It Takes a Commons:

Decolonizing South Africa's Eastern Cape with Agroecology

By

Mpumelelo Ncwadi

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Michael M. Bell, Professor, Community and Environmental Sociology
Randall D. Jackson, Professor, Plant & Agroecosystem Sciences
Sarah Adcock, Assistant Professor, Animal & Dairy Sciences
Richard L. Cates, Professor Emeritus, Soil & Environmental Sciences
Charles F. Nicholson, Associate Professor, Agricultural & Applied Economics

Dissertation Abstract

The systems that support rural life in South Africa are gradually deteriorating. In the Eastern Cape Province, waves of small cascading losses often lead to economic, social, and environmental misfortunes that undermine sustainable livelihoods of rural citizens. We see rural smallholder farmers losing their natural capital due to unmanaged grazing, soil erosion, and bush encroachment, and more importantly livestock diseases and theft. The litany of losses that seem "too big for rural dwellers to solve" is endless.

In the small village of Mozana, south of the coastal city of East London in the Eastern Cape, promoting a culture of resilience — *the capacity to influence and adapt to change*[1] — could offer the local smallholder farmers and their community a new operating system. A community-based '*discovery and learning-through-doing*' hub, serving multiple functions—holding togetherness, building capacity, growing food security, increasing incomes, enhancing ecosystem services, deepening education, building social ties, overcoming isolation, changing perceptions, as well as increasing livestock production through targeted investments and sustainable intensification; linked by narrative, a decolonial agroecological approach to sustainable rural

[1] *Resilience & Transformation Report*: A *Regional Approach. Ecotrust (2012).*

development—is needed to inspire fresh thinking that creates economic development, social equity, environmental well-being, and resilience.

A dream of a better future needs a shared vision because without the vision people will perish[2]. What do the people of Mozana want for their village, for themselves and the next generation? It's best to ask them. This means holding broad and deep dialogues, sharing ideas, listening for consensus to emerge, as well as the outliers that make new sense. The facilitation of this placemaking approach is what this research aims to accomplish.

Purpose

Despite the South African government's renewed focus on promoting an inclusive national red meat economy to support beef exports, the issues faced by smallholder cattle farmers in Mozana village are largely overlooked in the agenda. Considering this observation, the primary objective of this research is to investigate the feasibility of decolonizing the South African red meat industry. One approach to achieve this is to incorporate the affected farmers into the broader discussions regarding the future of South Africa's red meat industry, in accordance with the Red Meat Industry Strategy 2030. I contend that my four research questions offer a valuable framework

[2] *Proverbs 29:18, quoted by John F. Kennedy on the eve of his assassination*

not only for examining the difficulties faced by the farmers but also for identifying opportunities that local farmers and stakeholders in the red meat sector may currently be overlooking.

Through this research, I sought to understand some of the challenges facing the smallholder livestock farmers of Mozana so we might use these learnings to collaboratively imagine ways to integrate them into the existing beef supply chain in South Africa. Or, better still, chart a new course to prosperity and resilience. Additionally, I sought to motivate the farmers and their community to deeply reflect on how they could leverage the Common Property Resources (CPRs), already at their community's disposal, to create economic opportunities, predictable prosperity, social equity, and environmental wellbeing for their village.

Chapters

This dissertation is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1 is a brief introduction regarding the genesis of the research and an outline of the research questions. The chapter also touches on the important agrarian question in relation to the "Country of Two Agricultures" and the government-led land reform program. More specifically I highlight the troubling issue of the many labels that in the last three decades have been assigned to black farmers in South Africa to confine them to non-commercial roles within the

agricultural sector. I also highlight the silence in the current land reform debates about the government's neglect of the arable communal areas like Mozana village. In particular, I emphasize the concerning matter of the numerous labels that have been imposed on black farmers in South Africa over the past thirty years, which have served only the purpose of restricting these farmers to non-commercial positions within the agricultural industry. Additionally, I draw attention to the lack of discussion in the ongoing land reform debates regarding the government's neglect of arable communal regions such as Mozana village.

Chapter 2 provides a broad perspective on the following question: Can our village be fenced in again? This important question was posed by the oldest resident of Mozana village, who is also a smallholder cattle farmer, regarding the spread of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in the Eastern Cape, which sometimes restricted the movement of hooved animals from areas like Mozana village because of biosecurity concerns by the government. The question matters because fencing of Mozana can protect the village's livestock from FMD and other diseases. If done correctly, it can also set an example to promote fencing of other villages

Chapter 3 is an analysis of the insights I gained while conducting in-depth dialogues (*iimbizos* in isiXhosa, the local language) with a diverse group of Mozana residents. I conducted these in-depth dialogues to better understand the challenges

faced by the local smallholder farmers in their quest to gain market access for their cattle.

Chapter 4 is a summary of the insights and suggestions that emerged from a meeting which I organized and facilitated between some of the farmers of Mozana and a group of stakeholders from the South African beef supply chain, regarding possible supply chain modifications to better meet the smallholder farmers' needs.

Chapter 5 explains the visioning process that I undertook with the Mozana smallholder farmers and the village residents to contemplate different future community development alternatives. While this process is still incomplete, it offers potentially viable ideas—generated through a comprehensive consensus building process—that the community aspires to see realized going forward, beginning with a grazing plan and alien vegetation clearing for their multi-species communal herd.

Design / Methodology / Approach

Initial data, including 'grey literature', was collected through literature gathering and review. Besides literature review, a variety of qualitative mixed methods including oral history, critical dialogues (*iimbizo*), deep hanging outs, human observations, community hall meetings, and focus groups were used to collect research data. This data was collected—with informed consent—either by taking notes or recording, mainly in isiXhosa, the local language. Following the University of Wisconsin-

Madison's approved ethics protocols, the names of individual interviewees were kept confidential. With the assistance of another speaker of isiXhosa, the notes and recordings were translated into English for further analysis and synthesis of the information as it relates to the opinions and lived experiences of our participants, and our grounded understanding of the challenges they face.

Findings

Themes that emerged from the data analysis were grouped into three intersecting categories: 1) analysis of the current challenges that act as barriers to achieving desired new actions 2) analysis of the opportunities to use locally available resources to create the things that the community needs to survive and thrive, and 3) emerging ideas about a shared vision for a prosperous future anchored by environmental stewardship of what remains of the local natural heritage. Among the many ways to articulate the significance of these findings, the most appropriate approach is to share them with the Mozana community to afford them the opportunity to consider how they might use them to realize a better future. Hopefully, this dissertation provides a roadmap.

Originality & Value

I believe this research explores something that has not received much attention from researchers in South Africa: Establishment of a combined village herd and the use of

multi-species livestock grazing with permanent herders, a practice fast becoming the norm in countries like Zimbabwe and Zambia. As far as the agroecological approach to sustainable rural development is concerned this was the beginning of a collaborative process to develop the roadmap. This dissertation provides a kind of mental compass by which community members with diverse interests can pool their indigenous knowledge and local resources to create a mutually beneficial future and take new bearings in relation to their surrounding landscapes as they move toward a future of ecological and economic soundness.

Keywords: Agroecology, Rangeland Commons, Visioning Process, Multispecies Grazing

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None of what I accomplished, as a lead researcher, would be possible without the support of my family, especially my wife, Moratoe. My singular most heartfelt gratitude is to her. Against considerable odds, she endured so that together we may prevail. Thank you, *Mamkwena wam. Bendiyakubaphi ngaphandle kwakho*? I would like to dedicate this dissertation to you for making the impossible possible.

Rural people in South Africa have been callused by research that produces data that never delivers any practical results to improve their lives. I am grateful beyond words and measure for the support that I received from those people of Mozana, the anonymous subjects of my research, who opted to participate in my research. *Intaka yakha ngoboya benye* [A bird builds its nest with the soft feathers of other birds].

Every academic work is a joint enterprise in which several individuals lend the researcher intellectual, financial, and moral support without having the least control over what he writes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following individuals for their contribution to the writing of this dissertation without bearing any responsibility for what it contains. I am intellectually indebted to my co-advisors, Michael Bell and Randy Jackson. Words can't full express my gratitude for the advice, support, and encouragement that I also received from Sarah Adcock, Richard Cates, and Chuck Nicholson (the additional members of my PhD committee) who, together with my co-advisors, took a fat chance on me for the benefit of the rural people of

the Eastern Cape. Our journey together has been long and winding, but never filled with uncertainty, only undivided support, patience and love. Knowing you all has been a blessing for which I am eternally grateful and indebted for your time, friendship and wisdom. *Liyinyani elithi*, "*Induku entle yegawulwa ezizweni.*" [It's true, "A beautiful stick for battles is the one cut from faraway lands"].

A Note on Research Methodology

Ethical principles frequently serve as a guide in research to ensure both scientific soundness and social responsibility (Roman *et al.*, 2025). South Africa is a society with a long and complex colonial and apartheid history of highly skewed power dynamics. Vulnerable communities, especially poor rural people, rightfully feel exploited, in the name of research. When the word "research" is hyphenated into "re-search," as Maori anthropologist Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) suggests, it reveals that "*re-searching* people involves the activity of undressing them to see them naked. It is also a process of reducing some people to the level of micro-organism: putting them under a magnifying glass to peep into their private lives, secrets, taboos, thinking, and their sacred worlds[3]." In South African agriculture "settler colonialism is neatly woven into agriculture" (Nash, 2019, p. 445). To avoid subjecting the participants to "re-search," I carefully tried to adopt a smart combination of somewhat "decolonizing methodologies." Decolonizing research practices, such as exercising critical self-reflexivity, positionality, reciprocity, respect for self-determination, embracing "Other(ed)" ways of knowing", epistemic disobedience, and embodying a

[3] *This is a direct quote from Kimberly C. Harper (2019) at North Carolina A&T State University, USA. The Source Title is Handbook of Research on Promoting Higher-Order Skills and Global Competencies in Life and Work.)*

transformative praxis were all approaches I relied upon in our research (Ackerly, 2008; Barnes 2018; D'Arcangelis, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). Epistemic disobedience is a concept, often used in decolonial theory, that refers to the refusal to accept the dominant, often Western, epistemic (knowledge-related) systems and structures (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Though there is no standard model or practice for what decolonizing research methodology looks like, there are ongoing scholarly conversations about theoretical foundations, principal components, and practical applications (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). To counter historical injustices, it is a moral imperative to embrace decolonizing approaches when working with populations oppressed by colonial legacies.

Knowledge and the power to define what counts as real knowledge lie at the epistemic core of colonialism (Smith, 2012). Smith writes, "Decolonizing methodologies are about forcing ourselves to confront the Western canon in its philosophy, pedagogy, ethics, organizational practice, paradigms, methodologies and discourses and, importantly, its self-generating arrogance, its origin mythologies and stories that it tells to reinforce its hegemony. The exercise of a decolonizing methodology has to do more than critique colonialism. It has to open up possibilities for understanding and knowing the world differently and offering different solutions to problems caused by colonialism and the failure of power structures to address these historic conditions" (p. 6). "Knowledge is not only socially constructed but also

political" (Mao *et al.*, 2016). There are multiple versions of what is believed to be real, and yet the most accepted versions of reality are typically those associated with positions of privilege (Mertens, 2017). The globally accepted ethical principles hold a decolonizing perspective in research (Roman *et al.*, 2025). For example, working collaboratively is particularly important in a country like South Africa because it includes communities in their own development and determining their own future (Nel *et al.*, 2025). Most of our research methodology is grounded in deep dialogue. Dialogue has no 'method' or 'blueprint', but is rather a direction for pedagogical exploration, not a map (Burbules, 1993, p. 143). The process of dialogue might be seen as an 'educational voyage' to be re-visited regularly, rather than a destination or an endpoint (Coulter & Wiens, 1999, p. 4). Ethical protocols of voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were observed throughout the research. Prior to starting the research, a 'human subjects' protocol' was approved by the Institutional Review Board of University of Wisconsin-Madison's **Human Subjects Protection Program** . To protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to all the respondents who chose to offer their opinions. The participants in this study represented diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, age, and highest levels of education achieved.

Give First / Thinkering Approach

Give First is a philosophy developed and used by Feld (2025) for doing business, which "encourages individuals to give their time, resources, and expertise to others without expectation of immediate return." According to Feld (2025), "this builds a powerful network of caring people, all flourishing because they are all giving to each other." In the course of this research, I adopted and implemented a '*Give First / Thinkering*' approach. Thinkering is defined as "the intersection of creative thinking and discovery through doing (tinkering) (Stanford GSB, 2011). By embracing this methodology, I aimed to encourage Mozana farmers to consider the alternative techniques presented to them during our engagements with various industry stakeholders, as well as those they witnessed during our visits to the stockyards and a dairy farm.

[i] *See the Endnotes for references.*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On a rainy September day in 2023, the research team had its first meeting with the priest from the National Baptist Church of Southern Africa (NBCSA). As we later established, the elderly priest is also a highly regarded smallholder cattle and goat farmer living in one of the local communal villages of Buffalo City Municipality Ward 32. During our deliberation, we asked the priest, as a local smallholder livestock farmer, what his thoughts were on the often-touted end of apartheid in 1994 and the current land reform programme of the South African government.

Displaying a demeanor befitting of a member of the clergy, the priest calmly responded with a question of his own, "Who was it that convinced you that apartheid ended in 1994?" Then, he emphatically told us, "I do not believe that it did, although some would have us believe that this was the case. Instead of ending, apartheid adapted and adjusted its point of equilibrium to reflect the end of legislated racial segregation. Contrary to popular narratives about a new nation, reality suggests otherwise. Hence land ownership patterns have not changed much and the deeply entrenched economic and social inequities of the apartheid system remain and continue almost undiminished, in some instances."

This is how our first empathy interview regarding the state of cattle farming in Ward 32 of the Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) in the Eastern Cape province of

South Africa began. Empathy interviews[4] are a qualitative research method used to understand a user's experience, needs, and feelings by asking open-ended questions and listening intently to their stories.

Our question to the priest was not without basis. In 2021, Kidlinks Small Farm Incubator (KSFI), a local nonprofit organization, had requested the research team, which included Mpumelelo Ncwadi (one of the founders of KSFI), to investigate the issues of limited market access for cattle from the smallholder farmers of BCM Ward 32. This was the basis for the context-establishing empathy conversation that the research team had with the respected priest.

A day before the research team sat down with the priest, Mpumelelo Ncwadi, the lead researcher, had flown in from his home in Cape Town. Before he boarded the flight at the Cape Town International Airport (CTIA) to King Phalo Airport in East London, he bought himself a copy of **A *Country of Two Agricultures***, a book by the well-regarded South African agricultural economist, Wandile Sihlobo (2023). Reading from the book during the flight, he was unpleasantly surprised by how little progress that South Africa has made in almost three decades, to bridge the gap between its

[4] Vazquez-Maggio, L and H. Westcott (2014). Researchers' reflections of empathy following interviews with migrants. *Qualitative Research Journal* 14(3):214-227. DOI: **10.1108/QRJ-12-2012-0029**

thriving white-owned 'commercial,' and the emerging black 'sub-commercial' agricultural sectors.

The more he engaged with the thoughts and ideas presented in the book, the more he found himself reflecting on the unresolved land reform and agriculture issues in post-apartheid South Africa, as well as how agriculture remain the economic sector where the old divide persists; something which probably led Sihlobo (2023) to the conclusion that South Africa is a '*country of two agricultures*.' The book suggested that the post-apartheid idea of a 'country of two agricultures' perpetuates a system in which the sustainability of black farming is entirely reliant on the white-owned downstream supply chains.

Therefore, it is no big surprise that the smallholder livestock farmers of Mozana are struggling with limited market access for their cattle. This viewpoint — which was indirectly validated by the priest — indicated to us, as the research team, that the development of an "inclusive" post-apartheid feedlot-driven and export-oriented red meat industry has primarily been a superficial kind of reform. Consequently, it has largely failed to dismantle the fundamental economic structures that is keeping SA's smallholder farmers on the margins of the mainstream beef economy. Hence, the inequalities in access to financial capital, production capabilities, and integration into commercial supply chains persist, leading to the smallholder farmers of BCM Ward 32 decrying their exclusion from the existing

networks, institutions, and all manner of supporting infrastructure that has been concentrated in the feedlots and supply chain beyond.

In the rural Mozana village, which is among the smallest and most deprived communal villages of Ward 32, the '*country of two agricultures*' manifests itself in different ways. First, local smallholder farmers are occasionally referred to as "subsistence farmers." At other times, they are identified as "emerging farmers." These terms are not used exclusively to describe local farmers, but they are broadly applied to all black farmers in South Africa. This applies to both government legislation and the terminology used within the South African agricultural sector. It can be argued that the different branding of black farmers in any manner other than commercial farmers has considerable negative implications for how the red meat industry perceives and engages with South Africa's smallholder livestock farmers more broadly. For instance, according to the records of the National Wool Growers Association (NWGA), in the 2015/16 season the Upper Telle shearing shed in the Sterkspruit district of the Eastern Cape won the Grand Champions. At the time, the shearing shed had 66 black sheep farmers owning 5600 wool sheep and produced an average micron of 19.4 with a clean yield of 68%. Some of the larger farmers in the shed owned over 700 sheep. That season, the shed produced 95 bales and 3 bin bales, worth over R1.1 million. The 2015/16 national average for commercial wool farmers was R77.40/kg and for communal wool farmers it was R52.35/kg. Despite achieving

an outstanding R92.03/kg that year, those black sheep are still classified by the NWGA as “non-commercial farmers.”

Could this obvious bias be the explanation for why, nearly 30 years following the deregulation of the South African agricultural sector to include black farmers, these farmers are still lamenting their exclusion from the national red meat economy? The ‘*country of two agricultures*’ also reveals itself in the description of local ‘African’ cattle breeds — by the commercial beef industry and most animal science literature — “as a nondescript, impure and mixed breed of cattle,” that are unfit for commercial beef production (Faku 2009; Scholtz *et al.*, 2008). Additionally, through government’s failure to rehabilitate community dipping facilities and to provide basic veterinary care to smallholder farmers in rural villages like Mozana village.

Feeling left behind without any possible recourse, local smallholder farmers often complain that they are not favored by the current institutions, networks, and supporting infrastructure embedded within the South African feedlot system and the downstream beef supply chain. In the face of the blatant failure of the post-1994 land reform, “*market deregulation* and *trade liberalization*” policies that were introduced by the South African government *as* part of the menu of strategies to link small farmers to agricultural markets” (Makhura and Mokoena 2003), our research

addressed the following questions in relation to the problems of insufficient biosecurity services and market access for smallholder farmers of Mozana village:

1. Can Mozana village be fenced in again to curtail the spread of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in the Eastern Cape? What are the implications of being fenced in again?

2. What barriers inhibit the community of Mozana from establishing a self-organizing and rules-based social organization to govern and turn their livestock and local property resources into sustainable livelihoods?

3. Can a Collaborative Landscape Design (CLD) approach facilitate a collaborative process among various beef supply chain stakeholders (the communal livestock farmers, commercial seedstock producers, government extension officers, livestock agents, slaughterhouse managers etc.) to explore adaptive ways in which the regional beef supply chain could be modified to make it inclusive of the communal livestock farmers?

4. What possible outcomes can the Mozana community achieve through assistance with the vision of a different future for themselves, their land and their livestock?

Arriving at these four questions involved an iterative process that began in September 2022 and ended in 2024 of defining and refining the local context. The

placemaking framing of our research was distilled from a series of evolving learning journeys, ‘deep hanging outs,’ dialogues, focus groups, and Q&A sessions, involving the farmers themselves, the village people, local traditional authorities, a local NGO, the Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS), a commercial dairy farmer, government extension officers, livestock agents, a slaughterhouse manager and an auctioneer.

But this was not the starting point, as we said. This research was first proposed by the people at KSFI. Since 2020, the people have been working with the 27 village communities of Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) Ward 32 to improve food security, promote farmer development, and enhance sustainable livelihoods using regenerative farming and more agroecological approaches. In the months following the suggestion, KSFI organized a meeting with the chairpersons from all villages at the community hall in Gqala to assess the interest of local livestock farmers in investigating the factors that restricted their involvement in the South African national beef value chain. It was in that meeting that we met the young chairperson of the Mozana village committee who enthusiastically offered to consult with the farmers in his community to discuss the possibility of the research conducted in his village.

To get better informed, throughout this research, we reviewed the literature on the methods, subject specific content, and research analysis. What follows are four chapters of the findings from our deliberations. These findings were distilled

into bite size chunks of useful observations and strategies for visioning different alternatives and future for all the people of Mozana. Our conclusion, based on these observations is that apartheid may still be with the farmers of Mozana village and Ward 32, but it's also something from the past. There is nothing in it for the farmers of Mozana village and their families who tended to base their future aspirations on what happened to them in the past. Concentrating their focus on the past is like trying to drive a car forward by looking only through the rearview mirror.

Looking for the path to the future through past lessons may be working for those who benefitted from apartheid in the past. But the road ahead for the Mozana farmers demands an undivided focus on finding alternatives to build for the future. There are new doors opening and offering better options grounded on agroecological approaches to development. However, given the way that the South African beef industry currently works, the smallholder farmers of Mozana need better ways to communicate their often unseen, unspoken and unstated beliefs and epistemologies (ways of knowing), thinking and experiential knowledge. More importantly, they could start doing things differently, instead of blindly following the current system.

The Agrarian Questions in a "Country of Two Agricultures"

Our deep hanging out with one Mozana elder raised in our minds deeper questions about the Agrarian Questions (AQs) within the broader of Sihlobo's "Country of Two Agricultures." The Agrarian Question, according to Panosetti *et al.* (2025), "is rooted in the foundational work of Marx and Engels, that AQ emerged in the nineteenth century as a framework to study the development of capitalism in agrarian societies and the consequent fate of the peasantry." Moreover, they wrote, "In its 'classical' version, the AQ focused on how capitalism seized control of agriculture and the role of agriculture in ushering in the accumulation process necessary for national industrialization, as well as the implications of this for class differentiation and agrarian struggles."

In the context of Mozana and its smallholder farmers, thinking about the broader AQs provides a useful framework for examining ways in which the local farmers can think more broadly about their role in the SA red meat sector, as well as how to make their own transition from the its control, much the same way as how the current industry made a transition from state controlled agricultural sector in 1997. Such a transition, no matter how small, could provide the farmers with an answer to the dearth of viable post-apartheid trading options for them.

Even before we conducted this research, we had observed deliberate silence and exclusion of communal agrarian landscapes from the current land reform agenda. This created the impression that the possible ways in which SA's smallholder could use their lands to support their sustainable livelihoods isn't perceived as a contributor to land reform. This perception has been further reinforced by how little attention has the government paid the lack of infrastructure and animal healthcare services on communal agrarian landscapes, including Mozana. Against this backdrop, this research aims to position Mozana village agrarian struggles within Sihlobo's broader "Country of Two Agricultures."

Chapter 2: Can Our Village Be Fenced-In Again?

Mpumelelo Ncwadi[a], Richard L. Cates[b], Sarah J.J. Adcock[c], Charles F. Nicholson[d], Michael M. Bell[a,e], and Randall D. Jackson[a,f]

[a]Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies; [b]Department of Soil & Environmental Sciences; [c]Department of Animal & Dairy Sciences; [d]Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics; [e]Department of Community & Environmental Sociology; [f]Department of Plant & Agroecosystem Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, USA

Abstract

The uncontrolled spread of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) in South Africa significantly hinders inclusive growth by disrupting the entire red meat value chain. According to the Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS), this particularly affects small-scale and communal farmers, leading to substantial economic losses due to production losses and trade bans. Unfortunately, communal farmers frequently lack the necessary knowledge and financial means to effectively manage the disease. Concerned about the potential spread of the FMD into their in rural village of Mozana in the Eastern Cape, one local smallholder livestock farmer asked, “Can our village be fenced-in again?” To fully comprehend the question and to provide an accurate response within the context of the current FMD situation in the Eastern Cape, we undertook a series of deep hanging outs — a traditional ethnographic method — with the farmers of Mozana in the Eastern Cape. Our study revealed an appetite among the farmers for the establishment of a perimeter fence around their village. The farmers believed that the perimeter fence is necessary to exclude wandering

livestock from neighboring villages from entering their own villages. Similarly, they are of the opinion that the fence will help to limit the transmission of FMD, while also conserving the available forage for their own cattle and goats.

Keywords: Foot and mouth disease; fenced in; land reform.

