5.

Mobility patterns of Karoo farm dwellers

This chapter focuses on farm dwellers’ choices in the Karoo regarding the places they work and live, and the places they consider ‘home’. I interpret to what extent farm dweller mobilities, in particular their departure from the farms, are voluntary or inevitable in the context of establishment and outsidering processes and the re-configuration of power and belonging on trophy-hunting farms.

The ‘Great Trek’ of the 1830s refers to Boer emigrants in the Cape Colony moving up North in search of independence from British colonial rule and for available farmland to settle with their families and livestock. Epic images of boers trekking with their belongings packed on ox wagons in processions including their servants have been depicted in many paintings, history books, novels and the minds of trekboer descendants. But trekking and settling are not actions that should be solely attributed to Boers or colonial settlers. In fact, in conjunction with the famous ‘Great Trek’ and what it was part of, namely the process of land dispossession for Africans, other patterns of trekking and settling developed in relation to it. Some of these patterns concerning the 19th century are referred to in the previous chapter; notably the increasing number of Africans in the Eastern Cape who started to sell their labour on settler farms, and the growth of Cradock’s ‘location’. Farm dwellers have moved a great deal in their lives in order to retain some form of independence, to support their families, to seek farms where labour conditions were better, or to escape violent farm regimes. This history of mobility produced a sense of belonging that extends beyond particular farm boundaries. Farm dwellers on the hunting farms express ambivalent feelings regarding their attachments to the farms they worked and/or lived on.

In describing farm dwellers’ patterns of trekking and settling I start with the mobile life trajectories of two related male farm dwellers born in the 1950s and 60s, during the birth and inplementations of apartheid institutions. Their stories and experiences illustrate the circumstances and considerations part of decision-
making processes related to trekking and settlement choices. Then, I discuss farm dwellers’ notions of belonging in relation to different places, notably the farms and the RDP housing schemes in the township. The last section considers how the arrival of a new available pool of labourers in the area threatens the position of farm dwellers in the Karoo leading to yet another established and outsider figuration dynamic that increases tensions among the rural working class.

Extended family networks on the farm: Smith’s Hunting Safaris

The farm dwellers of Smith’s Hunting Safaris live in different places on the farm; some live in close proximity of the hunting lodge and others live closer to the homestead of the Smith family who owned the farm. On Persieskraal six permanent workers live in the workers’ quarters with their spouses and most of them are extended family members who came to the farm via one another. I met three of the male workers while they were building a stone-walled enclosure for a rhino that had tried to break away from the farm several times. John Smith put the animal there so he would stop breaking out of the farm borders, breaking fences, and thereby causing havoc with the neighbours. During the night before I heard a continuous dull sound of the animal’s horn striking the stone wall, but now, in the middle of a dry and sunny winter day, the captured animal just observes the farm workers fixing the hole. The farmer instructs Joseph, Sam and Tony on how to rebuild the wall and the men are busy making cement and collecting the stones that the rhino pushed out of the wall. When I arrive at the scene, it is Joseph who addresses me in English while he stirs with a wooden stick in a provisional gap in the ground mixing sand, cement and water. When John leaves we talk about home, language and family. Joseph mentions Xhosa words for various family members; grandfather, grandmother, cousin, uncle, aunt, brother and sister in law. He points out that he is related to Sam and Tony. What I did not know up till then (six months into fieldwork and multiple visits to Smith’s Hunting Safaris) is that most of the farm workers residing on the trophy-hunting farm are related through extended family networks. Their family homes are in Cradock’s townships where they gather during their weekends off;

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67 13 August 2009 field note
in Lingelihle or in the government housing schemes on the township plains popularly referred to as ‘Hillside’ behind Michausdal. Joseph was born on a farm and his life trajectory shows how he continually moved between jobs and places, and still has not settled in a place he can call ‘home’.

The life of Joseph Xolisi Zingeni

Joseph’s parents worked on a state-run farm part of an agricultural college when he was born in 1965. Meanwhile, his parents retired and permanently moved to Cradock’s black township Lingelihle. His grandparents were also farm workers, born and buried on the farm they worked and lived throughout their lives. He never visits their graves as that farm has been occupied by new landowners that makes him reluctant to visit the sites: “we feel bad, because it is not our farm”\textsuperscript{68}. Increasingly, farm workers are buried in the graveyard on the fringe of Lingelihle township or the cemetery close to the more recent government housing developments at Michausdal, the coloured township. Joseph links this practice to popular funeral policies (insurance schemes) that cover the costs for burials in town, but not on farms: “It is too expensive, because of the transport”. Funeral rituals and performances in Africa are ceremonies taking place ‘at home’, often in the context of the (rural) village; a place associated with one’s ancestors (Geschiere, 2009:55-56). In other words, a person’s funeral is ultimately about where a person belongs. In this sense, Joseph expresses an important shift concerning belonging in the commercial farming areas. Farm workers are deprived of access to the ancestors’ graves and funeral ceremonies gradually shift to town.

His first job, in the 1970s, after he completed grade six in school, was at a stock farm where his grandmother was born and where one of his uncles was employed\textsuperscript{69}. The uncle died and the low wages and unfavourable working conditions encouraged Joseph to keep looking for other opportunities which he found through another uncle who was a foreman in a construction company. When the construction site he worked at was finished he was retrenched. During this era the Lingelihle community was fully engaged in the anti-apartheid

\textsuperscript{68} 17 January 2010 field note. Translated from Afrikaans “Ons voel sleg, is nie onse plaas nie”

\textsuperscript{69} Interview 18 August 2009.
struggle: “Everybody, everyone was involved in apartheid, to fight apartheid.” It was a dangerous time in which walking through the location was very risky. Joseph’s memories of that time are about the violent atmosphere in the township community. He took part in area patrols to see “where things were going wrong”. He mentions an incidence where three men were found dead and no one knew who killed them. He then had to “sort those things out”. His engagement in the fight against apartheid was complicated by the absence of work and money. After the height of the liberation struggle he left Lingelihle in 1987 and worked for another construction company in Knysna, a coastal town in the neighbouring Western Cape Province. Within the construction sector he worked under sub contracts that dramatically reduced his income from 7.50 rand an hour to 3.50 rand an hour and he decided to return to Cradock once again. His friend Jacky who worked at Persieskraal farm at the time informed him that the owners were looking for another labourer and although Joseph had no experience in the trophy-hunting sector he was offered a job in 2001. During this time he experienced a transformation: “I used to be rough and beat people, but then the Lord visited me in my dreams.” He buried the violent memories of the past with dedication to the Church of Christ.

At Persieskraal, Joseph and the other farm workers engage zealously in regular religious performances on the farm. They are part of the same congregation and their Sunday gatherings are organised together with farm workers from other farms and sometimes attended by a visiting church elder from town as well.

