

Navigating the contradictory dynamics of production and social reproduction in collectively owned agricultural enterprises in South Africa's land reform

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Abstract

The paper explores how beneficiaries of South Africa's land reform programme attempt to navigate the contradictory dynamics of production and social reproduction in collectively owned agricultural enterprises. The Mphuzanyoni Communal Property Association in KwaZulu-Natal province farms with commercial beef herds and the Mayime Cooperative in the Eastern Cape province is engaged in a joint venture dairy farming scheme in partnership with an agribusiness firm. Severe tensions are evident between the social reproduction of households and the requirements of simple or expanded reproduction of agricultural enterprises. Bernstein's concept of competing 'funds' is used to examine struggles over production and reproduction on the farms, in which members of socially differentiated households contest divergent visions for the collective enterprises. Conflicts centre on how labour and capital should be mobilised, how income and other benefits in kind should be distributed to households and whether or not income should be invested for purposes of simple or expanded reproduction of the enterprise. Challenges of governance are rooted in these conflicts rather than in group ownership as a form of property right.

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accumulation, agricultural cooperatives, class dynamics, communal property associations, land and agrarian reform, social reproduction

1 | INTRODUCTION

Land reform in rural South Africa has ambitious and wide-ranging goals: providing redress for the historic injustice of large-scale land dispossession, securing the land rights of black South Africans, directly addressing one of the root causes of poverty (landlessness) and improving levels of agricultural production engaged in by poor rural households (Department of Land Affairs (DLA), 1997).¹ In relation to small-scale farming, it aims to enhance its contribution to rural livelihoods (i.e. 'social reproduction') but also seeks to stimulate agricultural 'commercialisation' (i.e. accumulation). However, the two objectives are often in conflict with one another, given the class contradictions of capitalist social relations. These contradictions emerge powerfully within collective agricultural enterprises, a key focus of many South African land reform projects, giving rise to a host of tensions and conflicts.

Some land reform farms are owned collectively by Communal Property Associations (CPAs), and many of these attempt to engage in collective ownership and management of singular capitalist farming enterprises (Hornby, 2014).² Legislation³ allows these groups to acquire, hold and manage property according to agreed rules and principles that are written into a constitution. It does not, however, prescribe how land and other property should be allocated to members of the group or how decisions about allocations and distributions should be made. The state has voiced concern over conflict within CPAs that lead to dysfunction and declining levels of production on farms transferred under land reform (Hornby, 2014). Binswanger et al. (2008) argue that CPA conflicts occur because of poor leadership and inadequate institutional design and propose more rules, clear sanctions and compliance with reporting requirements as solutions. However, these technical solutions fail to account for the social dynamics that underlie the dysfunctions and conflicts that CPA committees are expected to resolve.

Cooperatives are also promoted in some land reform contexts in order to facilitate collective commercial production and are sometimes extended to joint ventures between agribusiness firms and communities in so-called 'communal areas' (Bunce, 2018; Lahiff et al., 2007). A cooperative is defined in the Co-operatives Act, 2005 (No. 14) as 'an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic and social needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise, organised and operated on cooperative principles'.

Under the apartheid regime, cooperatives of white commercial farmers benefited from public subsidies and tax exemptions and wielded considerable decision-making power in the single marketing channel system that prevailed (Ducastel & Anseeuw, 2017). However, since the 1980s the cooperative sector has undergone restructuring, including removal of subsidies and tax exemptions (Ortmann & King, 2007), motivating many to transform into publicly listed companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (Bernstein, 2013). Since 2005, a plethora of agricultural cooperatives have been set up, partly in response to the 'Co-operative Incentive Grant' (Twalo, 2012). However, rates of failure are catastrophically high (Cousins & Gumede, 2017; Wessels, 2016). Rather than the dominant discourse of technical and governance problems such as poor management, leadership and institutional failure (Borda-Rodriguez & Vicari, 2014), this paper shows how the underlying contradictions between capitalist production and social reproduction emerge strongly within collective enterprises managed by CPAs and cooperatives and explores their local political dynamics.

¹There are three main programmes within South Africa's land reform: land restitution, land redistribution and tenure reform.

²This model was strongly promoted between 1994 and 2007 (Lahiff, 2007), after which individual or family/household ownership became the main focus within the land redistribution programme.

³The relevant legislation is the Communal Property Associations Act of 1996, designed specifically for land reform beneficiaries (DLA, 1997).

The fundamental contradiction is between the social reproduction of member households (and their kinship-based and other social networks) and the requirements of simple or expanded reproduction of the collective agricultural enterprise. This is similar to the contradiction faced by petty commodity producers, who occupy the class positions of both capital and labour (Bernstein, 2010). Not all the tensions evident within CPAs and cooperatives can be attributed to this contradiction, but the comparative case studies presented here illustrate the utility of social reproduction theory to help explain many of the emerging conflicts, dynamics and challenges faced by these entities, their governance structures and the households belonging to them. In particular, we make use of Bernstein's (2010) concept of competing 'funds' within households engaged in petty agricultural commodity production to examine a range of struggles on two such farms. These highlight conflicting claims on income generated by these entities.

The first case discussed here is the Mphuzanyoni CPA, which is involved in beef cattle production in the Besters District of the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The second case is the Mayime Cooperative, which has entered into a joint venture arrangement with a strategic partner, Amadlelo Agri, and is engaged in dairy production near Shiloh village in the Eastern Cape Province. In both cases, socially differentiated groupings of members have embraced very different visions for their collectively owned and managed farming enterprise, and conflicts often centre on how labour and capital should be mobilised and used, and on whether income and other resources should be distributed to households as a contribution to their social reproduction, or invested for purposes of reproducing or expanding the enterprise. We argue that these are the key dynamics at work, rather than those identified by the mainstream literature and often articulated by the government, which emphasises governance challenges, or the political dynamics inherent in group decision-making (Binswanger et al., 2008; Borda-Rodriguez & Vicari, 2014; Wessels, 2016).

The paper begins by reviewing recent literature on social reproduction theory, focusing on perspectives from agrarian political economy and clarifying this paper's contribution to these debates. We then present our two case studies, before analysing the roots of emerging struggles over income, jobs, land and other productive resources within a comparative perspective. We conclude by briefly discussing policy options for assisting CPA and cooperative members to 'navigate the contradictions' of collective commercial agriculture within South Africa's land reform programme.

1.1 | The contradictory dynamics of production and social reproduction, in relation to agriculture in particular

In *Capital* Vol. I, Marx (1976: Ch 23) focused largely on the problematic of the reproduction of the capitalist system as a whole, including the class that sells its labour to capitalists, the working class. However, what has come to be known as *social reproduction* is not given a thorough treatment in his analysis. From the 1960s, Marxist-feminists in particular, have attempted to shed more light on the interlinkages between the realms of production and reproduction under capitalism and the role of the non-commodified dimensions⁴ of existence in the workings of the capitalist system as a whole. Thus, Laslett and Brenner (1989, p. 382) have suggested a distinction between what Marx described as 'societal reproduction' and an expanded definition of 'social reproduction', the latter encompassing:

'the activities and attitudes, behaviours and emotions, and responsibilities and relationships directly involved in maintaining life, on a daily basis and intergenerationally. It involves various kinds of socially necessary work—mental, physical, and emotional—aimed at providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined means for maintaining and reproducing population'.

⁴There are, however, several aspects of social reproduction that are commodified, particularly in the care economy.

In brief, then, social reproduction can be understood as the ‘creation and recreation of people as cultural and social, as well as physical, beings’ (Vogel, 2000). As such it goes beyond the unpaid ‘care-work’ most often highlighted in earlier iterations of social reproduction theory to include the maintenance of human beings in their full set of social relations. Meeting social reproduction involves a variety of labour processes, which are both unpaid and paid, communal and individual and material and symbolic (ibid). As Fraser and Jaeggi, (2018, p. 32) note ‘Social reproduction encompasses the creation, socialization and subjectivation of human beings more generally ... It also includes the making and remaking of culture, of the various swaths of intersubjectivity that human beings inhabit—the solidarities, social meanings, and value horizons in and through which they live and breathe’.

Different emphases are evident within the ranks of Marxist-feminists. Thus Mezzadri (2019) suggests that social reproduction theory should focus on a conception of social reproduction as itself ‘value-producing’. In her view, reproductive realms directly shape and condition the appropriation of surplus value, for example, by reinforcing patterns of labour control in capitalist workplaces, by absorbing the costs of reproduction, and in the ‘formal subsumption’ of (outsourced) production processes, where labour is unwaged (Mezzadri, 2019). For O’Laughlin (2022) any conception of social reproduction as a ‘separate sphere’ should be jettisoned entirely. It is the ‘everyday struggles of living labour that determine its reproduction not just in the kin-based family but in overlapping, shifting spaces and processes, including struggles for better wages and working conditions in capitalist firms’ (ibid: 17).