Introduction

In April 2024, the outbreak of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), a highly contagious disease affecting hooved livestock, was detected in the Eastern Cape (South African National Department of Agriculture, 2024). In the aftermath of the outbreak, many smallholder farmers without proper branding and biosecurity records of their livestock have experienced challenges with the movement of their cattle for trading purposes. Consequently, due to the restrictions, the farmers could not transport their cattle to the local auction yards and slaughterhouses (**Freight News**, 2025). Concerned about the uncontrolled spread of the FMD and the subsequent restrictions, one smallholder farmer in Mozana asked, "Can our village be fenced-in again?" To fully understand the context behind the question and to find relevant answers, we undertook a series of a *deep hanging outs*[1] with the farmers of

[1] *Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo is often credited with first using the term, "deep hanging out," in relation to ethnographic research methodology. See James Clifford,* "**Anthropology and/as Travel**," *Etnofoor*9, no. 2 (1996): 5–15.

BCM Ward 32 in the Eastern Cape. Addressing the question matters because it's an opportunity to bring the often-disregarded voices of a smallholder cattle farmer into the current debate — led by the Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) — on the issues of "*Biosecurity, Movement and Risk Awareness*" and "*Vaccination for Priority Diseases.*" Hanging out with the local farmers and listening to their stories helped frame the nature of the problem. Currently, smallholder farmers feel excluded from mainstream biosecurity discussions because it is often said that they are unorganized (RMIS, 2025) and therefore, there are no formal structures through which government and industry can communicate with them. Recording the experiences of these farmers appeared to us as a more effective means to amplify their voices in the privileged discussions that are presently occurring without their involvement as impacted stakeholders. Our intervention could ensure that things that matter most to the farmers are included in the policy directions and decisions about before farming in South Africa.

The SA Animal Identification Act (No. 6 of 2002) provides the legal foundation for livestock identification in South Africa. It is compulsory for all cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs to be marked with a registered permanent identification mark. Farmers must register a unique identification mark – a brand, tattoo or group mark – and apply it in accordance with detailed regulations. Marks must be placed in prescribed locations on the body, be of prescribed size, and must remain legible throughout the

animal's life (Farmers Weekly, 2025). But the smallholder farmers don't always understand the requirements for marking, and this causes many compliance problems.

Study Area and Methods

Study Area

Figure 1: A young man standing on a hill of the indigenous Eastern Thicket looking at farmland and river below, with the Indian Ocean and the coastal town of Hamburg at a distance.

Our research is set in Mozana, a rural village located in Ward 32 of the Buffalo City Municipality ("BCM") in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The geographical coordinates are 33° 13' 03.32" S 27° 26' 55.74" E. The village lies along the Sunshine

Coast Belt, which typically enjoys approximately 300 days of sunshine each year. Historically, under the previous political system, Mozana was part of the black homeland of Ciskei. Ward 32 consists of 27 coastal and inland village communities, which represent a range of cultural, ecological, and social conditions, along the east-west continuum of the Indian Ocean, between the Keiskamma ("iXesi") River on the south and Tsholomnqa River on the northeast.

Methods

In 1980, anthropologist Renato Rosaldo, coined the term "*deep hanging out*" to describe "*localized, inside out, vernacular field research.*" The *deep hanging out* is a traditional approach to ethnography that emphasizes informal interviews, participant-observation, and the experiential immersion of the ethnographer. During our first community hall meeting in 2023, we asked the community to help me identify farmers to participate in this research. We were almost unanimously pointed towards the oldest person in Mozana because he knew the complete history of the village, which was shared with us. Subsequently, we conducted a "deep hanging out" with the oldest resident of Mozana village in the Eastern Cape. It was an opportunity to listen, watch, and learn. During one of our conversations, in 2024, the man asked, "Can our village be fence-in again?" This was in relation to intense debates in South Africa about the unrelenting spread of Foot and Mouth Disease

(FMD), a highly contagious disease affecting hooved animals. Besides the farmers of Mozana, we also conducted a survey of the chairperson of eight (8) other villages.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

“Can our village be fence-in again?” This question, from the oldest village person in Mozana, came to us as a complete surprise. We lacked the context to provide an intellectual response. Before the man asked us the question, we were unaware that, unlike the traditional villages of the Eastern Cape, Mozana was founded by the apartheid government, as part of the '*rationalization process*', which converted a former commercial pineapple farm into a communal village. Additionally, we were unaware that the village was built on what used to be a grazing camp that had a surrounding fence. Broadly speaking, the '*rationalization process*' (also known as the Bantustan system or "separate development" policy) was the apartheid government’s strategy to formally segregate black South Africans into small, ethnically designated territories, effectively stripping them of their South African citizenship and political rights within 'white' South Africa (Wotshela, 2018).

During the early 1950’s, after the apartheid government came into power, they started the ‘rationalization process’ to create the former homelands of Ciskei and Transkei, which are now part of the Eastern Cape province. The ‘rationalization

process' involved a series of administrative, political, and geographical manipulations to consolidate scattered African people into a single, nominally independent "homeland" for Xhosa-speaking people. Prior to the rationalization process, Mozana village was part of a commercial pineapple farm. The pineapple farm was acquired from a white pineapple farmer, for the sole purpose of establishing Mozana. Upon establishment of the village, people were brought in from different urban townships and other so-called 'black spots.' During this period, additional families were also moved from regional commercial farms to the village to increase the size of its population. Then, the village was called Kampini (meaning "the camp"), a fitting reference to the fact that it was situated in one of three livestock grazing camps. A community trust was created to govern its existence.

During our initial engagement with the village farmer who had initially asked if Mozana could be fenced-in again, we established that the farmer was advocating for government and the industry to re-establish the previous fence line around their village to protect their livestock from potentially FMD infected stray animals from other local villages. Following our further discussions with the other farmers and the local traditional authority, we were assured that the traditional authority would be willing to endorse the idea, if it aimed to limit the unregulated movement of animals between local villages. Our community survey also revealed substantial support for this idea, along with a proposal for the establishment of a collective village herd,

which would involve eight (8) villages, as well as the creation of a small quarantine facility on the previously arable land in Mozana. From the literature, we established that it is possible for the community to apply for fencing through the government's Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP). As Hall and Cousins (2013) noted, "Placing a perimeter around the villages and fencing of the arable blocks may be more cost-effective and more appropriate than investing in fencing camps for livestock, and can enable grazing land to be rested during the dry season." Furthermore, they suggested that "The fencing program that forms part of the CRDP is thus a useful tool that could be put to good effect, enabling these positive crop–livestock interactions." This consideration points to the appropriateness of establishing a combined multi-species herd with dedicated herders, rather than constructing fenced grazing camps. This will be a cheaper option, compared to establishing fenced rotational grazing camps. Finally fencing in of Mozana will enhance the chances for the local farmers to raise steers for the local market instead of weaners for the faraway feedlots.

Discussion

This research revealed that if Mozana was fencing in again to give its 26 smallholder farmers an equal opportunity to farm in ways that are aligned to their values, the idea would receive widespread support from the community. On the strength of this

observation, this research incorporates the visioning process in Chapter 5 to dig deeper into the fencing, multi-species grazing, and management issues.

At that time, the farm was enclosed by a perimeter fence and contained three fenced cattle grazing camps, which are now located in Mozana. Following the relocation of people from other farms and a nearby township, the fence was dismantled to promote a communal environment for livestock grazing. The 140-hectare portion of arable land from the farm was equally distributed among fourteen (14) black families who had previously been labor tenants on the farm.

Following the removal of all the fences, cattle and goats from the village and beyond began to wander freely throughout the village in search of forage and water. Prior to 1994, this situation was managed and overseen by government employed extension officers in collaboration with the local traditional authority and herders. However, after the deregulation of the red meat industry in South Africa between 1997 and 1999, these services were discontinued, along with the management of bush encroachment, the cleaning of stock water dams, and soil erosion. In the wake of the cessation of these services, coupled with inconsistent management of livestock diseases, cattle from everywhere began to graze wherever they could find forage and water near the village. This has led to a rapid spread of diseases among the Mozana herds as well as those from neighboring villages.

It was in the broader context of the concern about the rapid spread of animal diseases, including the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) that the Mozana elder asked me the question, “Can our village be fenced-in again?” As we understood it, the context was threefold. Firstly, the elder sought to ascertain whether it was feasible to re-establish fencing around the village to facilitate better management of the animals, thereby minimizing the risk of FMD spreading into their village herds. Secondly, he asked the question because he was under the impression that the current government policy was not providing fencing to rural villages, in case it got stolen. Lastly, he asked the question considering the widespread rumors suggesting that the Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) was contemplating the use of geo-location technology to restrict certain areas from moving their herds, including transportation to local slaughterhouses, cattle trading auctions and confined cattle feeding operations. He was deeply concerned about the severe implications such a drastic measure could have on the livelihoods of his family and those of his fellow villagers.

To find answers, we consulted with both the State Veterinarian for the Eastern Cape and the RMIS. From our deliberations, we confirmed that indeed the RMIS was contemplating the use of geo-location technology to restrict the movement of cattle from known FMD areas. Nevertheless, Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) Ward 32 was not among the areas under consideration. Furthermore, the office of the State

Veterinarian for the Eastern Cape assured us that any implementation of such a measure would require approval from the provincial authorities.

During our follow-up discussions with the local traditional authority and the farmer representatives from Mozana, as well as the seven surrounding villages, we determined that the restoration of the former fence lines of the previous pineapple farm and its grazing camps would garner significant support from the traditional authority, local farmers, and their communities.

Walking About and Noticing as Revelation

During our engagement with the one farmer, he recalled that in the late 1940's Mozana did not exist. He mentioned that where the village now stands was a commercial pineapple farm. Assuming that the village was always there, we had omitted to ask about its origins, until the question of it being fence-in again arose.

Months before the question was asked, the man had taken us on a tour of the village to give us an idea on the lay of the terrain. It was during that tour that we noticed that the village bordered iXesi River. We also discovered that the former farmworkers were allocated 140 hectares of arable farmland alongside the river. During our 'walkabout', we took the photograph of the old farmer's son standing on a hill overlooking the confluence of the Indian Ocean, iXesi River, the coastal town of Hamburg and the part of the swathe of arable which is now a bush of Acacia Karoo.

During one of our subsequent walkabouts, the old man pointed to a plant and asked if we knew its name and what it was used for. We told him that we didn't know. Then he said, "*If these grazing camps were never allowed to return to being an African bush again, we would never know that there are plants around here that can be used to cure animal diseases. This is Boophone disticha* ("*incwadi*"), *used to treat cases of retained placenta after the birth of a calf*."

> "Ukuba lamathafa ayengayekwanga abuyele kwindalo yawo, sasingekhe sazi ukuba kukho imithi apha, engagasetyenziselwa ukunyanga izifo ezilwanyaneni. Yi "*ncwadi*" le, iyeza lokukhupha umgcantsi xa usalele ngaphakathi enkomeni emva kokuzal'ithole."

The revelation was refreshing because up to that point in our conversations, we had not thought to ask anything about indigenous knowledge based ethnoveterinary responses to animal care. Later, a study conducted by Masika *et al*. (1997) in the Eastern Cape Province showed that 89% of their respondents trusted ethnoveterinary medicines. In addition, the plant was reported for use in cases of abortions in cattle by Van der Merwe et al. (2001). Back home in Makhanda, we asked Mpumelelo's 92-year-old mother if she knew *Boophone disticha* and what it was used for. She knew and correctly explained.

As Henry James wrote in his 1884 essay, *The Art of Fiction*, "Village people are, at heart, the explorers of their natural environment who often notice things—those on whom nothing is lost." This is a paragraph from that essay:

> "*The young lady living in a village has only to be a damsel* ***upon whom nothing is lost*** *to make it quite unfair (as it seems to me) to declare to her that she shall have nothing to say about the military. Greater miracles have been seen than that, imagination assisting, she should speak the truth about some of these gentlemen.*"

"Imagination assisting", it was not the "gentlemen from the military" that the old man of Mozana was thinking of when his imaginative mind began converting long time memories into revelations, when he asked me, "Can our village be fenced-in again?" It was the future of his village's smallholder farmers and the future generations of his village. It was not lost to him that the FMD is posing a significant risk to their local herds because not enough was being done, by the farmers and government alike, to protect their village herds. Also posing further risk to their village herds are other potentially diseases-carrying cattle from other villages were roaming around his village in search of 'greener pastures.'

The Red Meat Industry Services' (RMIS)[2] recently wrote that:

"*Recurring outbreaks of priority animal diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), brucellosis, lumpy skin disease, and Rift Valley Fever continue to undermine livestock health, producer profitability, and market access across South Africa — particularly in communal and smallholder farming areas. Furthermore, "The recent FMD outbreaks have underscored the urgent need for improved biosecurity practices, movement control, and disease risk awareness across all segments of the red meat value chain. Despite the existence of protocols and technical guidance, implementation remains inconsistent — particularly in communal and smallholder systems where understanding of biosecurity is limited, and cultural or social practices often override regulatory controls. Movement of livestock for rituals, ceremonies, or informal trade frequently occurs outside the scope of monitoring frameworks, increasing disease transmission risks.*"

The elderly man was imagining the time when his village was still a commercial pineapple farm whose crop failed after its mostly sandy soils were slowly leached over time. As he told us, he was thinking of the time in history,

[2] *https://rmis.co.za/services/call-for-proposals/*

> when the highly palatable and nutritious "*ingca ebomvu*" (Kangaroo grass or *Themeda triandra*) was still the dominant species within Umqungu/Idobo (*Cymbopogon* grassland), whose remnants were recently observed by Judd (2012). He was reminiscing how fat his employer's cattle were without any need for supplementary feeding because they could graze the sweetveld in Winter and the sourveld in Summer. He was narrating to us, an oral history that only him, as the oldest resident in Mozana, knew and could tell, because as Renato Rosaldo said, "What people say is (as) inseparable from how they say it." Oral history is evidence taken from the spoken words of people who have knowledge of past events and traditions. It is about memories and lived experiences. It is about listening and being heard. It is about the past and how people give meaning to the past."[3]

The Fallacy of Composition

Howard W. French, the author of *Born in Blackness*[4] wrote, "It would be unusual for a story that begins in the wrong place to arrive at the right conclusions." The story

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[3] Institute of Oral History, College of Liberal Arts, University of Texas at El Paso. **https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/oral-history/about/what-is-oral-history.html** Accessed: 09/18/2024

[4] French, W. F., *Born in Blackness: Africa, Africans, and the Making of the Modern World 1471 to the Second World War*, Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York, 2021.

of black agrarians in the post-apartheid South Africa began "in a wrong place": the market deregulation and trade liberalization process of 1997 where black agrarians were kept on the fringes of the proceedings as the white commercial farmers sought to untangle themselves from state-controlled agriculture. As a result, conclusions regarding participation of black farmers in the SA red meat economy that emerged from that process may not be accurate.

Since ascending into power, the African National Congress (ANC) led national government has implemented no less than three different land reform policies. All have yielded very limited progress, in terms of addressing vexed issues facing smallholder farmers in South Africa. In 2013, the Communal Right Act was rejected as unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. This is all very instructive on the "grand illusion" of trying "to arrive at the right conclusions," with "a story that begins in the wrong place." Also, government's land reform program, insofar as it relates to black smallholder farmers, is being implemented based on what Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation* calls, "the fallacy of composition." In its simplest form, the fallacy of composition is "a rational error or a mistaken belief that what seems good for an individual will still be good when others do the same thing." In the context of South African beef sector, the fallacy of composition' manifests itself in various ways, including the expectation that if black SA's small-scale agrarians re-created themselves in the image of white commercial cattle farmers, they would achieve

similar outcomes despite the unresolved issues of conquest, dispossession, confinement in the former homelands, and now isolation. It also manifests itself through the submerged tyranny of the minority, and white domination of the post-apartheid market economy.

Hall and Cousins (2013) wrote, "land reform has the potential to expand South Africa's rangeland commons. These commons have traditionally been restricted to the ex-Bantustan areas, to the former 'coloured reserves' (or Act 9 areas), and to municipal commonages surrounding towns." What seems to be missing is an emphatic suggestion to government to fence off some of the strategically located rangeland commons arable and grazing land in the former homelands to enable smallholder commercial livestock farming to scale. In our view, such a bold land reform step would afford smallholder livestock farmers grazing land with the infrastructure they need to farm more effectively.

When Alfred Milner (1997), the erstwhile colonial Governor of the Transvaal (1901-1905) naïvely tried to create a "beef frontier" in such an unforgiving terrain as the western Transvaal Bushveld, his legacy project floundered and ultimately failed. Echoing the words of Helen Bradford (1993), "*mothered by myopia, fathered by compromise and delivered by coercion,*" the project "*was a stillborn*" because somehow Milner believed his European settlers possessed the magical powers to successfully establish cattle farms in the western Transvaal Bushveld without the necessary

"breeding stock, fencing, boreholes, stock dams and watered pastures." Ironically, this is exactly what the current government is asking the smallholder cattle farmers of the former homeland areas across South Africa to do; almost 125 years after the exercise failed in the western Transvaal Bushveld. Another drawback of the western Transvaal Bushveld 'beef frontier' was that large parts of area was covered by 'sweet veld.' Although this is a good winter pasture, it has serious nutritional deficiencies. So apart from increasing the likelihood of overgrazing, the lack of access to summer pastures or supplementary feeding increased the time it took to produce a steer for the market. The same situation is currently repeating itself in Mozana.

Government Preservation of the *Afrikaner Agrarian capitalism in* SA

SA's smallholder farmers, generally, are expected to operate within a red meat industry with an entangled past. Certain elements of that recent past have been preserved by the current government. They now form part of the policies. In relation to the broader agrarian questions in the current "Country of Two Agricultures", the following brief historical issues are worth mentioning. Agribusinesses[5] that are

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[5] *We adopted this definition of the word 'agribusiness' from Henry Bernstein with our own addition of "veterinary supplies, feedlotting and slaughtering": Agribusiness is understood here as corporate activity upstream of farming (supply of seeds, fertilizer, agrichemicals, machinery and veterinary supplies) and downstream (milling and other processing, feedlotting, slaughtering, marketing and distribution).*

Quoted from Bernstein, H., 2012. Commercial Agriculture in South Africa Since 1994: 'Natural Simply Capitalism,' Journal of Agrarian Change, Vol. 13 No. 1, (January 2013), pp. 23–46.

owned by Afrikaner agrarian capitalists are entrenched in the South African food economy. According to numerous peer-reviewed publications (Milton 1997; Williams *et al.* 1998; Bernstein 1996; Bernstein 2012), the evolution of their dominance can be traced to the nexus between the Afrikaners and successive apartheid regimes. As Williams *at al.* (1998) eloquently reminds us:

> *"The agrarian system which the new government inherited in 1994 rested on four pillars: white control of land; capitalists' control of black labour; state regulation of markets; and exclusion of black producers from the same access to land, labour, credits and markets as white farmers enjoyed." This was made possible by the proximity of the former South African Agricultural Union (SAAU now called AgriSA) and the Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAU) to successive former apartheid regimes.*

On the relationship between TAU and the apartheid government, O' Meara (1963) further noted, "The apartheid state sought primarily to secure a stable labour supply for agriculture by implementing the SAAU's proposals — and since the late 1950s, apartheid had succeeded in doing so." Perhaps, there is no cogent published material that better illustrates this close proximity and strong connection between the apartheid state, and the Afrikaner agrarian capitalists dominated agriculture in South Africa than this thought-provoking commentary by Williams *at al.* (1998) "In 1994, the new Government of National Unity established two separate ministries to

deal with Agriculture and with Land Affairs. … Kraai van Niekerk of the National Party continued to hold the portfolio of Minister of Agriculture, which he held in the previous regime. He had close links with 'organized agriculture', the networks of agricultural unions, co-operatives, marketing boards, the Land (and Agricultural) bank, which integrated the state, the National Party and farmers' organizations in the direction of state land and agricultural policies under the old regime. He clearly saw himself as representing the interests of these constituencies in the new government and threatened to fight against any dilution of the protection of property rights (which the previous government had treated so cavalierly when the rights of black title holders were at issue." According to Bernstein (2004), "The apartheid government's continued support of white farmers, notably in the form of 'drought relief' beginning in 1983 ultimately culminated in the massive R3.2 billion handout following the 1992 drought. The money was not so much to assist farmers as those institutions that held their debt, among which a handful of summer grain co-operatives were pre-eminent. The fundamental purpose was supporting capital formation by the co-operatives and maintaining land values."

If, as the literature suggests, the current government sought to preserve part of the pre-1994 status quo, then there is a case to be made for the smallholder farmers of such peripheral places as Mozana village to pursue alternative routes to markets for their livestock and meat. If during the last three decades, an impression

has been created that the post-apartheid South Africa was about forging an agrarian democracy, the reality on the ground, witnessed through the lived experiences of the smallholder farmers is that of subordination through what Strydom (2008) called "bovine racism" — classification of beef cattle based on the age of the animal rather than the quality of its beef.

Subordination Through Bovine Racism

Similar to the western Transvaal Bushveld situation of the 1920's, where the creation of '*a white man's country*' required that African interests should be subordinated to those of the white settlers, the current SA beef sector is espousing similar "corporate rationales" where commodity beef value chains must favour red skin cattle "*rooi ras*" production over indigenous and nondescript African beef cattle production. Participation in the South Africa red meat supply chain is premised on production of large red cattle. Failure to adhere to the commodity beef industry's defined standard of producing "functionally efficient" cattle are penalized with bovine racism and denial of market access. Bovine racism manifests itself in various ways: refusal of certain types of cattle; discounting their financial value; use of meat classification rather than meat grading system; deliberate misuse of terminology (for example using A-grade instead of A-class); making nature's way of raising beef cattle ("grass-fed or veld raised") tantamount to a claim that must be investigated and audited; deceiving the consumers by equating A-class and C-class beef to 'super' and 'inferior

eating quality status' respectively; collecting slaughtering levies but then never use the monies to promote meat that is not considered "super" beef.

When Strydom (2008) asked, "*Do indigenous Southern African cattle breeds have the right genetics for commercial production of quality meat*? what he discovered in relation to what he called, "bovine racism" was revealing. He found that the current bovine racism against indigenous breeds is wholly unwarranted because the meat quality is the same. Heather Dugmore's response to me illustrates our point. Heather is a long time Nguni cattle farmer in the Eastern Cape. We wrote to her to seek clarity about the ongoing efforts by some beef industry players to design a special "hot ration" to feed the Nguni cattle. This was her long response:

> "*Research by Dr Philip Strydom at the Agricultural Research Council* (ARC) *indicates that there is little or no difference between the meat quality of indigenous and European/British breeds, as is sometimes claimed. Yet the current system discriminates against the indigenous breeds, which are early maturing and ideally suited to being marketed off the veld, without the need for heavy supplementation. Class* AB *and older animals of all breeds are further accredited in various parts of the world as having extremely tasty meat. But the grading system does not accommodate this even though the tenderness and taste can be as good if not better than younger, A-grade animals. South Africa's meat classification system is outdated and must be changed, according to Professor*

Frikkie Neser of the Department of Animal, Wildlife and Grassland Sciences at the University of the Free State. He believes that ABs should be incorporated into the A-grade price range. This way it becomes viable for not only the indigenous breeds, but also all the other breeds and crossbreeds to be marketed off the veld, as an alternative marketing channel to the feedlots. But this is not happening and there is no price reward for keeping your animals on the veld longer. The stats speak for themselves: 83% of beef slaughtered in the formal sector is A-grade.

It is extremely concerning that the meat classification system has not kept up with the times and the need for various systems of sustainably produced meat. Beef production has been hard hit by this, and many South African farmers have given up farming with purebred indigenous breeds like the Nguni because of the price discrimination of R2 to R6 less per kilogram paid by the feedlots for Nguni weaners and certain other indigenous breeds. What this means is that the numbers of indigenous cattle will increasingly decline, which is putting the indigenous breeds at risk."[6]

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[6] *Heather's response can also be found here: https://heatherdugmore.co.za/why-the-meat-classification-system-must-change/*

This clearly demonstrate that indigenous cattle breed and the so called 'non-descript' cattle are unfairly discriminated against. This points to the need for SA to develop a proper grading system, similar to countries like Australia.