**Zionism in South Africa**

The Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) is a type of Christianity adapted to the context of 20th century Southern Africa, in particular the increasingly oppressive states and insecurities produced by labour migration and rapid processes of urbanization. Zionists, like Pentecostals, provide healing, protect against evil spirits and deliver spiritual power to overcome problems of sickness, poverty, unemployment, evil spirits and sorcery (Anderson, 1999: 285). The ZCC is the largest African initiated Church (AIC) in Southern Africa and in South Africa about 46% of the black population were reported to be a member of AICs in 2010. Field note.
1991, and most were Zionists (ibid, 286). Currently 30% of the South African population congregate in Zionist and Apostolic churches of which many are small church organizations “many being house churches which form socially meaningful groups in rural villages and especially in urban sprawls, where people can find an ‘extended family’ that gives them a sense of belonging and identity” (Anderson, 2005: 68). The ZCC is lead by a bishop whose hereditary office is for life. This bishop “is a reminder of the pre-colonial past, a type of modern African king with a ‘royal’ residence and handpicked advisers, and to whom millions of his subjects come annually to give allegiance” (Anderson, 1999: 287).

The ZCC was founded at the beginning of the 20th century by Engenas Lekganyane whose son Edward and grandson Barnabas succeeded him as paramount leaders of the ZCC (ibid). The apartheid government did not interfere with black churches which was completely in line with the apartheid ideology that prevented any form of social integration, including integrated churches. The relation between the ZCC and the apartheid regime were ‘pragmatic’ (Anderson, 1999: 292).

The Zionist church services at the farm typically consist of prayers in isiXhosa, dancing around a drum, preaching, and rituals that involve blessed objects or water and laying of hands. Farm workers often mentioned that they felt “better” after such church sessions. The appeal of Zionism to the rural dispossessed class, and in particular farm workers, in South Africa has been noticed by anthropologists and historians (Chidester, 1992:135-138; Evans, 2010:142). Chidester (1992:135) writes that wage labourers found in particular within Zionist churches a “heaven of healing in personal integrity and spiritual power in a social world in which people were increasingly disempowered.” Moreover, he also points out (1992:137) that the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) is committed to a cultural order “in which hard work, discipline, and obedience were as important as ritual healing in generating spiritual purity and power.’ Therefore, members of the ZCC, often the poorest of the poor, make an obedient and thus convenient labour force for employers whose interest is to maintain the social order and access to cheap labour. Indeed71, when I speak to the mfundisi72 after a service on the farm about his speech (that I understood only partly because it

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71 Sunday 6 February 2011. Field Note
72 isiXhosa for ‘teacher’ of ‘pastor’.
was delivered in isiXhosa) he repeats his message to me in English. He utters
the importance for farm workers to work hard so that their wages increase and they
set a good example for new workers.

God is watching them and will reward them. If they are slowing their pace, or
decide to be lazy they will remain ‘down there’.

The pastor is convinced that workers’ rewards are mediated through God’s sense
of justice. In this sense he attributes complete agency to farm workers who
historically and empirically rely a great deal on farmers’ goodwill. The behaviour
of individuals is detached from the structural conditions on the farm. The
mfundisi emphasizes the church is an important institution for farm workers
where they come together and feel supported. When I mention other types of
gatherings that could bring farm workers together (of which our research project
is one) he suspiciously affirms that people always want to bring “politics into the
church” which he disapproves of as “politics are corrupt”.

The ZCC did not evolve in reaction to white oppression and its messages
have suited the demands of white employers (Chidester, 1992). Its emergence is
associated with is a form of social distinction for wage labourers “from other
blacks in the world of rural reserves and urban townships” (Chidester, 1992:138).
For Joseph his church affiliation constitutes a valuable aspect of his life. This is
expressed when he shows me his church robe that he carefully keeps in an
appropriate suitcase that allows him to keep it neat while travelling to attend
regional church meetings. While the heavy green robe rests on his arms stretched
towards me, ensuring me a good look at the attire, he mentions: “I do not wear
this when I take the glass”. Dressed in clean religious attire one does not drink;
clearly it is associated with dignity and grace. And this way contrasts the farm
worker overall marked with dirt and holes.

On the farm it is still the authority and judgment of the farmer that dictates
life. Joseph worked at Persieskraal in 2001 for 450 rand a month. Every month
the farmer gradually increased the earnings, an incentive to attach farm workers
to the farm. Joseph affirms that this method “showed me I do a very good job
for Collin and John so they pay me more and more you see...if the employer is
not alright for me I cannot stay in his place.” Joseph’s friend Jacky that got him
the job at Persieskraal, has been dismissed due to his drinking habits. He left
Persieskraal and now works on a farm on the other side of Cradock. After ten years with the same employers Joseph earns 1800 rand a month - of which about 75 rand is deducted for accommodation, water, and electricity – and he received 6000 rand hunting tips in December 2009. Although his salary is substantially higher than the minimum wage for agricultural workers he is frustrated with the situation on the farm:

But I have been thinking that if I do not get an increase, I am going to leave, that is better for me. Dirk [trainee] knows nothing and he gets more than me! Johan [farm manager] too, just because of this (touches the skin on his face). Ten years! I am tired, I am going to ask for 2100/2200 rand...Now, that is why I drink. Then I can forget. If my wife worries, I just go home and sleep so that I do not say things that I will be sorry for. I have a lot of stress, but I cannot work for Hein [neighbouring farmer]. He is bad.

The farm regime with its racial categorization linked to a hierarchy of positions still works divisive. Joseph continues to talk and reveals how envy creates tensions among the farm dwellers at Persieskraal:

People do not like others to have it better than they have… Phumla, she is jealous, too much. But I do not worry about that. They put poison in my drink, but I am still alive.

Envy is one of the most prevalent aspects of farm life tied to the politics of paternalism: “paternalism creates a culture of back-biting and jealousy, pitting worker against worker in rivalry for the farmer’s approval” (Du Toit, 1993:324). There lies a danger in being privileged by employers. Joseph’s father received a bakkie from the farmer he worked for and had a car accident which Joseph explains by: “the people were very jealous”. He assumes they sabotaged his father’s car because “there is too much witchcraft”. The divisive forces on the farm are understood to be the workings of evil spirits. Leaving or finding alternative employment remains an occasional brave thought wandering through Joseph’s mind, but is quickly subdued by the realities of today’s farming economy in the Karoo. Other farmers might be even worse employers, or simply

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73 17 January 2010.
reduce their demand for labour to a minimum which makes the plight of the job-seeking farm worker more precarious.

As was the case with Joseph, farm workers often find work through a friend or relative who knows when there is a demand for labour on the farm. This kind of “market intelligence” system (Mather, 1997:70-74) provides important information on conditions at the farm, as well as labour opportunities. In the Karoo such information networks have developed over time through farm workers who have been reported to frequently move between farms in the district, constantly in search for better wages and working conditions. Kooy (in Evans, 2010:191-192) reports that in the Karoo during the 1970s farmers rarely required the services of the labour bureaux, as they benefitted from these information networks through which they met their labour requirements. Workers often protested with their feet, but they stayed in the district for generations and constituted a constant pool of available (cheap) labour. These farm workers’ networks still advantage farmers’ labour recruitment strategies. As farmers still advertise jobs through farm workers, it is no wonder the permanent workforce at Persieskraal consists largely of an extended-family network. The staff composition on the farm changes frequently, especially when including the use of casual labour. Joseph called his younger brother Timothy during 2009 and told him “they are looking for some hands” and Timothy came to the farm to work for two days. Then the farmer phoned him to ask if he wanted to work more. Timothy moved to the farm in the hope to earn money to support the family and invest in his future.

