Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences

Materialisation of Emergent Farmers in a Malawian Context

– A Privileged Class' Positioning in Agricultural Transformation

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Master's Thesis • 30 HEC
Agriculture Programme – Rural Development
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Uppsala 2020

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Credits: 30 HEC
Level: Second cycle, A2E
Course title: Master's Thesis in Rural Development and Natural Resource Management
Course code: EX0777
Programme/education: Agriculture Programme – Rural Development
Course coordinating department: Department of Urban and Rural Development
Place of publication: Uppsala
Year of publication: 2020
Cover picture: An emergent farmer's labourers arrive from the fields in an oxcart with tobacco leaves. They carry the leaves to dry under the roofs of sheds. Photo: Gustav Broms.

Online publication: https://stud.epsilon.slu.se

Keywords: capital accumulation, surplus value, food regime, patronage, differentiation, livelihood, diversification, food security

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Abstract

Emergent farmers have rapidly increased in numbers on the sub-Saharan African continent during the last couple of decades. The main interest in this study lies in how emergent farmers have materialised as a class in a political economic context and historical process and what societal impact they have had. Emergent farmers as a class are understood as capable of reproducing their means of subsistence and creating surplus value without having to own their means of production. Mkanda Extension Planning Area (EPA) in Malawi has served as the empirical area for this matter.

During the fieldwork, 31 persons were interviewed. The interviews gave insights into farmers' living conditions. An explorative survey was also conducted with 31 informants, of which 13 persons also participated in the interviews. The explorative survey provided an overview of farm characteristics in the area. In addition, two focus group discussions were held to gain perspective on shared experiences among farmer groups regarding the positioning of emergent farmers, how they and other types of farmers can be classified and how the relationship between farmers appear. The field work was combined with a desk study to investigate political, socioeconomic and environmental conditions through which emergent farmers have materialised.

Emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have materialised through inheritance and acquisition of property such as land; other natural resources; material assets and technology. They have grown through extension service and credit regimes; sales of cash crops and livestock; agribusinesses; incomes from employment and off-farm activities. They have advanced through family and class support; labour power control; strategic utilisation of volatile agricultural markets and income diversification. They have progressed through agricultural institutions, political favouritism and resource exchange with state representatives; traditional authorities; traders; investors; large-scale buyers and other farmer groups.

Emergent farmers have contributed to and been shaped by the development of the capitalist mode of production during Malawi's postcolonial history. The farmer class has enabled increased capital investments and accumulation and contributed to new businesses; production methods; market directions and means of livelihood in rural areas. They have provided links between local production conditions; extraction of raw material; capital exchange; means of profit and growth opportunities.

At the same time, emergent farmers have constituted a minority that has served certain class interests. While emergent farmers have influenced the socioeconomic and ecological dynamics in rural places such as Mkanda EPA, the class has maintained structures that have reproduced inequality among the population.

Keywords: capital accumulation, surplus value, food regime, patronage, differentiation, livelihood, diversification, food security

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to express my appreciation to the people in Mkanda EPA and Mchinji District who have shared their time, knowledge and experience about matters of concern for the thesis. Above all, I am thinking of the informants I have met: farmers; traders; agrodealers; agribusiness representatives; extension officers and district development officers.

I owe gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Linley Chiwona-Karltun and co-supervisor, Dr. Kingsley Mikwamba, for guiding me through the field work and writing of the thesis. I am also thankful to Emmanuel Ngwenya, who has assisted me in the field work and with the interpretation of the information that formed the basis of the study.

My sincere gratefulness is also dedicated to Maggie Alibewawo Thindwa and Masautso Mnyanga for your hospitality, friendship and support. Thank you to Dr. Gray Matita for hosting me at Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources – Natural Resources College and the researchers and students I interacted with during my stay there.

In addition, I have benefited greatly from discussions with specific researchers about how to embrace the research phenomenon: Dr. Alexander Phiri, Dr. Kennedy Machira, Dr. Richard M. Mkandawire and Richard Kachule.

I would also like to thank The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for funding my field study through the Minor Field Studies scholarship.

Thanks also to my classmates with whom I have shared valuable experiences. Lastly, am filled with appreciation and love for my family who has encouraged and supported me during my studies.

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Abbreviations

ADC	Area Development Committee
ADMARC	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
AHL	Auction Holdings Limited
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EPA	Extension Planning Area
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FISP	Farm Input Subsidy Programme
FRA	Zambian Food Reserve Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IPS	Integrated Production System
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
MDGS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
NASFAM	National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi
NFRA	National Food Reserve Agency
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
SFFRFM	Smallholder Farmers Fertilizer Revolving Fund of Malawi
TAMA	Tobacco Association of Malawi
TCC	Tobacco Control Commission
TLMA	Traditional Land Management Area
VDC	Village Development Committee
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WFP	World Food Programme

1 Introduction

In *The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) III* (Government of Malawi 2017a) agriculture[1] is designated as a key priority area for national economic growth and development (ibid.:32). A publicly stated objective is "to achieve sustainable agricultural transformation and water development that is adaptive to climate change and enhances ecosystem services" (ibid.:34). The question is how.

In a number of sub-Saharan African countries, there has been a significant rise since 2000 of what may be referred to as domestic emergent investor farms, medium-scale farms or a rural-based hybrid capitalist class[2] (Jayne et al. 2016; Jayne et al. 2019; Anseeuw et al. 2016; Sitko & Jayne 2014). According to authors in other studies (ibid.), these farmers hold arable land from 5 to 100 hectares (where the range differs depending on the study). They have a background as civil servants; professionals; traditional leaders; businesspeople or relatively successful small-scale farmers who have expanded their operations by reinvesting revenue from agricultural sales and other sources of value.

Between 2000 and 2015, the land size occupied by emergent farmers has almost doubled in the Malawian districts Mchinji, Kasungu and Lilongwe (Anseeuw et al. 2016). The rapid rise of emergent or medium-scale farms is remarkable in a country where the majority of the rural population experiences severe land pressure while being dependent on agriculture: In Malawi, there are 186 people on average per square kilometer – a comparatively high population density on the continent – in one of the world's poorest nations (Government of Malawi 2017a:32; Government of Malawi 2019:13; Jayne et al. 2016; Jayne et al. 2019).[3] Agriculture accounts for about a third of Malawi's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and generates over 80 percent of the national export earnings (Government of Malawi 2017a:32). Eighty-six percent of the country's population lives in rural areas (Government of Malawi 2019:10) and the vast majority is engaged in crop and livestock production. The average arable land size per person is 0.22 hectares (Trading Economics 2020).[4]

According to Jayne et al. (2016) and Jayne et al. (2019), emergent farmers' presence in rural and peri-urban areas has created new dynamics in agricultural technology and innovation; markets; socioeconomic relationships between urban- and rural-based actors and groups within farming communities as well as how natural resources are managed and used. The appearance of emergent farmers raises questions about what has driven their growth and how they have been involved in societal resource allocation and accumulation.

[1] Agriculture in capitalism is the economic interests of farming including their institutions and activities that affect farmers' production and reproduction (Bernstein 2010:124).

[2] Class is interpreted as a distinctive group's relationship to the means of production.

[3] The annual population growth rate is 2.9 percent (Government of Malawi 2019:4). The population density has increased from an average of 138 people per square kilometer in 2008 (ibid.:13).

[4] The total arable land area in Malawi is 3.8 million hectares (out of a total of 9.428 million hectares of land) (Trading Economics 2020).

Research problem and purpose

This thesis provides an exploration into political economic contexts and historical processes that have given rise to emergent farmers as a class, their characteristics, positioning in agricultural transformation and societal impact.

The study was undertaken in Mkanda Extension Planning Area (EPA)[5] located within Mchinji District, which is found in western Malawi and is part of the Central Region (see Figure 2. Map of Malawi and Mchinji District in chapter 3). In Mkanda EPA, agriculture has involved increased capitalisation of land, labour and other means of production during the last decades. The agricultural transformation has had far-reaching effects on farmers' living conditions. Mkanda EPA provides an empirical field where one can explore themes such as whether emergent farmers are impeding a climb out of poverty for a majority of rural residents. Or, if they can be seen as one of few agents for economic vitality, increased farm productivity and income diversification in a Malawian rural area.

The question on which the study is based is:

- How have emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA materialised as a class in a political economic context and historical process and what societal impact have they had?

Key descriptive concepts in the study

In the thesis, emergent farmer as a term is used with emphasis on how farm actors are positioned in relations of production and reproduction. Farm(er) types are therefore mainly categorised on the basis of sociological (type of farming) criteria. Emergent farmers as a class are treated as capable of reproducing their means of subsistence and creating *surplus value* without having to own their means of production. An approach to them as a coherent group is how they "negotiate spaces of accumulation and access to resources in ways that [potentially] put them in a privileged position to increase the productivity and profitability of the various activities they perform" (Oya 2007:460). Farm actor is used to encompass actors involved in the agricultural value chain: raw material extractors; producers; farm intermediaries (e.g. supervisors and group leaders); civil servants; professionals; traditional leaders; local businesspeople; traders; wholesalers; manufacturers; processors; parastatal agents; policy and decision makers; investors; *capital* owners and civil society organisation (CSO) representatives.

Anseeuw et al. (2016) characterise the emergent farmer as an actor who has been disadvantaged by colonial government policies, but gradually become part of a more commercialised type of agriculture. As a constrast, the authors point to the fact that there are better-off farmers who have not been historically disadvanted or overcome an emerging stage to reach their position. According to Jayne et al. (2016) and Jayne et al. (2019), one type of emergent farmer has a small-scale farm background in rural communities, but has expanded their scale of production (a process where labour is applied in changing the nature of raw material to satisfy conditions of human life) and reproduction (means for

[5] An EPA is an agricultural administrative unit where agricultural policies from the central government are implemented through extension services. According to such a model, agricultural knowledge, skills, methods and technologies are transferred from researchers to farmers via extension workers.

humans to secure the conditions of life and future production from what is produced or earned in the present) (Bernstein 2010:128). Another type of emergent farmer has invested in farming with income or other financial sources outside agriculture. Moreover, there are emergent farmers with a relatively privileged background within family networks who have owned and managed estates, or whose precursors in other ways have reached influential positions within the agricultural sector. These types of emergent farmers are included in the study.

I see emergent farmers as part of the Malawian middle class, which in the rural context is positioned between small-scale and large-scale farmers. According to Bernstein (2010:3-4), the small-scale or smallholder farmer is found in households with a simple reproduction orientation, whose means of production and reproduction are determined by the family's labour power (ibid.:129). Their production primarily serves household subsistence needs. Emergent farmers are able to sustain and expand their means of production and reproduction by combining market and social relations. Large-scale farmers are fully involved in market relations for profit.

In terms of farm size, Anseeuw et al. (2016) define the Malawian medium-scale farmer as someone who holds between 5 and 50 hectares of land. This is also the general range of land size for emergent farmers used in the study. Most emergent farmers included have 10-30 hectares of land. However, some emergent farmers have less than 5 hectares of land. What is of particular interest in such cases is how they have created value within and outside their land – including how productively they have used property and from where they have received income.

Recurrent descriptive concepts

Some recurrent concepts used are worth clarifying here: *Livelihood*, *diversification* and *household*. In the study, I assume the definitons given by Ellis (2000), which builds on the work of Chambers & Conway (1992): "A livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household" (Ellis 2000:10). "Rural livelihood diversification is defined as the process by which rural households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive and to improve their standard of living" (ibid.:15).

Household is the primary social unit through which emergent farmers have been studied. Household is interpreted as "the social group which resides in the same place, shares the same meals, and makes joint or coordinated decisions over resource allocation and income pooling" (ibid.:18). Emphasis is given to interhousehold rather than intrahousehold relations, altough some elements of the latter is discussed as well.

Theoretical entry

The significance of the research question about how emergent farmers have materialised is influenced by agrarian political economy, as it is defined in mission statement of the *Journal of Agrarian Change* "the social relations and dynamics of production and reproduction, property and power in agrarian formations and their processes of change, both

historical and contemporary". The exploration of the political economic context and historical process in which emergent farmers have materialised centres around social relations between *capital* and labour. An underlying element affecting such relations is how *capital* users in their pursuit to accumulate profit invest in agricultural production to make more profit. Another central theme is how relations of production, consumption and reproduction are materialised within and between classes (Bernstein 2010; Scoones 2016).

In the thesis, *capital* refers to variable *capital* (labour power: labourers' capacity to work and which they can sell for wages to buy means of subsistence – the only *capital* that, when used to produce a commodity, generates greater value than its own value) and/or constant *capital* (technology, raw material and land – which in the production of new commodities only can contribute to its existing value) (Bernstein 2010:25-26).

I trace the materialisation of emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA to how *capital* has moved and been organised through them during Malawi's postcolonial history. The agricultural transformation that emergent farmers in the study area have been involved in is interpreted by how *capital* as a force appears when monetary value takes the form as commodity, before returning to the money-form, but then with a greater sum than what was initially capitalised (Bernstein 2010:25). Figure 1 displays main factors that are addressed in the thesis in relation to the materialisation of emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA.

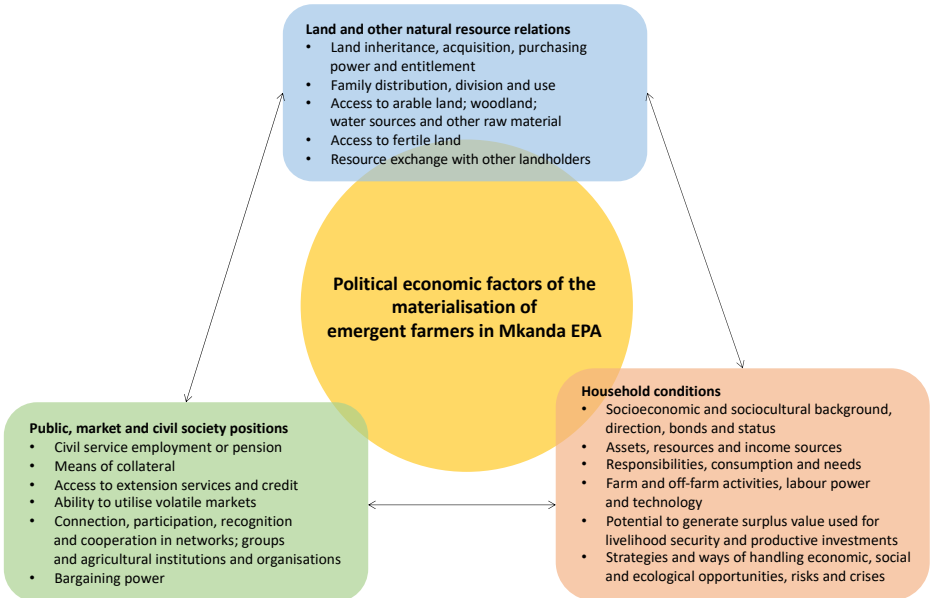

Figure 1. Political economic factors of the materialisation of emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA. Illustration: Gustav Broms.