Conclusions

Informed by our research into the FMD, we can conclude that the possibility of Mozana being fenced in again exists. However, if this was done, it couldn't be for the purpose of creating an FMD exclusion zone around BCM Ward 32 because the ward incorporates a number of white-owned commercial dairy and beef cattle farms. It is improbable that these farmers would consent to such a significant measure to exclude their farming estates. Our research revealed a growing desire amongst the Mozana farmers and those of the seven surrounding villages to see a perimeter constructed around their villages. Collectively, the farmers believe that the perimeter fence will not only exclude loitering animals from other villages from entering their eight villages but reduce the spread of diseases and preserve available forage for their own cattle and goats.

This establishment of Mozana indicates that, in certain cases, the rationalization process led to the transformation of agricultural and pasture lands into residential communities.

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Chapter 3: Factors Hindering the Participation of Mozana Smallholder Farmers in the South African Beef Supply Chain

Mpumelelo Ncwadi[a], Richard L. Cates[b], Sarah J.J. Adcock[c], Charles F. Nicholson[d], Michael M. Bell[e,a], and Randall D. Jackson[f,a]

[a]Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI, USA; [b]Department of Soil & Environmental Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, USA; [c]Department of Animal & Dairy Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI, USA; [d]Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, USA; [e]Department of Community & Environmental Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, USA; [f]Department of Plant & Agroecosystem Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, USA

Abstract

For the smallholder farmers of Mozana village in Eastern Cape, South Africa, the abundant herds of cattle that can raise the living standards of the twenty-six (26) farmers, their families, and the local community of two hundred and ten (210) households roam around the local landscape unmanaged. The land and water that these farmers need to raise their herds are available but under-utilized because the farmers lack the knowledge and financial resources to build the necessary infrastructure. To gain a deeper and grounded understanding of the critical issues regarding the hidden challenges, primary research was conducted using mixed methods combining two critical dialogues ('*iimbizos*' in the local language) with elements of Participatory Action Research (PAR). We conducted a total of 36 individual empathy interviews alongside two focus groups consisting of six participants each: one focus group with the local young smallholder cattle farmers

and the other with a women-only group of goat farmers. From our empathy interviews and critical dialogues in Mozana, we identified four key findings. First, there are three categories of smallholder farmers in Mozana — "*traditionalists*, *all-rounders and commercial traders*," based on their characteristics and descriptors. The "traditionalists" keep cattle for traditional purposes; the "all-rounders" to honour traditions and to earn money; and the "commercial traders" farm strictly to make money. Second, the context and rules of engagement with respect to cattle farming and beef production in South Africa have changed since a new dispensation was implemented in 1997 but strategic assumptions, mindsets, and actions of the smallholder farmers in Mozana have not aligned with those changes. Third, local farmers are in a survival trap, largely stemming from a pervasive trust-deficit, subtle tendencies to point fingers towards external forces for their current circumstances, and over-reliance on government assistance to farm. Finally, regarding cattle production and trading, our research has shown that some of the Mozana smallholder farmers are making significant efforts to align themselves with the "new era farmers" classification established by the red meat industry, instead of exploring new ways to achieve independence from the industry through direct marketing of the cattle to meet the demand of the local market for steers ("oxen").

Keywords: Smallholder farming • strategic mindsets • beef supply chain • trust deficit

Introduction

Mozana is a small rural village in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa (SA). The community has two hundred and ten (210) households. Cattle farming has been an enduring traditional practice among local smallholder farmers since the village was established in the 1950s. Keeping livestock, especially cattle, supports both traditional customs and sustainable livelihoods of local families. However, like many other traditional rural communities across South Africa, ownership of cattle in Mozana is still a male dominated farming practice. Fuelled by traditional customs and beliefs, this class and gender bias approach to cattle farming "has curtailed opportunities for the local women, to expand their ownership of livestock assets and the diverse sources of income derived from them" (Hall and Cousins, 2013).

Since 1993, the historically effective management of local livestock and governance of common-pool resources (CPRs), which are essential for the survival of both livestock and traditional customs in Mozana, have been neglected. After the integration of the Ciskei government into the present-day government of the Eastern Cape, maintenance of the grazing areas stopped because the regional extension officers who were previously stationed in the village were moved to the head office of the Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR), 72 kilometres away. Payments for the village people to maintain the landscape around the village were also stopped. Consequently, the village's three grazing camps have

reverted to traditional local shrubs and non-native plants, the erosion ‘dongas’ have become much deeper, perimeter fences have long been stolen, the stock dams are full of silt from the run-off, and cattle have ticks because they overgraze on the same locations closer to the village.

Smallholder cattle farming, management of rangeland commons, and beef production in South Africa, as well as the historic divide between smallholder farmers and commercial beef supply chains, are all well documented in the peer reviewed academic literature (Kirsten and Van Zyl, 1998; Ainslie *et al.*, 2002; Hall & Cousins, 2013; Kirkman, 2020; Thamaga-Chitja and Morojele, 2014; Carelsen *et al.*, 2021). In South Africa, smallholder farmers are defined in multiple ways. For example, Kirsten and Van Zyl (1998) provide a comprehensive South African context that has been widely used in literature to define local small-scale farmers. According to them, smallholders are “subsistence farmers in the former homeland areas.” Kirsten and Van Zyl (1998) argue that in South Africa the concept of "small-scale farmer" is usually value-laden, creates wrong impressions, and is often viewed in a negative light. Furthermore, they suggest that "small-scale" is often equated with a backward, nonproductive, non-commercial, subsistence agriculture that is found in parts of the former homeland areas. For Pienaar and Traub (2015), South African smallholder farmers are referred to by various alternative names, including small-scale, subsistence, and emerging farmers. Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2012) defines smallholder

farmers as “predominantly black individuals who successfully established their farming operations despite encountering considerable obstacles due to limited access to essential resources, including economic, social, and human capital.” In addition, the South African Department of Agriculture (2015) defines smallholder farmers as those farmers who produce for household consumption and local markets, subsequently earning ongoing revenue from their farming businesses, which form a source of income for the family. We contend that it is critical to align the definition of small-scale farmers in South Africa with the international norms and standards and lay to rest the fallacy that small is about farm size only. The land size is just one in a myriad of issues that constrain the growth of small cattle farmers. These include the lack of access to appropriate infrastructure, information, and extension services. Correcting these negative perceptions towards small-scale farms in South Africa is important because without a coherent definition of this class of farmers, it is almost impossible for the government and other stakeholders to support them on commercial terms. For the purpose of this research, we adopt here the definition of smallholder farmers used Van Averbeke *et al.* (2011), “A group of households and individuals with several limiting factors that undermine their ability to embark on profitable interventions in the agricultural sector because they are strictly categorized as unorganized subsistence farmers.” Therefore, by law they aren’t allowed to trade meat products for human consumption. The smallholder farmers discussed in this paper are black household level farmers that are very

distinct from the 'emerging black agriculture of the middle' farmers. The latter farmers are those who aspire to enter the formal national meat markets but are too big to participate exclusively in subsistence livestock farming and also too small to compete successfully in commodity beef markets. Such livestock producers operate at a scale sufficient to productively engage local speculators and meat markets, such as butcheries.

Research by Ainslie *et al.* (2002) presents a comprehensive review of various aspects of "cattle ownership and production in the communal areas of the Eastern Cape in South Africa." Hall & Cousins (2013) offer policy suggestions on how the potential of South Africa's land and agrarian reform could be used to expand South Africa's rangeland commons and enhance their contribution to the livelihoods of the rural poor. For his contribution, Kirkman (2020) suggests a sustainable approach to grazing, land restoration, and rethinking of radical veld improvement, meaning reduction of soil erosion and improvement of ground cover. Coetzee *et al.* (2005) identified the following five issues as the major marketing constraints faced by small-scale farmers in South Africa: 1) Poor condition of livestock, 2) Lack of marketing information, 3) Problems with livestock identification. 4) Lack of infrastructure, and 5) Poor production and marketing management. In addition, peer reviewed scholarship by Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2012) identified the market access challenges

facing smallholder livestock farmers in South Africa and suggests strategies to improve it.

Our literature review found no peer reviewed publications regarding the motivations of younger smallholder and women farmers for getting involved in livestock farming, a male-dominated agricultural practice in South Africa. Also, we couldn't find any literature explaining why SA's smallholders believe that they aren't being supported by the beef supply chain actors and infrastructure that have been concentrated downstream in the supply chain. Addressing these issues is important for two reasons. First, it provides external role-players, such as the supply chain actors and government extension services, with concrete evidence of where their interventions should be directed for greater impact. Second, and more importantly, it provides farmers with a systematic analysis indicating how they might do things differently to improve their situation, if they choose to enter the national meat market.

In our attempt to integrate decolonial thought and agroecology, the aim is to challenge coloniality of agriculture in South Africa and highlight the importance of restoring and valuing traditional ecological knowledge, which has often been suppressed or dismissed by dominant agricultural systems, and promote participatory approaches that empower the marginalized local people of Mozana. So, based on what we have unpacked above, we conducted critical dialogues and

empathy interviews with some of the Mozana village farmers and citizens to excavate information. Grounded in community based participatory research (CBPR) and critical consciousness theory (Freire, 2000; Israel *et al.*, 2010), a critical dialogue involves a deep engagement where the stakes are high, the emotions run deep, and the outcome has a great potential to shake and shape the future and financial independence of the Mozana farmers. Paulo Freire (2000) defines critical consciousness as the ability to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 19). Dialogue has no 'method' or 'blueprint', but is rather a direction for pedagogical exploration, not a map (Burbules, 1993, p. 143). The process of dialogue might be seen as an 'educational voyage' to be re-visited regularly, rather than a destination or an endpoint (Coulter & Wiens, 1999, p. 4). A critical dialogue uses critical questions informed by critical consciousness theory and critical thinking to challenge deeply held beliefs, assess community problems, and develop action plans to address the problems (Jemal *et al.*, 2022). Participatory Action Research is a "framework for creating knowledge that is rooted in the belief that those most impacted by research should take the lead in framing the questions, design, methods and analysis and determining what products and actions might be the most useful in effecting change" (Torre, M., 2009). It is "a collaborative and dynamic approach to research that equitably involves community members, neighborhood stakeholders and

researchers in all aspects of the research project—from generating the questions asked to analyzing and publishing the data (MIT CoLab, 2018).

There are many methods to generate critical dialogue. Some suggested tools include purposefully developed reflective questioning, co-learning, and the group process (Jemal *et al.*, 2022). Critical dialogue about common experiences helps participants combat isolation and receive social support (Gutierrez & Ortega, 1991). Within the consciousness-raising process, [community] participants and the researchers are co-learners and active in a process of co-constructing knowledge through multi-methods and dialogical means (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002).

One tool to promote critical reflection through dialogue is the posing of reflective questions (Jemal *et al.*, 2022). Reflective questions direct attention to power dynamics involved in various systems that maintain systemic inequity (Garcia *et al.*, 2009). Reflective questions allow exploration of how "knowledge is created and maintained by larger sociopolitical forces" (Garcia *et al.*, 2009, p. 32). For example, the importance of classification-based pricing of cattle. Questions provoke discussions about the status quo, promote the ability to analyze or identify the meaning of experiences and events, and then elicit how participants would improve the situation or act to promote social justice (Watts *et al.*, 2009).

Some scholars consider the need for small group discussions and interactions as an important tool to facilitate critical consciousness development (Jemal, 2017a). For the group process to be successful, listening, humility, respect and critique are needed elements to allow the group to problematize repetitive oppressive aspects of everyday lived experience (Watts *et al.*, 2011). As cited in Jemal (2022), Gutierrez and Ortega (1991, p. 30) identified a five-phase group process of critical consciousness development: "(a) recognition of member similarities to enhance group identity; (b) the development of common goals; (c) identification of obstacles or barriers to self and group expression, (d) exploration and generation of ideas to address identified obstacles and barriers and (e) planning action steps." Sadly, in hierarchical research approaches with strong power differentials, many of these elements are often missing.

Group participation may support a number of tools for consciousness-raising. For example, the group process can encourage dialogue and reflective questions about the connections between personal and societal issues; use role plays and other participatory activities for behavioral rehearsal; ground discussions within the daily, shared experiences of participants; co-construct empowered understandings and identities; and identify potential liberating action steps (Jemal, 2017a).

According to Garton & Copland (2010), "Acquaintance interviews suggest familiarity between the researcher and the participants based on prior

engagements." Alongside isiXhosa (the local language) and shared traditional customs, acquaintance interviews are ideal for building trust. Roiha and Iikkanen (2022), cited in Haukås (2024), contend that "acquaintance interviews can offer researchers a fruitful arena for utilizing the already existing common ground between them and their research participants" (p. 1).

Our combination of critical dialogues, acquaintance interviews, and focus groups embodied strong elements of "a decolonial research methodology, guided by familiarity, relationality, deep trust, radical love, desire for communal life, abundance, and desire for harmony" (personal communication with Dr. Hamzeh, 2024). People at Mozana are already familiar with '*imbizo*' (a critical dialogue). Therefore, conducting one doesn't feel like being researched. Unlike common research practices in South Africa, including questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, in a critical dialogue, indigenous people become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, people participate on different terms. (Smith 1999, cited in Keikelame and Swartz (2019) [p. 1]).

Our research objectives are (1) to illuminate the challenges undermining Mozana's smallholder farmers in their cattle farming and governance of their local common property resources; and (2) suggest the concept of "*one village*, *one*

combined herd" as a useful frame for adoption of a planned communal grazing that benefits the village overall; and (3) use self-determination theory (SDT) to consider how competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000) can contribute towards achieving the "*one village, one combined herd*" strategy. Ashwood *et al.* (2014) proposes an inductive approach to research that emphasizes developing theoretical ideas during the data collection process, rather than gathering data to address hypotheses conceived before ground truthing. We used literature to formulate theoretical ideas about how to elevate the currently submerged issue of the local farmers achieving "growth through the satisfaction of their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness" (Koole, 2019).

Prior to 1994, black smallholder farmers in the former homelands were legally restricted to supplying slaughter cattle to the mainstream industry through government appointed livestock agents (Makhura and Mokoena 2003). However, since 1997, the South African red meat industry has been transitioning from a state-owned economy into a private ownership driven sector that is inclusive of smallholder livestock farmers (Red Meat Industry Strategy 2030). In the literature, transition economies are broadly referenced as economies which convert from a communist or "central" state to a capitalist or "free market" state (Jackson et al., 2005; Meyendorff & Thakor, 2002). Beyond mere participation in the evolving south African beef economy, the smallholder farmers have an opportunity to create a new

category in the sector. The farmers have an opportunity to follow a self-determination approach to the development of their autonomy, competence, and market development. For example, through this self-determination approach, Mozana farmers could focus their attention on the 'ground up' development of the stocker cattle (mature steers) market which has a very strong local demand from buyers needing slaughter animals for customary practices and functions.

Ultimately, our goal is to recommend opportunities for collaboration to advance the development of a robust livestock farming and regional beef economy in Mozana. The knowledge and infrastructure gaps are especially pronounced within the broader context of the former homeland areas of the Eastern Cape, where black farmers were systematically excluded from full participation in the national beef economy beyond selling their cattle to speculators. To counter historical injustices, it is a moral imperative to embrace decolonizing approaches when working with populations oppressed by colonial legacies. By decolonizing approaches, we mean approaches that give voice to the voiceless, build trust, and promote meaningful collaborations.

What is Self-Determination Theory?

First introduced in the mid-1980's by Deci & Ryan (1985), SDT is a comprehensive framework for understanding human motivation and personality that emphasizes

people's inherent tendencies toward growth and self-actualization through the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Koole *et al.* 2018). For Haukås (2024), citing Deci & Ryan (1985, p. 38), self-determination refers to "a quality of human functioning that involves the experience of choice. [It is] the capacity to choose and have those choices be the determinants of one's actions."

Furthermore, Haukås (2024) posits that SDT makes a distinction between autonomous and controlled motivations. People with a strong autonomous motivation act with a sense of inner volition and choice, that is, they are intrinsically motivated, whereas people with a strong controlled motivation tend to act with the experience of pressure and demand toward specific outcomes that comes from forces perceived to be external to the self" (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 14). SDT proposes that people—independent of age, gender, culture, and other factors—have three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Haukås 2024; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Additionally, Ryan & Deci (2000, 2012) wrote that SDT suggest that "human beings can be proactive and engaged or, alternatively, passive and alienated, largely as a function of the social conditions in which they develop and function." According to Haukås (2024), "Autonomy refers to people's sense of initiative and ownership in their own decisions and actions; competence is the feeling of mastery and of being in control of one's learning; and relatedness refers to

people's sense of belonging and connectedness, caring for others, and being seen and valued."

By fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness, interventions such as herding, rotational grazing and improvement of biosecurity practices can encourage farmers to adopt new technologies and farming practices that improve their livelihoods and the environment. For example, autonomy could provide the local smallholder farmers with the information and knowledge they require to liberate their creative thinking, make informed decisions, and take timely actions regarding their production, marketing and trading options. Natural and common property resources in Mozana are abundant. Despite the abundance, local farmers may be feeling less competent to transform these resources into the things they need to sustain their livelihoods. But with access to better quality extension services, connection to sources of relevant information, infrastructure and new technologies, local farmers' sense of competence to do things differently could be greatly improved.

That's why throughout our research we incorporated elements of "*give first thinkering*," a structure process through which we empowered the farmers with learning through doing skills, including animal handling and processing, establishment of a community of practice, connection to industry stakeholders and organization of information days. We also introduced the local farmers to the holistic

planned grazing idea of "*one village, one herd*", as it is practiced by the farmers of Mpanshya village in Zambia and Hangwe village in Zimbabwe. Currently, each farmer in Mozana is individually managing his herd. Combining the herds into one village herd with permanent well-paid herders could improve management practices, resting of the rangeland commons to enhance forage availability, improvement of the quality of livestock raised and reduction of stock theft. When farmers feel empowered and supported, they are more likely to be resilient in the face of challenges and to engage in establishing farmer networks, forming farmer cooperatives, organizing field days, and promoting a sense of community among farmers that benefits the local community and the environment.

Research Question

The research was proposed by Kidlinks Small Farm Incubator (KSFI), a local nonprofit organization in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, to meet one overarching objective: To illuminate factors inhibiting the smallholder cattle farmers of Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) Ward 32 in the South Africa from prosperously farming in a manner that is aligned with their core values and cherished traditional customs. BCM Ward 32 is comprised of a total of twenty-seven villages. To understand the issues involved, we first needed to select one village. We chose Mozana village because the chairperson of the village committee invited us to conduct our research in their village. He also promised to act the facilitator of the interactions with his community.

To uncover general themes of the constraints that have led to the marginalization of local smallholder cattle farmers, in 2022, we conducted one critical dialogue with all the 27 chairpersons of the village committees in Ward 32. Using the outcomes of our deliberation with the group, we developed the following research question as the basis for our subsequent engagements with the smallholder farmers and other residents of Mozana village: *Why do local cattle farmers of Mozana feel that they are being ignored by the beef supply chain actors and aren't being supported by the institutions and infrastructure that have been centralized downstream in the supply chain?*

Where and How Was the Research Conducted?

Geography & Demography

Our research is set in Mozana, a rural village located in Ward 32 of the Buffalo City Municipality ("BCM") in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The geographical coordinates are 33° 13' 03.32" S 27° 26' 55.74" E. The village lies along the Sunshine Coast Belt, which typically enjoys approximately 300 days of sunshine each year. Historically, under the previous political system, Mozana was part of black homeland of Ciskei. Ward 32 consists of 27 coastal and inland village communities, which represent a range of cultural, ecological, and social conditions, along the east-west

continuum of the Indian Ocean, between the Keiskamma (“iXesi”) River on the south and Tsholomnqa River on the northeast.

Figure 2: Map of Mozana & Surrounding Villages

Together, these communities have a substantial natural resource base, including arable land, rangeland commons, two flowing rivers, and a plentiful supply of livestock. These natural resources should empower local communities to enhance their livelihoods by establishing a robust bottom-up regional agri-food economy. This economy could be supported by small-scale regenerative livestock farming, but good livestock management and infrastructure are lacking, gradually degrading land through overgrazing and the spread of non-native plant species. Unemployment is

very high. So, many residents rely on informal sector jobs or social grants for income (Patel, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

We endeavored to adopt a decolonial methodology based on ethical principles (Roman *et al.*, 2025). Though there is no standard model or practice for what decolonizing research methodology looks like, there are ongoing scholarly conversations about theoretical foundations, principal components, and practical applications (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). Using a decolonial lens and drawing on mixed-methods, semi-structured and acquaintance interviews and workshops, we applied a qualitative archetypes analysis to combine participants' observations into findings. Ethical protocols of voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were observed throughout the research. All participants were guaranteed anonymity, while I also reserved the right to return to specific individuals for approval to share compelling quotes and stories in future publications and media (Kohl-Arenas *et al.*, 2022). Prior to starting the research, an exemption from IRB was granted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. To protect the identities of the participants, fictitious names were assigned to all the participants who chose to offer their opinions. The participants in this study represented diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, age, education, and type of livestock farming.

Approach

Our research began with a comprehensive review of the academic and relevant literature on cattle farming and beef production by smallholder farmers of the Eastern Cape. Following a similar thought process, we considered literature on decolonial approach to research. Based on what we already knew about rural livestock farming issues in the Eastern Cape, we also considered the self-determination theory, in particular the three basic issues involving *autonomy*, *competence*, *and relatedness* which can help the local farmers think differently about their current limiting situation. Then, we identified and scripted gaps in the literature, illuminating the factors that may be potentially inhibiting the participation of smallholder cattle farmers in the South African national beef supply chain. Comprehensive sources of peer-reviewed information were very limited.

Before we commenced our deliberations with the Mozana village community, in collaboration with Kidlinks Small Farm Incubator (KSFI), we arranged a critical dialogue ("imbizo") with the chairpersons of the 27 villages within Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) Ward 32, the area where Mozana village is situated. We began the exploration by conducting a simple FIVE WHYs process to get to the root cause of what the local smallholder farmers perceived to be their exclusion from the mainstream beef supply chain. This is what we told the chairperson:

Local smallholder livestock farmers are not favoured by existing networks, institutions, and all manner of supporting infrastructure that has been concentrated in the main beef supply chain. Why do they feel excluded?

Why? *We are told that our cattle don't meet the grade.*

Why? *We are often told that we don't follow the government's biosecurity protocols.*

Why? *We don't always have the means.*

Why? *The government has stopped helping us.*

Our goal was not to end up with definitive answers to the questions asked, but rather to develop a new set of hypotheses to test. After we were reliably informed that "*The government has stopped helping us*," we visited the government Extension Officer for the ward and asked her, "Why did the government stop helping the farmers of BCM Ward 32." The Extension Officer politely told us, "*Unless what the farmers need is in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), a government budgeting tool for project funding, it will never be done.*" A few weeks later, we had a follow-up meeting with the chairpersons, during which we informed them of the outcomes of our meeting with their Extension Officer and what she told us. During that subsequent deliberation, we further asked the chairperson the following three additional fact-finding questions:

1) What aspects of livestock farming in their area were being overlooked in conversations, yet ought to be discussed?

2) What primary constraints hinder local farmers from achieving their cattle farming goals?

3) In what ways can local farmers and other relevant stakeholders collaborate to improve the quality and increase the price of their cattle?

From the responses that we received, we established that the provision of appropriate infrastructure and vaccines by the government is often overlooked in the conversations about smallholder livestock farming on the communal areas. Furthermore, we also established that the inability of the farmers to trade their cattle remains the biggest challenge hindering the veiled ambition of the farmers to participate in the business of trading weaners (six month on calves) with the feedlots. We further established that there were local farmers who were interested to engage stakeholders in the regional red meat supply chain. We used the insights from these deliberations as our basis for the empathy conversations with the twenty-six (26) livestock farmers and their community.

Subsequent to our deliberation with the 27 chairpersons and the Extension Officer of the area, we started our deliberations at Mozana village with a meeting of all available community members at the local community hall ('*imbizo*') in September

2022. The meeting was attended by 56 community members, including all 26 cattle keeping farmers in the village. The aim of the meeting was to introduce ourselves and the research project, following the invitation extended to us by the chairperson of the Mozana village committee. At the end of the meeting, we asked community members to suggest local farmers (both present and absent at the meeting) with in-depth knowledge of the livestock farming struggles facing their community.

Ultimately, we conducted individual empathy interviews with all 26 farmers and 10 other community members, whom we chose using the snowball method. As Bell (2014) wrote, “The most common type of recruitment strategy for qualitative fieldwork projects is “snowball sampling,” which we prefer to call relational recruiting. It’s more accurate. Relational recruiting leverages the social networks of your participants to reach people who you would not otherwise be in contact with. We also conducted two focus groups: one with the young farmers and the other with the women-only goat farmers.