Fraser (2017) argues that the contemporary crisis of social reproduction is a central characteristic of the ‘neoliberal moment’, brought on by capitalism’s relentless destruction of social reproduction through its drive for endless accumulation. This is not simply a ‘crisis of care’; rather, it is a generalised crisis of a capitalist society unable to reproduce the necessary conditions for its own survival. The capitalist mode of production internalises a ‘crisis tendency’ of social reproduction in two senses. Firstly, sustained capital accumulation relies on the social reproduction of labour-power; secondly, the constant striving under capitalism for sustained accumulation uproots the very process of social reproduction it depends on. In this sense, its structural crisis cannot be ameliorated through tokenistic policies and rather requires ‘reinventing the production-reproduction distinction and reimagining the gender order’ (Fraser, 2016).

The theorisation that we are presenting on social reproduction in this paper needs to be appropriately situated within this broader literature. Unlike many contributions to social reproduction theory, which have a core focus on ‘unpaid care work’ or which aim to highlight ‘gender relations’ as the central dynamic in their analyses, our focus is specifically on how to theorise the contradiction between the social reproduction of households (and their kinship-based and other social networks), and the requirements of simple or expanded reproduction of collective agricultural enterprises. We present two empirical case studies, which illustrate how production and reproduction, through both non-commodified and commodified relations, are as contradictory and dynamically intertwined in agrarian societies as they are in industrial economies, but in distinctive ways (Chung, 2017). We account for the particular dynamics of our cases with reference to the wider political economy in which they are embedded.

We focus on both the material conditions required to meet social reproduction and the need to maintain human life and social relations in all their fullness. We particularly centre the ceremonial functions required to maintain lineage and wider kinship networks but also gender and class relations. Of central importance to our approach, is a thorough analysis of the class dynamics of agrarian formations.⁵

Work on social reproduction in rural areas in the global South is beginning to find its way into the literature but has yet to influence a debate that still tends to be somewhat North-centric. The social reproduction of labour and life takes particular forms in these contexts, including the use of crop and livestock production for both domestic

⁵Perhaps, a shortcoming of the paper is that while gender is discussed throughout, a more nuanced intersectional approach could have provided deeper insight into gender dynamics and social reproduction processes. It would be worthwhile to systematically investigate how different aspects of social difference (like class, gender, generation and lineage) are produced and reproduced in a dynamic relationship with each other in particular lived experiences (Ferguson, 2016). While the care requirements of households have been analysed to some extent (i.e. generational dynamics of various social units, the requirements of raising children and several instances of ill health and disability in households), this is not the core focus, as is the case in other studies of social reproduction.

consumption and cash income and the gathering of natural resources such as wild foods and fuelwood. Many natural resources are found in commons, held 'collectively' by a range of social units. All of these activities are structured by distinctions of age, gender, lineage, ethnicity and so on, with women assuming major roles in small-scale food production, fuel and water collection, domestic labour and the care of young children, the frail, elderly and the sick, and maintaining harmonious social relations among kin and communities (Razavi, 2009; Federici, 2004).

Access to and control over land and natural resources, in conjunction with the labour required for production and gathering, are key for household subsistence in many contexts (Naidu & Ossome, 2016: 61). Several authors have demonstrated the centrality of social networks in meeting the requirements of social reproduction in African agrarian formations as a means to secure future claims to land, labour and other resources (Berry, 1989; Peters, 2004), including as members of communities, in networks of kinship, lineage, marriage, gendered relations and other religious and cultural associations (Cousins et al., 2018; Ferguson, 2016; Kingwill, 2017). Ethnographic research in African agrarian formations has indicated how property relations (including land) are mediated by relations of kinship, clanship and especially lineage connected to descent groups (whether patrilineal, such as the cases presented here, or matrilineal) (Kingwill, 2016/7; Peters, 1997).

Pressures on social reproduction are central in tendencies towards processes of class and social differentiation in agrarian contexts. As Bernstein (2010: 103) argues, drawing on Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985), small-scale farmers should be conceived of as 'petty commodity producers' rather than 'peasants' (often portrayed as existing outside of capitalism's contradictions). By combining the positions of capital and labour, petty commodity producers consequently also concentrate contradictory imperatives to secure both social reproduction and the survival (or expansion) of the farm.

Bernstein (2010: 18–20) proposes that this should be conceptualised as attempting to meet the demands of four competing 'funds'⁶: a *consumption fund* for food, clothing, shelter and so on, including for those too young or too old to work; a *replacement fund* for productive capital (e.g. seed, tools, draught animals)—but also for labour, through generational reproduction (childbearing and care of the old and unfit); a *ceremonial fund*, for activities that create and recreate the cultures and social relations of farming communities, such as rituals and festivities' (ibid: 20); and a *fund of rent*, where farmers make payments to others such as landlords, moneylenders or states.

Bernstein locates the reproduction squeeze facing many small farmers today within the global reality of the structural fragmentation of 'classes of labour',⁷ by which he means those people depending, directly and indirectly, on the sale of their labour power to sustain themselves on a daily basis (Bernstein, 2010: 110–112). 'Fragmentation' refers in part to hybrid and diverse combinations of precarious forms of livelihood and income available to classes of labour today, as well as the 'forms of differentiation and oppression along intersecting lines of class, gender, generation, caste and ethnicity' (Bernstein, 2006: 455). The politics of these classes are often equally fragmented.

Under capitalism, similar contradictions are faced by members of agricultural collectives and cooperatives. Thus Philip (2003) suggests that the defining feature of worker co-ops is that they redraw the relationship between 'owners' and 'producers' and combine them in the members of the co-op, which makes them a potentially radical alternative to conventional capitalist enterprises. But this is also the source of many of the difficulties they face. Tensions arise between democratic worker participation in decision-making and business efficiency; between the roles and interests of workers in their capacity as owners (to whom managers are accountable) and of workers in their capacity as producers (who are accountable, in the context of production, to managers); and between the short-term desire of members to improve their quality of life and the longer-term interests of the cooperative as an economic entity (ibid: 3).

Philip (2003) describes the variety of problems that have been experienced by South African cooperatives: one is 'business viability'; another is establishing democratic and participatory management structures; a third is financial

⁶The quotation marks in Bernstein's use of the term 'funds' suggests that not all activities, forms of labour, types of production or consumption within a PCP enterprise need be monetized.

⁷For illuminating analyses drawing on this concept, see Li (2009), Lerche (2011) and Mezzadri and Srivastara (2015).

management. In particular, the latter is strongly associated with tensions between social reproduction and accumulation⁸:

In many co-ops, members have only a rather hazy understanding of the distinction between total revenue, net monthly income, profit, or the net funds available for distribution as wages ... and the situation is rife for conflict. Many a co-op has found itself having to choose between paying wages, or setting the money aside to pay for inputs for the next production cycle. And in the context of recurrent cashflow crises, many co-op members sacrifice their own incomes to keep the enterprise alive; but there are only so many times this can happen without it eroding cohesion and fuelling dissatisfaction and conflict (ibid: 20).

Similar dynamics occur within many of the collective ventures established through South Africa's land reform programme, particularly in relation to how trade-offs are made between commercial farm production and household livelihoods.

2 | METHODS

Our research methods are informed by Critical Realism, in particular the iterative use of both 'intensive' (e.g. life histories, semi-structured interviews) and 'extensive' methods (e.g. surveys) (Sayer, 2000) and by Marx's (1973) method of recursive abstraction, to both identify and explain concrete phenomena and their causal mechanisms (Mtero et al., 2021). In this approach, researchers are asked to question their first impressions of social reality and seek to understand it through the application of appropriate theory to identifying 'causal mechanisms'. Moreover, these must be understood within their historical and contextual context (Sayer, 2000). In our case, the process of data collection and analysis was directed by the key theories that underpin social reproduction theory and other key concepts of Marxist-Feminist analysis, including the social relations of production under capitalism (Bhattacharya, 2017).

The household was used as the key unit of analysis. As far as possible, we adopted a 'broad residency rule', to ensure that individuals who live elsewhere for periods of the year are included in the analysis, based on the understanding that they remain important to contributing to the household as a social unit (Mtero, 2015; Posel, 2004). However, other social units such as 'networks of kinship' or 'lineages' remain important to processes of social reproduction. During ethnographic research and in the analysis, the dynamics of 'household relations' were explored but so were other sets of relations which influenced access to income, jobs, land and other productive assets and benefits, such as membership of a lineage, which spills over the boundaries of the 'household'.