Significance of how the empirics is interpreted through domestic power relations

The interpretation of the empirical material based on the question about how emergent farmers have materialised as a class and the societal impact they have had is partly characterised by the importance of domestic power interests. More specifically, I take into account the role and positioning of emergent farmers in an environment where state resources are considered as the patrimony of the ruler and particular client groups

(Chirwa & Dorward 2013:65). In Malawi, the state has been treated as a sphere without agreed moral imperatives (Ekeh 1975) and served as a means for political leaders and other elite groups to transfer public resources to themselves and in return provide support and loyalty – i.e. *patronage* – to selected clients (van Wyk 2007). Individuals with positions of power have used public institutions as resource pools from which resources are distributed to kinship networks, ethnic groups and residents in their home area. The exchange has implied moral obligations that are reminiscent of social principals in family and kin relations.

Consequently, corruption in the public arena has been a mode of action associated with the need for rulers to build and consolidate social networks and patron-client relationships. The political resource appropriation has rested on rent-seeking strategies, where privileged groups have sought to acquire an increased share of the existing wealth, without necessarily creating new wealth. They have accumulated wealth from monopoly trading, subsidies, donor support, foreign investments and control over scarce resources in ways that have led to misappropriation of public funds and positions (Cammack, Kelsall & Booth 2010:2).

The presidential office has dispensed and regulated *patronage* to gain and sustain legitimacy, authority and support in relation to three main client groups: the political elite, the middle class and the wider mass (ibid.). Different presidents have had their specific approaches and interests in how they have reinforced support and loyalty from targeted clients. In this light, I ask in what ways emergent farmers have materialised within the client groups shaped by the *neopatrimonial state* (where a formal law and administration framework exists, but public institutions are controlled by *patronage* networks) (Booth et al. 2006). *(Neo)patrimonialism* as an ideology gives insight into how ruling ideas win consent when they are embodied as the general interest and common sense of societal groups – beliefs that in turn can affect the materialisation of emergent farmers.

Significance of how the empirics is interpreted through food regimes

I also handle the empirical material concerning the materialisation of emergent farmers – and their relationship to *capital* – by encountering the actor as embedded in *food regimes*, which is "a rule-governed structure of production and consumption of food on a world scale" (Friedmann 1993:30-31). Each *food regime* is organised within particular geopolitical configurations of production and food relations that take place through capitalist powers (McMichael 2009). With this theoretical perspective, I place emergent farmers as part of broader historical and political economic conjunctures (cf. ibid.).

Significance of how the empirics is interpreted through means of production

My concern about how emergent farmers have materialised and their societal impact also lead me to process the empirical material through how the capitalist mode of production that characterise their means of production has involved them in relations of *capital*, class and labour.

The capitalist mode of production as a system of organising production and distributing value is based on the social relation between the owner of the means of production and labour (the social form of work). In agrarian societies such as Mkanda EPA, farmers have

exchanged labour to produce and reproduce themselves through their labour power; land; tools; mechanised technology; seeds; livestock; food; shelter; rest; other needs as well as values associated with social and cultural interactions (cf. Bernstein 2010:18, 26). The farmers' subsistence has required that part of their income has been allocated to the consumption of the producer and those dependent on him or her; the technology used in the cultivation and the inputs applied for each production cycle (cf. ibid.:71-72).

The value of someone's labour power is based on its *exchange value*: the labour that has gone into producing something – that is, the value of the resources that the labourer must consume to replenish his or her work capacity (Araghi 2003). In the capitalist mode of production, a labourer's labour power becomes the property of the capitalist. The *exchange value* (the relative value of a commodity in relation to other commodities) of someone's labour power is expressed in wages or other types of payment (including food). When *capital* and labour are separated, the labourer must buy back the commodity that has been produced from the *capital* owner.

The *capital* owner generates profit from the value difference between the production costs (the use of variable *capital* in combination with constant *capital*) and the price of the commodity (Bernstein 2010:25-26). *Surplus value* in capitalist relations is realised when the *capital* owner appropriates the value invested in producing a commodity that exceeds what is required to meet the producer's (labourer's) reproduction needs. Expressed differently, the capital owner's *capital* accumulation for the acquisition of more *capital* requires that *surplus value* is generated through labour – where the value of what the labourer puts on his or her subsistence is less than the cost of producing the commodity (ibid.:36, 126, 129). In short, the margin between the *exchange value* and *surplus value* is the basis of exploitation, *capital* accumulation and profit. The profit generated from *surplus value* can be increased either by an extension of the labourer's working hours, or a reduction of their payment (Araghi 2003).

This theoretical approach to the empirical material of the study is analysed in chapter 8.

2 Methodology and methods

Below, I clarify the scientific underpinning for how the research was conducted. I also describe what methods were applied to handle the question how emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have materialised in a political economic context and historical process.

Research approach

The understanding of emergent farmers in the study is characterised by what kind of social relations and historical patterns connect them as a class. My search for knowledge is based on how emergent farmers have been formed through societal structures (established social patterns); political economic systems (set of social relations) as well as agricultural institutions (rules of the game) and organisations (patterns of action). The treatment of emergent farmers is shaped by their social positioning in relations of production and reproduction. I look at the political economic conditions that have influenced their positioning and scope for action – what is possible for them to do. I also make sense of what happens between them and other societal groups.

During the research process, I asked questions; sought empirical material; looked for literary sources and interpreted the material with an abductive approach. In other words, I moved between a specific empirical phenomenon and hypothetic overarching patterns and whether they could explain what I experienced in Mkanda EPA (cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009:4). When I conducted the study, I developed the use of empirical material successively while adjusting and refining theoretical traces (proposed coherent conceptual characteristics). By alternating between theory and empirical facts in the light of each other, I could reinterpret my understanding of the research phenomenon. Furthermore, in order to develop underlying conditions that could explain emergent farmers as a societal group and contexts in which they have materialised, I analysed the empirical facts in combination with previous relevant studies (cf. ibid.).

Methodical direction

I gathered empirical material – knowledge based upon experience – through interviews, focus group discussions and an explorative survey. The field work was done in Mkanda EPA between February and March 2018. The decision to choose Mkanda EPA as the empirical field was influenced by how the place would allow me to get relevant information about the research problem from a relatively small sample of empirical sources (Flyvbjerg 2006).

In addition to the field work, I formed the understanding of emergent farmers through a desk study to identify key factors that have influenced how emergent farmers have materialised in relation to long-term and wider societal circumstances (cf. WFP 2009:48). I reviewed studies (articles, reports and public documents) with perspectives on political, economic, social and environmental conditions that have affected and been affected by how farming is done in the area (cf. ibid.).

In order to approach emergent farmers as a class and their positioning in agricultural transformation, I asked four central questions as entries to the primary and secondary sources, articulated by Bernstein (2010:22-24; 2017):

- Who owns what (how are the means of production and reproduction distributed)?
- Who does what (how is the social division of labour organised)?
- Who gets what (how is the product of labour and its use in reproduction distributed)?
- What do they do with it (how are the social relations of consumption, reproduction and accumulation materialised)?

With these questions put into use, I could place emergent farmers in the intersection between concrete situations and structural forces of power, politics and economics (Scoones 2016).

Primary sources

During the fieldwork, I was accompanied by a field assistant. He helped me with translating questions and responses in Chewa and English during interview situations, when informants had difficulties with expressing themselves in English. He and I also had recurrent discussions about the findings. The field assistant is a graduate student from Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resouces (LUANAR), where he has studied Nutrition and Food Science.

I collected the empirical facts through theoretical sampling: I focused on informants and sources of information that were relevant to my research question and theoretical explanation of the empirical phenomenon (Creswell 2014:189; Silverman:60-63, 122). My selection of informants was based on treating human beings as representatives of a specific societal problem (ibid.:4; ibid.:61, 67). I chose informants in consultation with government extension officers in Mkanda EPA. The criteria for who would be included in the study were based on the person's livelihood direction; farm orientation; socioeconomic conditions; gender and land size (cf. Creswell 2014:189-189; Hansen 2003; Lund 2014; Silverman 2015:71-72; van Maanen 2001). The sample consisted of informants who were both full-time and part-time farmers; focused on different types of production; lived in relative poverty; were able to meet their subsistence needs and were relatively wealthy; included women and men and had a land size that was either smaller than 2 hectares; between 2-5 hectares or larger than 5 hectares.

The informants signified an approximately equal proportion of individuals who reside in three sections within Mkanda EPA. The sections are located closer or further away from Mkanda trading centre. The sections differ in terms of physical features and its population's average farm size as well as livelihood conditions. Some informants were also included later during the course of the fieldwork, depending on how their roles and interests in society could complement the understanding of emergent farmers' positioning in relations of production and reproduction. I continued to collect facts from the field until deviant cases faded and empirical saturation was met to answer the research question (Creswell 2014:189; Lund 2014; Silverman 2014:69, 99-100, 124). The empirical material was organised in categories, codes, groupings or themes (Creswell 2014:14, 197-200; Silverman 2015:256-257).

By structuring the material, I could distinguish emerging themes and factors about how emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have materialised in relation to other studies and my theoretical assumptions. The themes were used to create subheadings in chapter 7 (where a large part of the interview material is mainly used) and chapter 8 (where emergent farmers are analysed based on social relations and materials are used from interviews and focus group discussions). Overall themes in chapter 7 are therefore food security; market relations; land relations; farmers' participation in agricultural institutions and organisations as well as natural resource relations. The overall perspectives in chapter 8 focus on social relations between farmer groups in terms of class, gender and labour.

Secondary sources

In the process of integrating secondary sources, I mapped topics, attributes and the importance of the text sources to be explored (cf. QuestionPro 2019). Next, I narrowed down the sources that could contribute purposefully to my study. I reviewed writings that were more closely or broadly related to the topic to further sort out in what political economic context and historical process emergent farmers have come into being. I combined and compared information from the selected secondary sources with my findings from the empirical field. By doing so, I explored research gaps; source reliability; which questions could be answered and on what basis logical coherence was uncovered about the research phenomenon (ibid.).

Empirical explorations

In the next section, I outline the sampling methods and sources that constitute the research material.

Explorative survey

Initially during the field work, I undertook an explorative survey with 31 small-scale and emergent farmers. They represent a roughly equal number of individuals from three different sections in Mkanda EPA (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participants in explorative survey

Gender	**Small-scale farmers (number)**	**Emergent farmers (number)**	**Total (number)**
Man	4	13	17
Woman	10	4*	14

Source: Information from explorative survey. *Three of the female emergent farmers live in male-headed households.

The explorative survey included questions about the informant's household: the number, age and gender of the members; income sources; assets; land size; farm practices; type of produce; market relations; off-farm activities; ability to meet basic needs; ability to create *surplus value* and institutional connections. The explorative survey provided an overview of farm characteristics in the area. I could thereby begin to discern what categorically

defined specific types of farmers. The findings from the survey also guided my selection of informants that were to be further interviewed about the research problem (Creswell 2014:16, 19) – depending on how their direction could contribute with in-depth knowledge about how emergent farmers have materialised as a class; what impact they have had on their surroundings and how other farm actors have related to them.

Interviews

During the field work, I relied on broadly formulated questions that pointed at the research problem. The interviews were semi-structured from an interview guide with specific themes (Creswell 2014: 8-9, 18-19, 194) about how the informant has experienced livelihood conditions and directions; farm actor positionings and relationships; the agricultural development in the surroundings and socioeconomic differences between farmers. The interviews provided a nuanced and multifaceted material (Creswell 2014:190; Silverman 2015:166, 186) about conditions and complexities that farmers live in (Alvesson 2003). I interviewed 31 persons (23 men and 8 women) who had ties to Mchinji District and Mkanda EPA (see Table 2). Among them, 13 informants (8 emergent male farmers; 1 emergent female farmer; 1 small-scale male farmer and 3 small-scale female farmers) also participated in the explorative survey. The informants were generally interviewed individually. Group interviews were conducted in a few cases with a small number of participants.

Table 2. Interview subjects

Category	**Men (number)**	**Women (number)**	**Total (number)**
Emergent farmers	8	1	9
Small-scale farmers	2	3	5
Agrodealers and traders	4	1	5
Large-scale estate farmers	1		1
Large-scale estate farm managers	1		1
Agribusiness company representatives	3	1	4
Agricultural extension officers	1	1	2
District development officers	3	1	4

Source: Information from the individual interviews conducted.

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were arranged initially during the field work. One focus group discussion was done with 12 male emergent farmers. A second focus group discussion was held with 12 female small-scale farmers. In each focus group discussion, I wanted to include participants who shared some characteristics – in this case gender and socioeco-

nomic conditions (cf. Bosco & Herman 2010; Silverman 2015:206-207). The group division thus enabled the participants to discuss issues based on shared experiences both in terms of class and gender – and possibly express differences within their respective social category.

Focus group discussion with male emergent farmers (left) and female small-scale farmers (right). Photo: Gustav Broms.

During the discussions, I applied Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools (Cavestro 2003): historical timeline, wealth ranking and seasonal calendar. The tools used and discussions in general provided perspectives on how common and distinguishing features of farmer groups could be identified and elaborated in terms of production and reproduction relations; self-image and image of others; assets; resource use; farm and off-farm engagements; seasonal activities and major events that seem to have affected the participants' living conditions. In sum, the information from the focus group discussions helped me categorise the participants' perceptions of social groups; distinguish conditions in the research problem that seemed important to focus on in the continued study and analyse the materialisation of emergent farmers from a class and gender perspective (cf. Silverman 2015:218-222).

Implication of the methodical direction

The different research sources explored with various methods enabled me to approach emergent farmers from several angles. I could ask whether the content from the sources emerged as mutually supportive, complementary or contradictory (Lund 2014; Creswell 2014:185, 191-191; Silverman 2015:42-45, 91-93) and elucidate, link, reexamine and verify findings (Silverman 2015:226). In other words, I sought to reinforce the scientific value of the thesis by comparing different types of data and find out whether they supported the claims of one another and in combination contributed to a more convincing and comprehensible conclusion – or if there were still gaps I needed to explore and fill.