All our empathy interviews we conducted in pairs. They lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. We sought permissions to use a voice recorder and capture videos in some instances. During the interviews, we asked the participants many “Why” questions because we are not experts on their lives and we didn’t know their lived experiences. We asked questions that encouraged the participants to tell stories. We listened carefully for inconsistencies because sometimes those

inconsistencies hid interesting insights. We tried not to lead the participants. We vigilantly watched for nonverbal cues, body language and emotions. Finally, we let silence linger to allow the participants to reflect on what they've just said and may reveal something deeper. We ended all our empathy conversations with the "*How Might We*?" questions to reframe the expressed pain points into opportunities. We shared the maps with the community to solicit feedback which was incorporated into the final maps we present and explain below.

The farming objectives of the 26 farmers in Mozana vary. The younger male and female farmers farm to make money. To understand their specific farming perspectives and challenges, we conducted a separate focus just for the group, without the older men who farm for traditional purposes.

Findings and Discussion

Drawing from the insights of our participants, we created two journey maps: one in which we highlight the identified gaps, emerging themes, and contradictions, and the other to reframe the challenges into opportunities. We explained these maps to the community to gather feedback, which was then integrated into the final versions that we discuss below. Our qualitative analysis of our empathy interviews and focus groups with livestock producers of Mozana village revealed challenges which we

distilled into various themes about the people and place, changes in the South African beef industry, changes in the local landscape including the rangeland commons.

People and Place

The village people of Mozana are not a homogenous demographic. They are men and women. Some are old and others young. Not everyone is a farmer. Some residents have jobs in town while many are unemployed. Since its establishment in the 1950s, Mozana population has always been an eclectic mix of relocated previous farmworkers, township dwellers with a rural family home in the village and people local for grazing land for their livestock. Given the diversity of genders, age, educational backgrounds, and social status, it is understandable that the local people also have very diverse interests and preferences.

In recent years, the farmers and other residents of Mozana have witnessed, in other local villages, the arrival of new urban people who are building their homesteads on the rangeland commons. Young people, looking for independence from their parents are also building shacks on the commons designated for grazing. Although this trend has not arrived at their village yet, the farmers of Mozana complained that the influx could reduce the available land for grazing. They also mentioned that the arrival of township people in the area has increased incidences

of stock theft, making owning livestock riskier. A local herder told us "*Ubusela bemfuyo buqatsele kwezimini*" (Lately, stock theft is a huge problem).

The context and rules of engagement with respect to cattle farming and beef production in South Africa have changed since a new dispensation was implemented in 1997. But the strategic assumptions, mindsets, and actions of the smallholder farmers in Mozana have not aligned with the changes. Local farmers seem to be operating within a survival trap, largely stemming from a pervasive trust-deficit of overall red meat production system. They demonstrated subtle tendencies to point fingers on the external forces for their current circumstances, and over-reliance on government assistance to farm. With respect to cattle production and trading, Mozana's smallholder farmers are trying very hard to fit into the "new era farmers" box that the red meat industry has designed for them rather than exploring new ways to achieve independence from the industry.

From the Five Whys we did during our two focus groups that we conducted with the young farmers and women goat farmers together, we deduced and understood that the root cause of *why* the Mozana farmers believed they were not supported by the institutions and infrastructure that have been centralized downstream in the beef supply chains is because the older farmers are reluctant to 'wean' themselves from their excessive dependence upon the services of agricultural extension officers to carry out the tasks that the local farmers themselves ought to

be routinely performing. For example, branding for proper animal identification and routine dipping of cattle. The women goat farmers were adamant that "if farmers want to trade, they should find ways to market their cattle; for example, to local butcheries." The young farmers noted that "the older farmers were too dependent on trading with the livestock agents." In the words of a priest from the local National Baptist Church of Southern Africa, the farmers seem to be always *"waiting for one familiar cattle speculator called, Mr. Wilson."*

Some of the responses from our empathy interviews showed a pattern of contradictions. For example, over-reliance by the local farmers on a system they profess to distrust. Some of the farmers bemoaned their categorization by the industry as subsistence farmers. ("*Kwesisithili sethu, sithathwa njengamafama asakhasayo*"). But they also confirmed that very often they "don't adhere to many of the principles employed by the white commercial livestock farmers *[Asilandeli imigaqo]* because they "lack the necessary capital, information and expertise required to comply with government and industry standards and requirements for raising cattle" *["Asinamali kwaye asinalwazi luphangaleleyo"]*. The farmers told us that they understood it to be "the duty of the government officials to provide them with such information" *["Ngumsebenzi wamagosa kaRhulumente ukusazisa"]* because the government officials "Are paid to deliver such a service" ["*Bayabhatalwa*"].

Although typologizing the farmers was not one of the objectives of this research, we noticed that smallholder farmers in Mozana seemed to fall into three categories — "*traditionalists, all-rounders and commercial traders*," based on their characteristics and descriptors. In their own words, the "traditionalists" stated that they "keep cattle for traditional purposes." The "all-rounders" raised cattle to honour traditions and to earn themselves money from selling their cattle to local buyers; and the "commercial traders" stated that they "farm strictly to make money and grow their herds to become black commercial farmers." This categorization had an influence on how farmers responded to their challenges. For example, the young "*commercial traders*" expressed their challenges from the commercial trading point of view, whereas the "*traditionalists*" aligned their responses with the protection of their customs. Participants in our research complained that government is no longer recruiting the local people to deal with soil erosion, cleaning of the stock dams and the removal alien vegetation, which has taken over both arable land and the grazing rangeland commons around the village. These challenges have increased incidences of variable forage and animals dying from preventable diseases.

Further analysis of the categories of farmers for the purpose of understanding their motivations for farming revealed certain underlying patterns. The farmers were categorized based on their ownership of livestock. The first category is a small group of farmers, mainly women, who don't own cattle but own a few goats. The second

category consists of farmers with small herds ranging from 1 to 15 cattle along with some goats. The third category comprises farmers who own herds of 16 or more cattle. Farmers with cattle are further divided into three distinct subgroups that we 'loosely' named the "*Traditionalists, All-rounders and Commercial Traders.*" These terms are our conceptual frameworks to describe the three subgroups: (1) The '*Traditionalists*' are the livestock keepers farming to preserve their culture and prestige of owning cattle, (2) The '*All-rounders*' are traders with one foot in the traditional local markets and the other in the commercial sector, and (3) The '*Commercial Traders*' have a desire to become fully commercial farmers.

CHARACTERISTICS	TRADITIONALISTS	ALL-ROUNDERS	COMMERCIAL TRADERS
Who are they?	Largely old men	**Young men and women**	Young men with another job
What's their relative position?	Standing in and looking inward	**Standing in and looking inward & outward**	Standing in and looking outward
How do they farm?	Farming for survival and prestige	**Farming necessities**	Farming for profit
Level of operation?	Subsistence farmers	**Folks who keep livestock to trade to meet obligations**	"New era" farmers aspiring to become commercial

Table 1: Grouping of the Farmers Based on their Characteristics.

When we dug deeper into the demographics of the three subgroups, we were able to further distill them into the descriptors in Table 1 above. Altogether there are 26 livestock owning farmers in Mozana village. Thirty five percent of them are

Traditionalists. Half or fifty percent (50%) of the farmers are the *All-rounders*, and the rest are the *Commercial Traders*. The *All-rounders*' subgroup included women goat farmers and all the young male farmers under the age of 35 years (considered youth under the South African law). This finding is consistent with the Hall (2013) observation that "there are increasingly large numbers of female-headed households in rural areas who find it easier to establish their own livestock herds with goats rather than cattle."

SEGMENT	SIZE (%)	KEY DESCRIPTIVE FACTORS
Traditionalists	35 (9/26)	• "*Masingalahli imbo yethu ngophoyiyana.*" [We should always resist the temptation to abandon our essence over the pursuit of money (The Chief of Mozana Village)]. • **More inclined to keep livestock for prestige and to honor cultural customs.** • **Heavily reliant on government support.**
All-rounders	50 (13/26)	• "*Thina sifuna imali. Yiyo lonto singapha nangapha*" [What I want is to make money. (A Local Young Farmer)] • **Compared to the "traditionalists," they are open to change if there are opportunities to make money.** • **Value internal and external collaboration in spite of differences in identities.**
Commercial Traders	15 (4/26)	• "*Sisemindawonye. Nathi siyanqwenela ukuba ngamafama athengisa imfuyo yawo ngamaxabiso athe xhaxhe.*" [We are standing still. We too would like to become commercial farmers and trade our livestock for higher prices. (The Chief of Mozana Village)]. • **They have a distaste for the smaller frame heritage breeds and 'nondescript' cattle.**

		• **Compared to the other two segments, these farmers don't trust the government.**

Table 2: Segmentation of the farmers by their demographic descriptors.

"*Isizathu sokuba ndifuye iinkomo kukuba ndingafuni kuthenga zinkomo xa kufuneka ndenze isiko, okanye ndibhatale ilobola yonyana wam. Xa ndingafuyanga andinalo ilungelo lokuthetha ezinkundleni xa amadoda anenkomo ethe nqwadalala.*" [I keep cattle for no other reason than to worship my ancestors, pay dowry for my son and most importantly earn my rightful place among other men when there is a traditional function. As they say here, a man without cattle has no right to stand and talk over those who keep cattle]. This is how one of the *Traditionalists* summed up his involvement with cattle farming in the village.

During our first community hall meeting in September 2022, we asked the Mozana community to help me identify farmers to participate in this research. We were almost unanimously pointed to the oldest person in Mozana because he knew the complete history of the village. During our engagement with the old farmer, he mentioned that in the 1950's Mozana did not exist. He pointed out that where the village now stands was a commercial pineapple farm. During the early 1960's when the apartheid government undertook the 'rationalization programme' to create the former homeland of Ciskei, the farm was acquired for the sole purpose of creating

the village. A community trust was created. It was during that time that additional families were brought into the land to increase the size of the village.

The old farmer suggested that it is the next generation of those former '*township dwellers*' who came along with the currently strong culture of raising cattle for moneymaking in Mozana. Unlike the former farm workers, some of their children and the *Traditionalists*, this younger generation of village people have no interest in cattle farming to venerate ancestors and to honor other traditional customs. "*Bafuyela imali qwaba*!" [They keep livestock solely to make money. That's it].

When I spoke to both the *All-rounders* and the *Commercial Traders*, in their own words, the farmers falling into these two groups told me, "*Umdla wethu usekufameni iinkomo neebhokhwe, sizenzele imali yokukhulisa sifundise abantwana bethu.*" [Our only motivation for raising livestock (cattle and goats) is to make money to raise and educate our children. (Local Female Goat Farmer)]. This sentiment was also expressed by the young farmers in the group. One of them told me, "*Amathuba engqesho anqabile. Yiyo lonto sefuye iinkomo. Ukwenza imali.*" [Employment opportunities are scarce. That's why I raise cattle to make money]. "*I farm here in complete frustration*," a young farmer with aspirations of becoming a commercial farmer, told us. Expressing a view that received a round of applause from his peer, the young farmer who works as a security guard in the City of Gqeberha, while a MoSotho herder looks after his herd said:

"When I couldn't secure any government support to acquire a breeding bull for my herd, I went ahead and exhausted my savings and bought a good Limousin bull, which occasionally I share with other farmers in our village. I spent the money because I don't only want to farm commercially, but also (one day) to witness beef from my own herd qualifies for export to other countries. But most of the other here aren't interested in farming differently from the farming practices of their forefathers. They are dragging us down with them."

This is how another young farmer, who also struggled to hide his frustration explained his current situation:

"I have good cattle genetics. I own a Braford bull. I pride myself of taking good care of my animals. I provide all the things that white commercial farmers provide for their cattle. Clean water. Veterinary services. Winter feed. But, sharing "idlelo" (veld) with other people is damn frustrating. Because other people cattle graze in one location for a long time, all our cattle are exposed to the same disease carrying external and internal parasites. Also, the government no longer provides a service of managing livestock dams. So, sometimes the neighbors cattle drink the clean water for my cattle. I feel like I am pouring all my money and effort down the drain. This 'take it or leave it' attitude of the farming business is costly, unfair and very disrespectful. And it's just not right."

Our research also revealed that it is mostly the younger farmers in the Commercial Traders subgroup who feel ignored and abandoned. They feel aggrieved because they see what one female goat farmer described as "*the better level of service that commercial farmers are receiving to manage, grow and sell their cattle.*" They have no knowledge of the reasons behind the distinct separation between commercial and smallholder farmers. All that they are witnessing and experiencing are solely the negative consequences of the separation. In the South African context, white farmers irrespective of the size of their operation are always considered to be "commercial farmers." Black farmers on the other hand are referred to in various ways: "subsistence", "emerging" and now "new era" farmers, according to the Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) and the Red Meat Strategy 2030 document.

Strategic Assumptions & Actions

In the South African red meat industry, the context changed completely in 1997. Our research found that smallholder farmers of Mozana still don't understand what happened. When we asked the ambitious *Commercial Traders* to explain the basic rules of engagement, as articulated in the South African Animal Identification Act No. 6 of 2002 and the South African South African Animals Protection Act No. 71 of 1962 for livestock sellers and buyers in South Africa, they did not know the rules. This pointed to a serious information and knowledge gap. One young farmer blamed the government's extension officials for hoarding the information. "*Amagosa ezolimi*

aseburhulumenteni ayasifihlela thina ezizinto." [Our government's extension officials hide this information from us], he confidently told us. As it turned out, though, despite his openly expressed ambition to become a commercial farmer supplying feeder cattle to the industry, he could have done more to understand the basic requirements. This information is available from the offices of the Department of Agriculture and the area Extension Officer. Another young smallholder farmer told us, "I often hear on the television that white commercial farmers are selling live cattle and beef abroad. But they fail to include us on these government contracts." [*Simane ukuva apha ezindabeni ukuba urhulumente wethu uncedisa amafama amhlophe ukuba athengise iinkomo nenyama emazweni aphesheya. Kodwa abezi apha kuthi*]. But he too did not know about the costly animal health requirements for export markets. Even more striking, was the fact that he did not keep and current records of his animals including their vaccination schedules.

These shortcomings point to the infrastructure deficiencies and inadequate support services that have been highlighted in the academic literature (for example, Van Zyl and Binswanger (1996); Hall and Cousin (2013)) as the biggest impediment to market access for smallholder farmers across South Africa. But for me, it also highlights fundamental status quo issues of the farmers' obsession with the production of more cattle to grow their individual herds without paying more attention to the sources of water and forage to feed the cattle. The manner in which

the farmers talked about their current situation was more focused on the things they don't have instead of the ones they already have in place. This represents a limiting mindset and a scarcity mentality that has hindered the farmers' ability to explore alternative strategies for creating abundance. Also, the local farmers who farm livestock trading purposes are obsessed with market-oriented cattle farming and meat production. In the process they are missing out on the low hanging fruit of producing meat with a story as food locals. Concerns with issues beyond the farmers' loci of control are blinding them to better local opportunities, as a result of the changing context and rules of engagement with respect to cattle farming and red meat production in South Africa. The farmers who farm to trade incorrectly assume that keeping cattle is the same thing as running a cattle farming business.

Status Quo	Desirable State of Affairs
Production focus (cattle numbers)	*Production focus (skills development)*
Limiting mindset / scarcity mentality	*Abundance mentality*
Obsession with market orientation	*Obsession with community focus*
Meat as commodity	*Meat as food with a story*

Table 3: Status Quo versus Desirable State of Affairs

The Survival Trap

The research revealed that all Mozana's smallholder farmers are in a survival trap of one kind or another. This is largely due to a pervasive lack of trust in the South

African red meat industry, the tendency to blame others for their circumstances, and an excessive dependence on government assistance. The survival trap begins with a great opportunity, hiding in plain sight, but never gets pursued because of endless challenges which fosters a culture of "finger pointing." This in turn cultivates a trust deficit in the system. Rather than trying something different, the affected farmers resort to trying the same thing, only harder. The farmers get stuck in a survival trap, and the cycle of poverty continues.

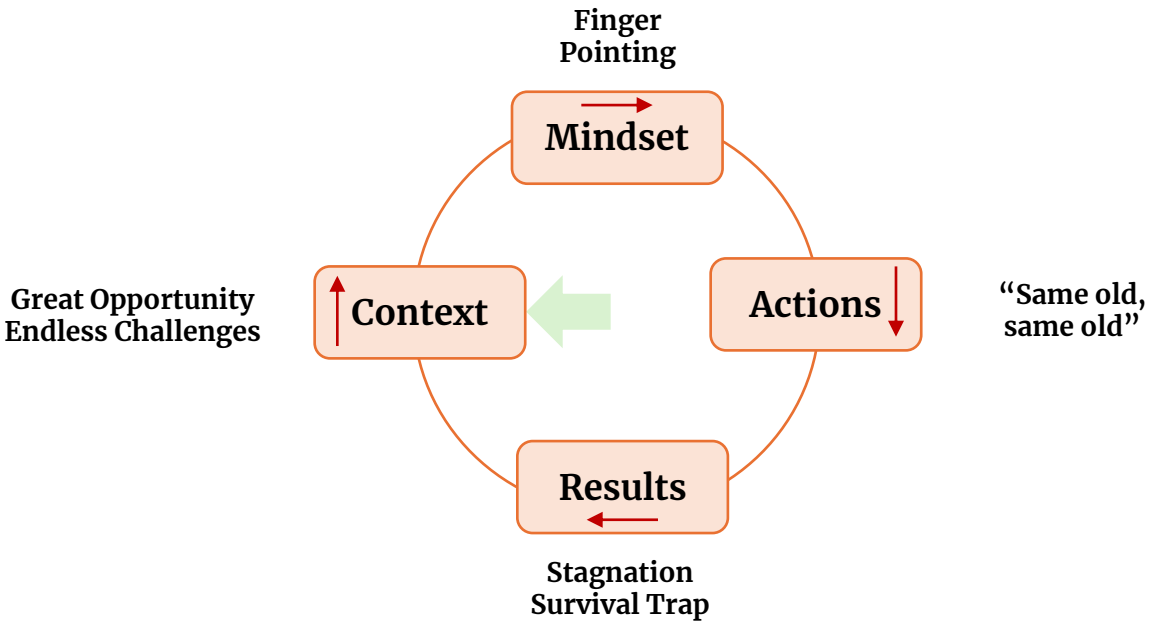

Figure 3: The Survival Trap that is Keeping Mozana Farmers Poor

The great opportunity, as it was clearly articulated to us by the goat farming women during our focus group is to produce castrated steers ("oxen") for fattening on grass and sell them locally to the butcheries and local families for traditional

ceremonies. The women estimated that every year, in each of the 27 villages in Ward 32, there is a demand of 5 steers and 10 goats for traditional functions such as the passage to manhood for boys and ancestral veneration. The women decried this missed opportunity because they are still not allowed to raise cattle,

From our critical dialogues with almost all the male farmers, we consistently observed limiting mental models ("*iingqondo*") that have caused them to lag far behind their commercial counterparts. For example, the male farmers waited for the government extension officer to dip and vaccinate their cattle. The women goat farmers, on the other hand, worked together to buy vaccines for their goats. They recruited and paid the herders to assist with administering the vaccines. A mental model is a mental map of how the world works (Fairbanks, 2000). As Fairbanks further noted, "It consists of beliefs, inferences and goals that are first person, concrete and specific." In the context of Mozana, understanding 'mental models' of the farmers can help them transcend their current beliefs and begin to focus attention on the resources already at their disposal, and to embrace collaboration across multiple divides as one way to establish a mutually beneficial bridging social capital network. Social capital refers to "the connections among individuals' social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." (Putman, 2000, p. 19). Mozana is blessed with at least 265 days of sunlight every, an average of 560 mm of annual precipitation, 140 hectares of arable land, in excess of 200 hectares of

rangelands commons (with bush encroachment), a herd of 562 head of cattle and 601 goats, a dipping tank, tow stock water dams, and three kilometres of river frontage. These are all the underutilized resources under the control of the village people.

Convenience Without Commitment

During our first engagement with the current chairperson of the Mozana Village Committee, when I asked him to introduce himself as if someone else did it for him, this was part of his response,

"*Ndingowalapha. Ndazalelwa apha. Ndakhulela apha. Ndizakufela apha. Mna andinguye umntu othanda ukulahla* ***imbo*** *yam ngophoyiyana. Ebutsheni bam, zininzi izinto ezazisebenza kakuhle kulelali (iikampi zamadlelo, ukutya kwemfuyo ebusika, ukususwa kwengxondorha, nokususwa kwezinto ezifana noNwele). Kodwa ngoku azisasebenzi ngoba sakhetha ukulahla imbo yethu ngoophoyiyana*"

[I am of this place. I was born here. I grew up here. I will die here. I am not the kind of person who likes to lose his essence over nothing. During my youth, we kept our grazing camps free of alien vegetation species; we reserved fodder banks for winter grazing, and we managed erosion on our landscapes. But nowadays, we threw all this away in the name of the 'fads of freedom'].

For noting, “Imbo” was a highly valued red stone full of iron ore, that was used by amaMfengu people (A Xhosa clan) to coat their faces, as a form of protection against the effects of sunlight. But after the arrival of Europeans, amaMfengu — a group of amaXhosa clans whose ancestors were refugees that fled from the Mfecane (tribal war) in the early-mid 19th century to seek land and protection from the amaXhosa people — almost abandoned their tradition in favour of unnatural manufactured fads. For example, the “calamine lotion,” which is white and liquid instead of the traditional red and solid stone.

Almost all the participating farmers in our research lamented the deteriorating state of their local common pool resources (livestock dips, paddocks fences, stock dams, croplands etc.) and the missing governance structures of the previous years. Yet, throughout those deliberations, not once did we hear any farmer or village person offer his time and effort to restore these facilities and to re-establish the missing governance structure. Over the course of three years that we spent engaging with and listening to local stakeholders, we repeatedly heard how the lack of extension services to supply the farmers with up-to-date information, significantly hindered their ability to make informed decisions and act swiftly to protect their livestock against diseases.

The local farmers yearned for a return to the time when extension officers were stationed in their villages. But notably, the better educated but also frustrated

young farmers were not seizing the opportunity to establish a stronger relationship with the Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR) to facilitate better access to information from the provincial office. At that point in our research, this anecdotal evidence suggested that local farmers were looking for convenience without any commitment of their own resources to accomplish their farming goals. But during the course of our further interactions, something moved the needle forward towards a commitment to self-reliance.

To demonstrate to the farmers that the information they needed was available, we connected them with the RMIS which is the custodian of the information on behalf of the red meat industry. After we used our own resources to demonstrate to the farmers how to prevent internal parasites and incidences of liver fluke in their herds, we noticed that the farmers were able to mobilize resources to complete the necessary exercise of dosing their animals for the second round in a year. This is what we mean by "something moved the needle."

On Autonomy

One important insight that emerged from our deliberations is the importance for farmers to have the autonomy of trading their cattle at the appropriate time, rather than being dictated by the market. Across the Eastern Cape livestock agents buy cattle from smallholder farmers during the month of May, just before the onset of

Winter. This is the time when the live weights are low, and the prices are also low. The appropriate time for the farmers to sell their cattle is in January when the money is needed for school fees and other household needs. Malusi *et al*., (2021) suggested a similar timing and importance.

During one insightful conversation [‘*incoko*]’ with a moSotho goat herder I met on the outskirts of Mozana one morning, he put the challenge facing the local livestock farmers more succinctly with this old African adage. He said, “*Setlhare saMosotho ke lekgoa*”, meaning, “THE BLACK MAN’S MEDICINE is the white man.” His boss, a young woman who farms with goats (“*for now*”) expressed similar sentiments when she later told me,

“*Emva phaya, ngokuya lelali yethu yayisakuba yinxalenye yefama yakwaDowu, yonke into sasiyixelelwa ngumlungu, kwaye siyikholelwe. Nangoku sesikhululekile, nomlungu engasekho, sisalinda ukuxelelwa emasikwenze*,” [Long time ago, when our village still formed part of Dowu Farm across the valley, we relied on the white farmer’s directives prior to taking any action. Despite our freedom, we continue to await guidance.]

When distilled to their essence, these two remarks talk to the issue of ‘autonomy’ or the lack thereof. All human beings are capable of 'the ability to start entirely new processes that could not have been predicted from what came before’

(Schutz, 2001, p. 98). As a collective, and through collective action, Mozana farmers possess within them the resources to establish community structures to govern their CPRs and to establish a centrally managed communal herd that will forever transform their lives by creating community-based economic opportunity, environmental wellbeing, social equity, shared prosperity and resilience.