The case study of the Mayime cooperative involved periodic ethnographic immersion between September 2015 and November 2016, a socio-demographic and livelihood survey of 63 households,⁹ 21 key informant interviews, 40 semi-structured interviews and 15 life histories (Bunce, 2018). The case study on Mphuzanyoni CPA involved periodic ethnographic immersion between October 2010 and June 2013, conducting a socio-demographic and livelihood survey of 18 households,¹⁰ a survey of data on cattle sales at the district auctions, 13 key informant interviews, 16 life histories, 13 semi-structured interviews and one focus group (Hornby, 2014). These cases were deliberately chosen for comparative analysis because they clearly illustrate the tensions between the social reproduction of

⁸While Bernstein's 'funds' include non-monetary resources and flows, Philip's (2003) account of contradictions in cooperatives in South Africa emphasizes monetary flows because these forms of collective ownership and production have generally been engaged in fully fledged commodity production.

⁹A sample of 33 of these households were members of the Mayime cooperative, which has a total membership of 395 households, thus providing a sample of 8.4% of cooperative members. Due to the large size of the cooperative, it was not practical to reach a larger sample size. The households of nine farm workers and 20 from the surrounding community were included in the survey to enable a broader view on the key aspects of reproducing households and community relations.

¹⁰The total number of CPA households was 24, thus providing a sample of 75% of CPA members.

households and the requirements of simple or expanded reproduction of collective agricultural enterprises.¹¹ However, due to the very different contexts of these collectively owned farms, the two cases also bring to the fore different dynamics regarding the contradictions present and the ensuing struggles over land, labour, income and so forth.

We have made use of a number of analytical tools to understand the data collected, including analysis of (1) asset groups (Sarre, 1987); (2) wealth rankings (Scoones et al., 2010); (3) analysis of livelihood activities, strategies and sources; (4) labour exploitation: the degree to which households employ others, work for others or work for themselves (Bunce, 2022; Patnaik, 1987); and (5) agricultural and other livelihood trajectories (Scoones et al., 2012). The combination of these various tools differed in each case study; however, the logic of investigation was similar, based on Marx's (1973) method of 'recursive abstraction'.

3 | NAVIGATING THE REQUIREMENTS OF PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION IN MPHUZANYONI CPA AND MAYIME COOPERATIVE

3.1 | Mphuzanyoni CPA beef cattle farm

The Besters Land Reform project is located in the north of the Emnambithi/Ladysmith local municipality, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The economy of Besters is based strongly on agriculture, with beef being the dominant commodity, followed by maize and soya beans. In 2005, negotiations between commercial farmers and former labour tenants resulted in the transfer of about 21% of the district's farmland to 13 CPAs, made up of 170 farmworker households. The government spent R25.2 million on the project, of which 55% was paid to the sellers of land within 2 years of agreement being reached, a pace of implementation rarely evident in land reform. Most importantly, within 2 years, several of the CPAs were selling weaned oxen at district cattle auctions, signalling that successful 'commercial livestock production' was taking place.

The farm which the Mphuzanyoni CPA owns comprises 2034 ha and is occupied by 24 households. The CPA received 169 beef cattle in 2006, as an additional benefit of the land redistribution programme; by October 2010, the herd had grown to 305 cattle. Herd off-take through sales amounted to 25% of breeding stock, within the range of commercial standards (ADA, 2012), but other targets were not being met: Heifer replacement amounted to 14% of the herd, compared to the commercial standard of 20%, and the cull rate was 6%, as opposed to 10% (Gertenbach, 2000).

As in several other CPAs in Besters, not all the cattle on the farm were owned by the CPA itself. The Mphuzanyoni CPA owned just over 300 cattle, whereas individual member households, all of whom owned some cattle with a range of two to 51 animals, kept their own separate herds, which totalled 311 cattle in 2010. The member households occupied four different parts of the farm, and each group's cattle was allocated a grazing camp. The CPA's cattle, by contrast, were managed according to commercial cattle management principles, using a system of rotational camp grazing, with separate camps for bulls, pregnant cows and heifers.

The spatial living arrangements of the households at Mphuzanyoni thus determined land access for livestock grazing and residential use. However, these arrangements were historically mediated by the landowner, who would have permitted a new labour tenant household to settle on the farm. This would be determined by existing kinship relations on the farm, which would have influenced where on the farm the new household settled, as well as by decisions of subsequent landowners over how the farmland was allocated for use.

The logic of household cattle farming is different from that of commercial herds. Cattle are kept for a range of ceremonial functions, including the payment of bridewealth, slaughter during weddings and various ceremonial

¹¹The difference in the sampling approach of these two case studies reflect the fact that research was carried out as two separate PhD research studies, which have been compared in this paper. This does, however, reflect a limitation of this paper in that the two studies were not originally designed to enable comparative analysis.

events associated with death, as well as sales when the household urgently needs cash. Household cattle at Mphuzanyoni are a critical feature of the ceremonial economy and play an important role in underpinning local culture and strengthening relationships within and between households on the farm.

The community of co-owners at Mphuzanyoni, as at other CPAs in the Besters area, is socially differentiated, despite a common history of employment on commercial farms as former labour tenants. Differences in wealth status derive largely from both the number and type of off-farm income sources, as well as the gender of the household head and the size of a household, the incidence of household 'shocks' (e.g. death or unemployment), and the unequal numbers of cattle that households own (Hornby & Cousins, 2019). These are evident in data collected from a number of CPAs in the area.

Table 1 describes three primary sources of income on the Besters land reform farms. These are income from employment, income from a range of social grants paid by the government (old age pensions, child support grants, child foster grants and disability grants) and income derived from household farming activities. The data refers to the total income of all household members in the month prior to the interview. Thus, for example, the sum of income refers to the total income earned in that category by all members of the sample households on the six land reform farms investigated. Since income illustrates some of the activities involved in social reproduction, the table demonstrates that social reproduction on the land reform farms occurs through a combination of livelihoods, including wage labour, social grants and petty commodity production. It also shows that wage work is the main source of income for most households while farming is less significant as a means of deriving income. Furthermore, while the income individuals receive from employment is on average higher than income from social grants or farming, the income distribution within each source of income is very uneven, with individuals receiving a range of R400 to R16 200 from employment and from R15 to R7 833 from farming. This would suggest the presence of inequality between households on the farms.

It is therefore the combination of wage income, social grants and access to productive farming assets (mainly cattle but also land for crops) that account, in the first place, for wealth differences between households. However, gender and generational differences in how these combinations come together are also evident: Men own 75% of the total cattle on the Besters land reform farms and occupy 60% of permanent jobs, and 64% of temporary, casual or contract work, and all the farm jobs in the CPAs. Women were more likely than men to be self-employed with no employees (71%) and far more likely to take part in government employment programmes (89%) than men. Generational dimensions also shape the possibility of wage work as well as income from farming: the largest unemployed age group is young adults (aged between 18 and 30 years) with only a third in any kind of employment (including self-employment) and with over half of those occupying the more marginal and less secure jobs. Furthermore, only 5% of the same age group earns an income from livestock (cattle, goats or chickens), whereas 63% of adults over the age of 45 earn some income from livestock sales.

However, there is an indication that the pattern of gendered cattle ownership is changing, and the change is related to the number of women who receive regular social grants, either child grants or old age pensions. Mrs Ndaba, for instance, said she could sell the cattle she owned at any time because she'd bought them with her own money, but she would inform her husband. 'Since many men can no longer find work, and we women have child

TABLE 1 Household monthly income from diverse sources on land reform farms at Besters, 2010.

	Employment <i>n</i> = 60	Social grants <i>n</i> = 65	Own farming <i>n</i> = 65
Sum of individual incomes	R210 592	R130 000	R67 311
As % of total income	52%	32%	16%
Mean income earned	R3 509	R1 653	R1 035
Range in income earned	R400–R16 200	R250–R6250	R15–R7 833

Note: *n* = 84, which includes the Mphuzanyoni sample of 18 households.

grants, we can now buy cattle in order to feed our children'. However, the magnitude of the shift should not be exaggerated. Mrs Hlatshwayo pointed out that husbands can easily take cattle that belong to their wives and use them to pay *ilobolo* for a second wife, indicating social limits to the notions of women's exclusive and individual ownership claims over cattle.

The possibility of generating an income from cattle sales is partly dependent on the number of cattle that a household owns: the greater the number of cattle owned, the greater the number sold to supplement income, particularly among older men and female heads of household. But cattle sales can also indicate financial distress and the urgent need for income following a shock to the household (e.g. the death and burial of a family/kin member, particularly a wage earner or pensioner). Although all households at Mphuzanyoni own some cattle, households with larger herds are more able to recover from shocks and rebuild their herds, whereas shocks to households with fewer cattle often caused them to drop out of livestock production altogether, particularly if the CPA did not distribute cattle as dividends.