In the empirical field, I needed to handle the fact that those I interacted with expressed themselves from a certain position and role, which was influenced by my presence (Creswell 2014:189-189; Hansen 2003; Lund 2014; Silverman 2015:71-72; van Maanen 2001). Therefore, I tested impressions, preconceptions and interpretations about specific research material against other sources with modes of suspicion, questioning and reflection (Willig 2014). I strived to make the interpretations of the research sources reliable

and valid through comprehensible reasoning; clarity of the text; comparison between sources of data as well as other studies and logical cohesion regarding the meaning of the studied phenomenon and how the material related to the research problem (Lund 2014; Silverman 2015:91-93).

The significance of the thesis primarily lies in how the analytical constituent properties (or patterns) in the studied phenomenon make sense and stimulate further investigations and theoretical understanding about how emergent farmers and the contexts in which they exist can be seen as something conceptually true (Silverman 2015:81-89; Creswell 2014:201-204).

3 Study area: Mchinji District and Mkanda EPA

Mkanda EPA is one of six Extension Planning Areas (the local Ministry of Agriculture office) in Mchinji, a district within the central region which borders Zambia in the west and Mozambique southwards. Mkanda EPA lies in western Malawi, adjacent to Zambia. It is located some 35 kilometres north of Mchinji Boma – the district centre. Mchinji Boma is located at one of the main paved roads – M12, about 110 kilometres from the capital Lilongwe and 10 kilometres from the Zambian border (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Maps of Africa, Malawi and Mchinji District. Source: Google Maps 2019, own processing.

Table 3. Geographic and demographic conditions in Mchinji District and Mkanda EPA

Classification	**Mchinji District**	**Mkanda EPA**
Land area (ha)	334 600 (2018)	103 660 (2018)
Arable land (including woodlots) (ha)	222 455 (2018)	60 775 (2018)
Leasehold land (including estates and business properties) (ha)	71 237 (2018)	27 399 (2018)
Customary land (including individual farmland; households; accommodation as well as public land controlled by the state or community such as public buildings; infrastructure; recreational sites; grazing areas; marketplaces; business locations and burial grounds) (ha)	151 218 (2018)	33 376 (2018)
Dambo land (wetland) (ha)	55 576 (2018)	18 296 (2018)
Forest reserves and community forests (ha)	42 551 (2008)	14 225 (2018)
Hills and surface water (ha)	14 018 (2018)	10 304 (2018)
Average landholding size per person (ha)	0.37 (2019)	0.33 (2018)
Average landholding size per household (ha)	1.66 (2019)	1.65 (2018)
Number of households	134 799 (94 110 male-headed, 40 689 female-headed) (2019)	36 341 (23 671 male-headed, 12 670 female-headed) (2018)
Average household size (number of people)	4.5 (2019)	5 (2018)
Population (number of people)	602 305 (3.4 percent of the total population in Malawi) (2019)	181 705 (2018)
Share of the population formally engaged in off-farm economic activities (percent)	20.6 (mainly wholesale and retail; accommodation; food services and social welfare services) (2017)	?

Sources: Government of Malawi 2017b:70; Government of Malawi 2019:12, 47, 74, 211; Mchinji District Agriculture Office 2008:6, 26; Mchinji District Agriculture Office 2018 and information provided by the Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator in Mkanda EPA.

Mchinji District is part of Kasungu Agricultural Development Division (ADD) (see Figure 3).

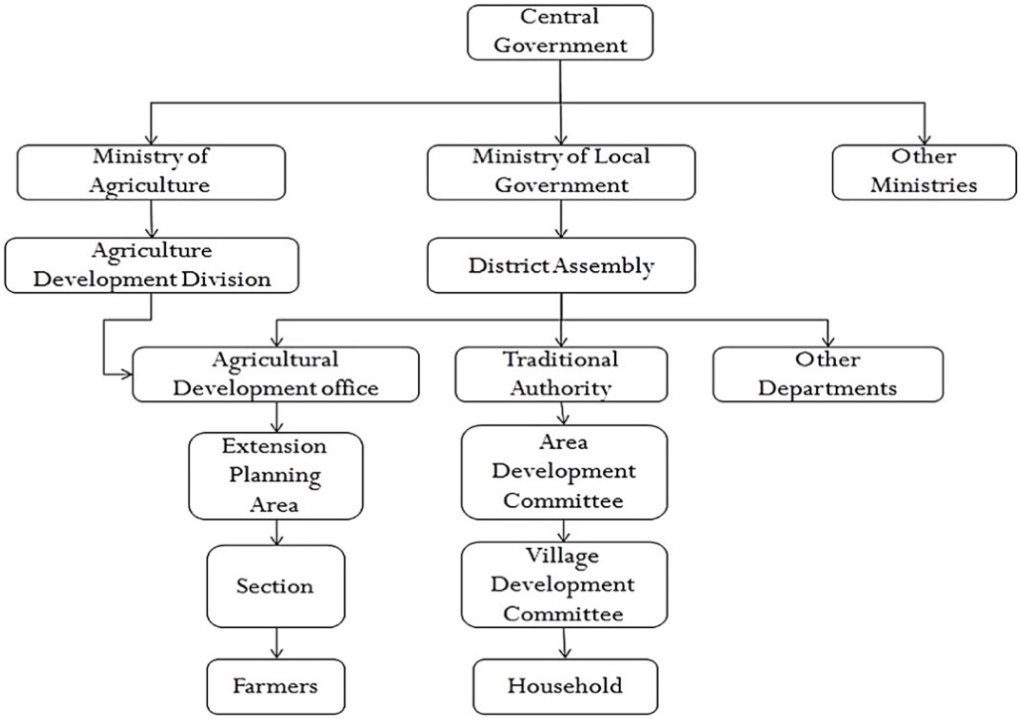

Figure 3. Administrative structure of agricultural institutions. Source: Munthali & Murayama 2013.

Mchinji District

Over 90 percent of the population in Mchinji District relies on farming (Government of Malawi 2017b:125). The area has a mix of smallholder-, emergent- and large-scale farms – although the majority of the population is small-scale farmers. The population density is 192 persons per square kilometre (Government of Malawi 2019:14). The population has increased with almost 148 000 people between 2008 and 2018 (ibid.:6). The mean household size is 4.4 persons (Government of Malawi 2017b:12). Among the population, 57.6 percent consider themselves to be very poor and 29.4 percent poor (ibid.:144). The literacy rate among the residents over 15 years old is 73.4 percent (ibid.:25). The proportion of the population who have never attended school is 13.2 percent (ibid.:27). Among the residents who have been to school, 12.1 percent has completed eight years of education (ibid.:29).

Mkanda EPA

Mkanda trading centre is the hub in the EPA. The trading centre is reached on a partly paved and sandy road, which occasionally is impassable during the rainy season. Poor road infrastructure and access to government services have limited the range of market activities to small-scale food processing; agricultural and household equipment trade; handicraft; carpentry; construction; retail stores; manufacturing and wholesaler facilities; grocery shops; bars; workshops; restaurants; guesthouses and transportation services as well as selling of electronics (including mobile phones), clothes and media products. There are basic public functions present including health; education; law enforcement; food market regulations and administration of natural resources and electricity.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) present in the area provide services on similar issues that the public institutions are responsible for. There are also agricultural organisations and credit institutions in the EPA.

The majority of the population in Mkanda EPA is dependent on farming as their main livelihood source (see Table 4 for main farm activities carried out in specific seasons during the year). Their main energy sources for cooking and heat are firewood; charcoal; gas and grass/straw. The lighting sources are torches; lamps; lanterns; solar panels; the electricity network; generators; paraffin and candles. A majority collects water from boreholes and wells. People also get water directly from streams and ponds. Some residents have access to tap water in their house. Farmers mainly grow maize; burley tobacco; groundnuts; soybeans and horticultural crops (vegetables and fruits), but also pigeon peas; red beans; cowpeas; Irish potato; sweet potato; cassava; pumpkin; sunflowers; rice and sugarcane. They also engage in forestry to some extent. They mainly raise poultry and goats, but also pigs; ducks; doves; rabbits and cattle. Mkanda EPA has relatively fertile soil conditions which consist of sandy and clay loam. Streams flow from the Rusa River, which runs through parts of the district. The climatic conditions are relatively good for agriculture. The dry season lasts from May to October and the rainy season between November and April.

Table 4. Main farm activities during the year

	July-September	**October-December**	**January-March**	**April-June**
Farm activities	Land clearing/ tilling	Tilling/Planting	Planting	Harvesting
	Input acquisition/ Seed selection	Mechanised tilling		Input acquisition
	Planning for the next season	Weeding	Weeding	Planning for the next season
	Ridging	Ridging		
	Manure application	Fertiliser/manure application	Fertiliser application	
	Harvesting			
	Marketing/ selling	Marketing/ selling		Marketing/ selling
Socioeconomic conditions	Main food availability	Peak labour demand	Peak labour demand	Main food availability
	Main monetary exchange			Main monetary exchange
	Main social events	Main social events		

Source: Information given by participants in focus group discussions.

4 Overview of relevant agricultural conditions in time and space

In this chapter, I outline major historical events that have affected Malawian agrarian societies (including Mkanda EPA). I also summarise livelihood characteristics among specific farmer groups in Mkanda EPA.

Below, in Table 5, an overview is given of significant political economic events that have shaped agrarian societies such as Mkanda EPA and the conditions for emergent (and other) farmers there.

Table 5. Major political economic events affecting the materialisation of emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA

1964-1990 (chapter 5)	**1990-2000 (chapter 6)**	**2000-2019 (chapter 7)**
• Land Bill 1965 (Land classification) • Large-scale estate expansion during the 1960s and 1970s (increased domestic commercial interest in arable land and class difference between farmers) • Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) late 1960s (state expansion) • Formation of ADMARC 1971 (state intervention on the agricultural market) • Special Crops Act 1972 (legislation defining who can produce what) • Farmer group/club model 1978 (state-sanctioned *capital* distributed to selected farmers) • Oil and geopolitical crises as well as state-debt crisis in the late 1970s (increase in production costs and restructuring of the estate sector and the cash crop market)	• Market liberalisation policies (including the repeal of the Special Crops Act and trade deregulation) during the 1990s (liberalised production and trading conditions, including the spread of commercialised input use among farmers; expansion of burley tobacco production through clubs and estates and increased class differentiation and price volatility) • Food crises/shortages 1979-1980, 1986-1987, 1991-1992, 1993-1994 and 1997-1998 (waves of differentiation among farmers; rising maize prices; collapsed credit systems; relative increase in household spending on maize and reintroduction of input subsidises in the late 1990s) • Burley tobacco price decline 1998 → (structural change in tobacco buyers' preference; farmers' production orientation and household income sources)	• Removal of the price band 2000 (private trader expansion) • Collapse of civil servants' real salary value during the 2000s (civil servants invest in agriculture as a livelihood security and a business opportunity) • Food crises/shortages 2001-2002, 2004-2005, 2012-2013, 2015-2016 (waves of differentiation among farmers; rising maize prices; continuation of input subsidy programs; livelihood diversification and growth of farmer organisations; agribusinesses; investors; NGOs and microfinance institutions and new production models such as contract farming) • National Land Policy 2002 (passed into the new Land Act 2016) (strengthened legal support for individualised land tenure and increased commodification of natural resources) • Food crisis and financial crisis 2007-2008 (domestic and international land rush and increased investment and speculation in agriculture and rural markets)

• Strategic grain reserve 1981 (state control mechanism over the agricultural market) • Structural adjustment programs 1981 → (revised agricultural support system; rationalised public budgeting and fiscal policy as well as promotion of smallholder cash crop production and international trade competitiveness) • Small-scale and medium-scale estate expansion during the 1980s (state-sanctioned *capital* distributed to selected farmers)		

Source: Own compilation from academic literature and empirics. The red text marks periods of crises.

In Table 6, main conditions are presented of how different types of farmers in Mkanda EPA can be characterised. The featured attributes are arranged based on information interpreted from an explorative survey and two focus group discussions (see chapter 2).

Table 6. Farmer class characteristics

Characteristics	**Smallholder farmers**		**Emergent farmers**
	Resource-poor farmers (small-scale farmer informants)	In-between farmers (small-scale and some emergent farmer informants)	Better-off farmers (the majority of the emergent farmer informants)
Land size (ha)	0-2	2-5	5-50
Main land type	Inherited and rented plots of customary land, including woodlot (in some cases).	Inherited and/or rented and/or purchased customary and leasehold land, including woodlot (in some cases).	Inherited and/or rented and/or purchased customary and leasehold land (estates), including woodlot(s) and water reserve(s) (in some cases).
Gender of household head	Woman or man.	Primarily man.	Man.

Main income sources	Irregular and informal sales of agricultural products on the local market. Family-based small-scale business (e.g. sales of raw materials such as firewood; cooked edibles or products that others have produced and manufactured). Casual farm labour. Other manual labour such as burning and laying of bricks, or tasks in infrastructure projects. Rental of land. Remittances (in some cases).	Relatively regular sales of farm products through semi-formal or formal relations in local, regional and interregional markets. Established or emerging family-based business(es) (e.g. sales from fixed places or through modes of transport) with some diversification of activities such as carpentry and other crafts; slaughterhouse operations and sales of used clothing; animal products; crops and cooked or prepared foods and beverages). Trade where they have the role of intermediary between producer and end consumer. Non-mechanised services (e.g. transport and rental of houses). Civil service employment or traditional authority position (in some cases). Temporary or permanent farm labour. Management position on estates. Rental of houses and/or land. Pension. Remittances (in some cases).	Regular and formalised sales in local, regional and interregional markets. Established business(es) that include(s) staff and a larger number of labourers (e.g. cross-border trade; seed cultivation; transport; maize milling; shop ownership; slaughterhouse operations; monetary lending; rental of houses; mechanised technology and specialist expertise). Trade where they have a noticeable influence in the value chain and/or deal with larger volumes of unprocessed, processed and manufactured products (including animal products and crops). Civil service employment or traditional authority position, or private employment. Professional (including consultancy) services. Rental of houses. Pension.
Market position	Net-food buyer. Price taker.	Alternating between net-food buyer and net-food seller. Shifting between price taker and price searcher.	Net-food seller. Price searcher, at least in certain market relations.