He was born in 1981 on a farm, matriculated in town, and left to Port Elizabeth to work in the industrial sector. Although there were work opportunities in the city, the costs of living and travelling were too high for Timothy. He had just returned to his family in Cradock when Joseph informed him about the farm job. From the start the relationship with the farmer was problematic. Timothy’s inquiries about higher wages, fees for unemployment funds, the registration of overtime payments, possibilities to go to school, or the distribution of hunting tips, were perceived as subversive questions. Timothy could not hold out on the farm and went back to the township frustrated, to

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74 Interview 19 January 2010.
take care of his elderly, and needy, parents. The work experience on the farm was very different from his earlier jobs in the urban industrial sector that included clock cards, safety procedures, insurance, and higher minimum wages.\(^75\)

And the most important thing is at the farms, you work yourself to death... For a little bit money, and after all you get older, or you get injured you been thrown out like an old shoe...That is the main thing that happens in the farm, really.

When Joseph is in town he visits his parent’s house and that of his parents in law. Regina, his mother in law, lives in one of the postapartheid government RDP houses in ‘Hillside’ where Joseph’s two daughters reside because they go to school there. Joseph feels that this is however not the way a family should live. In Xhosa culture he, as a man, should have built his own house as soon as he started a family, but in the context of Cradock’s economy such aspirations are necessarily replaced by hopes for government housing. Joseph and his wife Dorothy are on the waiting list for an RDP house as they cannot afford to buy land and build their own house somewhere.\(^76\)

I have not got money to buy for me a house, let’s say to build for me a house you see. If I got money I can get a house for myself. Look, I must buy many things when I build my own house you see. I must buy the how do you call the ground, and you must buy cement, some bricks, sand, everything you know, a roof and I must pay for it, there are guys who do the job and I must pay that too.

During his employment with Smith’s Hunting Safaris Joseph moved to a bigger and free-standing house on the workers compound; accommodation that included a geyser to provide hot water. He keeps a small vegetable garden at the back where several chickens run around. Gardens used to be a way for farm dwellers to complement their wages on the farms and engage in an independent livelihood. Because Joseph does not own the house on the farm he cannot extend or improve it as the state of the building is problematic; the wind blows through the cracks in the walls and the rain leaks through the ceiling. The farmer promised to fix it a long time ago, but it has not been fixed as yet. Joseph

\(^75\) Interview 19 January 2010.

\(^76\) Interview 18 August 2009.
worries about the furniture he brought to the house that is now damaged by the exposure to wind and rain. He covered the TV set in the living room with a cloth to protect it from the dust blowing through the house. The farmer had bought the TV for him and then deducted the loan from his salary and Joseph said about the farmer: “he helped me a lot”.

The ambivalent feelings towards the farmer – anger as well as gratefulness – are typical of the paternalistic attitudes governing relations on the white-owned farms. Another characteristic of the politics of paternalism discussed by Du Toit in the context of Western Cape wine and fruit farming, is the denial of the possibility for farmer and worker to “ever be systematically opposed in an antagonistic relationship” (Du Toit, 1993:321). There can be antagonistic feelings on the farm, but the people on the farm constitute a “community” threatened not by internal antagonism, but by external dangers like alcoholism, thieves, or trade unionists (ibid,322). In this line of thought Joseph’s ambivalent expressions illustrate the power of paternalistic discourse. According to Fanon the black man’s inferiority is expressed in always “thanking” the white man who is portrayed a superior being, in the image of a hero that deserves deference from black man (Fanon, 2008:172). Joseph and other workers often expressed gratitude about farmers’ willingness to “help” them with things ranging from transport, financial loans or handouts (airtime, food, and cigarettes), while they also complained about the conditions and injustices on the farm (the white trainee receives more wages and responsibilities than the black experienced worker). This is telling for the type of asymmetric power relations perpetuated on the farm.

Joseph’s visits to town are important to shop and maintain relations with parents, family, church members, and he mentions that “our problems are actually in town”. When visiting town he often encounters Paul, who is Elizabeth’s brother and stays with his wife Janis a couple of streets up the road. Paul works on the hunting farm as well though he is in and out of employment. Paul’s son Sam works closely with Joseph on Persieskraal, as on the day they were fixing the rhino’s enclosure. Paul’s life trajectory is discussed next. It is another mobility pattern linked to life on the commercial farms that reveals some typical predicaments of Karoo farm workers.
Map of Paul Andersen’s movements in the Cradock farming area
Paul’s life trajectory consists of frequent and constant movement between farms and jobs. Paul was born in 1953 at a farm (No 1 in map) on the northern side of Cradock town. His parents migrated from the former Transkei homeland to the white commercial farming areas where Paul was born soon after the advent of apartheid. As farm workers Paul’s parents had to learn to speak Afrikaans (and appropriate a European surname), something his grandparents never could because they were ‘real’ swart mense who only spoke and understood isiXhosa. Paul grew up on a farm with two sisters and six brothers. His parents are buried there and their graves remain unvisited because the Afrikaans farm owner is “bad”, and worse than English farmers, according to one of Paul’s sisters who is afraid to go to the graves. Thus they feel the ancestor’s graves are inaccessible. Moreover this is caused by the fact that the property owner is an Afrikaner which they associate with more conservative, - racist - attitudes. Common associations with the English on the other hand are that they are more liberal. The established and outsiders dynamics between the English and the Afrikaners are reproduced by farm workers’ classification systems.

As a child Paul attended farm school for black African children where he was educated until standard four. The baas gave him chores to do before and after school such as looking after young sheep and cows or picking turkey’s eggs. When he finished school he worked on the farm for 5 shilling a month. As soon as he could, in 1965, he announced to his mother he was leaving the farm to find work at a neighbouring farm where he could earn more money. The move signalled a new level of independence. Labour migration and leaving home is associated with rituals of manhood and a particular masculinity in the South-African countryside (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2002:797; Evans, 2010:210). The passage to manhood and preparation for marriage by young men often involves travels and different jobs in different places, both urban and rural (James,

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77 Interviews with Paul on 3 October 2009 and 14 January 2010.
78 English: black people
79 Interview 17 January 2010. Translated from Afrikaans: Hy is kwaai, ons besoek nie die grave nie’. ‘Jy sien hom is nie soos die Engelse nie’. ‘Thul Ek is bang vir die baas’.
80 South Africa got his own currency (SA Rand) during the 1960s.
Paul’s life pays testimony to this itinerant aspect of life on the commercial farms.