These differences in how wages, social grants and ownership of productive farming assets are combined in the formation of 'classes of labour' help to generate the contradictions evident in conflicts between the imperative of social reproduction of households as members of CPAs and that of the simple or expanded reproduction of the collective enterprises.

3.2 | Struggles over land, farming income, dividends, cattle, jobs and wages

Mphuzanyoni CPA has experienced a range of tensions and struggles in relation to land allocation, the distribution of CPA income, the payment of dividends from CPA profits in the form of both cash and heifers and CPA jobs and wages. Shabalala, a beneficiary resident on the farm and the farm manager at the time of research (2010 to 2013), recognised that if the CPA was to succeed as a commercial producer of cattle, it would probably have to adhere to official recommendations on carrying capacity, cattle numbers and herd management. Over a five-year period (2008–2013) Mphuzanyoni showed a profit in only one year, in 2010, and in 2013, it broke even. Between 2010 and 2013, decisions on how to allocate income, including wages, and also how to manage the CPA's cattle, were bitterly contested.

For the Mphuzanyoni CPA, farm income had two sources: cattle sales and the rental of land to a neighbouring commercial farmer. Rental income covered the costs of a burial insurance scheme that benefited all member households. When the term of this lease ended in 2012, the committee was divided between those in favour of finding a new lessee, in order to maintain the insurance scheme and those who wanted to expand the grazing area of the CPA's commercial herd. In 2013, members elected a new committee to oversee farm management. While it was consolidating its position, CPA cattle, as well as the cattle of households living nearby, were moved into the empty grazing camps. The struggle by those in favour of expanded CPA and household production had been won by default, at the cost of the burial insurance scheme.

Rental income, however, formed only a small proportion of total income. The primary cause of the CPA herd's declining profitability from 2011 to 2013 was the reduced number of cattle put up for sale, combined with increased expenditure. Farm expenditure is made up of farm input costs, dividends to members and wages. Each of these funds must be replaced by the income earned through the sale of the CPA's cattle. Wages rose very gradually between 2009 and 2013, whereas both the costs of inputs and the value of dividends paid fluctuated and sometimes declined.

Wages were a source of grievance for the two (and later three) CPA employees. In 2010, monthly wages of R1270 were slightly lower than the mean wage of R1310 per month earned on other commercial farms in the district.¹² By 2013, wages had dropped below the legally prescribed minimum farm wage, as a result of a CPA decision

¹²This figure is calculated from survey data on 27 of 38 permanent farm workers whose wages were known.

not to provide increases for two years and not to adhere to the government's prescribed new minimum wage for farm workers of R105 per day (R2289 per month). Farm manager Shabalala, a diplomat by nature, was torn: As a member of the co-owning collective, he recognised the financial constraints on paying higher wages, but as an employee, he would lose out. He also feared that the decision could compromise the productivity of farm labour (because the CPA committee advised its employees to reduce their working hours in order to compensate for the lower wages).

The committee's decision on wages arose in part from the increasing discipline it attempted to exercise over farm expenditure. Expenditure fluctuated widely over five years, driven mainly by increased prices in the operational inputs required to farm the CPA's cattle along commercial lines, together with the committee's decisions to reduce expenditure on the full range of inputs required for commercial beef farming in the area. There was a temporary reprieve in 2012 when the Department of Agriculture donated a portion of the mineral licks required and some fencing materials. But in 2013, the CPA committee was forced to cut back on input purchases and to make difficult trade-offs between longer term investments and short-term income as a result of declining farm income.

These tensions were lodged within deeper contradictions, indicated by declining calving rates on the one hand, and a rapid increase in the payments of cash and cattle dividends to members on the other. Heifers were not replacing older female breeding stock at commercial beef production target rates because the CPA was making annual disbursements of heifers, and cash, to its member households. Between 2007 and 2013, this amounted to 142 heifers and two oxen disbursed to households and R17,800 to each household in cash, a total cost to the CPA of R427,200.

A more hidden form of dividend (or perhaps subsidy) to members was that the CPA also funded the input costs of household cattle herds, including the labour required to dip, feed, castrate, dehorn and inoculate them. Households were entitled to use CPA bulls, saving them the cost and management of keeping and replacing their own bulls but thereby increasing the total number of bulls the CPA was required to keep to maintain the biological reproduction of all the herds on the farm. Each of these benefits increased costs to the CPA enterprise and generated tensions that had to be managed. The cost to the CPA of maintaining household cattle more than doubled the CPA's cost of producing weaners from R760 per weaner to R1648. The subsidy thus threatened the profitability of the CPA enterprise and its ability to compete with other beef producers.

These subsidies provided a mean additional annual income of R5100 to each household in 2010. Since household cattle numbers ranged from two to 51, the actual subsidy benefit ranged from R600 per household to R15,300. Asked about the apparent inequality of this benefit, several respondents said the household cattle subsidies were not a benefit (*umhlomulo*) but a form of assistance (*ukusizana*) to households. The decision to provide this particular 'support' appears to have been mediated by kinship relations.

Shabalala, the farm manager, belonged to one of two clusters of patrilineal decent groups at Mphuzanyoni. These clusters shaped the outcomes of CPA committee elections. In the first election immediately after land reform, the Shabalala cluster prevailed while the second cluster dominated the subsequent election.¹³ The committees made decisions relating to how the land was used and how benefits from the commercial cattle herd were distributed. The decision to maintain the support provided to household cattle despite declining profitability benefitted those kin, like Shabalala, who had larger herds of household cattle. But farm politics were complex matters: the committee under the leadership of Shabalala's sister, also decided, against Shabalala's advice to reduce farm workers' hours and the expenditure on farm inputs in the same year that a distribution of cash dividends at Christmas time was made to all households. In that year, the pressure on the committee from members of the second cluster of patrilineal decent groups was enormous. They (or one member in particular) argued that cash distributions were needed urgently to support households that had no wage workers.

¹³The 'communities' on land reform farms were artificial in the sense that the beneficiaries of particular farms were selected through processes mediated by Department of Land Reform officials and farm owners. The presence of kinship relations on land reform farms and how they influence decisions and outcomes is an area of investigation that requires more research.

The cash disbursed annually to members placed huge demands on the CPA's finances. It came at the cost of the capital required to fund ongoing operational expenditure (visible in deteriorating infrastructure and machinery). It also compromised the ability of the CPA to expand its breeding stock to the size of the original breeding herd, which had been reduced by the annual off-take necessary to maintain a commercial herd (that is, off-take through culling and deaths), and which would have required cash to raise or purchase new heifers. Despite the cost to the CPA, however, the cash disbursements from a household perspective were relatively insignificant, amounting on average to around R280 per person per annum. This intensified members' demands for increased benefits.

Arguably, the most valuable dividend paid to households was in the form of heifers. These cattle dividends increased breeding stock within household herds and also improved the wealth and status of household heads, who most often owned the cattle and publicly represented the interests of their households at CPA meetings. The mean total value of these heifers was nearly R28,100¹⁴ per household over the 7-year period, and by 2011, 'dividend' heifers had begun to calve. However, the decision to disburse heifers as a dividend seriously reduced the potential productivity of the CPA herd. In the two consecutive years that two heifers were given to each household, the CPA herd's replacement breeding stock ran at deficits and cash constraints meant that new heifers could not be purchased.

In 2011, conception rates also fell, making the looming production crisis visible to all, and forcing the committee to persuade members, at the AGM held that year, that it was necessary to reduce the number of heifers distributed as dividends. The decision was fiercely contested, and several members stormed out of the AGM muttering about mismanagement and the failure of the CPA to improve their lives. In an attempt to hold the CPA together, the members, with the committees' reluctant agreement, then resolved to increase cash dividends to households in lieu of heifer disbursements.

The committee's 'fiscal discipline'—evident in decisions not to increase wages, together with the decision to reduce and then stop dividends in the form of heifers from 2011 to 2013 and, after an initial increase in cash dividends in 2011 and 2012, to cut these dividends altogether in 2013—resulted in a 'perfect storm' of discontent that threatened to unravel the CPA and put the collective cattle enterprise at risk. The committee was the first casualty when its members were voted out in 2013 and replaced by younger members, mainly from the second cluster of patrilineal descent groups. Despite an increase in the numbers of pregnant cows and heifers in 2013, and indications that the production challenges were gradually being resolved, it was unclear whether or not Mphuzanyoni would be able to ride out these conflicts.