In order to illustrate to the Mozana farmers the feasibility of a centrally managed communal herd, we presented at the community hall, two videos to the farmers showcasing the Mpanshya and Hangwe village communities in rural Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively. As Donella Meadows (1999) contends, "The most effective point to intervene in a system is the mindset or paradigm out of which the system—its goals, power structure, rules, its culture—arises." We argue that even with a minor shift in their mindsets the local farmers can achieve autonomy by moving away from dependencies on outsiders. Even without mainstream market access, some local farmers are already selling their cattle locally for much better prices.

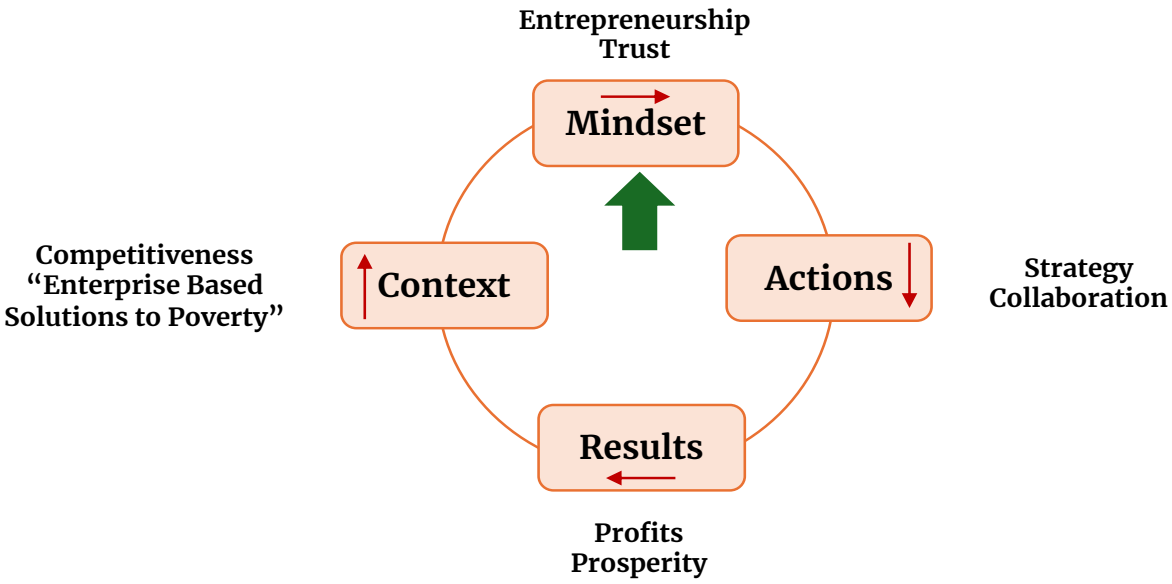

Figure 4: The Potential Path to Prosperity for Mozana Farmers

In many villages of the Eastern Cape, including Mozana, livestock herding is no longer the duty of local young men. Nowadays, these functions are performed by the young Basotho men from Lesotho because they are perceived to be reliable, trustworthy and come at a cheaper price. Without the skills to manage their own herds using their own people, the local farmers will continue to struggle to achieve their much-deserved autonomy.

On Competence

On a rainy day in September 2023, we had a conversation with a priest at the National Baptist Church of Southern Africa (NBCSA). Sharing a beautiful story of his father who was a successful farmer in the former Transkei homeland, the priest said

something profound about competence. He said, "*Farming is not on the land. It is in the man. No man can do something until he has first comprehended it.*" One year later, a former female school principal whose son, a cattle farmer we had previously interviewed, told us:

> *"I love ox liver. It's my favorite piece of meat. I attend local functions just for it. Lately though, I have noticed that livers from our cattle can no longer be consumed. They have nasty looking abscesses. There is no one here who knows how to deal with the problem."*

Believing that we knew what the real issue was (liver fluke and internal parasites) and how to address it, in May and again in August 2024, we rounded off all the cattle in Mozana (495 units) and dosed them with Flukazole C for liver fluke. We also injected them with Decasure for other internal parasites. During the slaughter season in December 2024, the former school principal was the first to call and congratulate us for successfully addressing the issue. Hearing the lady say that made us realize the importance of imparting knowledge and skills to strengthen the competence levels of the local farmers to deal with other similar animal health problems.

When we asked the young farmer who works as a security guard in the City of Gqeberha about how to build the competence of local farmers, this was his suggestion:

"*Many of us here have been farmworkers before. Cattle farming is something we love to do. Making money doing it, just like all the white commercial farmers around here, is something that we aspire to do to support our families. But it would be naïve to think that we can do it alone. To farm commercially, we need capital for infrastructure, technical support, and access to markets. But we aren't optimistic that government can provide support. So, we need private people who are professional experts to assist us to become organized and prepared because as we say around here, 'Inyathi ibuzwa kwabangaphambili'* ["For the beginners, it's wise to seek enlightenment and guidance from those who possess the knowledge and wisdom]."

Too quote one enlightened young lady who reminded us, during our engagement with the local chief that former Thabo Mbeki once quipped:

Ubododa abukhulelwa: ubudoda ngamava (Mere age does not amount to manhood: to be a man is to be wise)! *Abo banamava bathetha bathi, notywala besiNtu buyalindwa* (The wise say that even brewing traditional beer takes time)!"

~ President Thabo Mbeki

On Relatedness

Except for the *Traditionalists*, all the others indicated that they valued the importance of breaking down the barriers and build relationships across the 'multiple identity divides.'

Here is how one local farmer put it:

"*Ngoba isitha abantu abafuna uncedo, kumele ibesithi abema ngenyawo bekhangelana nabantu abangasinceda.*" [Since we are the ones looking for assistance, it should be us who take the initiative to identify the people who can provide the assistance that we require].

In the end, it was heartwarming to realize that even the staunch *Traditionalists* among the smallholder farmers of Mozana, showed willingness to reconsider their stance after our eradication of the liver fluke, something which one lady called "Ummangaliso" [Magic].

Conclusions

Observations and insights from our research were many, varied, and sometimes complex. But we carefully distilled them to the following four clear messages. Firstly, it is abundantly clear that Mozana has the natural resources (land, livestock, water, sunshine and rangeland commons) and some common property resources (dips,

cattle races, stock dams) to benefit from cattle and meat production. The rangeland commons mentioned here are separate from the degraded “veld” that we mentioned earlier. The degraded rangelands are located in the areas immediately around the village. They are overgrazed because of continuous selective grazing of the climax grasses and palatable shrubs without the herders to move the cattle. Mozana also has rangelands that are distant from the village. Those rangeland commons have lots of forage that the farmers don’t often use, unless their cattle stray there on their own. But very little is being done to enhance these resources.

There is too much over-reliance on external good and basic natural factors of comparative advantages (sunshine, rainfall, landscape, etc.) to capture unique sources of competitive advantages. For example, production of heritage breeds for meat with a strong focus on high animal welfare practices and exploitation of climate change as key drivers. As the women goat farmers clearly articulated these heritage breeds and even the so-called “nondescript” cattle have a strong local market: slaughter cattle for the local butcheries and traditional functions. This market is also aligned with high animal welfare practices including access to good nutrition, clean water, veterinary care, and protection from pain, fear, and distress. The only concern for us is how some animals slaughtered during traditional ceremonies are still not stunned. Although this is being addressed, awareness creation and progress are both very slow.

Secondly, the livestock farming terrain in Mozana is also complex with many actors (different types of farmers, residents, the traditional authority, and government officials). It is most likely that any proposal that is not all-encompassing of these actors will not succeed for long. The research highlighted the submerged identities of the Mozana village livestock farmers. We conclusively found that the local farmers are not a homogenous demographic. Although they share the same landscape, they have different identities informed by their respective social and economic status. It is clear from this finding that the participants in our research are correct in their observation that "the current one size fits all approach of servicing their respective needs is not enough."

Thirdly, our research revealed that the context and rules of engagement with respect to cattle farming and beef production in South Africa are changing. But the strategic assumptions, mind-sets and actions of the farmers in Mozana have remained stagnant. For example, South Africa is currently experiencing waves upon waves of Foot and Mouth Disease outbreaks. This is prompting the industry to urge the national Department of Agriculture to take drastic steps to compartmentalize the country by the locations where the cattle are farmed. In an environment characterized by pervasive and historic trust-deficit, subtle tendencies towards blaming others for their circumstances, and an excessive dependence on government assistance, it is the smallholder farmers who will most likely be "fenced-

in" within the survival trap of the proposed "red zones." Being fenced-in would mean that the farmers cannot transport their cattle outside of the ge0-fenced area without a permit and biosecurity clearances for their cattle.

Some of the farmers in Mozana feel sidelined, frustrated and disillusioned by the current situation in the cattle farming and beef production industry in South Africa. However, we noted in our research that despite their frustrations, some of the farmers have veiled ambitions to participate in mainstream cattle and beef supply chains. However, full participation is subject to full commitment rather than partial convenience.

Future Research Opportunity

As part of this research, we showed the Mozana farmers how a combined multispecies communal herd and rotationally grazing with herders were practiced in Hangwe village in Zimbabwe and Mpanshya community in Zambia. We showed the farmers how the practice improved forage availability, the condition of the animals, and the landscape. We observed a great sense of enthusiasm and the farmers expressed willingness to try, bearing in mind that in Mozana trust deficit and stock theft are potential risks that should be addressed. Based on our deliberations with the farmers regarding possibilities, in Chapter 5, we share some ideas that emerged

from our deliberations including the establishment of the Mozana Forage and Grazing Association and beginning of the process to develop a grazing plan.

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Chapter 4: Sidelined, Frustrated and Disillusioned: "Commercial Traders" of Mozana Searching for Common Ground

Mpumelelo Ncwadi[a], Richard L. Cates[b], Sarah J.J. Adcock[c], Charles F. Nicholson[d], Michael M. Bell[a,e], and Randall D. Jackson[a,f]

[a]Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies; [b]Department of Soil & Environmental Sciences; [c]Department of Animal & Dairy Sciences; [d]Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics; [e]Department of Community & Environmental Sociology; [f]Department of Plant & Agroecosystem Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, USA

Abstract

Mozana smallholder cattle farmers in South Africa are not a homogeneous demographic. While some have remained "*traditionalists*," others have chosen to be "*commercial traders*," with a veiled aspiration to become active suppliers of weaners to the commercial cattle feeding industry. For the latter, the road to their future in farming runs through the current beef supply chain. However, they feel marginalized by the industry and all the supporting institutions and infrastructure that are integral to it. Here, we investigated possible supply chain modifications to bridge the existing gaps between these aspiring "*commercial traders*" and the supply chain stakeholders. Our findings revealed three key considerations. First, as cow-calf operators, suppliers of weaners and old cows, smallholder farmers of Mozana are lagging behind the red meat norms and standards on the basic animal identification and biosecurity requirements for participating in the supply chain. Second, industry stakeholders seem somewhat willing to support the farmers as they improve some of their practices, but only if the industry can extract maximum value for their support.

Third, Mozana farmers face the existential threat of being "fence-in", by the prevalence of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), which would effectively assure the status quo remains. Local cattle would continue to be bought at the lowest negotiated prices within geographical areas believed to be harboring the disease. These findings suggest that if the "*commercial traders*," are committed to fulfilling their ambition, they should aspire for self-reliance. They should also give consideration to the issues highlighted by industry stakeholders, namely, improved: record keeping, animal health and animal welfare. But the mainstream beef supply chain is not the only option open to Mozana's smallholder livestock farmers. South African meat trading rules allow direct marketing of boxed meat, if the final products meet the health and safety standards. These findings help us generalize about the importance of biosecurity as a tool for cattle trading in South Africa. The findings also highlight the need for a common definition of 'an inclusive beef economy' to promote a shared meaning.

Introduction

Since South Africa's first ancestors of European origin landed on the Cape of Good Hope, their interface, interactions and relationships with indigenous Africans have been characterized by an overwhelmingly attitude of conquest, grabbing of resources through violent means, and racialized privilege — a type of status in which white racial identity provided the basis for private ownership of land, and by certain

inescapable economic logic and submerged political language, the people who worked the land (Harris, 1993). According to the Drakensberger Cattle Society Handbook (2017), “as far back as 2 December 1497, Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese explorer who was the first European to reach India via the Cape of Good Hope, mentioned the ‘*fat black ox*’ that he obtained in a trade with the Khoi-Khoi people. The handbook also states, “When Jan Van Riebeeck, the Dutch navigator who became the first commander of the Dutch fort at the Cape of Good Hope, first encountered the Khoi-Khoi ancestors, in search of cattle for the Dutch East India Company's (VOC) refreshment station in the Cape, he was peacefully traded the black Khoi-Khoi cattle (Peires, 1976 quoting Boeseken, 1966). Today, the Khoi-Khoi cattle are called the Drakensbergers, whose origins, according to the Drakensberger Cattle Society Handbook (2017), “can be related back to the indigenous cattle of the Khoi-Khoi people and other indigenous groups of the Cape and adjacent areas.” The modern-day Afrikaner cattle (formerly known as Africander), were also developed from the native Khoi-Khoi cattle of the Cape of Good Hope (Cattle Site, 2022). In 1812, when “amaNdlambe and amaGqunukhwebe were expelled from the Zuurveld by British Governor Cradock in the now Eastern Cape province of South Africa, their homes, crops and grazing areas were deliberately and destroyed” (Peires, 1976). As Peires (1976) further elaborated, “the very concept of such an expulsion was alien to amaNdlambe and amaGqunukhwebe,” because for centuries this had been their livestock grazing landscape. Since being violently removed from Zuurveld, the

remnants of Chief Gqunukhwebe's people now live and farm their livestock within the confines of Mozana village and the surrounding landscape; a tiny fraction of the vast expanse their forefathers once occupied.

In his explanation of what the colonizing European forces missed comprehending during that historical forced removal, Derricourt (1974) wrote,

> *"To the colonizing European forces, who occasionally expressed the opinion that amaXhosa had all the land they required, amaXhosa's land usage may have appeared very wasteful. This derives not only from cultural prejudice, but also from the different manner in which Europeans and amaXhosa understood land tenure, and in particular their differing attitudes towards water and land. The European concept of tenure was one of a clearly defined piece of land with a farmhouse in the middle ("an enclosure") and the use of whatever water happened to be running through that piece of land. AmaXhosa, on the other hand, focused on the river, the hinterland of which was seen as its obvious appendage. The whole belonged to the community jointly. The difference in settlement pattern reflected the relative density of amaXhosa population, compared with the European."*

According to Galbraith (1963), "The economic rationality of amaXhosa could be seen in their pasture management. They had been described as semi-nomadic,

but this is incorrect." AmaXhosa did migrate for political reasons, and their demand for land increased with every generation, but their use of pasturage was that of a settled community. The sourveld provided excellent grazing in summer but lost most of its nutritional value after about four months so that an exclusive diet of it caused botulism and stiff sickness in cattle. (Handbook for Farmers in South Africa, 1957). Meanwhile, sweetveld retained most of its nutritional value throughout the year, but an excess of it was believed at the time to give rise to a lung disease. Moreover, whereas sourveld is extremely tough, sweetveld is delicate and can easily be destroyed by overgrazing (Handbook for Farmers in South Africa, 1957). Consequently, the best combination is to graze cattle on the sourveld in the summer, while resting the sweetveld, and to graze them on the sweetveld in winter when the nutritional value of the sourveld is at its lowest. Alternatively, it is possible to burn sourveld to make it sweet, a practice which causes minimal damage to the soil if not overdone. "AmaXhosa adopted both practices. Transhumance (seasonal rotation of livestock) knew no boundaries" (Collins, 1844; Backhouse, 1844). The capacity to follow this traditional practice was completely lost through the forced removal of 1812 that give birth to the current "environmental apartheid that is instituted through

rural marginalization[11]" in rural places like Mozana village. Environmental apartheid "refers to the use of the rural environment to deliberately marginalize racially defined groups, as well as the subsequent consequences of that marginalization" (Stull *et al.*, 2016).

In December 1818, Colonel Brereton started the Fifth Frontier War by attacking Chief Ndlambe unprovoked (Peires, 1976). At the end of that war, Chief Ndlambe did not only lose the war, but he also lost 23,000 cattle which Brereton and his warmongers took. Future generations of Chief Ndlambe lost potential intergenerational wealth from land, water, and livestock. In 1820, 4,500 British Settlers arrived in 21 ships in Algoa Bay (now Gqeberha). They were swiftly moved to Zuurveld where amaXhosa were violently expelled, eight years earlier. Now living across the Fish River, without any cattle, many of those black household farmers, were returned to work for the settlers as cheap labor. Others were forced to go and work in the mines because as the Chairman of the Association of Mines named George Albu[12] said when he appeared before the Industrial Commission of Enquiry in 1897, "*The Kaffir should not be allowed to hold land in the country. Instead, he must*

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[11] *The term "environmental apartheid" idea comes from 'Environmental apartheid: Eco-health and rural marginalization in South Africa paper by Dr. Valerie Stull, which I had the privilege of being a co-author alongside Professor Michael M. Bell.*

[12] *Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines, Industrial Commission of Enquiry, 1897 p. 22 (As quoted by Charles F. Feinstein, An Economic History of South Africa: Conquest, Discrimination and Development).*

work for the white man, to enrich him. That will be his part of the work of helping his neighbours." He was responding to this question from the Commission: "*Suppose the kaffirs retire back to their kraals, would you be in favour of asking the government to enforce labour?*"

The story of the Khoi-Khoi people, Chiefs Ndlambe and Gqunukhwebe were far from being unique. Towards the end of 1947 the then Secretary for Agriculture in South Africa appointed a committee, chaired by Prof. F.N. Bonsma of the Agricultural Research Institute "to make a survey of the nature and numbers of indigenous stock in the country and to report upon the desirability and means of preserving the stock". In the end, the committee suggested that "Nguni cattle constituted the most promising material with which to build up the native cattle industry of Zululand, Swaziland and certain adjourning territories" (Nguni Cattle Report, 1950). Owing to this suggestion, the committee recommended that "a pure-bred herd of not less than 500 Nguni breeding stock be established with a view to investigating the potentialities of the breed with regard to growth, production and reproduction and reproduction and to serve as the nucleus of Nguni stud cattle." Furthermore, the committee pointed out that "the ultimate value of the Nguni breed to the cattle industry in the native reserves, will in the last analysis depend upon the ability of the native himself to exploit fully, the productive and reproductive potentialities of the breed. This he will be able to do, only if he can be taught sound husbandry, and the

necessity of proper pasture and animal management. The committee therefore wishes to stress the urgency of such teaching" (Nguni Cattle Report, 1950). Yet, in what can only be expressed as a shocking turn of events, on November 1, 1986, the results of that indigenous resource extraction, 37 years earlier delivered a 'strictly white' Nguni Cattle Breeders' Society.

According to the SA Studbook, "Since Robert Bakewell's pioneering work in the breeding and improvement of purebred livestock in the late 18th century, British purebred livestock breeds gained global popularity. Due to colonization, the practice of stud breeding was established in countries like the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The British occupation of the Cape Colony in 1806 marked the introduction of several British livestock breeds to South Africa. Additionally, Friesian cattle were imported from Holland, and by 1850, a few herds of purebred Friesian cattle were established in South Africa. Livestock farmers increasingly recognized the value of stud animals. By the late 19th century, sheep and cattle breeders had realized that traits of economic importance are heritable, and this understanding played a significant role in improving their livestock through genetic selection. They also recognized that such knowledge could only be effectively utilized if credible pedigree records were maintained. This logic follows the observation of Bakewell, namely that "like begets like", or related animals share common genes. Using pedigree records significantly contributed to livestock

improvement efforts by guaranteeing breeding animals' lineage and superior breeding. This realization led directly to the formal recording of stud animals and the establishment of breeders' societies. In 1903, the South African Agricultural Union supported the establishment of a General Stud Book for South Africa. This important step was needed to meet the need for structured recording of the purebred animals of various breeds present in the country at the time."

One of the recommendations of the 1950 Nguni Cattle Report was the establishment of a Nguni Cattle Breeders Society so that the farmers could benefit from trading of purebred animals. But the registration rules forbid the participation of black farmers in the society, as with any other cattle breeders' society in South Africa for that matter. This is how, in 1986, the ownership of purebred Nguni was formally transferred to white farmers.

Without knowing all of this, because we never provided them with the history of how the Nguni Cattle Breeders Society was established, these are the sordid historic dynamics in which the young "*commercial traders*" from Mozana walked into when they met with the supply chain stakeholders in the conference room at the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce (NAFCOC) regional office in East London, early 2024.

The South African Beef Industry: Then and Now

Beef is an important part of the South African diet. It contributes to food security of the country (BFAP, 2021). In the overall agricultural sector, cattle farming and beef production are the highest contributors to the country GDP (BFAP, 2023). The industry currently rates as the highest in employment creation (Sihlobo, 2023). In 1997, South Africa completed what was considered a groundbreaking process to '*deregulate*' and '*liberalize*' trade in the red meat sector. According to Groenewald and Jooste (2012), the Marketing Act, enforced by the Meat Board, imposed significant legislative constraints on the production and trade of cattle and beef in South Africa. As Groenewald and Jooste (2012) further explain, "Most of these restrictions limited the producer's operation on a free enterprise basis, constrained the economic ability of traders, and limited the consumer's choice to what is supplied rather than to what is demand linked."

To prevent cattle and meat prices from falling below the established thresholds, the Meat Board categorized South Africa into two distinct areas: the primary urban regions were identified as controlled areas with respect the located of slaughterhouses and centralized meat trading, while the rural regions were designated as non-controlled (Groenewald and Jooste, 2012). Most of the meat consumption took place in the controlled areas, while most of the animal production was concentrated in non-controlled areas, which included all extensive livestock

farming areas (Elliot *et al.*, 1987). Practically, all red meat marketed and sold within the controlled areas was required to be slaughtered within those same controlled areas. Transportation of carcasses or meat cuts from the cattle production areas was strictly prohibited. A major state-owned parastatal company, known as Abacor, was given an almost total monopoly on urban livestock slaughtering and the delivery of carcasses to markets (Carlisle, 1970). In South Africa a "parastatal company" is a company or organization which is owned by the government and often has some political power. Due to the legacy of the Marketing Act, smallholder farmers in places like Mozana village continue to suffer the consequences of predatory discrimination on the mainstream red meat markets. Currently, their only possible access to metropolitan markets is through the '*monopsonistic*'[13] speculators and butcheries that buy the animals at the local auctions (Jooste & Van Rooyen, 1996; Jooste and Alemu, 2004; Bailey et al., 1999).

The dearth of livestock and meat marketing opportunities and institutions in traditional areas such as the erstwhile South African 'homelands' has certainly contributed to meager marketing responses in such areas. Jooste & Van Rooyen (1996) suggest that market access plays a pivotal role in the transition of the small-

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[13] *"Monopsonistic" describes or relates to a* ***monopsonistic market****, which is a market with a single or dominant buyer, such as a sole employer in a town. In a monopsonistic market, this dominant buyer has the power to influence prices, like wages, because sellers have few or no other alternatives for their product or service.*

scale sector towards commercial production. Increasing market price variability, as well as a lack of infrastructure to support asset and income diversification, were identified as major causes of limited market participation. (Jooste & Alemu, 2004; Bailey et al., 1999). Research on alternative financing, production, marketing, and route to market strategies is very limited (Uys 2017, RMIS 2022).

Currently, the production of red meat in South Africa occurs mainly through the feedlotting system, which produces between 70% and 80% of the total beef in South Africa (Scholtz & Jordaan, 2025). However, “few of the animals fed in large commercial feedlots are bred by the feedlots themselves. The feedlots are therefore mainly dependent on beef cattle farmers who supply weaner calves” (Ford, 2016; Scholtz & Jordaan, 2025). Owing to the way the South Africa red meat supply chain is structured, smallholder livestock farmers often complain that they are not favored by the current institutions, networks, and supporting infrastructure embedded within the South African feedlot system and the downstream beef supply chain. Consequently, they often feel marginalized by the national commodity beef economy, that is predominantly concentrated around the feedlots. This sentiment has been echoed by Spies (2021) who wrote, “Commercial feedlots are usually integrated with the downstream segments of the value chain in the form of abattoirs, deboning facilities, packing and the retail sector.”