Besides economic deprivation on the farms, psychological and physical abuse was common practice on the farms during apartheid. The violence against farm workers was systemic and Paul vividly remembers incidents from the “olden days”. “Even if they beat you, you just had to stand there and be beaten”. When workers fought back, the police questioned workers’ rights to argue with the farmer whose authority was assumed beyond question. Strict norms regulated the relationship between farmer and worker and corporal punishments followed if those rules were not obeyed. Besides general rules demanding submissive attitudes from workers towards the farmer some rules specifically targeted the strict segregation of blacks and coloureds on the farm, mirroring the attempts in town to separate the residential areas of different racial categories. Despite the fact that blacks and coloureds worked together on the land during the day, racial segregation was enforced through separate accommodation and Paul was not allowed to visit the coloured residences in his free time. If he was caught by the farmer he risked a hiding with “blackie” which was the name for the farmer’s sjambok[^81] that he used to beat black workers. The sjambok used for coloureds was called “shelletjie”. The use of different whips to punish workers of different racial categories illustrates how deeply entrenched racial divisions were in the formation of power relations on farms.

**Language on the farms.**

The Afrikaans language spoken on the farms articulates ideological expressions of relations on the farm like in the mode of address, as well as in its vocabulary. Farmers are addressed by workers as ‘sir’ or ‘baas’ or even ‘master’. Farmers address or refer to workers through their Christian/English names instead of African names, or worker’s functions on the farm like ‘skinner’, ‘garden boy’ or ‘maid’. Importantly, a black worker referred to as ‘skinner’ will never become a ‘seun’ which is the Afrikaans word for son that is used for young white bachelor males. Nor can a black woman working as ‘nanny’ become a ‘tannie’ which is

[^81]: English: rawhide whip
the Afrikaans word for aunt that is used to address white women who are mothers (Ross, 1995). Language use is inscribed in power relations on the farm.

Punishments for farm workers were not only harsh; they were also inevitable for workers living in a confined space enclosed by fences, under the constant gaze of the farmer. One farmer wanting to punish Paul pretended for some time not to notice him specifically, until they walked into the garage where he quickly shut the door and revealed the **sjambok** to execute a hiding. Paul ran around the tractors and managed to escape through an unlocked door. But he knew the farmer would be watching him. And though workers had restricted access to places on the farm, the farmer was allowed to go anywhere, at any time. Sometimes the farmer would be listening at the window of the worker’s accommodation and when the workers became aware of his presence they started running in terror “the sound was like a whole bunch of horses running through the house”. And women were beaten too, for making ‘too much noise’ for example. Paul imitates how a woman after one lash with the **sjambok** said “dankie baas” and he bursts out in laughter. He continues to give me an idea of the relations with the farmers in the past. The constant threat of violence required escape strategies. These ranged from temporarily fleeing or preventing punishment to deserting the farm. Paul explains how made sure farmers would not get a chance to inflict an injury on him:

You do not have a phone and you go to the **veld**, then you knew he would beat you there. He will stay close to you to make sure you do not call the police. You have to call the police when he is not looking. Then, if the police come, you have to be nearby to hear what is said, so that you can also talk. Then you leave with the police only to return, in the presence of the police, to fetch your furniture and other stuff. You should never give the farmer an opportunity to attack you.

Paul worked on several farms and also briefly joined the Transkei Army\(^2\). The search for labour took him beyond the Cradock district; he welded in the

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\(^2\) The Transkei was the first territory declared independent from South Africa in 1976. It was one of the two homelands installed by the apartheid government for ‘Xhosa-speaking’ people. The Bantustan had his own military unit called the Transkei Defence Force whose leader
steel industry of Queenstown and Johannesburg where he worked as supervisor. Since the birth of his eldest son towards the end of the 1960s Paul’s family engaged in difficult balancing act between seeking employment in different places and raising a family in one place. In 1971 he married Janis. It was a customary marriage that he referred to as marrying the traditional Xhosa way.

On Marriage Practices

Marriage is one of the cultural practices that has transformed over time. Farm workers mostly engaged in dual marriages meaning they adhere to both customary and civil law. Since the advent of democracy these marriages are both recognized in civil law with different legal consequences (property, inheritance). Farm workers differentiate the two kinds of unions as the Xhosa wedding and the ring wedding or legal marriage. Sometimes one wedding day can contain both the customary part and a church part, but the two occasions can also take place years apart. Often when I visited farm workers in their homes they would show me their marriage certificates. The legal wedding seems to have a higher status among farm workers than the traditional marriage. A woman working as domestic worker on one of the trophy-hunting farms expressed this in the following way:

We got married, in the way our culture prescribes, that is how we married. This year we need to go to Home Affairs. And then we get married the right way.

It is possible that legal marriage is especially attractive for women as it is a more formal, strictly regulated union in which their rights as spouse are secured more firmly than within the framework of customary marriage.

Three more children were born in 1972, 1978 and 1983 while the couple lived on a farm where Paul worked mostly as driver going out of the region while Janis looked after their children. For some time Janis lived in a “tent” (shack) in

General Bantu Holomisa lead a coup d’état in 1987 and became the new Head of State. From then alliances with the ANC were developed.

83 Interview 14 August 2009. Translated from Afrikaans by author. “Ons het getrou, hulle soas op onse culture, ons het so getrou, op hierdie jaar ons moet die Home Affairs toegaan. En gaan trou daso, die regte trou”.

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Cradock’s black location and only saw Paul twice a year for about a week when he could afford a holiday at home. For Janis, who was squatting in the location with their young children the absence of her husband was very difficult. When he lost that job Paul phoned another farmer from the area to ask for work. The whole family moved out to the De Wet’s farm and within a year, during the early 1980s, they were told to transfer with the farmer’s son to his newly acquired property elsewhere in the district. At De Wet’s farm Paul worked with sheep and Angora goats while Janis was the nanny of the farmer’s children. Janis feels they stayed nicely on that farm, but Paul expresses frustration with farmer De Wet and the way he treated Paul and his family. After years of living and working with the family, even raising De Wet’s children, the farmer suddenly told Paul he should leave the farm. Paul angrily thrusts the back of his hand in the air, a motion meant to shoo away an undesired animal or person, and he speaks the words “you can go”. The farmer had not lived up to the hopes of reciprocity.

The asymmetric nature of power relations on the farm are articulated in many ways. The future of Paul’s children on the farm was predestined to be ruptured by the divisive forces of privilege. Paul and Janis witnessed how De Wet’s daughters all got married after a decent education, to privileged men. Their weddings were splendid celebrations on the farm. The family owned several properties at the coast. “They do not spill money” Janis explains about her wealthy employers. How different were the circumstances and experiences of their own progeny. They were educated at ‘Hillzone’ during the late 1970s and early 1980s; a farm school that provided Bantu education in isiXhosa language for black pupils and in Afrikaans language for coloured children from the farms. Paul’s sons ended up in different classes. “He cannot write Xhosa” and the other one’s “Afrikaans is not good”. His last born son received tuition in Afrikaans because the Xhosa classes had disappeared in the 1980s. During the height of the anti-apartheid struggle the family lived in a township by Queenstown where Sam went to school and Paul worked in industry. They returned to the Cradock farms in 1990. Slowly but surely farm schools are disappearing as farm operations are scaling up while downsizing labourers. From the roadside you

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84 Interview 10 June 2009.
sometimes see the skeletons of buildings where farmers’ wives used to teach. Paul’s grandchildren all go to schools in town.