Major credit sources and institutional commitment	Microfinance institutions (in some cases). Services from extension officers and traditional authorities. Support from relatives. Resource exchange with small-scale and emergent farmers.	Farmer clubs and organisations. Microfinance institutions. NGOs. Services from extension officers and traditional authorities. Support from relatives and acquaintances. Resource exchange with small-scale and emergent farmers.	Farmer clubs and organisations. Microfinance institutions. NGOs. Contracting companies. Services from extension officers and traditional authorities (including individuals within the family). Banks. Commitment in development committees and boards. Support from well-off relatives and acquaintances. Resource exchange with small-scale farmers, emergent farmers and large-scale farmers.
Labour relations	Works as a casual labourer or tenant. Hires casual labour (in some cases). Uses family labour.	Works as a casual or permanent labourer. Hires casual labour. Uses mainly family labour.	Might work as a permanent labourer. Is or has been employed (to a large extent). Hires casual and permanent labour. Uses family and/or non-family labour.
Technology	Manual tools.	Manual tools. Mechanised technology (e.g. ploughs drawn by oxen and treadle pump).	Manual tools. Mechanised technology (e.g. tractor, harrow and plough). Treadle pump. Motorised pump. Maize sheller and/or mill.

Common household assets (excluding livestock, crops and agricultural technology)	Chairs. Sleeping mats, mattresses or simple beds. Mobile phone. Bicycle(s). Torch. Lantern. Fuelwood stove. Water from pump connected to borehole or well outside the plot. One main building. House with roof made of straw or mudbrick, one or no window, mud or sand floor, walls of mud or handmade brick.	Furnished basic equipment for kitchen and leisure activities. Commercially purchased pots and pans. Beds. Mobile phone(s). Radio(s). TV set (in some cases). Music and/or video player. Bicycle(s). Motorbike (in some cases). Oxcart. Torch(es). Lantern(s). Lamp(s). Solar panel(s) (in some cases). Fuelwood stove. Water from pump connected to borehole outside the plot or tap in the yard. One or few buildings. Handmade fence. Houses with roofs made of sheet metal or unburned bricks, windows with wooden frames, floors of cement or wood and walls of brick, cement or mud.	Furnished sitting area and kitchen. Commercially purchased pots and pans. Equipment for decoration or leisure activities. Beds. Mobile phones. Radio(s). Music and/or video player. Stereo. TV set. Bicycles. Motorbike. Car(s)/truck(s) (in some cases). Oxcart(s). Connection to electricity network. Torch(es). Lantern(s). Lamps. Solar panels. Car battery (for charging). Generator (in some cases). Electric or gas stove. Fuelwood stove as extra energy source. Refrigerator (in some cases). Water from tap in the yard or faucet in the house. Several buildings. Manufactured fence. Houses with roofs made of sheet metal or corrugated iron sheet or burnt bricks, glass windows, cemented floors, painted exterior walls and interior plaster walls.
Main expenses	Food, beverages and other basic daily household needs. Household maintenance. Clothes. Healthcare. School fees. Transport. Use of mobile phone. Social events. Membership fees. Firewood.	Healthcare. School fees. Social events and support to relatives and acquaintances. Household maintenance. Farm labour. Inputs. Transport. Use of mobile phone(s). Membership fees. Loans. Services based on mechanised equipment and vehicles. Investments in farm and off-farm business(es). Firewood. Charcoal.	School fees. Social events and support to relatives and acquaintances. Farm labour. Mechanised and motorised equipment, including maintenance. Inputs. Investments in farm and off-farm business. Electricity. Charcoal. Gas. Fuel.
Educational background	(Primarily) primary or secondary education.	Primary or (primarily) secondary education.	Secondary or tertiary education.

5 Political economic conditions of emergent farmers prior to the democratisation

In this chapter, I describe how emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have materialised between 1964 and the early 1990s – a period characterised by state monopoly capitalism. The main factors considered during this period include the expansion and restructuration of the large-scale estates; the government support channelled to certain smallholder farmers; the introduction of structural adjustment programs; the effects of deregulations on the agricultural market and the growth of small-scale and medium-scale estates.

Large-scale estate expansion

Malawi became independent in 1964 and was led by the then president Hastings Banda until 1994, when the country turned from a one-party system to a multi-party democracy. By the late 1960s, Banda and his government turned their attention towards the estate subsector[6] – a British colonial legacy. Government representatives saw estates as a firm basis for lending, public revenues, rural employment creation, economic development and improved living standards (Mkandawire 1992:179). The government borrowed financial means on commercial terms and made substantial investments in the estate sector (Hirschmann 1990).

Individuals and corporations tied to the government negotiated with chiefs to lease what was regarded as "virgin" (or unexploited) customary land. Large tracts of land in less populated areas were expropriated, cleared and transferred from the customary (smallholder) to the leasehold (estate) subsector (Mkandawire Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:22).[7] Between 1967 and 1994, more than 1 million hectares of customary land was turned into private and public land in the country (Saidi 1999:66).[8] The number of estates increased considerably in districts within the Central Region: Kasungu; Mchinji and Ntchisi. The conversion undermined the tenure security in the communities and increased the land pressure and conflicts among customary landholders (Government of Malawi 2002).

By 1994, the estates occupied more than 25 percent of the total land area in Mchinji District (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990). The estates were allocated to parastatal and

[6] Estates are commercial farms held under a registered title, where input-intensive cash crops are produced for export markets.

[7] Based on the Land Act 1965 (Government of Malawi 1965), the original title in customary land (tenure held, used or occupied under customary law) was removed from the chief and community and vested in the government in trust for the citizens of Malawi: While the custody of customary land lied in the traditional authorities, the legal right ultimately belonged to the state. Government representatives could therefore transfer customary land and grant leases up to 99 years to legal subjects (ibid.).

[8] The 1967 Customary Land (Development) Act provided for the conversion of customary land with reference to the government's interests in agricultural development (Government of Malawi 1967). At the end of the 1990s, customary land constituted about two-thirds of the total land area in Malawi (Saidi 1999:66).

private corporations as well as people with political influence and access to public or private resources: businesspeople, senior civil servants and political leaders[9] (Holden, Kaarhus & Lunduka 2006:16).[10] Flue-cured and burley tobacco and maize were the main crops cultivated in the estates (Prowse 2009). Schools; health centres; agricultural extension service institutions; agricultural markets and infrastructural establishments – constructed for the distribution and transportation of agricultural commodities – gradually established in Mkanda EPA (cf. Chirwa & Dorward 2013:66).[11] Through the Special Crops Act, amended in 1972, estate holders were given exclusive rights to grow burley and flue-cured tobacco and auction their produce to the highest bidder at international markets.

At the same time, smallholder farmers were limited to grow cash crops of comparatively low value – e.g. maize, groundnuts and sun-cured and fire-cured tobacco. Their surplus was sold to the Malawi Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC),[12] at prices below the export price level (Kanyongolo 2005:122). Smallholders' marketable produce was extracted via implicit taxation which amounted to 50 percent (Whiteside 2000). In return, crops and fertilisers were sold by ADMARC at subsidised rates. The parastatal made considerable profits from the margin between the purchase price for smallholder produce and the price at which the commodity was sold (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:23). A significant share of the *surplus value* was injected in the estate sector as well as the financing of credit and input subsidies for maize production.

Between 1964 and 1977, the average annual GDP growth rate was 5.5 percent in Malawi – a comparatively high level on the continent (Harrigan 2003). Agricultural exports stimulated public and private investments in new technology and increased domestic commodity production. On average, the estate sector grew with 17 percent per annum, compared to the smallholder sector with a correlated growth rate of 3 percent per year (ibid.). Elite groups invested their profits from agriculture in sectors such as retail and wholesale; transport; real estate; financial services and small-scale industries (including food processing) (Cammack, Kelsall & Booth 2010:10-11).

The estate expansion in Mkanda EPA implied that large land areas were alienated from rural communities in a time – from 1965 to 1977 – when the country's population nearly doubled (Hirschmann 1990). Restrictions in international migration routes further reduced smallholders' mobility and income opportunities. The growing land pressure made family-based farming less feasible in parts of the country. A class of landless farmers was

[9] The president had a majority shareholding in Press Holdings with commercial interests in sectors such as tobacco, food, energy, retail, clothing, hardware, transport and property (Thomas 1975:48). Press Holding was also the largest shareholder in the two national commercial banks, which made loans available for actors within the estate sector (Hirschmann 1990).

[10] The corporations that owned estates included General Farming; ADMARC, Press Agriculture and Chamwavi Group (closely associated with the president's family).

[11] Such investments were made through the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). The IRDP was launched in the late 1960 and financed by aid and taxation from sources such as the estate and smallholder sector. The program supported investments in infrastructure, public institutions, basic service provision and food security interventions (e.g. expansion of agricultural extension services, feeder roads and rural market facilities).

[12] The parastatal and marketing board ADMARC was established in 1971 as a succession of previous colonial marketing boards.

created and formed part of the labour pool for the estate sector – and eventually emergent farmers (Cammack, Kelsall & Booth 2010:16).

Estate labour conditions

Smallholders and landless farmers supplied cheap labour and tenancy for the estates. They generally received wages too low for any substantial household development (Mkandawire Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:24). A monthly payment was equivalent to 90 kilo of unprocessed maize, which was just enough to sustain an average-sized family (Hirschmann 1990). Some of the labourers had already settled in the area. Others arrived from southern Malawi.[13] International migrants returned from neighbouring countries – South Africa and Rhodesia (current Zimbabwe and Zambia) – where men had worked in sectors such as mining (Chirwa & Dorward 2013:62).[14]

The leasehold tenant

Much of the estate tobacco expansion was based on tenant production (Kydd & Hewitt 1986). The tenant was a man and could be a relative to the estate owner; a small-scale farmer living near the leasehold or a migrant who lacked reliable livelihood alternatives. The tenant was allocated a portion of land to grow tobacco. The tenants built temporary houses and barns with grass, sticks and poles – material that was generally provided and charged by the leaseholder against the tenant's tobacco income (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertol 1990:81-82). The estate owner further kept down the production costs and increased the output value by letting the tenant involve his wife, children or other family members as unpaid labour (Nyanda 1989).

In the early growing season, the tenant received hoes; watering cans; tobacco seedlings and fertilisers on credit. Some tenants also received maize seeds to grow food (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertol 1990:77-78). The price the estate owner paid to the tenant for the tobacco they produced reached about 20-40 percent of the average price on the auction floor (Mkandawire 1999). The final payment was made after the estate owner had deducted the costs for the means of production (e.g. fertilisers; seeds; agrochemicals and the provision of casual labourers for specific tasks) allocated by the owner. Although tobacco price and input-cost guidelines were issued by the Tobacco Association, the estate managers could withhold their actual expenses for inputs, services and food rations provided to the tenants (ibid.:76).

Consequently, the estate manager tied the tenant to the farm through their remuneration, which was directly linked to the margin between the production costs and output. Yet, tenants who were successful in producing tobacco and negotiating prices could potentially earn a higher income than other farm labourers (and become emergent farmers). Some increased their profit in ways that created distrust between them and the estate

[13] Migrants from the southern region left a region where the average landholding size was the smallest in the country, poverty severe and major tobacco cultivation rare (Devereux et al. 2008).

[14] Domestic and international migration was an important income source for Malawian households until the mid-1970s, when labour conditions changed in neighboring countries and the Banda-led regime made Malawians return to provide labour on the tobacco estates (Hirschmann 1990).

owner.[15] The tenant usually remained on a specific estate for one or two seasons, before moving on.

The permanent labourer

Permanent labourers were hired seasonally or throughout the year. They were responsible for land and nursery preparation; crop cultivation; maintenance; construction and arranging the harvested tobacco before the sale (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:84). The estate managers saw permanent labourers as easier to command than casual labourers and tenants because they were directly supervised by the manager or field supervisor. The estate manager controlled permanent labourers by paying them salary at certain intervals. The labourer sometimes had to remain on the estate until the tobacco bales[16] had been sold before getting paid (ibid.). In which case, given the skills, status and regular income they received, they could access and use *capital* in such ways that enabled them to reach a higher socioeconomic level than the majority.

The casual labourer

Casual labourers were hired to reduce the work pressure for permanent labourers and tenants in the peak labour season (December-February) on the estates. They performed tasks such as land preparation; weeding; fertiliser application; harvesting; grading of tobacco leaves and packing of bales for the auction floor. Unlike permanent labourers, they did not receive housing, food rations or periodic medical treatment. The payment they received was given in food or money and was conditioned by the output of their effort (ibid.:84).[17] The casual labourers lived in villages close to the estate. They sought work when they had run out of food or money in the household and the labour demand was high. The estate manager controlled the casual labourers through the supervision of permanent labourers and tenants. Social tensions were created especially during times when the estate owner lacked money to pay the casual labourer with (ibid.:85). Because labourers limited the time on their own land (if they had it) during the growing season, they risked reducing the likelihood of creating *surplus value* from their holdings (ibid.:82) and remaining dependent on farm labour as a source of income.

Agricultural restructuration and differentiation

ADMARC developed an extensive network and infrastructure of agricultural markets around the country, including Mkanda EPA. Agricultural marketing was also done by private traders (licensed or otherwise), who adjusted their operations according to state limitations on how much could be traded at what price (Chilowa 1998).

[15] Some tenants stole tobacco; input and tools from the estates. Tenants also avoided paying debts by leaving the estate before the harvest. Another trick the tenant used was to add water to the tobacco and increase its weight before the grading was done, which meant that the estate owner could not sell the crop or had to lower its price (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:80).

[16] A standard tobacco bale weighs about 100 kilos.

[17] The payments given to child and female labour was considerably lower than what men received (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:84-85).

Public support to selected smallholders

After the national independence, agricultural extension officers began to offer input loans and advices to smallholders who were organised in groups – and formed part of the emergent farmer class (Devereux et al. 2008:25-26).[18] In 1978, the government introduced a farmer club model to improve smallholders' access to credit and advice (Kishindo 1988). Being a club member became a requirement to receive extension services and inputs on credit. The institutional formation of clubs reminded of the previous Master Farmer scheme,[19] that turned into the Progressive Farmer scheme in 1969 – where extension workers identified and favoured farmers who proved to be successful in implementing agricultural advice and had more resources than their neighbours (ibid.).