These changes in relation to allocations of grazing land for both household and CPA use, and how profits from the collectively owned cattle enterprises were to be distributed, did not conform to notions of 'commercial production targets', nor did they reflect ideas of 'peasant community solidarity'. Rather, CPA decisions showed that this was a hybridised production system designed to meet multiple purposes, including both social reproduction and successful commodity production, and that it is extremely difficult to align these purposes neatly with one another. This helped to generate the many types of tensions and forms of struggle evident at Mphuzanyoni (Hornby & Cousins, 2019).

3.3 | Mayime cooperative dairy farm

In 2011 Mayime Cooperative entered into a joint venture enterprise, with an agribusiness firm, Amadlelo Agri,¹⁵ focused on commercial dairy farming. The joint venture is known as the Shiloh Dairies Trust, with its name taken

¹⁴This was calculated using the mean price for CPA stock obtained at the district stock sales between February 2009 and June 2013. It is probably slightly overstated, in that CPAs also sold infertile breeding cows and non-productive bulls.

¹⁵Amadlelo Agri was formed in 2004 by 70 white commercial dairy farmers. They have established seven dairy joint venture farms, a macadamia joint venture and a piggery joint venture. Government support was essential to the agreement of these joint venture deals, sanctioning them and providing funding for the farms' fixed assets.

from the surrounding village. The Trust is a joint governance structure mandated to implement a 10-year 'share-milk' contract,¹⁶ which was renewed in 2021. The contract involves a '50/50 share-milk' agreement, a model adapted from New Zealand (Bunce, 2018). The farm involves residents from Shiloh, as both landowners and farm workers, some residents combining these two identities.

The Mayime Cooperative, (with the help of massive government investment¹⁷), brings 'fixed assets' into the business including the land, irrigation equipment and a rotary milking parlour. Amadlelo Agri brings the cows and other 'movable assets' into the venture, and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the farms. These assets remain the property of the different parties involved in the share-milk agreement. After a 10% management fee has been deducted by Amadlelo Agri, profits from milk sales are split on a 50/50 basis between the two parties.

The joint venture dairy farm is located on an apartheid-era smallholder irrigation scheme within the former 'homeland' of the Ciskei, but now within the Chris Hani District of the Eastern Cape Province. Irrigation plots are spread over 450 ha and are held under communal tenure, with land rights accessed through 'customary' allocations from either a traditional leader or the Moravian Church. In 1818 Shiloh was founded as part of the Moravian Missionary Society, which gained control of over 30,000 ha of land in the area (van Averbeke et al., 1998). The Moravian Church continues to be an active part of social and cultural life among the customary landowners. Religious affiliation is central to accessing land and other benefits from the joint venture farm, as this quote from a cooperative member illustrates.

'The co-op committee are from that church. It is like that church is the ANC (African National Congress) in this village and if you are not from that church they do not want to listen to you. The Isibonda (headman) belongs to the Moravian church. They have meetings in that church and they announce the committee meetings in the church'.

The 395 customary landowners, all of whom are members of the Mayime Cooperative, have rights to small irrigation plots of around one ha. The cooperative committee comprises six members, three of whom also serve on the Shiloh Dairies Trust, and is chaired by the headman (a traditional leader). The same committee members had been in office from 2003 until the time of research in 2015/16. They were all members of the Moravian church and from dominant patrilineal decent groups who were in close allegiance to and personally chosen by the headman.

3.3.1 | Historical and contemporary land conflicts in Shiloh

Shiloh village contains many female-headed households and unemployment is widespread. Many households rely heavily on informal migrant wage labour opportunities, social grants and some petty trade and occasional participation in public works programmes. The population is socially differentiated along lines of class. Other aspects of social differences like generation, gender, patrilineal descent group, religion, race and ethnicity intersect with class in complex ways. Livelihood strategies and the key features of labour exploitation among households included in the sample differ significantly, in terms of the extent to which they hire out family/household labour, hire in labour or are self-employed (Patnaik, 1987). Some aspects of social differentiation are evidenced in Table 2 below.¹⁸

The many intragroup conflicts among the irrigation plot owners reflect the realities of a highly differentiated community in a context where household reproduction is under extreme pressure. *Petty commodity producers* make little or no use of wage labour and mostly exploit their own household labour. Households identified as *supplementary food producers* rely considerably on social grants and are a vulnerable class. The majority of households in Shiloh are located in the *allotment holding worker* and *worker farmer* class categories, together comprising 74% of the total;

¹⁶The share-milk contract specifies the assets owned by the relevant parties and outlines financial and governance arrangements.

¹⁷At Shiloh around R30 million of government funding was invested in fixed assets. Amadlelo Agri invested around R11 million in movable assets.

¹⁸For more on the characteristics of the class categories and the methodology employed for class analysis see Bunce (2022).

TABLE 2 Social differentiation in Shiloh Village ($n = 62$) and among members of Mayime cooperative ($n = 33$), 2016.

Class categories	Type of labour exploitation	Characteristics of class categories	Class proportion for entire Shiloh sample ^a ($n = 62$)	Class proportion for cooperative member sample ($n = 33$)
Rent-earning rich farmers and business owners	Primarily exploiting the labour of others	Employment of others' labour (including rents) is equal to or larger than self-employment. Some derive substantial income from off-farm businesses with hired labour. Some also sell labour in off-farm activities and some labour on the joint venture. They reinvest income in their own farming, especially in accumulating livestock.	0.03	0.07
Petty commodity producers/petty traders	Primarily self-employed	Reproduce themselves predominantly from self-employment (on-farm and/or petty trade) without any or minimal hired in labour, which may be supplemented to a minor extent by wage labour.	0.08	0.12
Supplementary food producers	Primarily self-employed	No access to wage income. Survive primarily on social grants, supplemented by garden plots and petty trading.	0.15	0.07
Worker farmers	Primarily exploited by others	Engaged in wage labour (often migrant, also joint venture) for social reproduction, but reinvest off-farm incomes in own account farming on a substantial scale.	0.32	0.44
Allotment holding workers	Primarily exploited by others	Engage in wage labour for social reproduction but also work in small home gardens or plots.	0.31	0.3
Near-landless labourers	Primarily exploited by others	Depend almost wholly on wages and social grants. Landless or near-landless.	0.11	-

^aInclusive of Mayime Cooperative members.

wage labour is their most significant source of income. *Rent-earning rich farmers and business owners*, who primarily exploit the labour of others, are a very small minority.

3.4 | Struggles over cooperative income, jobs, dividends, land, water, heifers and milk

Conflicts over land ownership and use in Mayime have racial, ethnic, religious, gender, patrilineal, and class dimensions, these social identities articulating with each other in complex ways to mediate access to jobs, dividends and decision-making power in Shiloh. Shiloh is bordered by the densely populated Sada Township, a resettlement site for the victims of apartheid-era forced removals (Evans, 2014). Shiloh's residents have submitted a collective land claim on Sada, asserting that it is located on their ancestral grazing land. Residents from Sada are commonly considered outsiders by customary landowners and are not eligible for jobs at the dairy farm.

In addition, a further land conflict revolves around the claims of 17 dairy farmers, who lived and farmed on the irrigation scheme during the Ciskei era (1981–1994). Both the irrigation equipment and their homes were vandalised after the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation (Ulimocor) was liquidated in 1997. The following statement from a male respondent in a ‘rent-earning rich farmer and business owner’ household illustrates how the conflict over land has racial and ethnic dimensions as well. Many of the so-called ‘settler farmers’ came from other parts of South Africa, and included Afrikaans-speaking coloured¹⁹ farmers. They continue to be seen as outsiders by many of the customary landowners from the isiXhosa-speaking Thembu.

‘Some of those 17 farmers are dead already. Others do not have a dividend ... for example, Farmer (B) is coloured and he lives in Queenstown since he was removed ... Those dairy farmers that are not from here did not get to keep their land ... they cannot be landowners on the irrigation land. There is no place for them, that place is for the landowners from Shiloh’.

For cooperative members, the main benefits from the joint venture take the form of preferential access to jobs, land use fees, cash dividends, free milk for workers, cheap milk for landowners and male calves at low prices.²⁰ In relation to heifers, a respondent from Amadlelo Agri explains: ‘If there were 100 surplus heifers, 50 belong to Amadlelo and 50 to Mayime. We tell them to take the animals and lease them out which will help them to buy more animals’. However, the fact that surplus heifers owned by the cooperative do not get distributed to households is contentious.

53% of the labour force of the cooperative comes from member households; however, much of the remaining workforce is recruited from wider kinship networks. Households in conflict with the committee leadership reported being unable to gain access to these jobs. A female cooperative member from a ‘worker farmer’ household argued that ‘People are called from their houses to work there ... The people who work there are only from a certain side of the community, those on the side of Mayime and the Nkosana [headman]’. This clearly illustrates how dominant descent groups control access to jobs, while other aspects of social difference like class, gender, religion and generation intersect and affect the experience of exclusion or inclusion.