In 1995 De Wet’s farm was sold (or possibly leased) to an English speaking business man from Johannesburg who immediately converted the place to a game farm. Paul’s labour was included in the deal and he then worked for an absent land owner. The property was enclosed by a high fence and Paul and Janis enjoyed their living on the farm with a big garden in which they planted and harvested their own vegetables. As caretakers of the property they lived quite independently for about three years. When hunters visited the property, Paul directly received tips for all the springbuck that were shot. The relative privileges came to an end when De Wet told him he was not needed any longer. After many years of loyal service the family had to go. Paul felt as disposable waste. Once again, the unexpected loss of livelihood made life unpredictable and precarious. At some stage, it is not clear when exactly, Paul hunted for another game farmer and learned how to skin and cape trophies; skills that he then transferred onto his sons. When he left the game farmer he was told he should find employment on another trophy-hunting farm where they could use a man like him. This was ‘Smith’s Hunting Safaris’.

Meanwhile, the couple registered for one of the houses that were built onto the rural township of Cradock as part of the post-apartheid government Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which aimed to provide infrastructure for the poor. These government houses partly aimed at the continuous influx of people from the commercial farms to the rural towns. Between 1996 and 2007 nearly 2,000 people living on farms left for the rural townships of Cradock and Middelburg85 where Paul and Janis settled in 2001.

85 Statistics SA’s 2007 Community Survey report.
RDP housing Cradock ‘Hillside’
When Paul’s children left school they worked on the commercial farms near the Fish River. Paul’s son Sam, born in 1978, first worked with his father on the farm when he dropped out of school because there was no money. He remembers swimming in the Fish River, driving tractors, and working in the veld until he went to “the bush” with the amakwetha, young men ready to be initiated into manhood. Sam stayed in the bush on a farm for one month and one week. That is what it was like in dai tyd (that time) when he was a teenager. Nowadays amakwetha only stay in the bush for three weeks, often accompanied by a doctor, possibly even in the presence of women who control the health status of boys healing from the wound of circumcision.

That is democracy now. In dai tyd it was much better. There were not many problems.

The boy’s initiation ritual is in essence about masculinity and men’s position in power configurations and changes naturally cause anxiety among men. This worry appears with conflicting sentiments about the “olden days”; apartheid is despised but tradition had a place and helped men like Sam to make sense of the world around them. After Sam’s initiation he left his parents to “stand on his own feet” and he found employment on another farm along the road. While we drive through that area on our way to a church service Sam talks about his history in this place where he spent considerable time seeking better employment, avoiding working for farmers that were ongeskik which means something like ‘not right’. “You see these farms” he says and turns his head towards me while I am driving the car. “It is these hands that worked these lands.” He shows me the palms of his hands, markedly roughed by years of manual labour in the open fields; skin scorched by summer heat, scuffed by winds of dust and sand blowing across the lands, and tested by ice cold water wells during winter time. He drove tractors, slaughtered animals, and laid pipes to direct water to thirsty crops. He welded, repaired and constructed. Both Sam and his father Paul worked and contributed to the prosperity of the white commercial-farming community settled along this road by the Fish River.

87 Dit is hierdie bande wat die lande bet gemaak - 13 Dec 2009
Paul’s eldest son moved to a city to work in the construction industry. Again, migrant labour forms a part of the household economy. Paul eventually found work at Smith Hunting Safaris and together with Janis he moved to the game farm where she worked as a cook. During this time they temporarily closed their RDP house in the township. After a financial dispute with the game farmer the couple left the farm in 2006 and they moved back into their house in the township. Janis had to undergo a leg operation and was unable to go out and find work any longer and she started looking after their eleven grandchildren in the two-roomed house. All the children (except one baby) go to school in town which is partly financed by child grants. In need of employment and an income, Paul sees no other option than to return to Smith’s Hunting Safaris in 2009 and ask the farmer to employ him again. He walks four hours to the farm’s office and after a brief discussion is ultimately reinstated, for lower wages, on an isolated property where he has to maintain the infrastructure alone. His earlier desertion is punished with a kind of solitary confinement. The choice for Paul consists of this or sitting unemployed in the RDP house knowing there are many mouths to be fed. His accommodation lacks electricity. He cannot charge his cell phone which is so essential to communicate with his family outside the farm borders. He cannot eat proper meals because he does not have time to collect wood and prepare a fire to cook breakfast, lunch and dinner. For transport he relies on John and Collin Smith who are rarely available to fetch him and take him to Janis in the township, or to take him back to the farm. He usually waits along the roadside next to the township to return to work on Monday mornings. Sometimes the fence makers, working on contract labour, take him with them, or other people driving on that road, but he can never rely on such services. Effectively he only visits his family in the township once a month during the weekend; that is if he is not suddenly called to work. When he finds an opportunity to spend a day or two with Janis at their house, he often returns at the farm too late to the farmer’s liking which results in several warnings for “undisciplined behaviour”. After a year of quarrelling and suffering Paul determines he cannot cope with the situation and he leaves Smith’s Hunting Safaris in January 2010. The final blow that makes him feel bitter and disappointed is the amount of the 2009 December bonus. This ‘gift’ of only 800 rand is significantly less than the bonuses of some of his colleagues (who
received 4000 rand or more). Paul looks for work elsewhere, but he expects his former employer to disable that process by spreading the word to other farmers that Paul left for no reason and that he is an unreliable person who steals. Ironically, the people working at the hunting farm still call him sometimes with questions about how to fix this or that; and he gives them the answers for free.

Paul states that despite the institutional transition to democracy, the social and economic structures on farms have remained extremely unequal. He explains that on many farms in the area ‘the bible is a fist’ which perpetuates violent practices in the interactions between farmers and workers. An example of these imbalanced power relations is farmers beating workers without repercussions or police involvement. Farmers still get away with this kind of behaviour. On the other hand, when a worker steals a farmer’s sheep he gets 15 years behind bars “as if he murdered someone!” The meaning of violence and justice seems closely related to the interests of farmers. At the back of his house Paul grows few onions the size of small pumpkins to sell locally. It is a miracle they grow in the stony, dusty soil that is picked up easily by the slightest wind breeze. His dream is to extend the house with another two rooms and to own a car in which he can drive Janis to all the places she wants to go. “Our lives you see, I have started to realize, our lives go up and down, up and down”. This fluctuation relates to the power relations on the farms where decisions made by commercial farmers still have a disproportionally great effect on the lives of farm dwellers.

Where is home?