Through the farmer club model, groups were formed with 10-30 members from the same village or neighbouring villages. The members elected a committee who managed the club's affairs, paid an annual fee and followed a set of rules and regulations.[20] They received loans in kind and collected inputs at ADMARC according to individual requirements. The members were collectively responsible for the repayment of the input credit loan after their produce had been sold through the marketing board.[21]

To attract the extension officer's attention and receive credit and services, the farmer needed to demonstrate a certain level of financial security; control enough land to be self-reliant on food; produce a surplus for sale and be willing to take a financial risk (Hirschmann 1990). It was also beneficial for the farmer to have a certain educational background and connection with actors who exercised political or public administrational influence. Furthermore, the household should be male-headed with both the husband and wife present. The man should be a full-time farmer and active at the homestead where money was earned from established crop sales, or come on regular visits and contribute with income from off-farm work or employment. Alternatively, the household should have an accumulated wealth that enabled investments in the inputs needed for increased yields and the financial security required to obtain credit.

The farmer also had to produce specific maize varieties that required pure stand cultivation. Consequently, the recipient had to accept inspections by extension officers and apply specific fertilisers at given quantities and times (ibid.). Farm actors who met the crite-

[18] After 1964, extension workers had the mandate to visit smallholder farmers individually, but failed to do so because of high extension agent-farmer ratio (Kishindo 1988). Instead, extension officers primarily visited the better-off farmers who appeared most responsive to their advice and could convey positive results from the efforts made.

[19] The Master Farmer scheme was launched by the colonial government in 1950 (Green 2005:143). In the master farmer, the colonial administration saw a potential ally and class who could take the lead in cash crop (e.g. tobacco) production; transform farming methods; disseminate agricultural commercialisation; involve poorer farmers in labour exchange and expropriate land from less productively "successful" farmers (ibid.:144-145).

[20] For example, the members had to have a demonstration plot and club house for meetings with the extension officer. A member who violated the rules risked being denied credit the following season, or have assets confiscated (Devereux et al. 2008).

[21] If the debt was not fully repaid after the sale, the club as a whole lost the benefit of future credit (Kishindo 1988).

ria included civil servants; traders; traditional leaders;[22] estate supervisors; tobacco leasehold tenants and farmers with enough land and labour supply to increase their productivity.

Decline in the large-scale estate sector following the oil crises

After the global geopolitical instability following the world oil crises in 1973 and 1979, weaknesses in the national economy were exposed in the light of increased fiscal deficits; a banking liquidity crisis; fall in the foreign exchange rate; rising interest rates due to extensive borrowing on commercial terms; reduction of business profits and corporate tax payments; crop failure; a declining rate of return from farm labour and changing international and internal migration patterns (Cammack, Kelsall & Booth 2010:19; Hirschmann 1990). The Malawian economic base impaired when the export-related crop earnings (e.g. from tobacco) reduced and the oil-dependent import costs escalated (Hillbom & Green & 2018:230).

ADMARC had to import food in a time when the primary source of revenue – the interlocked estate-smallholder production model – destabilised. Many estates went into bankruptcy or were placed under the management of commercial banks (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:24). The financial instability contributed to a sharp reduction in the repayment of loans from farmer clubs. The government became increasingly selective with who would get support (Alwang & Siegel 1999; Zeller, Diagne & Mataya 1997). At the same time, the population growth remained relatively high – including over one million refugees fleeing the civil war that had erupted in Mozambique in the late 1970s. From 1968 to 2000, the mean land size per household in Malawi reduced from 1.53 to 0.8 hectares (Government of Malawi 2001).

Impact of structural adjustment programs

In the late 1970s, the government turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to deal with the financial crisis and supply the population with imported fossil fuel and food (Hillbom & Green & 2018:231). From 1981, structural adjustments were implemented. The credit conditions of the international organisations comprised a minimal state and neoliberal agenda (Cammack, Kelsall & Booth 2010:19).[23] International competitiveness and economic growth would be achieved through net-food selling farmers who produced high-value commodities for the export market. The producer price was raised for hybrid maize, tobacco, groundnuts and other crops that were sold via ADMARC,[24] while the fertiliser subsidies were phased out (Harrigan 2003).

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[22] In the thesis, the term traditional leader, or traditional authority, refers to the entire hierarchy of administrators in customary institutions including family head; clan leader; village headperson; group village headperson and paramount chief.

[23] The neoliberal economic policies included renewal of foreign exchange reserves; balance of payments; reduced public spending and budget deficit (Kaluwa 1992). This would be realised through reforms such as pricing and trade deregulation; non-agricultural economic expansion; currency devaluation; input subsidy removal; state fiscal discipline; government enterprise and investment rationalisation and downsized public welfare support (Chizimba 2010:76; Peters 1996).

[24] The price paid for hybrid maize increased by 131 percent between 1977-1978 and 1984-1985 (Sofranko & Fliegel 1989).

More producers – particularly net-food sellers (emergent farmers) with enough land and labour power for agribusiness expansion or changed livelihood strategies – increased their production of hybrid maize[25] and other cash crops, whereas net-food buyers continued to be food insecure and seek low-paid wage labour as a primary source of income (Chilowa 1998). However, the World Bank and the government did not agree on the food security[26] strategy.[27] Despite the market liberalisation measures, the government continued to intervene in the food market and secure staple supplies for periods of food shortages (Harrigan 1995; 2003).[28]

A rising inflation combined with corruption and abuse of office limited ADMARC's ability to purchase hybrid maize at the price producers demanded. The falling world prices for tobacco and the increased costs of fertilisers further contributed to make the parastatal insolvent and lose control of the maize supply (Peters 2006).[29] Some of the marketing board's depots were closed and it was partially privatised. In 1987, ADMARC ceased to be the single marketing agent for smallholder produce when licensed private actors were allowed to trade food crops (and eventually fertilisers) with small-scale farmers – a decision that stimulated the growth of the number of local traders (emergent farm actors) and large-scale private companies on the agricultural market (Chilowa 1998; Takane 2007).

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[25] Hybrid maize was promoted as an alternative to open-pollinated varieties. The hybrid maize seed production was monopolised by the National Seed Company of Malawi (an ADMARC subsidiary company) (Chilowa 1998). Hybrid maize matures early in the season (provided that sufficient fertiliser is applied) and can give higher yields than local (open-pollinated) maize with the same amount of fertilisers. The hybrid maize is homogenously grown; dried; stored; processed and packed; treated against pests and graded according to quality and size before it is sold (Mloza-Banda, Kaudzu & Benesi 2010:28). However, to maintain a certain yield, new seeds must be purchased each year.

Local (open-pollinated) maize varieties can be recycled 2-3 years; are less vulnerable to pests and diseases; can withstand prolonged periods of drought; taste different; are adaptive to place-related processing methods and require less management in terms of fertilisation and storage (Chinsinga 2011a).

Both local and hybrid maize are used as food, cash crop and payment for labour (Peters 1999:28-29).

[26] Food security is a measure of the availability of food and the ability of individuals to access it. Food availability has to do with the supply of food through production, distribution and exchange. Food access refers to the affordability and allocation of food, but also individuals' and households' preferences. Food security is also determined by how food metabolically is utilised by people (e.g. members in a household). Another aspect to consider is food stability: people's ability to obtain food over time (FAO 2009).

[27] The World Bank argued that food security could best be achieved through free-market-driven production of exportable cash crops, where the foreign exchange earnings would be used to compensate domestic food deficits with imports. The Ministry of Agriculture, however, saw increased food productivity as a prerequisite for land to be released for export crop production without aggravating the situation with food insecurity (Harrigan 2003). Their belief was that subsidies, extension services and spill-over effects from commercially successful farmers would lead to generally increased maize productivity; secure households' access to food and lower the maize price. Once the revenues had increased from exports, the household members' total spending on staples would decrease, their demand for manufactured goods and services increase and their market integration strengthen (Orr & Orr 2002).

[28] The government introduced a strategic grain reserve in 1981 (Chilowa 1998). ADMARC released grains on the market when local and regional supplies were insufficient in relation to the demand. The government used a price band to control the maize price. Floor (minimum) prices were meant to protect farmers' income, while ceiling (maximum) prices were set to protect consumers from unaffordable food products (Chizimba 2010:77).

[29] The price for the imported and subsidised fertilisers (monopolised by the parastatal Smallholder Farmers Fertilizer Revolving Fund of Malawi (SFFRFM) doubled between 1977-1978 and 1984-1985. At the same time, ADMARC's input sales increased with an average of 14 percent per year between 1976-1977 and 1983-1984 (Sofranko & Fliegel 1989).

The same year, a food crisis erupted. The food price increased with over 50 percent between 1985-1986 and 1987-1988 (Sahn, Arulpragasam & Merid 1990:107). Between 1982 and 1990, the rural minimum wage halved compared to the consumer maize price (Whiteside 2000). The government again raised the hybrid maize producer price and reintroduced subsidised fertilisers to increase the food crop production (Harrigan 2003). Food was imported in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Nevertheless, two severe droughts in 1991-1992 and 1993-1994 prolonged the period with maize shortages (Chirwa & Dorward 2013:66). The inequality deepened between farmers with and without *surplus value*.

Small-scale and medium-scale estate expansion

Part of the neoliberal order was to secure property rights for the landholder and stimulate agricultural investments through the conversion of land under customary tenure to leasehold estates. Most of the new estates were relatively small – the majority less than 30 hectares – and held by what Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli (1990) refer to as graduated smallholders (i.e. emergent farmers). The land was registered by individuals or heads of extended families – men. The leaseholders often converted customary landholdings that had been cultivated for years by registering their own property or land that was merged by relatives in order to fulfil the minimum requirements for an estate.

Some of the emergent leaseholders had sold fire-cured tobacco to ADMARC or burley tobacco illegally to large-scale estates, while others had worked as estate managers; tenants; clerks or labourers. There were also active; former or retired civil servants; relatively successful small-scale farmers; traditional leaders and small business owners, such as shopkeepers. The leaseholders used incomes from crop sales; businesses employment; and/or casual labour for investments in their estates. They also utilised incomes from migrant work (within or outside the country), remittances and earnings of members in the extended family (ibid.:38). Although their main produce was tobacco and maize, they also cultivated legumes, fruits and vegetables that were consumed by the household members; used as food for labour or sold to ADMARC, private traders and consumers (ibid.:40). They raised livestock including cattle; goats and poultry as food; commodity; gifts and store of value (a living "bank"),[30] but also for manure and tillage.

The emergent leasehold farmers had access to loans,[31] were granted license to sell burley tobacco on the auction floors and received extension services and credit through ADMARC, or organisations such as Tobacco Association of Malawi (TAMA) – the leading actor in the logistics of tobacco (ibid.).[32] The labour force of the emerging estates in-

[30] Livestock could be fed intensively in food abundant periods to stand a greater chance to endure droughts and other challenging circumstances. In challenging times, farm animals were exchanged for other produce or money.

[31] The emergent leasehold farmers found it difficult to obtain long-term loans after the liquidity crisis in the large-scale estate sector (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:25). Instead, they received bridging loans issued early in the growing season, once the forthcoming tobacco harvest could be predicted (ibid.:86). With the loan, they could cover expenses for some of the main activities in the tobacco production: harvesting; grading and transportation (ibid.:25). However, the loan recipient had to use own financial means for expenses early in the season.

[32] The auction floors are owned by what was previously called Auction Holdings Limited (AHL), before the corporation was renamed to AHL Group in 2015. The AHL Group consists of five companies involved in different parts of the tobacco value chain. The major shareholder is ADMARC (Chirwa 2011:14-15).

cluded unpaid relatives, tenants (and their family members), permanent labourers and casual labourers (ibid.:72). A farmer and trader who remembers the development of the period in Mkanda EPA comments on the labour relations of the time:

> If you had enough money or food supplies, you could hire people to help you, or you could invite family members. Extended family support was crucial to one's success.[33]

Informants explain that the relatives who belonged to a leasehold did not necessarily use the land as a coherent unit. Instead, they could divide fields among the family members according to patterns that preceded the estate registration. This allowed each family greater control over their "own" fields, but also required a higher degree of self-reliance. Farmers without enough land for a leasehold certificate and who did not merge land with relatives, but with money to offer or close ties to the village chief, could temporarily get land transferred by the traditional leader. The land was taken back by the chief after the registration had been approved. A motivator for farmers to expand their registered area of leaseholds was to increase the amount of tobacco they could sell on the formal market[34] – something that became important not least after the government introduced a quota system for tobacco sales following overproduction in 1982-1983 (ibid.:27).

During the 1980s, the nominal tobacco prices increased and the estate sector expanded faster than in the previous decade (ibid.:24), while the smallholder earnings remained low (ibid.:14) (see Figure 4).

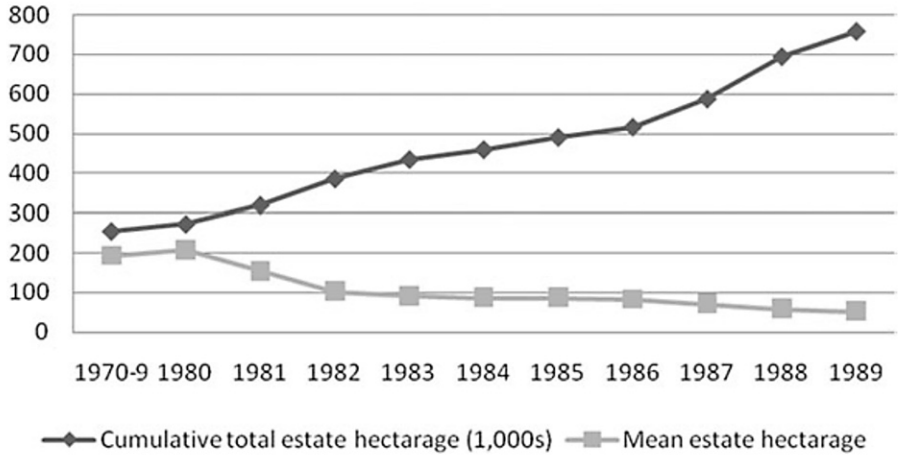

Figure 4. Small-scale and medium-scale estate expansion in the 1980s. Source: Conroy 1993.

[33] In farming households, large family has been a sign of womanhood for women and virility for men. Children have provided a cheap labour pool for tobacco production and in smallholder farming where the work has generally been carried out without mechanised technology. Having numerous descendants has also functioned as an old age security, considering the high levels of child mortality in rural areas, where the parents have hoped that at least some of their children will reach adulthood and eventually take care of them (Kishindo & Mvula 2017).

[34] Some estate owners expanded their leasehold property to obtain additional quota intended as *capital* for production on the main estate (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:52).