Joint venture jobs contribute significantly to overall household income within Shiloh, accounting for a median of 32% of total household income, for households receiving both jobs and dividends, and 50% for households receiving only jobs. However, of a total of 26 permanent labourers, only six were female. In dairy farming, the division of labour is highly gendered. Women work as milkers, sell milk and rear calves. Men work in roles considered to require more physical strength, such as irrigation, tractor driving, herding, administering injections, security guarding and undertaking artificial insemination.

The quote below is from a female farm worker from an ‘allotment-holding worker’ household. The joint venture job is central to sustaining the household, however, high levels of dependency mean that wages are unable to meet the full reproductive needs of household members, and they must also rely on social grants and own-account farming. Generational reproduction of children is predominantly the responsibility of women; this gendered inequity of care is accentuated by declining rates of marriage, as discussed below. Moreover, high levels of gender-based violence in the area, coupled with fierce competition over jobs, mean that the early working hours on the dairy farm pose a serious threat to the safety of female workers.

‘The only income in the house is my wages, my mother’s old age grant and four child support grants. We struggle to make months end, so we are unable to save money. We have to pay school fees for the four children. I want to start rearing pigs for extra money ... The challenges of this work at the farm is that as a women it is dangerous to walk here in the morning, you can get hurt because there are lots

¹⁹A person of mixed European (White) and African (Black) or Asian ancestry, according to the official definition of the South African government between 1950 and 1991.

²⁰Male calves are considered surplus to the dairy industry, so this is not a significant cost to the joint venture.

of muggers. I had an incident because I interrupted some guys busy stealing the silage. Relations between the workers and the community are not 100% ...There is some jealousy between those who want jobs and us'.

Commercial dairy farming in South Africa is capital-intensive, with relatively low labour requirements. White-owned sharemilking farms in the Eastern Cape, utilising a comparable level of capital inputs to those in the joint venture, employed a mean ratio of one worker to every 62 cows (Bunce, 2018). Mayime Cooperative, however, is under pressure from Shiloh's residents to hire as much labour for the joint venture as possible, and here one worker is hired for every 37 cows. Dairy farming also requires high levels of skill among the labour force, which must work with valuable animals sensitive to diseases. A farm manager at Shiloh explains the impacts of having to source labour locally: 'There is a lot of politics here! Because it's a communal farm, we must take staff from here, but the quality of the workers is not up to standards. We have a high calf mortality rate here because guys don't follow procedures'.

The relatively high labour and production costs borne by the joint venture are mitigated by the benefits of access to (low-cost) gravity irrigation, government funding, and Amadlelo's investments in milk processing, which helps to ensure a favourable milk price. However, in the long term, the joint venture is likely to struggle to continue to be both relatively labour-intensive and profitable, given the highly competitive nature of South Africa's dairy sector (Bunce, 2020).

In the 2015/2016 financial year, the co-op's committee claimed to have distributed a total of R1,178,000 to members in land use fees and dividends. A 2016 household survey reported a mean annual amount per household²¹ of R2096, contributing 2% to total annual household income. The limited benefits are in part a function of the large size of the cooperative group (395 households), taking into account the relatively small scale of production (966 cows on 450 ha of land²²).

Decision-making in relation to the cooperative's profits and disbursement of dividends was unclear and contested. According to members of the committee, this is undertaken at a general meeting of all members. However, many landowners complained that they were not party to these decisions and that dividends contributed little to their livelihoods. The explanation below from a younger male cooperative member from a 'worker farmer' household is illustrative of how the capital-intensive venture is unable to meet the demand for jobs from unemployed youth, and how the cooperative seeks to ease this contradiction by engaging in other 'social projects' such as constructing housing.

'Mayime has projects, which includes the housing project for youth ... youth are erecting houses for themselves. They are also paying me R200 a fortnight to help sometimes ... The dairy on its own cannot support us—we need jobs as well! Especially the youth, they are busy smoking drugs, and the only jobs they have is to make children.²³ There are not enough EPWP (Extended Public Works Programme) jobs!'

Workers at the farms receive free milk from the farm but cooperative members do not, which leads to disgruntlement; instead, the farm sells milk from the cooperative's offices at a discounted rate.²⁴ A worker on the farm explains: 'Another thing they [the opposition] wanted is milk for every landowner, but that will create a loss'. Moreover, several members complained about the fact that irrigated water was reserved for the farm and not accessible for household farming.

²¹The survey included 33 households. These estimates amount to considerably less than the amount claimed by the committee, official financial statements were however not forthcoming.

²²In 2016, the farm manager reported that the farm had 443 dry cows and 523 cows in milk.

²³This is a reference to the reliance on the Child Support Grant to meet household social reproduction.

²⁴In October/November 2016, Mayime was selling 5 L of unpasteurized milk for R32.50 (R6.50 per litre). The official price for supermarkets in rural areas in October 2016 was R14.24 for a litre of UHT milk and R13.14 for a litre of fresh pasteurised milk (NAMC, 2016).

Cooperative members hold differing views over how income and resources should be used and distributed. According to a male committee member and traditional leader from a 'rent-earning rich farmer and business owner' household: 'There is a tension between investing to grow the business and the demand for dividends. People don't want to understand that we need to pay the operating costs of the business, they just want their payments'.

A female respondent from a 'rent-earning rich farmer and business owner' household wanted profits to be reinvested in developing a shopping mall:

'We had proposed that one of the key projects that can come from the dairy is to develop the small town through setting up a mall, but instead they decided to come and put up the vineyard for wine making to further damage people through alcoholism! We do not even know how we are supposed to benefit from those vineyards. They just say they take grapes to Cape Town. We are not getting anything from them'.

The excerpt below from the life history of a male respondent in a 'supplementary food producing' household, clearly reflects pressures on the households' social reproduction, which is precariously met through social grants and subsistence farming. Unlike the households above, this household wanted all profits to be paid out in larger dividends. The social dynamics of generation, gender, patrilineal descent, race and disability are clearly interwoven with their class position:

'I am 77 years old and live here with my wife, brother and grandchild. We survive off our old age pensions, my brother's disability grant and a child support grant. We have a 1/4 ha garden plot where we grow maize and other vegetables. It is only myself and my wife working in the garden and we do not sell anything, we eat it all. I inherited that irrigation plot, which is rented to the dairy from my father because I am the first born. The last time we ploughed that land ourselves was in 2010 ... I only made about R200 from sales but overall I was making more from the land before because I always had enough food on the table! I am not pleased with the current status and now we are too old to work that land, so we will see whether we ask another white man to take over ... We do ask questions in the co-op meetings but we get silenced and answers do not surface'.

Committee members and their supporters often employed a discourse of the 'opposition group', led by a younger generation, being opposed to 'development'. However, this was clearly a simplified narrative that fails to clearly reflect the various aspects of social differentiation and pressures on social reproduction, which intersect to produce conflicts over the management of the cooperative. The chairperson of the committee argued that 'People don't see things the way we do ... I don't know why they are against us - they don't want development!'

These various conflicts have threatened the viability of the dairy farm, which becomes more acute in the face of other pressures such as the rising price of inputs and volatility of the milk price due to imports. Contradictions between the requirements of a capitalist enterprise operating within a highly competitive dairy sector and the diverse demands of social reproduction experienced by socially differentiated households, who are co-owners of the enterprise, emerge very clearly in this analysis.

4 | NAVIGATING THE CONTRADICTIONS

The mainstream literature suggests that governance challenges are at the heart of the failings of collective arrangements in land reform contexts (Binswanger et al., 2008; Borda-Rodriguez & Vicari, 2014; Wessels, 2016). In contrast, we contend that the challenges and contradictions faced by CPAs and cooperatives are best analysed using a Marxist-feminist lens on social reproduction under capitalism, together with an understanding of the contradictions

faced by members of households who are simultaneously workers within, and owners of capitalist enterprises. On both of the case study farms discussed here, contestations have emerged over whether all profits should be paid out as dividends, used to create more jobs, or reinvested to expand the enterprise or make it more profitable. Many of Mayime Cooperative's members were unwilling to reinvest profits into building a business that generates relatively meagre benefits, given the large number of beneficiaries involved. They preferred instead to increase dividend payments and create more jobs. Similarly, in Mphuzanyoni CPA many households indicated a preference for expanding the number of cattle held by households instead of increasing the size of the CPA herd.

The two cases highlight the contradictory requirements of reproducing the conditions for successful collective enterprises within the highly competitive environment of capitalist agriculture in South Africa, at the same time as meeting the demands of social reproduction. The latter involves ensuring the immediate consumption needs as well as the generational reproduction of households and their members, while also reproducing the social, cultural and property relations that hold members together. These contradictions underpin a series of struggles over the use of CPA and cooperative income, as well as access to jobs, land, other productive assets and benefits.