In the context of this research, and the South African beef industry, the term 'smallholder farmer' refers to "a group of households and individuals with several limiting factors that undermine their ability to embark on profitable interventions in the agricultural sector" (Van Averbeke *et al.* 2011). This research is our attempt to understand, through a facilitated dialogue, if any modifications to the current supply chain could be made to integrate the "*commercial traders*" of Mozana into what we perceive to be a still transitioning south African beef industry.

A *Transitioning Industry Explained*

The mid-90's process to deregulate and liberalize the South African red meat industry and the lofty promise of a '*trickle-down effect*' from the current Black Economic Empowerment in Agriculture (AgriBEE) legislation, to benefit poor farmers, created a façade of normalcy. In the academic literature and other pertinent sources of information, the epic failures of market deregulation and trade liberalization process and the AgriBEE are well documented. Hall & Cousins (2013) wrote about the persistent struggles of smallholder livestock farmers with farming on rangeland commons without infrastructure and proper management of common pool resources. By common pool resources, we mean "those which are used or can potentially be used by more than one agent, either simultaneously or sequentially, and where exclusion from the resource is difficult or costly to achieve (Cousins, 1996 citing Ostrom, 1986). Ostrom (1990) revised the term 'common pool resources' to

refer to “a natural or man-made resource system that is sufficiently large as to make it costly (but not impossible) to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from its use.” Ainslie et al. (2002) highlighted and emphasized the ongoing lack or inadequacy of infrastructure and facilities, as well as the unequal terms of trade, which continue to frustrate stock owners’ efforts to selectively increase their sales of cattle. Makhura and Mokoena (2003) argued that the issue of inadequate market access for the SA’s smallholders continues to be a significant concern. Consequently, this situation has resulted in a dualistic South African beef economy, where the so-called less commercially oriented "*emerging black cattle farmers*" (Van Schalkwyk et al. 2012) function within the highly consolidated commercial commodity livestock markets and conventional beef industry.

When it was first promulgated in 2008, the AgriBEE Charter was seen as a landmark policy to reverse the historical marginalization of smallholder farmers. It was envisaged by both government and black farmers generally that it would enable meaningful participation by the smallholder farmers in the mainstream beef economy. AgriBEE is a South African government framework for Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) for the agricultural sector. It forms part of the negotiated settlement on land reform. Besides land redistribution from the state and white farmers to black farmers, AgriBEE was meant to give substance to the transitional “beef market deregulation and trade liberalization” process of 1997. But

as the intervening two decades of tinkering have shown, however, the anticipated desired outcomes have been very slow to emerge—mainly because the major actors in the consolidated supply chain and the smallholder farmers intentionally have not considered themselves allies, instead of veiled business adversaries. Since the completion of the "beef market deregulation and trade liberalization" process in 1997, the phrase "inclusive red meat industry" has been bandied about but this is yet to be explained so that it carries a shared meaning for all the stakeholders involved in the beef supply chain. This is why, currently, it means different things to different people. Yet since 1997, smallholder farmers have been buying the types of cattle designed for feedlotting. The expressed desire by the industry to promote an "inclusive beef economy" combined with the open desires of smallholder farmers to trade with the commercial industry players points to potential allyship. But the continuing failure of the 'trickle-down effect' from beef supply chain to grassroots farmers to materialize coupled with the current discontent amongst grassroots black livestock farmers due to the sluggish progress of reforms in the red meat industry (Van Schalkwyk et al. 2012) suggests that both sides haven't quite transcended their historical positions as veiled business adversaries. The farmers are increasingly becoming impatient about being treated by the sector as supplementary contributors of cattle to the supply chain actors who extract the real financial benefits from the system (Bernstein, 1996c; Bernstein, 2012).

By framing our findings and discussion of the potential modifications of the South African beef supply chain within a context of a '*transitioning industry*', we are attempting to place the underrepresented and equity-seeking smallholder cattle farmers of Mozana squarely at the center of the Red Meat Strategy 2030's goal of '*achieving inclusive growth.*' (RMS 2030, 2022). We use both the '*transitioning industry*' frame and the equity lens to show that despite the obvious missing link to connect the "*market deregulation and trade liberalization*" process and the AgriBEE policy to the Red Meat Strategy 2030, there is still room for convergence.

A transition is a multi-part concept that can be applied to a range of different circumstances and scales (Harvey, 2024, p. 5). Therefore, the definition of a transitioning economy varies according to the context. In this research, a '*transitioning economy*' is an economy which "converts from a centralized state control into a capitalist or free market state." (Harvey at al., 2024; Jackson et al., 2005; Meyendorff & Thakor, 2002). For example, the South African red meat industry, according to Gannon's (1994) theory, the SA beef industry meets the definition of an economy that shifts from one economic development strategy to another. In the South African Red Meat Industry Strategy 2030, a reference is made to "a transition towards a service delivery model to inclusively grow production towards exports." (RMIS, 2022, p. 17). The transition emphasizes the utilization of the abundant herd of cattle owned by the black rural smallholder farmers (RMIS, 2022). But very little

consultation of the targeted smallholder farmers has taken place. As the findings here suggest, the goal may be a bridge too far to cross right now because as Harvey (2024) citing Hayter & Nieweler (2018, p. 82) argued, “transitioning economies should be characterized by a focus on building social capital, community capacity, and local collective efforts that enable greater adaptability, resiliency and local empowerment.” As things stand, none of this is happening in the South African red meat industry. Following this argument, I think, it is only by centering the equity issue of smallholder farmers of Mozana that the industry will be compelled to confront its limping “focus on building social capital, community capacity, and local collective efforts that enable greater adaptability, resiliency and local empowerment.”

A *Deeply Divided Red Meat Sector*

Published studies regarding cattle farming on the South African rangeland commons, often incorrectly assume that black smallholder farmers represent a homogeneous demographic. The village-centered lifestyle and agricultural methods of these farmers have prompted numerous researchers to conclude that the farmers share similar viewpoints on cattle farming. This flawed reasoning has resulted in adverse effects on the quality of service provided by both public and private service providers (such as extension officers, veterinarians, livestock agents, and funders) to these

black smallholder farmers. For example, there is no distinction made between farmers who farm cattle for profit and those who farm for prestige.

Our review of the existing academic literature and other pertinent documents in relation to cattle farming and beef production in South Africa, as well as the historical divide between smallholder farmers and commercial beef supply chains is well documented (Ainslie et al. 2002; Scholtz, Griffith and Robin 1997; Hall & Cousins 2013). In Mozana village, anecdotal evidence of the historical divide manifests itself in the persistent issue of inadequate market access for the local smallholder farmers, something which continues to be a significant concern lately (Makhura and Mokoena 2003). In the broader context of the Eastern Cape, the divide between smallholder livestock farmers to commercial red meat markets is relatively much more pronounced because of the amalgamation of the two former homelands of the Ciskei and Transkei into the province at the start of the South African democratic state. As Van Zyl and Binswanger (1996) noted, “These former homelands were already characterized by inadequate market access, infrastructure and support services.” Currently, this remains the case. In addition, relations, which are mostly transactional, between smallholder farmers and the red meat supply chain tend to show strong elements of deep-rooted distrust (Williams 1998; Bernstein 1996; Feinstein 2005; Faku 2016).

But the deep-rooted distrust that divides the two sides also betrays their veiled yearnings to exploit certain aspects of the beef value chain for shared benefits, albeit not equitably. For example, our reading of the literature suggests that smallholder cattle farmers in Mozana village and the commercial sector counterparts are flip sides of the same fundamental problem: *the scarcity mindset*. Historically, the apartheid system created a division between the so-called commercial and the smallholder farmers. This fostered a subtle 'us versus them' mentality on both sides of the divide. Since the initiation of the transition from state control to a market-oriented economy, the commercial entities have positioned themselves as gatekeepers of the sector, aiming to strengthen their dominance, influence policies, and ultimately dictate the distribution of benefits. For these entities, cattle farming and red meat trading have become their fiefdom. In contemporary times, to strengthen their position in the market, they have initiated the development of the Agriculture and Agro-Processing Masterplan (NAMC, 2022) and the Red Meat Industry Strategy 2030 (van der Burgh et al., 2022a & 2022b), which advocate for what they describe as 'inclusive growth' focused on exports, particularly to the Middle East and Asia. The strategy anticipates the involvement of cattle from 'emerging black farmers' as a significant contributor to its success. Conversely, smallholder farmers of cattle, goats, and sheep acknowledge the existing divide and the consequences of their exclusion on their sustainable livelihoods. They express their frustration over what one farmer referred to as '*ucalucalulo*' (clear exclusion). These farmers are

highly focused and resolute in their efforts to enter the market to sell their weaners and older cows. Therefore, they should adopt an abundance mindset, and devise strategies to cultivate mutually beneficial relationships with the bigger players in the industry. Better still, they should consider alternative strategies for marketing their cattle, and beef production for direct marketing and local consumption.

In the process, both parties overlook the wealth of resources surrounding them. The supply chain fails to recognize the matured livestock, owned by the smallholder farmers, that could enhance the entire red meat market, positioning it as a significant contributor to economic opportunity, food security, social equity, environmental wellbeing and resilience. Meanwhile, the smallholder farmers in peripheral places like Mozana village neglect to focus on the plentiful resources available to them—under-utilized land, livestock and lush landscapes, rivers, a favorable climate, and abundant grasslands—that could serve as sustainable economic opportunities for their livelihoods through the production of oxen for the local market. Oddly enough, these are the very resources that their ancestors used to farm sustainably before the arrival of European settlers.

The key question then becomes: How can the parties transcend the scarcity mindset to foster a culture of working together for mutual benefits and shared abundance? To uncover the insights, we facilitated the coming together of the parties for a consensus building process because as noted by Gary Miranda (1993 &

1995), “when two things seem to be at odds with one other, it is often prudent to examine them closely to discover their commonalities.”

Marrying the Two Sides

Based on our discussions with the smallholder cattle farmers of Mozana village, along with a group of stakeholders in the beef supply chain, we investigated whether any adjustments to the supply chain could enable the inclusion of currently excluded smallholders who aspire to become beef cattle suppliers. The necessity for farmers to comply with the stipulations of the existing legislation regulating all facets of cattle farming and accurate record-keeping for biosecurity purposes has emerged as a significant finding. We contend that through a Collaborative Landscape Design (CLD) approach, there is an unexplored opportunity for the “*Commercial Traders*” of Mozana and industry actors to work together on some practical supply modifications to deliver mutual benefits. For example, the recent call for research proposals by the Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) to “understanding different community structures for implementing inclusive growth or rural farmer development projects; biosecurity, movement and risk awareness; and stakeholder engagement model to ensure integrity and trust,” suggests that industry may be interested in engaging on consensus building. We suggest that this is the kind of collaborative red meat landscape design that the sector requires to make the industry more inclusive of the smallholder farmers currently operating on its margins.

Collaborative Landscape Design (CLD) is about agroecological transformations where local communities have the agency to shape their landscapes in the way they desire (Strauser et al., 2023, Bumont et al., 2021). In the case of Mozana, "the landscape" encompasses not only the physical ground, but also certain aspects of supply chain modifications. The CLD framework encompasses the core principles of equity, democracy, storytelling, consensus building, community engaged scholarship, and grounded knowledge (Strauser et al., 2023, Bumont et al., 2021)—all the important components of a consensus building process and creation of an inclusive red meat supply chain. The CLD approach, is a tool to encourage participants (local farmers, technical experts, and supply chain actors) "to collaborate as allies, working together towards the creation of a tapestry of knowledge based on individual experiences, using the concept of grounded knowledge to "link and situate everyone's knowledge within a participatory space" (Ashwood et al. 2014). Indigenous knowledge (IK) and smallholder farmers lived experiences are often ignored or undervalued in almost all aspects of meat production in South Africa. In this research, we attempted to bring together indigenous knowledge of Mozana smallholder farmers into dialogue with the expert knowledge (EK) of the supply chain stakeholders to build on the strengths of both parties through a community-based participatory approach to localized, grounded, adaptive, and shared knowledge generation.

The Key Question for the Parties

If you could do just one thing to achieve the inclusivity espoused in the SA's Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP) and you knew that you would succeed to, what would that be? As noted earlier, the AAMP is a national South African initiative to promote inclusive growth, competitiveness, transformation, employment, and food security.

Engagement Methodology

On December 5, 2024, we convened an *imbizo* (*dialogue*) between the "*Commercial Traders*" of Mozana and a multistakeholder group encompassing speculators, veterinarians, government extension services, a representative of the red meat industry services, owners of local butcheries, a representative of a cattle auction house and a local slaughterhouse owner. The convening took place at the regional offices of the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce (NAFCOC) in East London. It was attended by twenty-three (23). We are assembled the group through formal invitations to the Mozana "*Commercial Traders*", the Eastern Cape's Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR), South African Federation for Livestock Auctioneers (SAFLA), Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) and South African Animal Health Association (SAAHA).

To kickstart the process, we reminded the group that the South African red meat sector is building bridges across murky waters to encourage universal compliance with the minimum requirements of the prescribed animal identification, animal welfare and meat safety regulations because South Africa is working to address the persistent challenge of inadequate animal identification and biosecurity measures, especially among our country's smallholder farmers. In terms of the South African Animal Identification Act No. 6 of 2002, permanent marking of certain livestock (including cattle) is compulsory to combat stock theft, prove ownership, and aid in disease traceability. Moreover, livestock farmers must keep up to date records to comply with vaccinations and biosecurity regulations. Additionally, in accordance with the South African Animals Protection Act No. 71 of 1962, animals presented for slaughter at an abattoir must be handled humanely during loading, transportation, off-loading, housing, immobilizing and killing.

However, compliance is not always easy because commercial farmers and value chain stakeholders on one side and the smallholder farmers often see themselves as being on opposing sides of the challenges. Finding the common ground on which a mutually beneficial consensus necessitates a participatory, collaborative and tailored approach because as Miranda (1993 & 1995) wrote, "When two things seem to be at odds with one other, it is often prudent to examine them closely to discover their commonalities." We were meeting that day to build a consensus on

how we might consider helping each other move the needle forward on the mutual issues of concern.

"A consensus process is one in which all those who have a stake in the outcome aim to reach agreement on actions and outcomes that resolve, or advance issues related to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. In a consensus process, participants work together to design a process that maximizes their ability to resolve their differences. Although they may not agree with all aspects of the agreement, consensus is reached if all participants are willing to live with *the total package*" (Canadian Round Tables, 1993). However, in South Africa, consensus building is easier said than done. To overcome the pervasive issues of "master and servant" in the room, something which tends characterize the South African agricultural sector in general, we adopted a decolonizing engagement approach, which *uses an African lens to deliberately* introduce a *grounded knowledge* approach (Ashwood et al., 2014) in order to "creates the conditions that encourage all the participants to see their knowledge as socially *situated* but also potentially *linked* to other socially situated knowledges – just as one area of ground connects to all other ground. In our convening that day, we had auctioneers and government officials who were accustomed to instructing the farmers. Adopting a decolonizing engagement approach gave the farmers a protected platform to express their views without the fear of being disregarded and treated as junior people in the dialogue.

Our aim for using this approach, as Bell et al., (2019) suggested, was to transcend the typical expert/local knowledge divide by encouraging all perspectives, including smallholder farmers, veterinarians, livestock agents, government extension officials and university researchers, to see their knowledge as having a particular social situation or identity, but potentially linkable through building trust, a sense of inclusion, respect for *cultural diversity and recognition of individual contributions*. Thus, encouraging the emergence of a consensus and the kind of solutions that are better than the sum of the participants' individual contributions.

Following this literature advice, we chose a participatory *qualitative approach* to facilitate engagements. We participated in the process as the researcher/facilitator, meaning that facilitated the conversations, asked the questions, and recorded the responses. We secured the services of two other people who were translators, a note takers and recorders. Focus group discussion is a frequently used qualitative method to gain in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or an issue, in this case of local concerns regarding socioenvironmental dynamics (Nyumba *et al.* 2018). It is a participatory method that aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals, rather than a representative sample of a population (Johannson et al. 2018). We formed two groups of ten people per group. Each group comprised of two women, two white participants, and two Mozana farmers. As we soon found out, "*familiarity breeds contempt*." In one of the groups,

things didn't start as smooth as we had anticipated because of a disagreement between a speculator and his former employee who happened to be one of the village farmers.

But a timely intervention from a neatly dressed representing the all-too-powerful Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) saved the day. He raised his hand to speak, and permission to do so was granted. Politely but firm, he said, "*Our industry needs all the cattle that it can find to increase its exports to China and the Middle East. If we don't treat each other with common courtesy, we will struggle to reach our targets. We need to find a common ground.*" For what seemed to everyone like the longest one minute of our three hours of deliberation, the room fell quiet. During that brief moment of silence, normality silently returned to the room. Then, the young continued where he had left off, only this time around, with the question that changed everything for the rest of our deliberations, "Any suggestions on what that common ground could be?" Just like that, the room was filled with livestock husbandry jargon and a cordial vibe full of many suggestions.

Findings & Discussion

After the convening, we gave the Mozana farmers' representatives the opportunity to provide feedback to their colleagues back in the village. From the feedback that we received, the "*All Rounders*" were willing to support the four "*Commercial Traders.*" The "*Traditionalists*" only wanted assistance from the convening

stakeholders with compliance issues. This research made one major finding on the issue of possible supply chain modifications. From the engagements, it became clear that there is a section of Mozana smallholder farmers who are willing to engage in "*imvumelwano*" (a consensus process) that will assist the South African Red Meat Industry Strategy 2030 achieve its primary goal of becoming "*profitable, growing, and inclusive industry,*" despite being callused by years of exclusion. Similarly, feedback from the RMIS indicated that the industry is also thinking about ways to bridge the existing chasm by convincing industry players to provide a package of services.

Capitalizing on the young man's shaky ground stabilizing speech, we asked the groups to imagine that they were all on the same side of what the Red Meat Strategy 2030 proposed and the red meat industry's goal of an inclusive growth. If they could do just one thing to make the industry inclusive, and they knew that they would succeed, what would that one thing be? In case of different proposals, we challenged the groups to use the consensus process to come up with just one thing. By consensus, we mean a process where everyone can support the final outcome although they didn't get everything they wanted.

One group suggested that proper consultation is necessary to build long-term trust. They suggested that the principle of "No decisions about us without us" should always apply. They suggested that since not all black farmers aren't members of the organized farmer groups like the African Farmers Association of South Africa (AFASA)

and the National Emergent Red Meat Producers' Organization (NERPO), other platforms for engagement and communication should be considered, including Radio, which had been successfully used in the past. In the specific case of Mozana farmers, it was suggested that the Gompo Farmers' Association WhatsApp group would be an ideal platform to communicate with the local farmers.

The other group suggested the importance of recognizing the eating quality of older beef cattle. Their explanation began with a question and a story. "What if our ancestors and our parents are correct about how we value our cattle?", the reporter asked. Then he explained, "Before '*abelungu*' ("the Europeans") came here, cattle were valued based on what they were intended to be used for. For example, '*ilobola*' ("dowry"). Amanda and Yolanda are identical twins born on separate days. Amanda was born on the last hours of Friday ("*ngoLwesihlanu*") and Yolanda in the early hours Saturday ("*ngoMgqibelo*"). Because the mother of the twins was born on a Saturday too and she was named by her parents N*omgqibelo*, the family of the bride suggested to Yolanda's bridegroom's family that they should consider the coincidence a privilege worthy of one pregnant instead of all empty cows. The family agreed. The same logic could be applied to eating quality of beef from older animals raised on the 'veld' compared to beef from young feedlot-based cattle. The industry should pay a small premium for cattle raised on grass-based forage.

Over the years, the demand for grass-fed beef in South Africa has grown to 1% of the total red meat market. The suggestion was subjective, but we are encouraged that months later it made it into its recent call for research proposals from the RMIS on "standardization of meat quality and meat grading system for South Africa." If our focus group didn't suggest 'eating quality' in the presence of an RMIS representative, the thorny issue of cattle pricing based on animal age and fat classification would have remained muted. The man finished his report back with a plea, "*Inye nje into esiyicelayo. Sithembeni nime nathi*." [All that we ask. Trust us and stand with us]. Ashwood et al. (2014) contends that "much attention has been afforded to analyzing how personal narratives and storytelling serve as an agent of successful deliberation (e.g., Polletta and Lee, 2006), but less attention has been afforded to what conditions allow participants to listen to each other's narratives within the deliberative space." Furthermore, they argue that actors' ability to link and situate their knowledge helps explain their ability to engage in deliberation (Ashwood et al., 2014). The trust and consensus building process provided "the conditions which allowed the participants in our focus group to listen to each other's narratives."

In the months leading up to the stakeholders' meeting, together with some of the farmers, we visited an auction house to trade cattle. Previously, we observed that livestock farmers in the Mozana community don't strictly adhering to the correct biosecurity standards and the required recordkeeping. Upon engaging with the

farmers, we became convinced that they failed to change their *modus operandi* and to do things right at the right time because they don't appreciate either the value or the implications of ignoring the rules. To make them understand the urgency of biosecurity as a basic industry requirement for the movement of cattle, we decided to include them in a practical exercise to sell two pure bred Nguni bull calves at a regional auction yard. Initially, the yard refused to buy the calves without the affidavit to prove ownership. They also pointed out that we needed to produce a record of all treatments that were administered to the cattle. The auctioneer warned that if we don't get our house in order, we risk being geolocated behind a red line without permission to move or trade our cattle in the future. Fortunately, we had all the necessary paperwork for the cattle. But the cattle were still bought at a much lower price of R25,37 per kg, although the commodity price for red skin calves was R43,10 per kg that day. Although we lost money from the exercise, the farmers who came along with me were now understanding the implications of trying to sell cattle to the beef supply chain without following the stringent rules. The exercise was an eye opener for them. The exercise confirmed that in dealings with speculators, farmers often sell their livestock below market value due to poor information, bad timing, and because they are in a weak bargaining position (Fidzani 1993).

As if to mend the temporarily broken fences, the livestock agent who caused the disturbance earlier pointed to an article which appeared in the Farmers Weekly[14] magazine in 2017. He had brought a copy along with him and he read from it the following paragraph:

> *"South Africa currently has national herd of about 13.5 and 14 million head of cattle. An estimated 47% of these cattle are owned by smallholder farmers. Presently, the average inter-calving period of the cows in this herd is 710 days. Reducing this to 400 days would mean increasing our national herd from 13.5 million head of cattle to roughly 17 million on the same amount of grazing, because a cow without a calf still eats roughly the same amount of grass. Smallholder livestock farmers currently outside the economy could become players. It all starts with keeping records. However, in order to achieve this milestone, smallholder livestock farmers must keep 'economically efficient' records, a fixed breeding and calving seasons. Without a calving season, a farmer, any farmer cannot compare average weaning weights, as these will*

[14] *Keep accurate records for maximum economic impact by Gerhard Uys was published in the Farmers Weekly on June 16, 2017*

differ every three months or according to seasonal changes and nutritional state of the veld or pasture."

Complaints from the speculators included bad condition of cattle and biosecurity concerns, while some of the smallholder farmers claim that "speculators use trickery to get our cattle cheap". *Banamaqhinga.* With his contribution, the man also expanded into the issues of ensuring trust, the poor condition of livestock (*"a great source of frustration for speculators*"), problems with livestock identification, lack of cattle handling infrastructure, and the general lack of marketing information. One farmer suggested that the relationship between the farmers and the supply chain actors is limited to convenience rather than commitment and consistency. The farmers conveniently sold cattle to the livestock agents when the commodity prices are high because they believe that the buying agents are only interested in cheap cattle rather than establishing long-term relationships built on trust and mutual respect. He mentioned, it was their "*lived experiences*" to be treated by the industry's agents as "*abantu abacela amalizo*" ["beggars looking for favours"] instead of farmers. The Mozana farmers showed palpable distrust of the agents and the commodity beef production industry. They felt that the agents were patronizing and didn't always show appreciation of the fundamental cultural differences between different livestock owners, sellers, and the buyers.

During the course of our deliberations, it was mentioned that excessive dependence of the local smallholder farmers on external influences (e.g. extension services and livestock agents) is preventing them from taking responsibility for their own progress, such as animal welfare, finding other routes to market for their cattle, and reducing of stock theft. Additionally, it was also pointed out that the existing mindsets of the regarding the functioning of the South African beef supply chains is "fundamentally flawed and necessitate a change towards self-sufficiency." Based on these observations, we contend that Donella Meadows (1999) is correct in her observation that "The most effective point to intervene in a system is the mindset or paradigm out of which the system—its goals, power structure, rules, its culture—arises." We argue that local farmers must seek expert training from production to market access to shift their mindset away from dependencies on outsiders. The community of Mozana has a few young farmers with a very strong livestock commercialization mindset. These young farmers indicated to us their willingness to receive training.