The life trajectories of Joseph and Paul illustrate how mobility has been part of life in the commercial farming district of Cradock. Their lives are characterized by constant movements between places; farms, cities, and Cradock town. This mobility should be understood in the context of an agrarian economy that relies on their labour, yet the conditions and asymmetric power relations on the farms also push workers to search for better opportunities. Farm workers’ movements are driven by the economic logic behind migrant labour. Linkages between (urban and rural) spaces are “used by migrants and their families in cultural processes of building and affirming identities” (James, 2001: 98). Karoo farm
dwellers’ ambivalent attachments to life on the farms and deciding to move to the township RDP housing schemes are described in the following section. The spatial structures resulting from this ambivalence are an important aspect of the process of outsidering.

_split stand: one foot on the farm and one in town._

The notion of ‘home’ for workers on the trophy-hunting farms in the Karoo is shaped through particular mobility patterns and wage labour relations that strongly associate the farm as workplace with temporal living accommodation, instead of ‘home’. Empirical studies from the Free State (Murray, 1992) and Kwa-Zulu Natal (AFRA, 2005) have shown that farm workers feel attached to the farms they lived and worked on and claim belonging to the land through land claim procedures or even violent conflict. Farm dwellers in the Cradock region however articulated their association to the land differently. They associate places of ‘home’ with off-farm sites rather than on-farm ones. The problem is that many workers do not own a house, or land, outside of the farm. Moreover, if they do own a house in the township, the income from farm labour is often not sufficient to travel to the house regularly, or support family members dwelling in town.

Open conflict over land ownership in South Africa has been associated with struggles to access land for grazing or independent food production. Certain labour tenancy arrangements enabled in some places relative autonomy for dispossessed black farmers who owned their own cattle and produced independently up to the height of apartheid. Among the interviewed farm workers in the Karoo no one owns cattle or has access to land to produce crops, with the exception of small vegetable gardens and keeping of chickens in cages nearby the house. Memories or notions of independent farming by farm dwellers in Cradock are overshadowed by histories of wage labour, especially with the younger generation. Ruth, born on a farm in 1984, moved in between farms and town throughout her childhood. She went to school in town and spent her weekends on the farm with her parents. Her father herded sheep and cows and

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88 Interview 14 August 2009. Quotes translated from Afrikaans.
her mother did domestic work in the farmer’s house. When I asked her whether they owned any livestock themselves, she shook her head.

In the old days people could not have their own sheep, or their own cattle, so they did not have sheep or cattle.

In this region farm dwellers have been dispossessed of any means of independent production during the 19th century which shaped particular interdependencies between farm dwellers and farmers. Moreover, it transformed some of the Xhosa customs linked to cattle ownership and livestock farming. The practice of lobola, bride wealth in Xhosa culture, traditionally revolved around payments for a woman expressed in cattle. In the context of wage labour the meaning and actual payment has been replaced by cash as people often do not have cattle. For Ruth, the idea of owning animals or farming is not attractive. She prefers the life she lives in Cradock with a job and a house on the farm and her family in the township. Her husband comes from another rural area in the Eastern Cape where people still engage in farming, but she affirms “I cannot live there. I am used to stay here.” Ruth is attached to the way of life in this region.

During a multi-stakeholder workshop in Cradock farm worker participants from a neighbouring district were surprised that Cradock farm workers invest in township housing while they are still residing on the hunting farms. The participants were all part of an NGO project that had supported them in establishing farm committees on the farms that aim to improve communication between the farmer and workers. They decided to invest in their houses on the farm and in their relations with the farmer. The decisions of Cradock farm workers puzzled the workshop participants as it seemed economically irrational to them. The asked how farm workers deal with transport costs if you have homes in two places and how they manage this with one farm worker salary? Clearly, their assumption is that the commercial farms are a home for the farm dwellers and workers which in the Cradock region is experienced differently.

When I asked Joseph “what does it mean to you to live on the farm?” he attributes different meanings to the idea of his ‘own house’ and the ‘work house’.

But it is not really my house you know. I cannot do what I think, maybe build another room. That’s why I can say it is not my house, that’s why I can say it is my work house….. I like to have a house there [in town]. That’s why I am trying
always when I am going to town to look after house, something like that. And then I will take now my kids. Together and to live in my house and then I know, I owe my kids and myself. You see.

Ownership of an RDP house in the rural township is considered a meaningful investment for a family’s future. Tenure on the farm is insecure as it is not assured for life and cannot be inherited by farm dwellers’ children. Tenure is tied to work and when there is no work there is no place for farm dwellers as happens frequently in farm conversion processes when adjacent farms are incorporated to the wildlife farm. Farm workers anticipate to the insecure tenure situation and potential displacement from the farms they work on. This farm worker explains that he decided in 1990 to buy some land in the township from the municipality.

With the apartheid government disappearing I could see what was going to happen. White people do not care about us and I knew a time would come they could just tell us to leave the farm. I constructed the stones for our house on the farm.

Worker’s assessment of the political changes in the country and subsequent shifts in the relations on farms lead to workers anticipating to the inevitable displacement, they cannot stay on the farm forever. Farm dwellers did not explicitly express that they have a right or entitlement to a place on the farms. The current land ownership structure is experienced as an inevitable result from a troubled past. Therefore, they eventually displace themselves. Ruth states:

We need to get a house in Cradock so that when we leave Sir here, we are sure we have a place in town. Because if you do not have a place in town you have to build a shack and you shouldn’t. You shouldn’t stay with your mother either, you need to live in your own house.

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89 Interview male game farm worker 18 August 2009.
90 Interview 15 April 2009. Translated from Afrikaans by author.
91 Interview 14 August 2009. Translated from Afrikaans. Ons moet die huis by die Cradock kry, as ons hieso by Sir uitgaan, dan weet ons, ons het ‘n plek by die dorp. Want as jy nie die plek het by die dorp, jy moet nie die blikhuisse maak nie. Jy moet jou eie huisstee het, en jy moet nie by jou ma hulle bly, jy moet jou eie huis bly, so.
The way Ruth explains *why* she wants her own home in town links to past experiences of farm dwellers who came from the farms during apartheid and lived in shacks on the fringes of Cradock’s townships. At that time the municipality consistently tried to prevent black farm workers from coming to town. By staying in the township anyway farm dwellers have claimed their belonging in the area for decades. The sight of shacks echoes with images of the past where black mobility was heavily controlled by the state. In this sense farm workers’ aspirations to leave the farm at some stage is not new. What has changed is that instead of hampering the process of urbanization, the state enables farm workers to establish homes in town through government housing schemes. To some extent the state even encourages farm dwellers to move of the farms such as in the proposed idea to construct agri-villages in rural areas that can house farm potential labour for the surrounding farms. Such proposals contradict the reform policies that aim to structurally shift the balance of powers in the countryside by giving land to previously dispossessed people.