These tensions are exacerbated by a variety of forms of social differences among members of these collectives. These are often experienced as forms of oppression and privilege and are felt within, as well as between households. Although class, gender and patrilineal descent stand out clearly in each case, generational differences, religion and race also framed several struggles.

In Mphuzanyoni, with the collapse of marriage, households are often headed by older matriarchs who occupy the position of capital and who exploit younger women, often 'makhoti'—young, not fully married wives²⁵—for agricultural labour. In Shiloh, intrahousehold struggles were present between elder widows who received dividend payments and their younger daughters and daughters-in-law. However, there were also several cases where dividends went towards taking care of grandchildren. Single female-headed households bear the brunt of the generational reproduction of children, accentuated by declining rates of marriage in both case studies. Gender-based violence also permeates the experience of being a female worker and impacts access to jobs. The 'opposition group' that emerged within Mayime Cooperative was led by a younger generation (predominantly men), who championed different ideas about land-use.

Another defining feature of these collective enterprises is that they redraw the relationship between 'owners' and 'producers or workers' and combine them in the enterprises, which is also a root cause of many of the contradictions they must navigate (Philip, 2003). Various aspects of social difference, that characterise these 'fragmented classes of labour', mediate access to jobs, dividends and decision-making power and have contributed to the divergent visions that CPA and cooperative members have for their farming enterprises.

Although similar contradictions and struggles are witnessed across the two case studies, it is also clear that the value of the comparison is that they elucidate different sets of issues around how to understand the role of social reproduction. This is clearly also a result of the distinct social contexts and differences in the property rights entailed. Mphuzanyoni CPA is a case of land reform where only 24 families collectively own 2034 ha. Mayime cooperative is located on communal land in the former homelands involving 395 households, who are engaged in a joint venture with a strategic partner on just 450 ha. In the case of Mphuzanyoni, there is a common history among these households of employment on commercial farms as former labour tenants. Agricultural livelihoods have been, and continue to be, a very important component of their social reproduction, unlike many of the households in the Mayime case study who had long abandoned farming and where off-farm income sources and social grants were the mainstay of livelihoods. Although in both cases households are socially differentiated, this is more extreme among Mayime cooperative members, explaining to some extent the heightened struggles there.

²⁵Due to high levels of unemployment and de-agrarianisation many men can no longer afford bridewealth (ilobolo), which has led to a drastic decline in marriage rates since the 1960s. Marriage rituals traditionally include a number of inter-family transactions and engagements. However, the high cost of completing these various stages of marriage have led many couples to opt for more truncated versions of marriage (Hornby & Hull, 2022) One implication of this has been that women cannot always officially demonstrate their legal marriage status, leading to tenuous rights to land and farming assets (Weeks, 2013).

Mayime is located in a communal area where the institution of traditional leadership is important. This case therefore highlights the role played by traditional leaders in agrarian formations and the powerful descent groups who are well connected to them, and how this creates an important arena of struggle and negotiation over social reproduction (including access to jobs and incomes from the joint venture farm). These struggles also take place in Mayime between different groups/allegiances of communal landowners and the strategic partner (including white dairy farmers who are members of the agribusiness firm). The state is also an important actor in conditioning the wider political economy in which agrarian change is taking place. On the one hand, the state actively facilitates and enthusiastically supports joint venture agreements, and on the other, has become very critical of the role of CPAs in land reform.

In both cases, class formation is influenced by the relative contribution of different income sources and the type of labour exploitation entailed, the gender of the household head, generational dynamics, the size of the household, and the incidence of household 'shocks'. However, due to the fact that at Mphuzanyoni members have access to more land for their own household farming, accumulation in farming, and particularly the unequal numbers of cattle that households own, is central to class formation and also determining the struggles witnessed over the CPA, for example, preferences to extend household herds rather than reinvest in the CPA. Opportunities to accumulate in farming for Mayime Cooperative members are very limited, struggles are thus more acute over capturing limited benefits from the joint venture farm and class position is more determined by off-farm income sources.

4.1 | The concept of competing 'funds' to examine struggles over production and reproduction

Bernstein's (2010, pp. 18–20) notion of competing 'funds' that petty commodity producers attempt to satisfy can also be applied to collective enterprises under capitalism: a *consumption fund* for members of the collective; a *replacement fund* for productive capital (e.g. breeding stock, fencing, supplementary feed and irrigation infrastructure)—and also for labour, through generational reproduction (childbearing, care of the old and unfit and education); a *ceremonial fund*, for activities that recreate the social relations of farming communities; and a *fund of rent*. In addition, satisfying a fifth fund, for *expanded reproduction*, is often a requirement for the survival of the enterprise. In our cases, the concept of a 'fund of rent' is not applicable, the land is owned by members of these two collectives. Table 3 describes these various competing 'funds' with examples from Mphuzanyoni CPA and Mayime cooperative.

Contributions by these collective enterprises to both consumption and generational reproduction funds, in the form of a range of household benefits, are important, since most households suffer from income poverty. However, social differentiation means that the importance of these contributions varies across households. Households must also use cash or livestock to meet the requirements of the ceremonial economy, in particular marriage, circumcision and ancestral or burial ceremonies.

The quote below from a male 'worker-farmer' in Shiloh illustrates how the ceremonial fund (for circumcision school and ancestral ceremonies) is juggled with the household consumption fund, and aspirations to expand its herd. The decisions about how to manage these funds are made more challenging by stock theft and the added shock of a drought, which affected the productivity of the herd. With the impacts of climate change, managing these intensifying contradictions is likely to render social reproduction ever more precarious.

'I am a herder here. My income from the dairy covers food, clothes and feed for the animals. But it is not enough money to be able to save because I support all four members of my household- they are all unemployed ... I inherited five cattle from my uncle and I bought eight calves from the dairy farm ... I sold two cattle last year and I got R10 300 for them. We also slaughtered two of my mother's cows in a ceremony last year. There are lots of problems with stock theft here in Shiloh, in 2015 I lost

TABLE 3 Competing 'funds' in collective enterprises engaged in livestock production: Examples from Mphuzanyoni CPA and Mayime cooperative.

Competing 'funds'	Examples from Mphuzanyoni CPA and Mayime cooperative
<i>Replacement of productive capital</i>	To keep farming from year to year, the CPA and the cooperative must replace ageing operational inputs and infrastructure. These include breeding stock, livestock feed, veterinary inputs, seeds, chemicals and fertilisers and infrastructure such as fencing, irrigation and rotary milking parlours.
<i>Investments in expanding the enterprise (or improving its productivity)</i>	To remain competitive and profitable, the CPA and the cooperative must expand production (through increasing breeding stock and land area) or improve labour productivity, to boost income and profit margins. Other strategies include vertical integration by investing up and down the value chain (producing feedstock components or engaging in processing, e.g., cheese or unpasteurised milk) or diversifying into other enterprises.
<i>Consumption fund for co-owning members; plus a fund for generational reproduction</i>	To meet the consumption needs of members and also secure their generational reproduction (including the costs of childbearing and raising and taking care of the elderly and ill; which is largely reliant on the unpaid labour of women [many of whom are single]). At least some jobs must be provided to members, funds allocated for their wages, and benefits provided to members in the form of dividends in cash or kind (e.g., heifers, male calves and milk), social investment schemes (e.g., burial insurance) or access to land and subsidised inputs for household production. There are often trade-offs to be made between these different forms of benefit.
<i>Ceremonial fund for the community of co-owners</i>	<p>The CPA and the cooperative must assist their members to maintain the cooperative character of social relations within local communities and prevent disputes over land or competition over scarce jobs from threatening the stability of the collective farming enterprise. This increases pressure on the CPA and cooperative to provide benefits to members. Some of these ceremonial functions are also central to meeting generational reproduction and thus there are overlaps with the consumption fund.</p> <p>In Mayime, joint venture wages and dividends contribute to a ceremonial fund, including purchasing male calves from the farm to be slaughtered in various ceremonies (or as replacement livestock), for ancestors, funerals, weddings, initiations and circumcision school (ulwaluko). Some households rear calves to sell for a profit in the local ceremonial economy. In Mphuzanyoni, the use of rental income to purchase burial insurance for all members, dividends paid out in cash or heifers to households, as well as cattle slaughtered in household wedding ceremonies or funerals, and the slaughter of two CPA cattle at Christmas time so members could have meat. These all contribute to the ceremonies and rituals necessary to recreate social relations.</p>

3 cattle. The problem is the unemployment here in Shiloh. I want to take my son to circumcision school, so I will use the money from the cattle. When it's raining again, the cows will get fat and then I can sell them'.