In a show of solidarity one farmer who also works as a security guard in the City of Gqeberha said:

> "*Many of us here have been farmworkers before. Cattle are something we love to do. Making money doing it, just like all the white commercial farmers around here, is something that we aspire to do to support our families. But it would be*

> *naïve of us to think that we can do it alone. To farm commercially, we need capital for infrastructure, technical support, and access to markets. But we aren't optimistic that government and industry partners can provide some support. So, we need private people who are professional experts to assist because as we say around here, inyathi ibuzwa kwabangaphambili [for the beginners, it's wise to seek enlightenment and guidance from those who possess the knowledge and wisdom].*"

Then one of the speculators shared a story that one of us had previously heard from Dr. Allen Williams:

> "A *man in a small boat was fishing in a river when he ran out of the bait. Near the banks of the river, he saw a snake with a bullfrog in its mouth. He grabbed the snake and yanked out the frog. He then realized how angry the snake was. To calm the snake, he took his bottle of Jack Daniels and poured some in the snake's mouth. Then he released the snake. To his dismay, minutes later the snake was back with two more bullfrogs in its mouth. Then, the speculator said, we all need incentives.*"

Hearing this story narrated by a white man in isiXhosa was a fitting remark to close our meeting on a laughter and a high note to counter the unexpected turbulence at the start of the meeting.

Conclusions

First, it is both very encouraging and assuring to discover that some of the issues that we discussed during our dialogic focus group with the RMIS' were included in their call for research proposals. This is a significant milestone because by its own definition, "the RMIS is a service-driven organization delivering practical solutions and tangible impact across South Africa's red meat value chain. It works hands-on with producers, feedlots, auction houses, abattoirs, and decision-makers to build a resilient, competitive, and future-ready industry" (RMIS, 2025). From our reading of the situation facing the cattle and red meat industry in South Africa, we get the impression that there is some willing from the industry to meet the smallholders halfway. We may be wrong, but we don't think the business as usual, politics as usual, vested interests as usual and paradigms as usual approach to address the situation will work. Smallholder farmers have been callused by their long-lived experiences of being dispossessed and short changed. As a result, they have genuine trust deficit and lack of integrity issues which will not be addressed by waving a magic over the submerged issues. The RMIS, in its request for proposal acknowledges that "*these issues point to the importance of building trust as key ingredient to enable cooperation and collaboration between smallholder farmers and the industry to happen.*"

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Chapter 5: Envisioning A Self-Reliant Mozana Village

Mpumelelo Ncwadi[a], Richard L. Cates[b], Sarah J.J. Adcock[c], Charles F. Nicholson[d], Michael M. Bell[a,e], and Randall D. Jackson[a,f]

[a]Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies; [b]Department of Soil & Environmental Sciences; [c]Department of Animal & Dairy Sciences; [d]Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics; [e]Department of Community & Environmental Sociology; [f]Department of Plant & Agroecosystem Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, USA

Abstract

Seventy years after Mozana village in South Africa's was established by the apartheid government, it has attained cultural legitimacy and a political reason to be, but lacks an economic engine to sustain its existence. How can it achieve economic prosperity without an economic engine? A Collaborative Landscape Design (CLD)—inspired placemaking visioning process was a good start to address this shortcoming. Collaborating with the Mozana community, we conducted qualitative social science research using deep hangouts, interviews, critical dialogues (*imbizos*) and focus groups to answer the following three questions: i) Is the Mozana community making the most of the potential offered by their local landscape to develop its economic prosperity engine whilst improving the landscape for the benefit of future generations? ii) Is Mozana's livestock farming helping support sustainable livelihoods of the farmers and their community? iii) How can local natural capital support economic and enterprise development whose benefits are shared widely rather than enjoyed only by a few? Subsequently, the insights were analyzed, interpreted, and

distilled into emerging placemaking themes. The themes were sifted through the filters of what is possible, desirable, feasible, and catalytic. Results indicated that most residents of Mozana believe that trust and consensus building, collaboration, enterprise-driven farming, as well as discovery and learning through doing should serve as the essential foundational building blocks of a new future orientation for the Mozana community. Collaborating with the community, we re-imagined regenerative multispecies farming of cattle and goats as the lynchpin of a placemaking process and the development of a place-based 'veld-raised' red meat economy.

Keywords: Participatory practice of deliberation; Discovery and learning through doing; shared prosperity through managed multispecies grazing.

Introduction

The complexity of our present trouble suggests as never before that we need to change our present concept of education. … Its proper use is to enable citizens to live lives that are economically, politically, socially, and culturally responsible. —Wendell Berry, Thoughts in The Presence of Fear

Between 1996 and 2000, the South African government implemented various 'market deregulation' and 'trade liberalization' policies, as part of a broader strategy aimed at connecting black smallholder farmers in the former homeland areas to the national agricultural markets (Makhura & Mokoena, 2003). However, as the intervening three decades have demonstrated, these policies have not produced the expected inclusive South African agricultural economy—largely because the post-apartheid South

African agriculture has successfully managed to maintain the superficial divide between the well-resourced white commercial sector and the under-resourced emerging black smallholder farmers. The question as to why nearly three decades of reforms have not produced the dramatic change in the farmers' livelihoods as expected has not yet been systematically confronted (Obi et al., 2012). For Stull et al., (2016), the environmental apartheid that was largely instituted through rural marginalization — the use of rural space as an environmental means of marginalization — remains a major stumbling block to progress. Environmental apartheid refers to the use of the rural environment to deliberately marginalize racially defined groups, as well as the subsequent consequences of that marginalization (Stull et al., 2016). As Stull et al., (2016) concluded, "Although legal apartheid is over, environmental apartheid and its consequences continue to oppress black South Africans, with devastating implications for their health, livelihoods, and ecological integrity." Mozana's smallholder farmers have not been spared from this continued oppression. As Van Zyl and Binswanger (1996) noted, the former homelands were always characterized by inadequate market access, infrastructure, and support services. The smallholder agricultural sector in South Africa faces limitations due to its historical background of past deprivation and the current emphasis on broader reform processes that predominantly overlook their needs. (Obi et al., 2012). While the existence of smallholders has been acknowledged by the South African government, they have generally been overlooked in research and

policy initiatives. In the Eastern Cape's Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) Ward 32, local smallholder farmers decry their exclusion from the existing networks, institutions, and all manner of supporting infrastructure that has been concentrated in the feedlots and supply chain beyond. Mozana village, which forms part of BCM Ward 32, is an example of a place that has struggled to flourish economically during the post-'market deregulation' and 'trade liberalization' era. In the course of our research, we recently learned that the BCM stopped delivering community services to clear bush encroachment and management of soil erosion in the grazing camps, as well as cleaning of stock dams. When we asked the government Extension Officer responsible for BCM Ward 27 where Mozana is located to provide reasons for the termination of the services, she told us, "Unless these projects are in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), they will never be funded and implemented by the municipality."

In South Africa, an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is a five-year strategic planning document that municipalities are required to create in accordance with the Local Government Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act N0. 32 of 2000). The purpose of the IDP is to provide a coherent and strategic framework for local government planning and development. It IDP underpins the developmental mandate of local government as articulated in chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. A very critical phase of the IDP process is to link planning to the municipal

budget (i.e. allocation of internal or external funding to the identified projects); because this will ensure that the IDP directs the development and implementation of projects. From our understanding that the abovementioned services were not in the IDP because the required stakeholder engagement process has never been conducted in Mozana, we assumed that until the issues concerned appeared in the IDP of a municipality, they were unlikely to receive priority in budgetary decision-making processes of the municipality.

During our previous deliberations with stakeholders in Mozana village, we had established a trust-deficit among community members and among the community, government, and beef industry stakeholders was an impediment that tended to discourage a culture of collaboration and collective action[15] to resolve critical issues. As Ostrom (1990) wrote, "Collective action is any activity in which coordination by and across individuals has the potential to lead to achievement of a common objective. It may also lead to the provision of common pool resources that are non-excludable but rivalrous in consumption." In the context of Mozana, the absence of collaboration and collective action has led to what Olson (1965) termed, "the difficulty

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[15]*https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Political_Science_and_Civics/Introduction_to_Comparative_Government_and_Politics_(Bozonelos_et_al.)/09%3A_Collective_Action_and_Social_Movements/9.01%3A_What_is_collective_action_What_are_social_movements*

of getting individuals to pursue their joint welfare, as contrasted to individual welfare."

Observing from outside, the unequal world of entrenched power differentials and traditional hierarchies, which characterized the Mozana village situation, we assumed that it would be difficult if not outright impossible to overcome the trust deficit and promote a sense of collective action for the common good because as Bentley (1949) and Truman (1958) wrote, "the grand optimism expressed in group theory that individuals with common interests would voluntarily act so as to try further those interests can be challenging."

To test our assumptions, we offered a CLD placemaking approach to support a visioning process as a way to address the problem stated above, which was a lack of trust that undermines collective action. CLD is a tool to promote agroecological transformations where local communities work to shape their landscapes, biophysically and socioeconomically, in the way they desire (Strauser et al., 2023, Bumont et al., 2021). The CLD framework encompasses the core principles of equity, democracy, storytelling, consensus building, community engaged scholarship, and grounded knowledge (Strauser et al., 2023, Bumont et al., 2021), but specifically unfolds five key dimensions: connecting people, envisioning novel landscapes, designing supply chains, planning enterprises and institutionalizing change, (Strauser et al. 2025).

We facilitated the placemaking visioning process to support Mozana residents and local livestock farmers as they chart a new course towards self-reliance and prosperity. In Mozana, we have just scratched the surface of making connections and begun to envision what's possible. With continued funding and support, the CLD approach would specifically encourage participants "to collaborate as allies, working together towards the creation of a tapestry of knowledge based on individual experiences, using the concept of grounded knowledge to "link and situate everyone's knowledge within a participatory space" (Ashwood et al. 2014).

Managed Grazing as a Focal Point for CLD

Because the main agriculture of Mozana is livestock production and the village has access to significant grassland, preliminary discussions with community partners indicated the importance of livestock management as a focal point for CLD. Managed grazing is an approach to managing livestock on grasslands that has the potential to stimulate forage quantity and quality. Village-level multi-species grazing of a combined communal herd in Mozana was determined to be not only desirable and hopeful, but also feasible and catalytic. Unlike any similar initiatives in South Africa, managed rotational grazing of a single combined communal herd presents a unique opportunity for sustained investment in the development of the necessary processes, skills, resources necessary to establish novel livestock production methods and alternative supply chain (Carlisle & Miles, 2013; Miles et al., 2017) to

benefit Mozana and other communities within Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) Ward 32.

It adopts a place-based approach to communal livestock husbandry and the use of livestock as a community empowerment and wealth building resource. Citing Nassauer, Wang, and Dayrell (2009), Strauser et al. (2022) wrote, “A place-based approach recognizes that what is considered caring for the bio-physical resource is context-dependent because care is socially constructed” (p. 1016). Furthermore, a place-based agroecological approach also involves, “place-based solutions that are locally led, inclusive and celebrate the rich diversity of agriculture systems where there are no one-size-fits-all solutions.” Place- and space-based farming practices and systems based on agroecological principles, with diversified livestock interactions allows greatly reduced use of external inputs, farm practices that are defined according to objectives at the landscape level, and collaborative innovation (Duru et al. 2015).

Controlled grazing (in its many forms) was developed in the 1950s and 1960s (*personal communication with Paul Danckwerts*). Although there have been many spectacular demonstrations of its effectiveness, it has never been adopted by smallholder farmers in South Africa. Even among the more progressive commercial livestock owners, its adoption has been limited. During our recent engagements with the smallholders of Mozana village, we discovered that the slow adoption by the local

cattle farmers is partly due to a general lack of information and facilitated learning-through-doing opportunities. From our point of view, the other significant challenge facing the farmers is how to make an informed choice about which system to adopt and why choose that particular system over others.

For example, in North America, several studies (Paine et al., 1999; Tracy and Sanderson, 2004; Woodis and Jackson, 2009; Oates et al., 2011; Brink et al., 2013; Hanson et al., 2013) promoting the Managed-Intensive Rotational Grazing (MIRG) as an ideal system to improve forage availability, carrying capacity of the pastures, quality of the livestock, water quality, biodiversity, and soil health outcomes. In a MIRG system, large pastures are divided into smaller paddocks, and once a sward height objective is reached in the paddock being grazed, the herd is moved to the next paddock (Paine et al., 2000). Grazing within paddocks translates to bunching of animals where the selectivity of grazing animals is largely removed, i.e., livestock are forced to defoliate all vegetation in a relatively uniform manner (Martz et al., 1999; Tracy and Sanderson, 2004). Adaptive grazing is another system that is commonly used by the farmers of the Midwest states of the United States. Common amongst these rotational grazing systems is the premise of private ownership of land and the availability of complementary fencing technologies.

Even in the developing countries of Africa like Zimbabwe, Zambia and Kenya, the adoption of controlled grazing has been stifled by the plethora of different

"systems" that are being promoted by the different champions, including Alan Savory's Planned Holistic Grazing Management, Johan Zeitsman's Ultra High-Density Grazing, Richard Teague's Adaptive Grazing — and many others. Watching from the sidelines, smallholder farmers, some of them farmworkers with enough experienced using some of these systems, are often left wondering which system is both practical and affordable. One thing for sure, the smallholder farmers of Mozana have lived experiences of herding multi-species of livestock. They know the challenges that they previously had to overcome and how they did it to achieve successes with that system. They still have collective memory of what iterations they tried to succeed. However, there are also other farmers in nearby local villages who tried similar animal herding approaches as the Mozana farmers but spectacularly failed, gave up, and concluded that the system does not work.

Methods

Study Site: Mozana Village

The setting for this research was Mozana village ("the research site"), a rural village within Ward 32 of the Buffalo City Municipality ("BCM") in the Eastern Cape, South Africa (Figure 5). Ward 32 comprises 27 coastal and inland village communities, located along the R72 south of the coastal city of East London. These villages represent a range of cultural, ecological, and social conditions along the east-west

continuum of the Indian Ocean between Keiskamma River on the south and Tsholomnqa River on the north.

Figure 5: Map of Mozana & Surrounding Villages

Collectively, these communities have a significant natural resource base: 'Veld' for livestock grazing, 140 hectares of arable land, water flowing in two adjacent rivers, abundant livestock, and roughly 320 days of sunshine per year. Ideally, these natural resources should enable local people to benefit themselves by creating a thriving bottom-up local agri-food economy. Such an economy could be anchored by small-scale regenerative farming: crops and livestock. But currently, that is not the case, partly because local smallholder livestock farmers are not only often overwhelmed

by their scarcity mentality but also believe that their livestock are not favored by the current national commodity beef market.

How the CLD Process Unfolded in Mozana

"*You can observe a lot just by watching.*" —*Yogi Berra*

Our process of deliberations took four sessions of facilitation, figuring out, shaping and distillation of new thinking that align with the 'connecting people' dimension of CLD. The process involved a series '*give first / thinkering*' *engagements*; various empathy conversations with the farmers and community members; a consensus and trust building exercise; brainstorming of opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses to achieve new actions, including the establishment of a grazing association, a multispecies communal herd and the elements of a grazing plan; and goal setting. Our process was grounded in IDEO's Human Centered Design principles. That is, "When dreams and desires are articulated, assessed and given life, they fuel the future." Additionally, we conducted one focus group with female farmers to highlight their specific issues because they typically raise goats instead of cattle.

Give First Thinkering

At the onset of research at Mozana village, we found that the idea of a '*give first/thinkering*' can be a great tool to recruit people into our unfamiliar and complex

research projects. '*Give first thinkering*' is made of up of two terms, 'give first' and 'thinkering'. Feld (2025) wrote that the term means "being able to put energy into a relationship or system without defining the transactional parameters." Just as important, he says that it is about asking, "What's needed here?" instead of "What's in it for me?" *Thinkering*, refers to the intersection of creative thinking and discovery through doing (tinkering). Combined these terms are about promoting the idea of giving to others useful and practical things (knowledge, skills, mentorship etc.). However, as Feld (2025) also noted, "It's not altruism. You can and should expect to get something back. But you just don't know when, from whom, in what form, or over what time frame."

Empathy Conversations

One way to get a sense of the problems that Mozana people are facing was, quite simply, to ask them during face-to-face empathy conversation. Our strategy during these conversations was to conduct the interviews in pairs, capture them using a voice recorder and short videos (with permission) to review later. We used fewer words and asked many 'why?' and 'How Might We?' questions to reframe pain points into opportunities. We encouraged stories and listened for inconsistencies. We watched for nonverbal cues (body language and emotions) and at times we let silence linger. We used empathy conversations because empathy driven engagements say to the interviewees, 'I see and I hear you. Moreover, they encouraged shared ownership

of the responses. These were some of the questions we asked. How might we work collaboratively to help our community find “the path to its economic liberation” with clarity and confidence — by connecting our self-discovery, core values, interests, skills, and goals — to real-world opportunities that truly fit the cause? If you could do just one thing, and we knew that we would succeed, what would that be?

Consensus & Trust Building

Even before we commence our deliberations, we anticipated that our deliberations might occasionally get stuck and need consensus building. By consensus, we mean the process to get people to hear the ideas and inputs of other people, share their own thoughts and to collectively come to an agreement on the best steps. We facilitated a consensus building process that was attended by 63 people including all the 26 farmers.

bOTSWana Analysis

Traditionally, rural development planning starts by looking at the assets available — the class of land, available capital, skill of local people etc. In a word, people focus on the strengths and are constrained by what they have rather than by what they want. This kind of thinking immediately limits people’s thinking to the resources at hand instead of looking at the opportunities first and then say, “What resources do we need in order to take advantage of this opportunity?” We often hear that something

can't be done because … and there follows a litany of constraints. We don't have any money. It may work there, but there's no way it will work here. We don't have knowledge. In anticipation that we might encounter similar mentality at Mozana, we also facilitated a session to brainstorm opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses to achieve new actions. We played the devil's advocate and took a positive approach to encourage the community to look opportunities and then find ways to turn those opportunities into realities through goal setting.

Focus Group of the Women Goat Farmers

We organized a separate focus group consisting of six women goat farmers from the villages of Mozana, Jojweni and Zikhova village to assess their views on livestock farming by women in Ward 32, as well as their personal aspirations.

Goal Setting

Setting some goals matter. Without goals the vision will perish. Without strategy and tactics, the goals will be beyond reach and without a structure the edifice collapses. We worked with the community to set three simple SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-sensitive) goals.

Results & Discussion

On Giving First Thinkering

Our series of '*give first*' interventions to the Mozana smallholder farmers included treatment of 495 cattle for liver fluke, botulism and anthrax; cattle body conditions scoring, identifying sick cattle, and medicating cattle with the assistance of YouTube videos from veterinarian Dr. Lisa Lunn, University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service; development of a field records booklet, visit to a local dairy farm for a short demonstration of rotational grazing & two auction yard visits; a demonstration of tree felling with chainsaws conducted by Stihl; two Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) briefings on biosecurity and Foot and Mouth Disease; pasture renovation and grass testing by the Agricultural Research Council (ARC); and videos on communal grazing and herding in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Although our approach used a different methodology, it was effective because it helped us build rapport, gain trust of the people in the Mozana community. It enabled us to excavate information from within the community. Our 'give first' approach was reciprocated with time, commitment, good data and personal stories. This was important for us to deal with the trust deficit issues in the community.

Focus Group of the Women Goat Farmers

During our focus group, one participant to explain what it means for her to be a female goat farmer in the area. She told us that “it’s doing many things to create a sense of place: being a woman, a housewife, a mother and a sole provider for those of us who are either widowed or single mothers. Farming in around is challenging for women because some men feel threatened when they see women owning livestock. They are often reluctant to purchase from you." As a group, the women suggested that our process should focus on setting the direction. Where is Mozana planning to go? What are the local people willing to do to support agriculture in the area? These questions suggested to us that our visioning process needs to point to a destination, the route to take, and a timeline to get there.

On Consensus Building

Not all livestock farmers in Mozana raised cattle solely for trade. In fact, almost half of the 26 farmers indicated that they kept cattle for traditional purposes. Therefore, for Mozana village to progress as a community without excluding anyone, it was essential to build consensus. During, our first session of community engagements attended by 58 community members, at the local community hall we collectively affirmed, through a show of hands, that all participants present voluntarily wished to partake in the consensus and trust building dialogue. Furthermore, we also recognized that differences of opinion among individuals are likely to arise, and this

should be anticipated. As a result, it became crucial to establish fair rules of engagement to promote consensus.

We proposed a working definition for 'a consensus' and ten consensus building, six of which were endorsed. The simple definition of a consensus discussed and agreed upon during our deliberation was "*an outcome that is supported by everyone even when the people didn't get everything they hoped for.*" That is, everyone must be willing to live a "total package" of agreements. It was agreed that all the deliberations will be guided by the following six principles adapted from the 1993 Canadian Round Tables:

Principle #1 — Purpose Driven: *All the community members present felt that they had a strong reason to participate in the process.*

Principle #2 — Inclusive not Exclusive: *All the 26 farmers (including the staunch traditionalists) with significant interests in the issues that were going to be discussed chose to be involved in the consensus process.*

Principle #3 — Voluntary Participation: *All the community members present voluntarily participated in the process and agreed to accommodate any community member who was absent if they also chose to participate and accept the rules of engagement agreed upon by the group.*

Principle #4 — Equal Opportunity: *All the community members present agreed that equal access to all relevant information needed to make informed decisions is vital for everyone to have the opportunity to participate effectively throughout the process. This meant proper translation of the principles to isiXhosa.*

Principle #5 — Respect for Diverse Interests: *Everyone agreed that they were all different people of different age groups, diverse values, interests, and knowledge who happen to live and share the same village and some traditional customs which needed to be respected at all times.*

Principle #6 — Finish What We Started: *Everyone agreed that many previous projects were discussed but never implemented. This tended to create doubts in the minds of the people about commitment to implementation of the projects. Hence people often broke the rules agreed upon.*

On Goal Setting

Ultimately, Mozana community agreed on six different goals falling into three different categories:

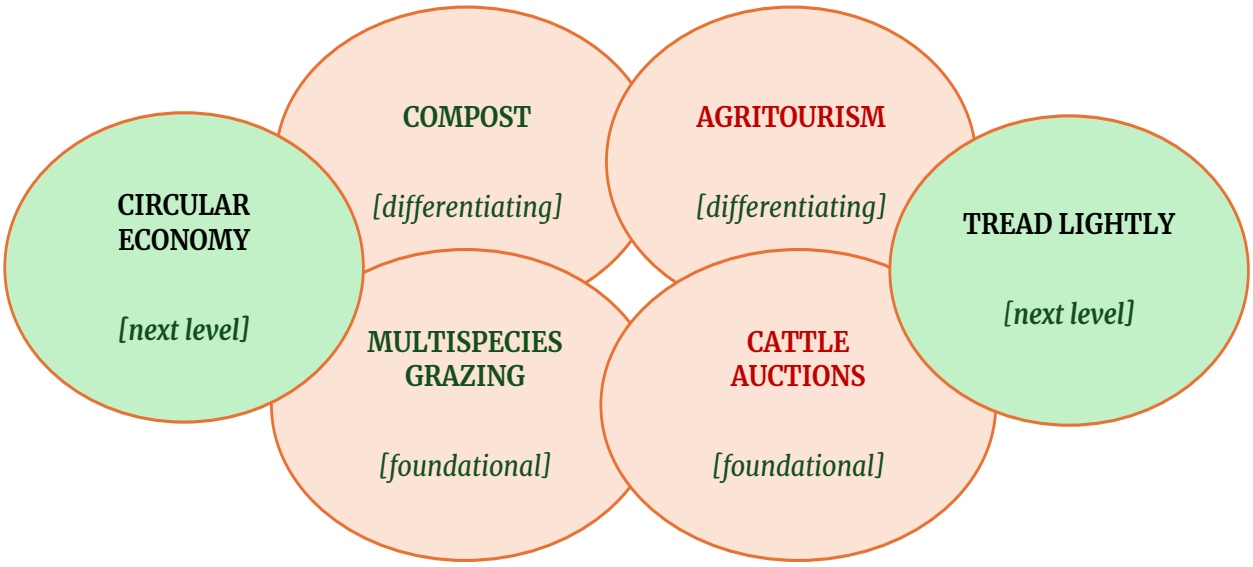
- *Getting the fundamentals right*
- *Finding the next level of economic activity*
- *Focusing on the sustainable differentiation of Mozana*

Goal: Create a Circular Economy

Strategy: Leverage our geography and bridging social networks to create intergenerational wealth.