The urban housing schemes currently serve as labour reserves for the commercial farms around them as there are few alternative livelihood options for farm workers in town. Simultaneously it provides a form of social security for farm workers; a place to retire, to raise children, a space away from the farmers’ laws, a way to provide their children with material inheritance, a sense of independence. But the household members in the town houses remain dependent on state grants and incomes from elsewhere, notably the farms; whether through members who trod to the roadside every morning to sell their labour casually, or relatives who work permanently on the farm. This way, farm workers always stand with one foot on the farm and one foot in town. A consequence of this split position, essentially a form of migrant labour, is the disruption of family life. The lack of daily sharing of family time robs many farm workers from being with their children, witnessing their developments into adulthood, and spending time with their spouses.

The emotional effect of this split position is evident when one winter morning I walk in the veld with Paul’s son Sam who every morning from 7am starts with checking water pipes on the lands that grow extra food for the
wildlife on the farm. While we walk back from the fields to have our breakfast-break, with hands shoved in our pockets to warm up, Sam confides that he always skips breakfast and lunch when his wife Helen and their youngest child are not at the farm house to eat with him. He simply drinks coffee alone before reporting at the farmer’s office again at 9am. When Helen is on the farm with their baby she prepares breakfast for Sam and when he returns from his morning shift they eat together. For Sam, who does not own a house in town, the farm house is the only place where he can be alone with his wife and child. He likes to watch Chinese movies or church DVDs with Helen during his free time, or just talk with her. When they go to town they have to stay over with one of their own parents and share a tiny space with many other relatives. Clearly, the idea of where home is depends on the availability of places to go to and movements of others as well.

Zimbabwean workers

Good evening, I am your chef. For tonight’s menu we have mushroom soup as a starter. The main course is a meat stew and for desert we will serve pancakes. I hope you enjoy your meal.

The chef who addresses the table in the hunting lodge is a tall black man dressed in white chef’s suit and a kitchen apron. While he informs the attentive hunting party about the menu to-be-served, another – younger – man serves out the soup. There is no eye contact. Johan, the professional hunter (PH), tops up the wineglasses regularly to make sure his client and his wife from Louisiana feel comfortable and happy. Light conversation roams through the spacious room decorated with trophies; mounts on the wall and skins on the floor. During the main course the young waiter places bread and salad in between the candle lights on the wooden table. For John Smith and his wife dinners with guests at their lodge have become a compulsory event that they try to avoid as much as possible. But hospitality is a key aspect of this business and they simply cannot escape this part of the deal. The hunting client asks me, speaking with heavy
American accent, whether hunting farms provide jobs in the region. Before I get a chance to answer John replies that they certainly do. I sip from my glass of red wine. The client’s wife says they heard worrying stories in other places about farmers being killed in South Africa. She adds that Americans are quite afraid to visit the country due to these stories. John assures them the countryside is safe and that they have no such problems. He proves his statement with the affirmation that “there has never been any danger here; I still sleep with no doors locked!” His wife informed him before dinner that these guests ask endless questions. This is apparently an unwelcome rarity in the hunting scene where political subjects are preferably kept safe in the taboo sphere. She warned John: “and another thing he is a democrat, an Obama lover”. Someone who likes the American black president is prone to bring up reform-minded political issues that do not blend well with the conservative taste served at Smith’s Hunting Safaris.

A question the client did not (get a chance to) ask during dinner is who are employed on the hunting farms. For specific tasks non-local labour is preferred by hunting farmers. The two men that served dinner for the hunting party are from Zimbabwe and work in South Africa during the hunting season to support their families back home. A steady stream of Zimbabweans travels up and down to bring home South-African currency and groceries that are no longer available or unaffordable in Zimbabwe. Tinashe, the chef, had arrived at the farm three years ago when he was informed by a friend working as a chef around Grahamstown that the owners were searching for a chef. After two years his younger brother Lovemore came to the farm to assist his brother in the kitchen and work in the garden94. They live together in a cottage behind the hunting lodge, separated from the South-African staff members. Tinashe’s wife and child visited for a month, but could not hold out on the farm: “it is always better home”. Their salaries are substantially higher than farm worker wages, yet not conform to salary standards for chefs in hotels and restaurants elsewhere. Tinashe, who has an education in cooking, expected to earn much more in South Africa. A friend in Johannesburg who works as a chef is paid 11,000 rand a month, but his own wages developed from 3,000 rand a month to 3,300 rand.

“When I came here I did not have an interview, nothing. They did not even saw my qualifications”. It is a precarious form of employment; casual, illegal and informal. But “we are no choosers” Tinashe explained. The farmer mentioned the presence of the Zimbabwean men to me earlier “off the record” because he did not want to “put them in danger”. Meanwhile they are perceived as desirable employees in the kitchen of the hunting lodge - educated, English-speaking, and African - compliant with the mental image of a proper African hunting experience.

The arrival of new outsiders on the hunting farm

The position of the Zimbabwean workers on the farm in relation to the South-Africans is comparable to that of foreign Africans in the country as a whole; they are outsiders perceived as threat to the established working class competing for scarce labour opportunities and living spaces (see also Matsinhe, 2011). In 2008 the presence of foreign Africans exploded in xenophobic violence that made international headlines. In the Karoo commercial farmers have started to make use of the arrival of new outsiders into the available pool of labour in the area.

Through connections with Zimbabweans already present in the area, more Zimbabwean men cross South Africa’s border and travel to Cradock via Johannesburg to seek work on the farms where farmers are eager to employ them instead of the local labourers. This is the route that Tafadzwa decided to undertake in 2008 when his friend told him “the place was like home”. But the 24-year old soon learned that the place was not like home at all. When he arrived after a long journey at the rundown train station in the heart of the Karoo his impression of the environment did not comply with his expectation of arriving at the “boulevard country” his people talked about at home. In Cradock there are not plenty of job opportunities, on the contrary, had to “scratch for a job” which he eventually found together with his fellow country member Marvellous. They were both offered casual work as cooks, including proper accommodation and promising benefits, on one of the eldest trophy-hunting

96 Interview Tafadzwa 6 November 2009, Cape Town (with Nomalanga).
97 Interview 24 July 2009, Cradock (with Nomalanga).
farms in the area belonging to the Watson family. When they arrived at the farm Tafadzwa and Marvellous were taken to a staff house that again did not live up to their expectations. It was awful according to Marvellous. The three-roomed house they shared with one of the South-African staff members was cold and rundown, the electricity was too weak to prepare a hot bath or bake bread in the oven. Tafadzwa recalls the bed was wrecked and the toilet broken. The conditions on the farm proved much less comfortable than the Watson’s had talked about during the interview in Cradock town. From the beginning the experience was disappointing and frustrating; Tafadzwa states “I was overworked and underpaid” with only 900 rand left per month after deductions. Marvellous affirmed he was only doing it “for the money”.

Tafadzwa and Marvellous met with a hostile reception by their South African colleagues suspicious of their arrival at the hunting farm. Marvellous remembers:

One week down the line there was a bit of tension between the workers now, because it was me and Tafadzwa were Zimbabweans and eight or nine of the other workers were South Africans. So they would kind of complain you seem to get preferential treatment... I do not know where they got that from...and they would act so naively and they would do childish stuff.