For both the cooperative and the CPA, increasing household benefits is often necessary to maintain the cooperative character of social relations. Income from enterprise profits must also be used to replace productive capital or, given fierce competitive pressures, to invest in expanding or improving the productivity of the enterprise. Trade-offs

must be made if returns from production cannot meet the requirements of different 'funds'. These underlying contradictions become acute when contingent factors (e.g., fluctuations in weaner, milk and feed prices or events such as droughts) affect income. They are both influenced by and contribute to patterns of social differentiation. Table 4 provides examples from our two cases of emerging struggles around trade-offs between competing funds.

The differential access of the collective enterprises to markets and means of production also helps to explain differences and similarities in how struggles over funds have been navigated. In both cases, the farms had access to government funding, which helped to ease the contradictions of production and social reproduction. For Mayime Cooperative this allowed for the purchase of two rotary dairy parlours and other fixed assets. Mphuzanyoni CPA benefited from land and the provision of a beef herd, as well as input support such as mineral licks and fencing materials. The Mphuzanyoni farm benefits from access to district cattle auctions to sell weaned oxen. A key difference between the two is that Mayime Cooperative benefits from access to markets and processing downstream of farming through its agribusiness partner Amadlelo Agri's share in Coega Dairy. This likely impacted its improved profitability, while Mphuzanyoni made a profit in only one year. However, the much larger beneficiary group at Mayime and the necessity to hand over 50% of the farm's profits to the strategic partner negatively affected household-level benefits.

Dairying as a form of commodity production in the South African context tends to involve constant technological innovation and shifts to ever-more capital-intensive farming methods, and is currently not very labour-intensive. Thus, its suitability is questionable in the communal areas of the former homelands, where creating jobs and

TABLE 4 Tensions and struggles over the use and distribution of income, jobs, land and produce in Mayime Cooperative and Mphuzanyoni CPA.

	Mayime Cooperative	Mphuzanyoni CPA
Struggles over income and jobs	Should the cooperative's income be used to distribute cash dividends, maintain a savings account, extend the dairy farming business through capital improvements, hire more labour or improve labour efficiency in favour of profits? Should jobs be reserved for the kin of cooperative members or offered to other community members to protect the farm's social legitimacy?	Should the CPA's income be used to fund an additional job, increase farm wages in line with the minimum wage, increase annual cash dividends to members and subsidies to household cattle production or replace deteriorating farm infrastructure; or purchase the operational inputs required for beef production?
Struggles over land and water	Should the cooperative continue with the joint venture or return the land to households for their social reproduction, extend the grazing land for dairy cows into neighbouring SADA township or use $\frac{1}{4}$ hectare food plots for grazing or for a 'youth farming project' (as demanded by the 'opposition')? Should water resources be exclusively reserved for the joint venture or provided for household farming as well?	Should the CPA's rangelands be used to generate lease income to pay for burial insurance for members, provide additional grazing to expand the CPA herd or provide additional grazing for household cattle?
Struggles over heifers and milk	Should the heifers produced by the dairy herd be distributed as dividends to members or maintained by the cooperative to rent to nearby farms and grow their herd in order to take over operations from Amadlelo in the future? Should all landowners receive free milk along with workers; or should the cooperative make profits by selling unpasteurised milk to the local community?	Should the heifers produced by CPA-owned cows be distributed as dividends to members in order to build their own cattle herds, be used to replace and expand the CPA's breeding stock or be sold to generate additional cash income?

supporting the social reproduction of fragmented classes of labour should be a high priority. While cattle production is even less labour-intensive than dairy, although with slightly higher growth potential (BFAP, 2011), the urgency to create numerous jobs was less of a concern to CPA households at Mphuzanyoni, than their desire to expand their household herds. Despite these limitations of livestock as a non-labour-intensive commodity, the fact that livestock is so central to the ceremonial function of social reproduction should not be underestimated. Moreover, the ways in which collective production also benefits household-level smallholder livestock production systems are critical.

In both Mayime Cooperative and Mphuzanyoni CPA, elected committees played a key role in decision-making, which resulted in the benefits of collective production being unequally distributed and skewed towards dominant patrilineal descent groups. At Mphuzanyoni, heifers were distributed to household heads, who tended to be men, reinforcing gendered inequality. At Mayime the dominant role played by the traditional leader, as head of the committee, as well as powerful networks of kin and patrilineal descent groups, (often elders from wealthier households, affiliated to the Moravian Church), allowed some members to enjoy preferential access to jobs and to exert decision-making power over how income, land, heifers and milk were distributed. Social ties such as lineage and larger kin networks were key 'arenas for interpretation, negotiation and contestation' (Kingwill, 2016, p. 3) over processes of social reproduction, although not determinative.

In both cases, not being able to successfully navigate the competing demands of different funds means that the collective farming enterprises have failed to provide many of their members with sufficient benefits. This has often resulted in these members questioning the effectiveness of those charged with managing the enterprises. Conflicts have become acute at times, with some members believing that abandoning collective production and dividing the farm's assets among members is preferable to enduring either the risks of a collapse of collective production or the continued appropriation of farm assets by powerful lineages.

However, other members of the collective argue for expanded pay-outs not primarily for purposes of social reproduction but rather to allow for expanded reproduction of their individual or household enterprises. These are the 'rich farmers and business owners' and some accumulating 'worker farmers' in the Mayime Cooperative and some households from powerful descent groups in Mphuzanyoni CPA, who are bent on accumulation. The class contradiction to be navigated here involves competition between two forms of capital, the collective enterprise and these petty accumulators.

5 | CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that the widespread tendency to attribute production failures in group-based land reform projects primarily to group ownership as a form of property right, and attendant governance challenges, is simplistic and misguided. Rather, the root cause of many of the problems faced by collective enterprises is the contradiction between the social reproduction of the household and its members, on the one hand, and the (simple or expanded) reproduction of the agricultural enterprise, on the other, which is both exacerbated by and further strengthens processes of social (and especially class-based) differentiation. Similar dynamics occur in all forms of agricultural enterprises under capitalism, whether owned collectively or individually (Bernstein, 2010). But this contradiction takes particular forms in collectives because they combine within the enterprise the class positions of owners/capital and workers/labour (Philip, 2003). This influences the outcomes of the struggles between members over exactly how the land, income and capital assets of these entities should be deployed and benefited from.

A key question for policy is whether or not there are ways that the members of these collective enterprises can be supported to successfully navigate the contradictory imperatives of production and social reproduction and to assist their members to work more equitably. We argue that land reform policy should explore the possibilities of assisting members of collective enterprises to negotiate the trade-offs that must be made between the different competing 'funds' that have been the focus of this paper. This might ensure the survival of the collective agricultural

enterprise, if not its expansion, while also meeting the social reproduction needs of socially differentiated households and their members. Whether this can be done successfully and to what degree, or not, remains to be seen.

Given the hybrid and diverse combinations of precarious forms of livelihood and income available to classes of labour today, land and agrarian reform programmes should assist households to maximise the positive links between a household's own farming and benefits from the collective farm enterprise, along with social grant contributions, wage employment and off-farm trade. However, the highly competitive character of commercial farming means that the risks of production failure are high. This can be mitigated through ongoing and more comprehensive government support than is currently being offered to land reform beneficiaries.

The research findings presented here illustrate how in-depth studies on agrarian political economy in the Global South can enrich the literature on social reproduction. Some of the key contributions of this paper include the following: (1) The concept of social reproduction is shown to be essential for understanding land reform dynamics in South Africa, but possibly more widely in cases where land reform has involved the establishment of cooperative agricultural enterprises. (2) Tensions between social reproduction and capitalist accumulation are shown to provide a new explanation for why collective land reform enterprises tend to fail. (3) By describing how 'ceremonial' activities are pulled into, and become constitutive, of an array of contradictory elements of the totality of production and social reproduction in these kinds of contexts, the paper broadens the reach of theories of social reproduction. (4) The paper illustrates how social reproduction theory can be successfully deployed to analyse the underlying dynamics of capitalism in agrarian settings of the Global South. In particular, our case studies illustrate how struggles over production and reproduction engaged in by fragmented 'classes of labour' strongly influence the dynamics and outcomes of agrarian change. (5) The case of South Africa, as well as its peculiar agrarian landscape, makes it a useful setting to explore Bernstein's (2006) 'agrarian question of labour'.²⁶ The article enriches debates on social reproduction by looking beyond its often urban focus but also examines cases which bridge the divides between urban/rural locales and farm/off-farm livelihoods.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have declared no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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²⁶In Bernstein's conception, the contemporary crisis of social reproduction is rooted in the scarcity of employment under present-day capitalism.

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