Potential Early Victories		Game Changers
○ *Establishment of the Mozana Forage and Grazing Association (MozFAGA)* ○ *Development and signing of the MozFAGA Constitution* ○ *Tentative agreement on the establishment of multispecies herd and the grazing plan*		○ *De-bushing of the arable near the river* ○ *Production of organic compost* ○ *Household gardens in every homestead in the village* ○ *Introduction of better cattle genetics for herd improvement*

Mozana 2030 Goals



Establishment of a Communal Herd and a Grazing Association

In our third session of community engagements, which was attended by 56 individuals (including 26 local farmers), we convened at the Mozana Community Hall to deliberate on the formation of a communal herd and a grazing association. An

independent facilitator was invited to guide the process, allowing us to focus on observing and documenting the proceedings. To initiate the process, the facilitator presented videos showcasing communal grazing practices in Mpanshya village, Zambia, and Hangwe village, Zimbabwe.

Establishment of a Communal Herd

For some farmers in the hall, the proposal of a communal herd managed by permanent herders touched raw nerves. They strongly opposed the concept. They thought that the idea was absurd. One farmer candidly referred to the idea as "a recipe for disaster," explaining that "all the cattle would be stolen without a trace." Another farmer correctly pointed out that “the fact that a communal herd worked in the communities shown in the videos is no guarantee that it will be successful in Mozana.” The progress stalled and needed a recess and a consensus building process. At that point, the facilitator divided the participants between those in favour and those against. He invited the local chief to conduct shuttle diplomacy between the two parties to ease tensions and re-establish the common ground. The disputes were ultimately settled when an impartial local prince intervened and said, “Our future depends on how we use the resources we have, including our livestock. We must own our problems. We must work together. Let’s get things done.” Then he asked, “What would make a communal herd possible?” A young female goat farmer responded with a brilliant suggestion which broke the deadlock. She said, “This idea

would work if the owners visited the herd daily to see and count the animals, if they wanted. Also, if the herders are well paid to discourage deception. We ought to also consider our traditional cultural practice known as "ukuphawulela," in which herders were rewarded with bonuses of live heifers for themselves, once all the livestock had been accounted for.

Another area of disagreement was the suggestion that the grazing association should be funded by retaining every third calf, ideally a bull calf. The farmer with the largest herd in the community was quite displeased with this suggestion. He believed that the proposal would lead to him becoming the greatest loser. However, it was clarified that he was poised to become the primary beneficiary of the proposed funding mechanism. With the introduction of improved genetics, his calving rate was expected to rise from the current 33%, as previously assessed by our veterinarian. He ought to feel optimistic because the majority of the funds will be allocated towards ensuring his animals are identifiable, healthy, and well-nourished, with daily access to clean water under the vigilant supervision of the permanent herders. All of this will ensure that, despite contributing every 3rd calf to finance the scheme, his income will increase. Upon reflecting on the potential advantages, he decided to endorse the proposal.

Ultimately, after the disputes were resolved, the participants agreed on the following ‘quick wins’.

1) To demonstrate that progress is achievable and tangible, the community reached a consensus regarding the formation of a grazing association and the collective utilization of the old arable farmland adjacent to the Keiskamma River.
2) To improve the communal herd, it was decided that acquiring multi-breed bulls with superior genetics was essential. However, acquiring the bulls would be conditional on every farmer getting his cattle vaccinated in accordance with the national biosecurity protocols.
3) The project should be executed in an inclusive manner, ensuring that all members of the community, regardless of their identity, reaped shared benefits. Additionally, it was emphasized that everyone should take ownership of the project and consistently act as its custodian.

One key takeaway from exercise is the importance of very high level of trust, partly founded on maximum transparency. Without this, the communal herd scheme is destined to fail.

Establishment of a Grazing Association

One key proposal put forth for further deliberation was the establishment of a grazing association to hold the vision together because the community expressed concern that without a proper structure, the momentum gained would quickly dissipate. It was acknowledged by all the participants that the existing village

committee was designed for a different purpose. Therefore, there was a need to establish a new and fit for purpose (inclusive and decisive) to govern the proposed grazing association. With the assistance of the facilitator, ten names were suggested for the interim structure of the association. Following a quick vote, seven individuals were confirmed by the facilitator. Subsequently, five names were put forward for the grazing association. Our recommendation to the community was to name their association, Mozana Forage and Grazing Association (MozFAGA) as the name reflects both the location and the intent of the association. This proposal received unanimous support from all participants.

In the spirit of reciprocity, we pledged to assist the community with the development of a "Draft Constitution" for MozFAGA. We undertook to present the "Draft Constitution" to the community during our scheduled next meeting. Given the fact that community structures are often delicate and can experience leadership changes, as well as the dissolution of alliances, the community emphasized the necessity to integrate into the final Constitution mechanisms for substantial involvement of the wider community into the approval of any proposed changes to the Constitution.

The Need for a Grazing Plan

During the era of the Ciskei homeland, which ended in 1994, cattle and goats in Mozana village were rotationally grazed in three fenced camps with a one-year rest

for each camp. While in the camps, the animals were guarded by government-paid herders who lived in the village. Once a year, village people were recruited by the government to eliminate the developing soil erosion 'dongas' throughout the local landscape. Additionally, the government facilitated the services of a contractor to clear the buildup of silt in the water dams used for livestock.

However, soon after independence, the new government stopped paying the herders and the resident extension officers. The perimeter fences around the camps were stolen and continuous grazing without a management plan began. Cattle and goat herds began to graze near the village. Grass did not get enough time to rest and regrow after grazing events. The incidence of livestock diseases began to rise and spread as cattle from neighboring villages also started to graze in Mozana village. Currently, the grazing camps are experiencing significant bush encroachment, and the palatable grass have long gone disappeared. In the evenings, some of the livestock is brought back to the homestead corrals, while the rest continues to graze on the veld.

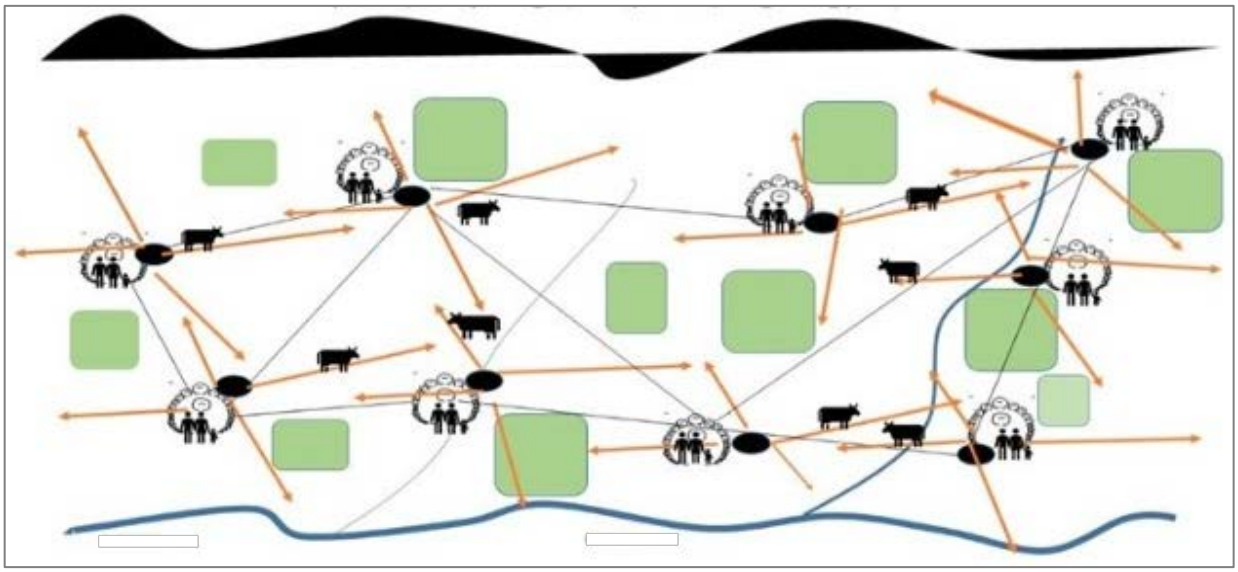


Figure 6: *The challenge of continuous grazing from different homestead corrals which could be solved through rotational grazing. Adapted from the Mpanshya communal herd grazing plan in Zambia.*

To address these and other related issues, it was agreed that developing a grazing plan for the communal herd should be prioritized. As one farmer put it, "Developing a grazing management plan is an important first step to ensure effective management of the grazing operation by the herders." It was also agreed that the herders should be sufficiently trained on how to perform their duties correctly and effectively. The grazing plan must match animal numbers to predicted forage yields.

Generally speaking, development of a grazing plan involves several key steps that, due to time constraint, could not all be addressed during discussions. The ones that were considered include setting objectives and goals, assessing forage supply and demand, ensuring the availability of clean water, conducting a cost-benefit analysis,

performing a risk assessment, implementation of the plan, livestock trading, monitoring progress, and finally, updating the plan. These were some of the pertinent questions asked and discussed during our deliberations:

- Why should the community of Mozana reduce bush encroachment on its rangeland commons?
- How can the community of Mozana manage its rangeland commons for both livestock production and the local landscape?
- What infrastructure is required for proper communal herd grazing?
- What skills do the herders require to implement the grazing plan correctly and effectively?
- How can the rangeland commons be properly managed for drought?
- How can the communal herd grazing be done to generate income?

Land, Livestock Production and the Local Landscape

The community of Mozana owns roughly 140 ha of fallow arable land with irrigation water from two existing boreholes. Also, they own three large grazing camps that will require de-bushing before they are ready for grazing again. Based on our previous assessment of the local landscape, physical counting of the animal and assessment of their Body Condition Scores, we know that both the carrying capacity (forage

supply) and the stocking rate (forage demand): of the local landscape are currently unknown. Mozana village has 552 cattle and 610 goats. Judging by the Body Condition Scores (BCS) of the cattle, currently, the animals are not getting enough forage and water.

Continuous grazing of the herd near the village is a major source of overgrazing and forage limitation for the animals. This implies that without constant supplementation the animals aren't getting sufficient forage to meet their daily feed requirements. Continuous grazing also means palatable plants are overgrazed without the necessary rest. The animals are not herded by humans. As a result, no one knows which plant species the cattle are grazing and how much forage is available. Management of the alien vegetation is an opportunity to increase the amount of available forage and the capacity of the ground to soak the moisture.

Based on these observations, it was agreed that the arable land should be de-bushed and the boreholes revived to create permanent rotational grazing camps, with 40 ha set aside to grow forage for the winter season. Because cattle are divided into classes, a consensus was reached that to make the numbers more realistic, we should assume that a Livestock Unit or LSU should be +/- 500kg or a 400kg cow with a suckling calf.

Livestock Water as a Grazing Tool

Livestock water is very important. It is an essential nutrient for beef cattle.

APPROXIMATE TOTAL DAILY WATER INTAKE OF BEEF CATTLE

	INTAKE IN LITRES FOR TEMPERATURE IN CELSIUS					
ANIMAL DESCRIPTION	4.4 °C	10.0 °C	14.4 °C	21.1 °C	26.6 °C	32.2 °C
Growing cattle [Approx 181.4 kg]	**15.1**	**16.3**	**18.9**	**22.0**	**25.4**	**36.0**
Growing cattle [Approx 272 kg]	**20.1**	**22.0**	**25.0**	**29.5**	**33.7**	**48.1**
Growing cattle [Approx 408 kg]	**23.0**	**25.7**	**29.9**	**34.8**	**40.1**	**56.8**
Bred heifers	**22.7**	**24.6**	**28.0**	**32.9**		
pregnant cows	**22.7**	**24.6**	**28.0**	**32.9**		
Lactating cows	**43.1**	**47.1**	**54.9**	**64.0**	**67.8**	**61.3**
Mature bulls	**32.9**	**35.6**	**40.9**	**47.7**	**54.9**	**78.0**

Table 3: Approximate Daily Water Intake of Beef Cattle

High quality water is critical for livestock health, growth, lactation and reproduction (Beef Cattle Research Council, 2025). According to the BCRC (2025), “Water accounts for between 50 and 80 percent of an animal’s live weight. Insufficient water intake reduces animal performance faster and more dramatically than any other nutrient deficiency.” This implies that to maximize feed intake and production, cattle require daily access to palatable water of adequate quality and quantity (BCRC, 2025). These

are the approximate daily water intake of beef cattle. Beef producers ought to consider specific grazing management strategies, site attributes, and economic factors when planning water systems.

Rangeland commons without water are worthless. Much of the rangeland commons in Mozana are on rolling terrain. Therefore, stock dams were constructed by the former Ciskei government near the village. But Mozana village has access to piped tap water for human consumption. It is possible to store this tap water in a 5,000-liter water cart which can be pulled with a tractor to where the cattle would be grazing on a particular day. This tap water can be stored in a 5,000-liter water tanks and be carted by a tractor to the location where the cattle will be grazing on a specific day.

Implementation and Economics of the Plan

The issue of stock theft in BCM Ward 32 is a significant concern. A decision is yet to be made regarding the nighttime holding of the animals. Regardless of the system that is eventually established, it should be relatively easy to relocate the nighttime holding corral. The nighttime corral will need to be moved frequently and should be situated near both the water source and the daytime grazing area to minimize walking time and to prevent the formation of pathways on the veld.

Implementation of the Plan

The implementation of the plan will require capital, which the people and farmers of Mozana do not currently have. But this does not preclude MozFAGA from designing a viable scheme and seek government funding based on the strength of their plan. Since the issue of viability of the scheme has not yet been presented and discussed with the community, a full section explaining possible options has been including at the end of this document. Based on our assessment of the figures, the proposed plan could be profitable for everyone in Mozana village. A map of the area is currently being developed to understand the amount of fencing required for the arable portion. Development of grazing charts will be completed in 2026.

What excites capital the most? In South Africa capital has many options. Currently, there are many projects jostling for very limited funds. How do the few get chosen? According to one impact investor with an interest in project, this is one possible recipe:

1. ***Tell a longer-term story:*** *Capital is excited by potential. A well-thought through future with widespread support gains attention and interest.*

2. ***Choose catalytic projects:*** *Capital likes leverage – it will prefer a project which has the leverage to ignite a growing economic ecosystem.*

3. ***Secure early victories:*** *Early victories reduce the arc of uncertainty and add a sense of urgency.*

The people of Mozana felt strongly that the livestock grazing project held the best potential to succeed. The viability of this project was briefly discussed by the community. That's why the following figures are very rough estimates of how much money will be needed to run a herd of about 500 animals, with every 3rd calf retained by MozFAGA. With careful supplementary feeding, a herd of +/- 500 animals should contain about 225 breeding cows, achieving an 80% calving percentage, or 108 male calves and 72 female calves a year. This should allow MozFAGA to sell 58 (every 3rd calf, less 4% mortality) 36-month-old oxen (steers) at a weight of 310 kg. At current prices of R25/kg ($0,67/lbs) liveweight for C grade cattle, this is an annual income of **R450,000**. Based on exchange rate of $1 = R16,90, this translates to $26,627.

BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE PROJECT		
Herders	R182,500	$10,799
Water	R50,000	$2,959
Dipping chemicals	R12,000	$710
Summer phosphate (December to April)	R15,000	$886
Dry season supplementary feed	R40,509	$2,397
Vaccines and medicines	R25,000	$1,480
Capex for maintenance and additional bulls	R125,000	$7,396
ESTIMATED BUDGET	**R450,000**	**$26,627**

According to these estimates, the total costs would be of the order of R450,000 is just less than the projected income. Therefore, the proposed idea of keeping every 3rd calf to finance the project would seem to be justified. These figures are only a very rough suggestion, to illustrate the way in which a communal grazing project should prepare a budget.

Cattle owners should be happy because the bulk the money will be spent on making their animals identifiable, healthy, have access to better genetics and well-fed and this food will ensure that, despite contributing every 3rd calf to finance the scheme, the income to the individual farmer will increase. Owners should also appreciate that this budget is not cast in stone. In the early years, it will be necessary to invest more in developing the water resources, clearing of bush encroachment and growing of own feed on the flat lower land areas. Such an approach will increase the carrying capacity of the 'veld' and double the number of animals. This is also important because in some years the price of feed might be higher (because of drought conditions reducing the availability of food and increasing the needs of the animals). Adopting these strategies will make the project more appealing to potential investors.

We believe that this financial analysis highlights the benefits of a communal scheme in developing the livestock sector within the Mozana community for the

benefit of everyone. By fostering cooperation over competition, every aspect of the cattle management can be made much more efficient and so more cost effective.

Grazing Principles to be Followed with the Combined Large Herd

All the livestock in the village will be combined into one large communal herd. The livestock units will continue to belong to their individual owners. A multi-species grazing plan should be developed by an expert in conjunction with the community members. Three trustworthy, well-trained and well-paid permanent herders should be recruited to implement the grazing plan. All the animals must be branded and tagged, as well as dipped, dosed and tested for fertility diseases. It was agreed that no individual farmer should be allowed to keep their own bull. Instead MozFAGA should raise capital to buy bulls of different breeds to satisfy the preferences of different farmers.

Potential Benefits of a Combined Large Herd

These are some of the potential benefits of having one combined large herd grazing according to a plan, instead of many smaller herds grazing continuously. Some of the issues mentioned here came from our engagement with Bruce Danckwerts whom we visited in Zambia in 2016.

- A combined and rotationally grazed herd will have a high density and high hoof impact that will break hard surfaces and encourage non-selective grazing and

re-emergence of palatable grass species, build soil health, increase carrying capacity, eliminate overgrazing, and most importantly break the cycle of ticks, worms and parasites.

- Using a few well-trained and well-paid herders will create certainty regarding the security of the animals, and it will eliminate the need for 100s of different herders. Professional herding will improve the productivity of animals and land management.

- Permanent fencing of the camps will not be necessary. The only permanent fencing that will be required will be the one around three sides of the 140 ha because the remaining side will be iXesi River. This will save the community some money.

- MozFAGA ownership of a few high-quality bulls of different breeds will eliminate the need for every farmer to have his own bull, probably infertile and untested for fertility diseases like Vibriosis and Trichomoniasis.

- Access to different medium frame bulls of different breeds will help MozFAGA and its member farmers service more cows efficiently and build a strong herd of grass-fed steers that can be sold locally, either to locals or local butcheries instead of selling bull calves to faraway feedlots.

- Animal medicines and equipment in South Africa are very expensive. Participation in the scheme will result in cost sharing and bulk buying.

- When all the farmers are part of the scheme, the land will grow bigger, and it will be much easier to plan rotational grazing, long resting periods to improve plants, water and soil fertility. The availability of the crop land (estimated 140 ha) for development of permanent perennial pastures will also provide an additional fodder bank.

- The need for many owners poorly managing many smaller herds without sufficient knowledge of animal husbandry and land management will eliminate noncompliance with the national biosecurity measures and thus increase the earnings of both the farmers and their association.

- Rather than focusing on one buyer at a time many animals can be marketed to many different buyers at local auctions.

- One herd will free up farmers' time to engage in other livelihoods

Creating of a Circular Local Micro-Economy

Mozana could have a circular micro local micro-economy. These are the early small winners and possible gamechangers that we managed to filter through the sieves of desirability, feasibility and catalytic. Mozana lies across iXesi river from the small

coastal town of Hamburg. The town receives many local and international visitors who could be brought to Mozana for lessons on rotational grazing. But there's no bridge connecting the two sides of the river. During one of our brainstorming sessions, we even imagined that a steel foot bridge could be constructed across iXesi River that will make it possible for the farming communities of both sides of the river to connect. More importantly, the bridge would enable tourists from the town of Hamburg, on the western side of the river to cross for the experience of rotational grazing in action and make agritourism in Mozana possible.

Concluding Remarks

The process of turning the vision into tangible life changing things on the ground takes time. Action can't happen without building alignment and consensus for seeds to take root and for momentum to build. The process must allow for the hiccups along the way. The majority of people in Mozana village have no formal education. Consequently, the grazing plan will need to be visual to be people friendly. This means developing a map of the watershed showing the village, crop fields, grasslands, water points and other physical structures. The map should also incorporate the movement of the multispecies herd throughout the year. Although payment for participation in the scheme has been briefly discussed, it still needs to be agreed upon and signed by every member of the community. The proposed communal grazing plan with permanent herders is not dissimilar to transhumance of the 1800's.

Mozana has access to all the other pieces of the puzzle, except startup capital, which could be raised, from the provincial government and its rural development agency, if a bankable plan can be developed.

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Appendix: Where The Path May Lead Us

With this research, we managed to lay a strong foundation for the future of Mozana village. But more work remains. In a discussion with a potential impact investor, this what they suggested as a starting point. As discussed, we would like to assess the viability of creating a Vertically Integrated Meat Production Unit in the Eastern Cape area which you have identified. To summarize the concept, it would entail the following:

- A fenced in area (veterinary cordon fence) with access-controlled entrances to create a Biosecurity Zone free of FMD and other disease.
- Livestock Rotational Grazing Camps/Fields
- Crop farms to grow supplementary feed for the animals
- Veterinary checking/handling station to improve herd health
- A small modular abattoir producing both beef and sheep/goat carcasses for local consumption (improve food security in this zone) and for export
- A butchery or factory shop to sell the local products to the people living in this zone at a fair price

- A learning center focused on skills transfer and skills learnership programs specific to opportunities withing the different sectors in this operation.

The key challenges that we face:

- Bringing together a large number of people and farming together as a community with a communal herd and not individual livestock.
- Effective Management of this system so that the whole group benefits and not only a select elite. Corruption must not be allowed to enter this operation.

We will take care of securing the trading of both the meat and the animals, all equipment, necessary skills and initial management needed for skills transfer. We can also facilitate a funding application process through external funding houses.

What we would need to continue to the funding application stage:

- A signed undertaking by the village elders/landowners and local leaders to incorporate their livestock into a communal herd and their communities into a livestock association with a set of rules, policies and procedures, contained in a Memorandum of Incorporation which would regulate and govern the operation.
- We would also require someone with integrity to chair the farmers' association as an objective/uninterested party to manage conflict of interest, prevent

corruption, and to ensure that the association benefits the whole community. We feel that this person should be you.

- We need a livestock census/count of cattle, sheep, and goats to determine the communal herd size. We also need an indication of what percentage is female so as to determine the expected weaner output that can be achieved.

- We need an approximate land size that would be enclosed in the bio-secure zone and the number of villages and people that would be contained within it.

Based on this information we can then determine:

- What the cost of a feasibility study would be

- Draw up a business plan

- Apply for funding for the feasibility study

    - Both a feasibility study and strong business plan is needed to apply for external funding for such a large project.

    - If we cannot obtain funding for the feasibility study, we would need to consider alternative funding such as self-funding by the association or local funding such as grants. Local funding would be the last option as we do not want to open a door to possible corrupt sources that may cause a stumbling block if they do not get what they want.

It is very important to discuss the terms and regulations that would govern the livestock association with the village elders-leaders so that the community will understand from the beginning how the biosecurity procedures (movement control) and veterinary cordon fence would work and how it would affect them so that they don't later on push back against these restrictions.

The benefits could then be explained to them; this system will provide sustainable jobs, crop farming opportunities to supply feed and a good price for their livestock sold to the abattoir. It would also provide key upliftment skills which the community would benefit from in the longer term. The communal herd will need to be managed effectively with ownership branding or ear tags so that each animal can be traced back to the owner, and they can be paid when the animal is slaughtered. These systems and the integrity of the fence, access control and bio-security protocols will need to patrolled by an independent committee as part of the memorandum of incorporation of the association to prevent corruption and livestock theft, FMD and other diseased animals moving into the zone and to be able to at all times prove that the systems needed to secure the export market is in place so as to protect the vital income stream for the whole operation to succeed in the long term. We furthermore see this as an initiation of a partnership with the community to potentially create further vertically integrated meat production units beyond this one project that will sustainably improve the lives of many fellow South Africans.

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