Differentiation within the estate sector

Estates licensed to produce large quantities of tobacco were the first to sell their quota on the auction floors. In general, they received a higher price than the succeeding sellers. Licensed producers and traders who made profit early in the season and/or had parts of their quota unfulfilled could return to Mkanda EPA and buy additional tobacco from unlicensed farmers and traders, or growers who had produced more than their allocated quota.

Emergent leaseholders who materialised from the late 1970s to the early 1980s could relatively easy acquire valuable *capital*, including fertile land (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:38). They started cultivating burley tobacco in a period without stated production limitations and with a major price rise. They invested in ploughs; baling jacks; tractors and trucks. Those with non-farm employment resigned from their profession and became full-time farmers. On the contrary, leaseholders who emerged in the latter half of the 1980s had less access to arable land and experienced greater credit and market constraints (ibid.). They relied on poorly trained managers who run the daily farm operations. Their farm income and investment level remained relatively low and those with salaried jobs were likely to remain in the formal labour market.

Chapter analysis of emergent farmers' materialisation through patronage

As demonstrated in the chapter, between 1964-1979, patrons in the political, administrative and financial spheres acquired leasehold estates and controlled the investments, production and revenues through such property. The revenues from taxation of smallholder production contributed to the financing of the estate sector. *Patronage* was structured through the upper societal strata of active and retired politicians; civil servants; professionals; traditional leaders and businesspeople with close ties to the regime and the main flows of monetary value (Mkandawire, Jaffee & Bertoli 1990:14). The elite licensed export crops; organised and offered extension services; approved bank loans to each other and regulated monetary sources through government agencies (Booth et al. 2006; Hirschmann 1990).

Although the assets of elite groups in places like Mkanda EPA were closely associated with access to leaseholds, it was not the control of land that enabled their positions. Rather, they acquired land as *capital* through their political status. Leaseholds were utilised by political leaders and their respective supporters as a source to feed the "personality politics" (Booth et al. 2006).

The *neopatrimonial* route changed direction in the early 1980s after the economy was in crisis and financial support was sought from the IMF and the World Bank. The government turned its attention to the export of cash crops through small-scale farmers, while the agricultural policy alternated between removal and reintroduction of input subsidies; high farmgate prices and low food prices and deregulations and government interventions (Harrigan 2003). *Patronage* through tobacco was extended to farmers who worked on large-scale estates, joined clubs and registered small-scale and medium-scale estates (cf. Devereux et al. 2008).

Chapter analysis of emergent farmers' materialisation through the prevailing food regime

Between 1964 and the early 1990s, emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA materialised during a decolonising process where a recently independent state was committed to national development and agricultural modernisation (cf. Bernstein 2010:73). The agricultural sector transformed through embedded liberalism (liberal political elements in combination with economic regulation) (McMichael 2005:275). The political economic conditions of agriculture was based on a state- and aid-centred order of power, with donors and agribusiness actors who sanctioned the state's expansion into urban and rural areas (Raynolds et al. 1993; Bernstein 2010:74).

The oil price spikes in the 1970s led to a recession in the world economy (Friedmann & McMichael 1989; Araghi 2003; Bernstein 2010:79). In Malawi, the debts increased to countries and institutions in the global North. As the national agricultural model for profitability was undermined, the government began to seek a new development path through structural adjustment programs, free trade reforms and increased financialisation (a process where financial or monetary means come to dominate other forms of *capital*) of public and private affairs (cf. Friedmann 1993; Bernstein 2017). Nevertheless, recurring food crises continued, while class differences were maintained and deepened.

Emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA were structured by a regime that promoted maize self-sufficiency and production of certain crops. A minority of rural residents were entitled to credit, subsidised inputs and extension services; went through higher education and reached lucrative positions in the civil service and agribusinesses. In sum, emergent farmers created *surplus value* through their involvement in tobacco and maize production.

6 Political economic conditions of emergent farmers after the democratisation

In this chapter, I describe how emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have materialised between the early 1990s until the millennium, a period featured by neoliberal market reforms and the introduction of democratic rule. The main factors highlighted during this period include the continued liberalisation of agricultural products, services and trade; the expansion of burley tobacco production through clubs, leaseholders and intermediary buyers and how changing market conditions for maize and tobacco have affected the socioeconomic relationships between farmers.

Continued market liberalisation and expansion of tobacco production

In the early 1990s, the government repealed the Special Crops Act and prohibited customary land from being converted to estates (except in special cases) (Chizimba 2010:79; Kishindo & Mvula 2017). The introduction of multiparty democracy in 1994 marked a clear end for ADMARC's monopoly on trade in smallholder inputs and crops. Burley tobacco production was no longer restricted to leaseholders. Farmers who joined tobacco clubs could receive credit for inputs, produce burley on customary land and sell the commodity on international markets (Harrigan 2003; Jaffee 2003).[35]

By 1994, the exchange rate on savings and loans were fully liberalised (Chizimba 2010:78). Two years later, the liberalisation of marketing of inputs had been completed and the input subsidies removed. The pricing for all crops was deregulated except for maize (which was controlled with a price band) (Chilowa 1998). Free trade agreements were signed with partners in Europe, USA and countries within Africa. After 1996, anyone could in theory market seeds and inputs (ibid.).[36] However, intermediary tobacco buyers – individuals or organisations – had to obtain a quantity specific license from the Tobacco Control Commission (TCC) to buy tobacco from smallholders at negotiated prices and sell it on the auction floors (Chirwa 2009).[37]

An increased number of producers and traders engaged in the burley tobacco value chain (Tobin & Knausenberger 1998). Producers and traders (including emergent farm actors) began to import and export cash crops and manufactured goods across the Malawian and Zambian border. The main road connecting Lilongwe and the Zambian border created opportunities for men and women to conduct small-scale businesses, with Mchinji Boma used as a market hub. When the emergent burley producers devoted a greater proportion of land for tobacco and less for food production, their demand for food crops increased – which improved the revenues for the net-maize sellers (Hillbom & Green 2018:276). In the 1990s, the fertiliser use and hybrid maize production increased significantly among

[35] Since the mid-1990s, the three biggest licensed buyers have accounted for almost 90 percent of the total tobacco export volume (FAO 2003:67). The dominating tobacco-exporting firms are tied to multinational companies based in USA and Europe (ibid.).

[36] The regime anticipated that the agricultural market liberalisation would stimulate the private sector to take over functions previously provided by parastatals and other state institutions (Chinsinga 2011b).

[37] The intermediary buyers did not have to grow tobacco themselves, but should have relevant experience in the sector (van Donge 2002).

better-off farmers – despite rising market prices for inputs (Peters 1999:13; Harrigan 2003; Takane 2007; Dorward, Chirwa & Jayne 2011).

The crop that gave farmers in Mkanda EPA the highest possible return was burley tobacco (Devereux et al. 2008). Smallholder and emergent farmer tobacco production replaced the previous large-scale estate dominance. In which case, burley tobacco required an expenditure level that was higher than for other crops (Harashima 2008). To become a successful burley producer, one needed a high supply of labour[38] and inputs, but also appropriate skills.[39] The producers had to reach a certain volume of the crop in order to sell tobacco on the auction floors (ibid.).

Characteristics of the expanding burley tobacco class

In general, the most prominent burley producers had the largest farms and highest average income (Harashima 2008). The head in the burley producing household was generally a man (Orr 2000; Harashima 2008). The level of education among them was higher than for non-tobacco producers. Successful producers had more full-time adult labourers (both family members and non-family workers). They cultivated a higher proportion of crops for sale. They were likely to have a maize surplus. They owned livestock. Their main income outside the farm came from employment, trade or other businesses, rather than farm labour. The land and other *capital* they had were often related to their family's previous socioeconomic conditions (ibid.).

Club membership inclusion and exclusion

Tobacco club membership depended on one's social status; background; financial capacity; farming skills; collateral and labour power. The member had to possess land that was at least 2 hectares, including woodlot (Negri & Porto 2007). The club's regulations were intended to ensure that the members produced enough tobacco, sold it as a group and repaid the credit loan collectively.[40] Some of the leading club members – the better-off and well-connected farmers – could treat other members as subordinates and allocate quota, costs and revenues unequally among the members (cf. Peters 1999:20-21). They also allowed non-members (e.g. extension officers) to sell tobacco through the club in exchange for favours or a share of their sale. Despite signs of arbitrary exercise of power, the management skills developed in many clubs including record keeping; administration of bank accounts; crop processing; transportation and conflict resolution (cf. ibid.).

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[38] Labour efforts are required almost the whole year for tobacco production. Nurseries have to be prepared when the early rains fall, which tends to be in October. After the harvesting and processing of the tobacco, the sales begin in April and last until September.

[39] Burley tobacco can be produced, managed and cured without needs of major energy sources, storage requirements or different control mechanisms. Unlike flue- and fire-cured tobacco, which require firewood for leaf curing, burley is cured by air in open-sided thatched sheds. The farmer's skills in curing the tobacco play a major role for the final leaf quality. The following steps – sorting and packing the burley into bales – also require special aptitude (Chirwa, Kydd & Dorward 2006; Negri & Porto 2007).

[40] The regulations stipulated fines to members who did not show up at regular meetings; denial of membership to farmers with a default history; prohibition for members to join an additional club; input use control (to prevent side sales of fertilisers); farm assistance among the members and social support to members in the event of illness (Negri & Porto 2007).

The clubs in Mkanda EPA were affiliated with agricultural organisations, predominantly National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM) and Tobacco Association of Malawi (TAMA) (Negri & Porto 2007; Chirwa 2009).[41] The members tied social bonds with each other and expanded their network with other farm actors. They improved their business and farming skills through group learning and extension services.[42] The club members procured inputs of high quality, secured means of transport and utilised depots and warehouses for their tobacco (Harashima 2008; Negri & Porto 2007).

Burley tobacco producers' trade practices

Some burley traders (who could also be producers) in Mkanda EPA did not restrict their affairs to the locality, but also sold tobacco in Zambia (cf. Negri & Porto 2007). Tobacco traders who materialised in the area made it possible for relatively resourceful producers – emergent farmers – to increase their competitiveness, e.g. by reducing transport costs, avoiding interference in mismanaged clubs and using a sales channel for tobacco volumes that exceeded their quotas (Chirwa 2009). For tobacco farmers who did not produce the crop through an estate or club, the licensed traders in the area constituted their main source of sales. The licensed traders in turn motivated unlicensed local residents to act as their intermediaries (including emergent farm actors).

The increased market competition triggered deceitful methods of *capital* accumulation among farm actors: A licensed producer or trader who sold tobacco on behalf of a non-licensed farmer or trader could withhold parts of the profit. An emergent farmer who has long experience of the development in Mkanda EPA illustrates how forms of value exchange and theft could take place between the parties:

> An unlicensed farmer or trader asked a licensed producer or trader if they could sell tobacco through their account. The intermediary buyer then bought the unlicensed farmer's or trader's tobacco at a lower price than what the final buyer offered on the auction floor. Alternatively, the two parties agreed that the unlicensed person would receive a certain share of the profit once the tobacco had been sold as part of the licensed person's quota. However, the intermediary buyer could claim that the price obtained on the auction floor was lower than what was actually the case and retain the difference. Some intermediaries did not return to the unlicensed farmer, but kept the money from the sale.

According to informants, club members and leaseholders who acted as informal intermediary buyers could avoid the costs imposed on licensed traders, while controlling tobacco inputs and outputs that circulated through their club or estate. Such control allowed them to incorporate small-scale farmers in a system where the smallholder was offered inputs,

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[41] NASFAM is a smallholder owned organisation that deals with tobacco and crops including groundnuts, soybeans and other legumes. The organisation offers its members credit; input supply; farmer, business and technical training; market access; contract assistance; purchase of produce; transportation; storage and advo-cacy.

TAMA is a non-profit organisation that is partly owned by a major tobacco merchant. The organisation assists tobacco producers with marketing; transport brokerage; satellite depots; warehouse storage; extension services; bargaining for better prices and lobbying.

[42] The extension services included technical support and training in marketing; quality control and literacy. Farmers learned about appropriate application of fertilisers and how to manage the specific crop throughout the growing season (Chirwa 2009).

food and money in exchange for tobacco delivered to the emergent farm actor. Lease-holders and tobacco club members also exchanged *capital* with large-scale estate actors. For instance, if a large-scale estate owner or manager had more tobacco seedlings than needed, they could sell or donate it to emergent burley producers. Large-scale producers also sold food to emergent farmers from their stocks.

Farmer groups are losing ground

Residents interviewed in Mkanda EPA remember how the focus on burley tobacco and hybrid maize among farmers meant that fertilisers were applied without much consideration as to whether the soil's nutrient was maintained or restored. Moreover, the expansion of burley production and the growing population contributed to deforestation – which affected people's livelihoods.

> Extension officers preached for the use of inorganic fertilisers, even if the soil was already fertile. Nowadays, you cannot get a good harvest without fertilisers. (Emergent farmer with long experience of living in Mkanda EPA).

While ADMARC was disintegrated from most farmers' daily lives, structural barriers restricted private traders from taking over market shares that the parastatal left behind (Chilowa 1998).[43] Anyhow, parallel grain markets gradually developed (Chizimba 2010:83-84) where private traders and their intermediaries (including emergent farm actors) strengthened their position in the trade with smallholders. They took advantage of the seasonal and spatial price variations in a context where few farmers were organised and reliable marketing institutions remained inaccessible for most producers (Mvula, Chirwa & Kadzandira 2002).

In years when the maize supply skyrocketed and the producer price fell, farmers who only sold small amounts of crops lost margins. In years with food shortages, the government became increasingly dependent on importing maize financed with commercial loans. When the maize supply was low and the consumer price increased, more smallholders ran out of food before the next harvest (Peters 1996). While the overall margins for the poorer farmers decreased (Peters 2004), morbidity and mortality related to HIV/AIDS contributed to reduced family-based labour power, land abandonment and less productive exchange between relatives and acquaintances (see Figure 5).

[43] Such barriers included high transport costs; inadequate storage facilities; poor grading technology; unreliable crop procurement and insecure marketing, selling and financing terms (Mkwezalamba 1989).