Two women that worked in the kitchen tried to make Tafadzwa and Marvellous look incompetent with the farm owners by refusing their cooperation in showing the newcomers how the Watsons want their foods prepared. Or they would point fingers at them when the Watsons complained the floor was dirty, the chocolates for the clients disappearing, or when they found litter somewhere. Tafadzwa asserts that “the South-African staff was not pleased with us”. Stereotypical tensions revolve around perceptions of job theft and language differences complicated communication. Tafadzwa and Marvellous spoke English with the Watsons who spoke Afrikaans with the South-African workers. Marvellous recalls how language differences increased tensions:

You know what happened? When we got to the hunting farm we, I understand Xhosa and just a bit of Afrikaans, just a bit. So we acted like we do not even know anything. Then they would say stuff...we wanted to see if we are welcome. So they would talk behind our backs. I mean, we pushed for three days without
even speaking Xhosa and they would say ‘these people why are they here? We would hear everything.

After three days they revealed that they actually understood Xhosa which surprised the colleagues that were now robbed of the opportunity to freely gossip in their presence. The gate to mutual understanding was partly opened, but the women in the kitchen still resorted to Afrikaans to conceal what they were talking about. Tafadzwa once suspected the women talking about Zimbabwe and told them to stop behaving so childish. Since he communicated this message in his own mother tongue Shona the woman did not grasp the meaning, which infuriated her and she attacked Tafadzwa with one of the kitchen knives. Nobody got harmed, but the kitchen where Tafadzwa and Marvellous were put to work had become a battlefield where tensions regularly reached high temperatures.

The perceived differences between Tafadzwa and Marvellous and the South-African staff members were often confirmed which caused more tension. The mode of address towards the Watsons was another subject that roused discontent among the workers. The South-African workers were upset that Tafadzwa and Marvellous addressed the farmer and his wife by their first names instead of “master” and “miss”. The more informal mode of address indicated a different kind of power relationship that interfered with the balance-of-powers on the farm as they were before. For Marvellous it was out of the question to call his employer “master”, a decision that was out of reach for the permanent South African staff who were used to a particular farm regime and its behavioural codes.

There are moments when workers found shared interests among each other; after all they all depended on the whims of the Watson family. Moments of common understanding could arise when stories were told about the private affairs of the farm owners. Their family disputes and conflicts facilitated animated conversation among the workers. When the Watsons left the farm, workers gathered in the manor’s lounge to watch TV together. Sometimes workers organized transport to town together or talked about ways to fix something in the house. Nevertheless, the conditions on the farm stimulated social division more than cohesion among the work force. Miss Watson assured Tafadzwa that “he should be careful with the women because they all have HIV
“aids” and “they steal”. After one month Marvellous was “fed up” with the situation and left the farm. Tafadzwa only left after another violent incident in which he was stabbed by a colleague and hospitalised for two days.

The incident starts when Tafadzwa and Dries are packing the pick-up truck that was going to take one of the hunting clients back to the airport. Tafadzwa notices that his colleague closed one of the client’s suitcases. When the client is ready to leave, the man notices that his camera is missing. Tafadzwa and Dries are asked who had the camera and they both deny having it or knowing anything about its whereabouts. Subsequently the farmer interrogates the men separately and Tafadzwa reports, pressured and scared of being falsely accused, that he has seen Dries close the client’s suitcase earlier. The camera was eventually located in Dries’ house and immediately when the client left the farmer got angry with Dries. Moreover, he explicitly mentions that Tafadzwa reported that he had seen Dries with the client’s suitcase. Tafadzwa immediately realizes Dries might blame him for being caught. His fear was justified. The same night Dries enters Tafadzwa’s house in a rage and stabbs him with a knife.

Such incidents are quickly interpreted as acts of xenophobia, and farmers believe Zimbabweans are not “loyal” towards South Africans. This act should be explained however, not by ethnically or nationalistic motivated crime. It is a consequence of the farms’ labour regime that is based on imbalanced power relations, social division and relations of distrust that are triggered by the arrival of newcomers that are categorized according to their nationality which marks them as a different category of people. To Tafadzwa’s astonishment Dries is still on the farm when he returns from hospital. The farmer, being used to resolve matters without outside involvement, did not report the stabbing to the police. Tafadzwa feels “used” and “dumped” by the farmer and leaves as soon as he can.

For employers immigrant labourers are the ultimate nonstandard workers; silenced, deprived of citizenship rights, and eager to do any kind of work available (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2002:798). The experiences of Zimbabwean farm workers on trophy-hunting farms in the Karoo resonate with the observation that rapid expansion of neoliberal capitalism in postcolonial societies stimulated the translocalization of the division of labour (ibid,2002). The perpetuated mobility, as migrant labour was a driving force during colonial times
already, of the international proletariat disrupts their sense of place and disperses class relations across national borders (2002:797).

What is more, because industrial capital chases cheap, tractable labor all over the earth, searching out optimally (de)regulated environments, it often erodes the social infrastructure of working communities, adding yet further to the stream of immigrants in pursuit of employment - and to the likelihood that they will be despised, demonized, even done to death (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2002:797).

The availability of non-local labour for farmers is utilized as threat towards local labourers by Karoo farmers. In 2011, farm workers dismissed from a hunting farm reported at a local NGO in Cradock that the farm owner told them that 'he was going to bring in Zimbabweans to work for him now'. Three workers that were unfairly dismissed had worked and lived on that particular farm for 6, 16 and 25 years of their lives. The force and meaning of the threat to employ non-local labour should be understood in the context ever stagnating labour demands in the agricultural sector of the Karoo, including on the trophy-hunting farms. With unemployment as a ‘ubiquitous anxiety’ (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001:646) in South Africa, being employed is a relative privileged position (Natrass & Seekings, 1997:453). Local farm workers feel threatened in their position with the arrival of foreign labourers they have to compete with.

Contemporary processes of establishment and outsidering

This chapter has shown how relations between commercial farmers and workers in the Karoo shaped ambivalent attachments to the farms and the township areas providing government housing for farm dwellers leaving farms. Farm dwellers expressed that they prefer to invest in township houses that provides tenure security as they perceive the farm a place of work where their tenure is insecure. Nevertheless farm dwellers articulated attachment to the farms through the ways they speak of their histories on the farms and presence in the area for generations. Their decisions and choices regarding settlement and trekking are made within the very uneven land ownership structures and asymmetric power

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98 Thursday 17 February 2011, Cradock Field Note.
relations inherited from the past. In the process of establishment Karoo farmers have appropriated the land and the idea that they remain the legitimate owners of the land. In the process of outsidering farm dwellers have adapted to the established images of the spatial and racial divisions in the countryside. The tensions inherent to this established and outsiders configuration are exacerbated with the arrival of newcomers in the area. Another configuration emerged in the rural working class, namely that of South-African and foreign African labour migrants.