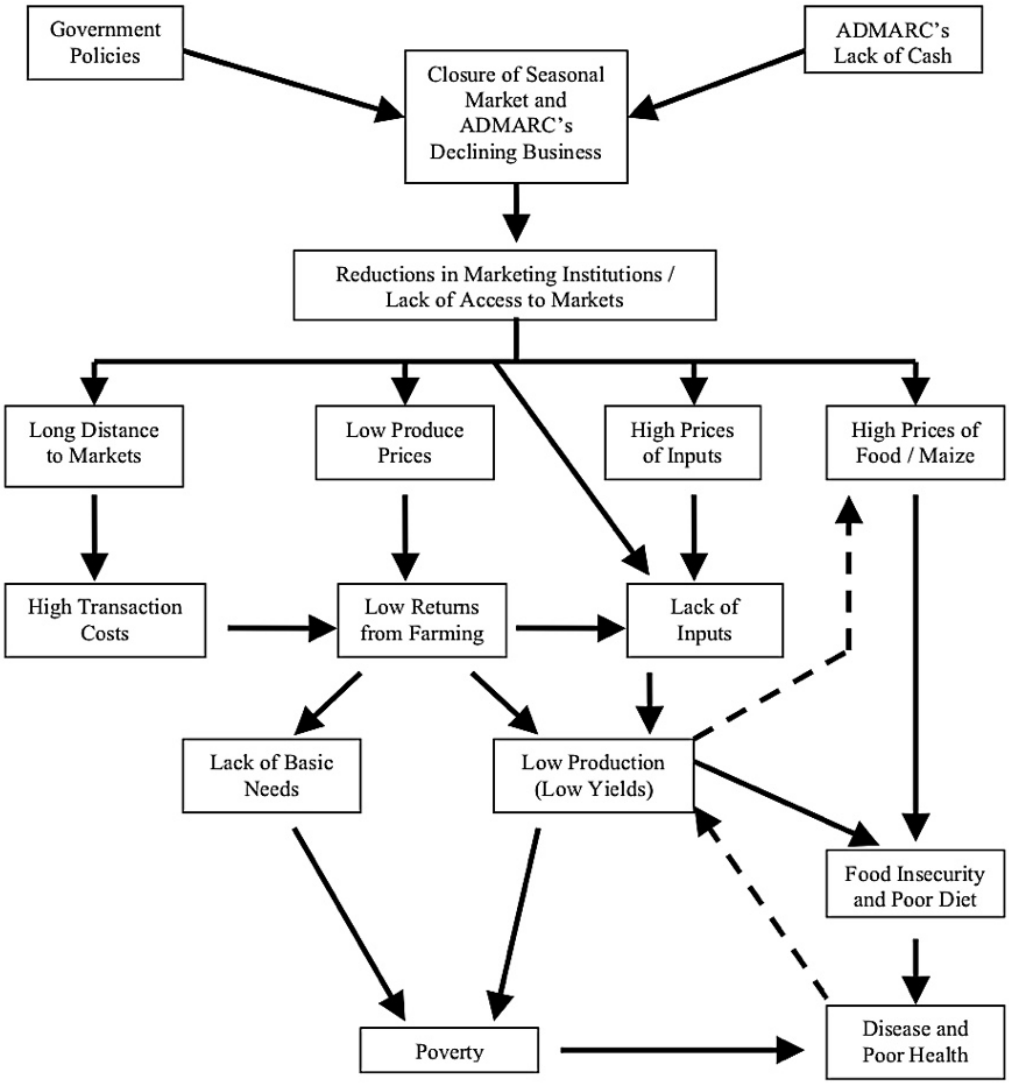

Figure 5. Socioeconomic causes and effects of ADMARC closure of seasonal markets. Source: Mvula, Chirwa & Kadzandira 2002.

Farmers drawn deeper into the supply of labour

Farmers with an average land size or input-output ratio below what was required for the household to reproduce itself became functionally landless (Orr 2000. Informants recall how net-food buyers set aside a larger portion of their plot(s to maize and a few other food crops for own consumption. Those who could not rely on own farming as a means of livelihood became increasingly dependent on providing farm labour. They also rented out or sold land, received handouts and got support from relatives. In short, they were trapped in a situation of low maize productivity (Dorward, Chirwa & Jayne 2011 (see Figure 6.

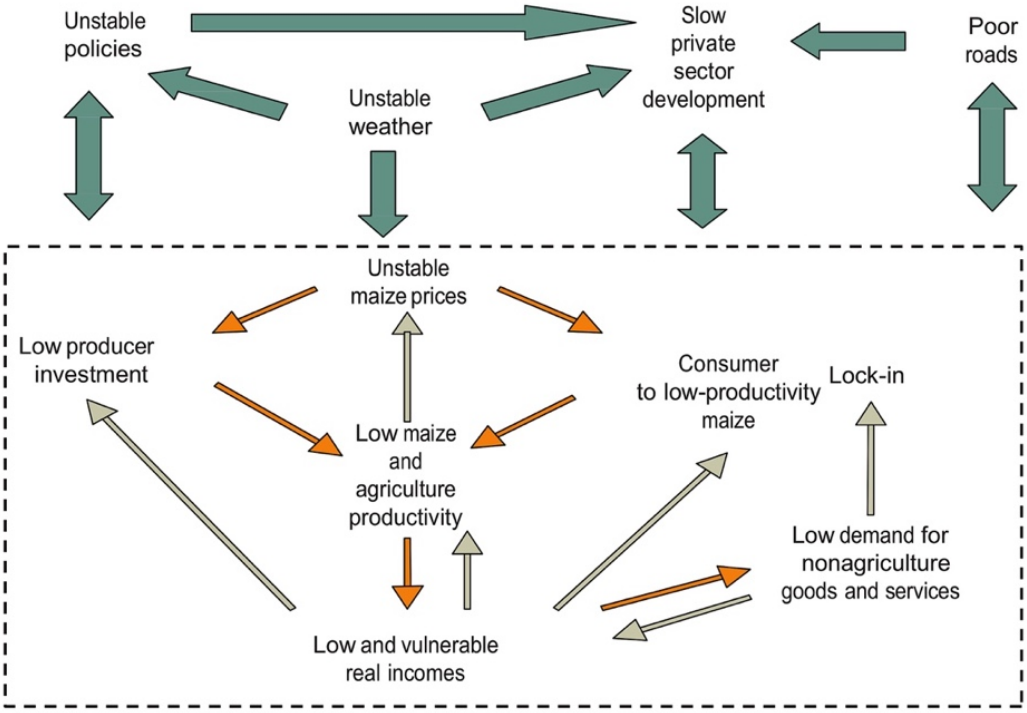

Figure 6. Farmer circulation in low maize productivity. The light green arrows represent feedback effects. Source: Dorward, Chirwa & Jayne 2011.

Eventually, the labour supply exceeded the demand in Mkanda EPA and other parts of the country, which reduced the labourers' income level and bargaining power against the employer (Hillbom & Green 2018:287-288). Below, the conditions for casual farm labour in the area are clarified based on empirical sources from the field work:

> Labourers clear land; dig; weed; ridge; sow; plant; apply fertilisers and harvest. They dry, grade, pound and grind other households' crops. They cure, sort and bundle burley tobacco leaves. They look after people's garden. They carry and draw water for construction of bricks or roads. They cut, collect and carry grass and wood for the employer. They build houses and thatch roofs. They manufacture farm equipment.
>
> Much work is carried out between October and March, when a range of labour efforts are required. During the rainy season, seasonal labourers from other parts of the country may arrive to Mkanda EPA. The agreement between the employer and the labourer might involve shared production risks (in terms of environmental conditions and price fluctuations) – which can reduce the amount paid to the labourer, but also secure his or her access to food. Once the agreed labour period has ended, the labourer may leave the village and seek another employer in the following season.
>
> Poor farm households with inadequate land size, soil fertility and working *capital* are exposed to the "hungry gap" (especially between November-December and February). During this period, the farm labour demand peaks,

while investments in inputs and medication for malaria and other illnesses are needed. Food and money obtained outside the own farm becomes critical for residents whose food stock runs low or has been emptied after the last harvest.

The wage labourers' low payment gives them little opportunity to increase their liquidity and monetary value. The fact that labourers may spend considerable time away from their own farm at a time when preparation of the arable land, planting of crops and clearing of weed is needed, means that they are likely to start late in the rainy season (between November and March) with the cultivation. Insufficient inputs and lack of farm management reduce the poorer farmers' chance to get a surplus (cf. Alwang & Siegel 1999). Although their landholding is small, they may lack sufficient labour power to utilise it productively. While the adults are away and working, the children may be left alone, with little to eat and increased risk of school dropouts, which contributes to keeping them in poverty (cf. Whiteside 2000).

New rules of the game

In the late 1990s, the production of tobacco in Malawi surpassed the demand on the world market (FAO 2003:66). After 1998, the price of burley tobacco decreased (Harashima 2008). The inflation increased and industries collapsed (Chizimba 2010:84). The ruling elite, at this time based in the southern region, mismanaged public finances and triggered sharp falls in the value of the national currency (Chirwa & Dorward 2013:67). Traders bought tobacco of low quality from small-scale producers.[44] Crop diseases spread. The dominating tobacco companies called for stricter trade regulations (van Donge 2002).[45]

> The fall of tobacco was disastrous for many families, especially those who had no savings for the future. They used to spend their income quickly and hope to make more money again next season. When the tobacco prices fell, they had little or nothing left in their pockets. (Emergent farmer with long experience of living in Mkanda EPA).

Farmers had to travel farther to buy inputs from retailers. Members of tobacco clubs had difficulties repaying loans. Estate owners struggled to get loans and other financial support. Estate labourers lost their jobs or received lower wages. Local businesses made losses when the money spent by estate labourers decreased. Groceries and other stores (usually owned by tobacco burley producers and traders) closed.

[44] Unlike estate farmers who brought burley tobacco directly to the auction floors and raised their income by producing tobacco of high quality, the profit for intermediary buyers depended on quick turnovers (van Donge 2002). The more transactions they made through the same bank loan, the higher the potential profit they could expect.

[45] The government suspended the intermediary buyer license system in the 2002/2003 season. Once again, only producers (or organisations representing them) could market tobacco on the auction floors (Prowse 2011).

> For us who produced burley, it was really hard to stop relying on tobacco as our main cash crop, because we had looked at those who did not grow tobacco as inferior to us. (Male emergent farmer).

The World Bank advocated further financial liberalisation, devaluation of the national currency and reformation of ADMARC (Harrigan 2003). While ADMARC continued to intervene in the domestic grain market, the responsibility for grain imports and exports was taken over by the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA) – a Trust formed in 1999.[46] In 2000, the price band was removed and replaced by indicative prices. The unclear market rules continued to hold back private investments and limit broad reforms targeting rural areas and agricultural markets (Chirwa, Kydd & Dorward 2006). The food insecurity situation worsened (Chirwa 2006; Chirwa & Zakeyo 2003).

Chapter analysis of emergent farmers' materialisation through patronage

The transition to multi-party democracy in 1994 paved the way for elite groups with a background in the private sector. The president and his surrounding clientele sought wealth within a short time frame to enrich themselves; fund their careers and pay supporters and allies with money or material assets to gain their loyalty and retain power (Cammack, Kelsall & Booth 2010:25). After the democratisation of Malawi, the allocation of international aid motivated elite and middle class groups to secure as much access to the inflow of the financial resources as possible (Jul-Larsen & Mvula 2009).

A government position became an entrance to business opportunities (Anders 2002:53-55). The civil service became politicised and incapable of implementing development policies. In other words, the *neopatrimonial* integration between the political leadership and technocracy formed a civil service that became a means of *patronage*, rather than an instrument of policy (Cammack, Kelsall & Booth 2010:4). Political actors and civil servants distributed *patronage* in the form of agricultural resources made available through clubs and farmer organisations. Among the client groups were emergent farmers who began to grow tobacco or expanded such production and increased the market supply of other cash crops.

Chapter analysis of emergent farmers' materialisation through the prevailing food regime

From the early 1990s, neoliberalism as an ideology and political program – focused on the state's withdrawal from market interests (Bernstein 2010:127) – became more prominent as a solution to the fiscal crisis. Agricultural commodities were further incorporated into a universal world price dictated by the freedom, movement and investment security of financial and monetary value. The volatility of the financial assets increased as the state took a step back from its regulatory market power. Emergent farmers made progress

[46] The NFRA is responsible for managing the strategic grain reserve and maintaining a balance between the demand and supply of maize. The agency stores maize in silos and makes it available on the market in times of food shortage.

partly by exploiting the proletarianisation[47] of poorer residents.

Emergent farmers as a class accumulated monetary value by buying crops from smallholders during periods and in situations when external traders were absent and the seller had little or no margins, or agreed to produce cash crops for them at a relatively low cost. Emergent farmers made profits on markets where the short-term price level differences increased and the production costs further impoverished net-food buyers. They acquired *capital* through farmer institutions where the membership was restricted. They reproduced class relations where the survival of the poorer farmer depended on the interests of the more prosperous one (Borras 2003).

[47] A process where classes of farmers are dispossessed of land and other means of production and become increasingly dependent on wage labour for their subsistence (Bernstein 2010:128; 2015).

7 Current political economic conditions of emergent farmers

In this chapter, I explore how emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have materialised since the early 2000s, a period when transnational financing sources have expanded in the area. I discuss the phase through factors such as the political economic management of food security; the development of the commodity and service market in Mkanda trading centre; the livelihood diversification among farmers; the increased corporate interests and financial stakes in the agricultural value chain; the leasing, selling and buying of land; the emergence of new agricultural institutions and the livelihood implications of how natural resources have been used.

Farmers', traders' and governing actors' response to food insecurity

In 2001-2002, 2004-2005 and 2007-2009, the maize price rose by 354 percent, 218 percent and 395 percent respectively (Ellis & Manda 2012). The recurrent food crises had far-reaching effects on the agricultural market and farmers' livelihood conditions. Below is an account of how the government acted on the agricultural market during this period and the effects it had for traders and farmers:

> A food crisis in 2001-2002 followed abnormal rainfall and pressure from the World Bank and the IMF on the government to reduce its grain reserves, which resulted in maize supply shortages (Devereux 2002). In 2001, the NFRA exported the maize in its reserves to release funds and repay loans, avoid storage losses and return to a situation with lower grain levels.
>
> In 2002, ADMARC was requested to reduce its financial losses and entered the market late in the season. By then, private traders had already accumulated the lion share of the maize available on the market. The NFRA had to import maize from South Africa at a high cost. Local politicians and well-connected businesspeople and traders were accused of creating an artificial shortage by buying maize at a low price from the strategic grain reserve. Such actors made significant profits when they sold maize after the government had trebled the selling price (ibid.).
>
> In 2005, the government declared an export ban on maize and fertilisers. The ban was lifted in 2007, but reinstated the following year. In 2006, private traders (including emergent farm actors) were banned from selling maize in local markets, which left ADMARC as the sole maize seller during a period when it had no stocks of the crop to sell (Ellis & Manda 2012). At the same time, ADMARC followed the government instruction to provide (crop) marketing services only in areas where the competition with private traders was limited. However, private actors (e.g. agrodealers) continued to be virtually unable to store enough grain and satisfy the consumer needs when there was a shortage of food. They were unwilling to buy maize from smallholders in remote areas and could not import enough maize to meet the demand.

The cropping season 2008-2009 was another period when ADMARC bought maize comparatively late after farmers had sold a large share of the harvest to private buyers (Jayne et al. 2010:31). Before the season, the NFRA had stockpiled maize that had not been released on the market, because government representatives held the view that there was an excess of maize circulating among private actors (Chinsinga & Chirwa 2013). Once again, the government attempted to control the national maize price and availability by forcing traders to release their stocks through the parastatal and prohibiting them from buying, hoarding and selling maize through other market channels. At the same time, the government tried to sell the crops in the stocks they controlled and avoid making losses from price falls when food was imported (Ellis & Manda 2012).

The government's strategy to control the stockpiles caused heavy costs for the responsible institutions and contributed to steep rises in the maize price. The ban on private trade in maize, which was reintroduced in 2008, generated a cash flow crisis from the price squeeze on the commodity and limited the producers' sales options, which discouraged many farmers from making any significant investments in maize (Chinsinga & Chirwa 2013). In addition, the flow of cross-border inputs was reduced (Ellis & Manda 2012). In September 2008, small-scale and medium-scale traders (i.e. emergent farm actors) were exempted from the ban on private marketing of maize. They moved between production and trading locations by bicycle, motorcycle, carts and pickup trucks (ibid.).

During the ban, maize traders in Mkanda EPA had little choice but to sell the commodity to ADMARC (cf. Jayne et al. 2010:31). Alternatively, traders and farmers (i.e. emergent farm actors) without direct access to elite groups but with a *surplus value* accumulated stored their maize until the ban had expired and the prices changed before they released the commodity on the market – unless their crops had been consumed; confiscated; deteriorated; destroyed or stolen (ibid.:53). Traders who had bought crops at a higher price than the price set by the government were likely to make losses. Some emergent farmer informants remember how their profit and monetary assets decreased and thus their ability to buy inputs for the next cropping season – which put them at risk of harvesting less maize and facing increased food insecurity.

An informant recalls how residents in 2001-2002 had to swap a 50-kilo bag of fertiliser or a goat for 20 kilos of maize. Household members sold livestock and other household assets; rationed their food consumption; changed what they ate and moved to towns and migrated to neighbouring countries in search of food or money, or exchanged it for sex. People offered labour for a negligible payment and stole food, livestock and crops. Children dropped out of school, driven by hunger. Young women got married. Adults of working age struggled with feeding children and elders. Diseases spread.

Reinstatement of subsidy politics

The food crises from the late 1990s and onwards resulted in a reintroduction of input subsidies. Emergent farmers – civil servants (e.g. teachers; health workers; agricultural extension workers; police officers; military officers and employees in ministries or parastatals); professionals; relatively successful farmers and community authorities – increased their investments in land and means of production in Mkanda EPA. These actors were driven by acquiring monetary value that arose from the financing of subsidised inputs, a growing food demand and an interest among civil servants to find alternative incomes[48] in addition to what they received from the public institutions – that were mismanaged and resource unstable (Booth et al. 2006).[49]

In 1998, the government, with the support from donors, introduced the Starter Pack Program. Smallholders received hybrid maize and legume seeds, fertilisers and extension services intended for cultivation of 0.1 hectares. Similar programs followed (Chirwa, Kydd & Dorward 2006; Harrigan 2003). A maize surplus was produced in the country, the root crop production increased and the smallholder farmer economy improved (Chizimba 2010:79; Chibwana et al. 2010), before the subsidies were gradually phased out and the input price increased again (Chizimba 2010:80).

In 2004-2005, lengthy dry spells combined with the scaling down of the subsidy programs created the worst maize grain harvest in the decade, with an acute shortage of food staples and other basic necessities (Chibwana et al. 2010). In an effort to improve the cash crop production and increase the national food security, the government introduced the national Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP).[50] Although the initial phase of the program resulted in high implementation costs, the food production increased with bumper yields in 2005-2006 (Dorward et al. 2008).

Growth of agrodealers

The subsidy programs have attracted private and non-governmental organisations to Mkanda EPA. Multinational and domestic input suppliers (e.g. Seed Co; Funwe Farm; Pannar Seed; Monsanto; Demeter and NASFAM) have placed bids and signed contracts to become suppliers in the input schemes and enter a guaranteed market for their products and services.[51] Their seeds, fertilisers and agrochemicals have been sold in agrodealer shops in Mkanda trading centre, which may be run by emergent farm actors: current and retired seed company officials; professionals; civil servants or people with a business

[48] For instance, agricultural extension officers interviewed have struggled with visiting famers in the field because they have lacked funds for motorbike fuel. Instead, they have been dependent on farmers visiting their office or moving by bicycle taxi, unless they have travelled in better-off farmers' motorised vehicles.

[49] Civil servants experienced how the presidency refused to delegate significant responsibilities over public domains to them. They feared or were reluctant to take action in the absence of superiors (Anders 2001).

[50] In theory, the FISP household recipients are farmers who cannot afford inputs on the commercial market, but have 0.4 hectares of arable land on which they can effectively use the subsidised input package and implement the advices given on agricultural practices (Devereux et al. 2008; Ragasa & Mazunda 2018). The targeted households receive coupons (input entitlements) which they can exchange for fertilisers, high-yielding seeds and agrochemicals.

[51] Multinational seed companies dominate the breeding, processing and supply market of seeds in Malawi (Chinsinga 2011a).

background.[52] In remote areas, farmers have had few options but to buy ill-suited seeds at a high cost from visiting agrodealers and informal traders.

Emergent farmers' positioning in the FISP

Government staff, Village Development Committees (VDCs)[53] and traditional authorities (e.g. village headmen) have been involved in identifying who should receive subsidised inputs. Informants point out that the households with the greatest chance to receive subsidised inputs have been part of emergent farmers as a class: they have had a relatively large land size under cultivation; been closely associated with traditional leaders and extension officers; produced a *surplus value* from cash crops; had access to relatively stable sources of income and been able to buy fertilisers at market price. They have come from households with comparatively few members – where the head is usually a man. Household heads who have resided in the area for a longer period have had a greater chance to receive more coupons than the recommended packet size (cf. Chibwana, Fisher & Shively 2010; Dorward et al. 2008; Ricker-Gilbert, Jayne & Chirwa 2011; Holden & Lunduka 2010 & Dorward & Chirwa 2011; Ragasa & Mazunda 2018). By strategically selecting who will be be privileged in this context, traditional, community and public authorities have been able to receive services in return.

Informants describe how some emergent farm actors have taken advantage of subsidy input leakages from the formally intended recipients – a phenomenon that has also been observed by Chirwa & Dorward (2013:113-118).[54] A market has formed where the targeted beneficiaries have shared fertilisers with other community members or sold subsidised inputs and vouchers to better-off farmers at a lower price than the level in the private market. Among the sellers are those who have had urgent needs of money or food. Others have lacked money for means of transport to redeem the coupons and paying the tip required by the seller. There are also recipients who have been unable to endure the long queues to the redemption points and confront eventual stock-outs, or doubted the marginal effect of using the inputs in the own field(s). Such sellers have generally failed to increase their food supply and felt compelled to sell parts of the harvest intended for their own food consumption (cf. ibid.:241-242). Emergent farmers involved in the trade with coupons and subsidised inputs have, on the other hand, achieved an advantageous market position by selling inputs during periods when most agrodealers have been absent (cf. Dorward, Chirwa & Jayne 2011).

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[52] Only agrodealers contracted by the seed companies – which in turn are connected with the political establishment – formally supply inputs through the FISP, apart from the parastatals ADMARC and SFFRFM (Chinsinga 2011a; Chirwa 2011:21; Chirwa & Dorward 2013:191). The input supplier determines which products should be marketed in the agrodealer shop (Chinsinga 2011b). Most agrodealers only stock seeds – predominantly hybrid maize – from the seed companies with whom they have a contract (ibid.). The majority of the agrodealers are only active in the period when the FISP inputs are distributed and until the specific seed company has collected the excess inventories (ibid.).

[53] A body that represents a group of villages under a traditional authority and is responsible for identifying needs and facilitate planning and development in local communities.

[54] Voucher diversion are caused by non-existent beneficiary names put on the recipient list, theft and coupons withheld and redistributed by extension officers; ADMARC staff; traditional leaders; intermediary buyers; politicians and criminals. Influential actors have also counterfeited and printed additional vouchers (Peters 2006; Chirwa & Dorward 2013:113).

Farmers' handling of market uncertainties

The period in the early 2000s was characterised by high real interest rates; fiscal deficits; a significant government debt; influx of aid money; devaluation of the national currency and farm produce price variations within and between years.[55] The prospects for broader socioeconomic development were limited (Dorward, Chirwa & Jayne 2011). An emergent farmer recalls his situation at the time:

> I had taken a loan from Malawi Rural Finance Company to buy inputs. That season, I harvested about 80 bales of tobacco. When I sold the bales, I made no profit. I could not pay the labourers their wages or cover other costs. I struggled to repay the loan and get back on my feet.

In recent times, net-food sellers in Mkanda EPA, including successful burley tobacco producers, have bought maize at a low price, sold the tobacco harvest and used the revenue to buy inputs and make other household investments. There are also burley tobacco growers who have borrowed money from relatives or acquaintances before the growing season and made investments in means of production. If the season has been rewarding, the borrower has paid the debt after the harvest been sold and retained a profit. In cases where the expenditure has exceeded the revenue, the borrower has continued to be indebted and risked ending up in a deteriorating socioeconomic situation.

[55] The average annual difference between the highest and lowest maize price month was 60 percent between 1989 and 2009 (Ellis & Manda 2012). In most years, the retail maize price has been at its lowest after the harvest in June and July and risen by 50-100 percent over the next six months, with a peak between December and February (Devereux 2002).

Market day in Mkanda trading centre. Photo: Gustav Broms.

In Mkanda trading centre, the business environment is characterised by trade in commodities such as field crops; garden vegetables; fruits;[56] farm inputs; livestock; animal products;[57] food ingredients; cooked food; bread; pastries; snacks; home-made or factory-made beverages; sunflower oil; firewood; charcoal; timber and merchandise (including clothes; shoes; household equipment and electronics). The inflow of imported finished goods and raw material has increased during the present. There are retail and wholesale facilities;[58] market stalls; small-scale grocery shops; rental of houses and other property; agrodealer stores; commerce in permanent locations and on the spot (e.g. during market

[56] Farmers in Mkanda EPA cultivate and trade the following crops in various combination: tobacco; maize; groundnuts; soybeans; cowpeas; red beans and other legumes; sunflowers; cassava; sugarcane; rice; Irish potato; sweet potato; tomatoes; onions; cabbage; cucumber; eggplant; pumpkin; other leafy vegetables; banana; mango; guava; orange and papaya. Some farmers also keep beehives and produce honey.

[57] Livestock like goats; pigs; poultry and cattle provide income opportunities for the owner and processor in a context where a growing number of relatively well-off residents and visitors demand meat; milk; eggs and other animal products.

[58] Wholesale and retail facilities owned by agribusiness companies may be run by staff who have been employed by the head office, relatives of them or emergent farmers in the area. The revenue realised through the sale is sent to the head office of the agribusiness company (cf. Chirwa & Matita 2015:21-22).

There are also local residents who run shops (operated by themselves or family members) and offer goods that have been procured from local growers and providers or larger retail and wholesale shops. Such businesses might be run by people who have had a relatively successful farm background or work(ed) as civil servants or on estates (cf. ibid.:19, 21). Someone running a store may in turn involve local residents in temporary work, such as loading and offloading goods.

days); hair-dressers; transport services; offer of the use of mechanised equipment;[59] workshops; repair services; money lending; crafts sold for everyday needs and businesses focused on leisure and occasional visits (such as bars; restaurants; tea-rooms and guesthouses).

Emergent farmers have been involved in such activities. They have used monetary value from inheritance; sales; savings; salaries; pensions and resources from well-to-do relatives (including relatively highly educated children with employment) to construct better houses and buildings; support relatives and other dependants; finance the use of mechanised technology (e.g. processing facilities such as maize shellers and mills) and use it in their production or as a service for others; hire labour; improve and extend their landholding and invest in off-farm businesses. They have bought furniture; household utensils; electronics; clothing; bicycles; motorbikes; cars; lorries and oxcarts. By owning motorised vehicles, some emergent farmers have been able to expand which market they have had access to. For instance, they have been able to transport larger quantities of goods and people within the area, but also to urban markets. Their mobility has increased their ability to reach favourable agreements with buyers and sellers. Moreover, when they have offered their vehicle as a transport service for others to use, they have created an additional source of income.

Among the informants, there are emergent farmers who have gradually shifted or diversified their main cash crop(s) to products such as groundnuts and soybeans[60] in relation to the growth of the food and animal feed industry and consumer market for such products. The involvement in animal production has been another important source of growth for emergent farmers. One informant claims that breeding pigs has become his most profitable source of income. He has noticed how more farmers with enough financial means have invested in enclosures; buildings; fodder and other resources required to become profitable in animal husbandry. The informant has experienced that

> when someone has profited from selling crops, I hear them say "I want to buy cattle", "I want to have pigs", or "I want to raise chickens". More animal products are consumed in the trading centre. When I sell two or three pigs, I can afford maybe ten bags of fertiliser.

The informant has increased his number of goats; pigs; chickens; doves and ducks. He strives to become less dependent on inorganic fertilisers and rely more on animal manure.

> Before, when I worked as a civil servant and consultant for NGOs, I only had a small number of farm animals. Even if I could afford the fertilisers I needed, it costed me a lot of money. Since becoming a fulltime farmer, I have reduced my spending on inputs and can use part of the difference to pay the school fees for my children.

[59] For instance, small-scale traders may operate near hammer mills to buy small quantities of maize, groundnuts or soybeans from household members who need money to grind the crop.

[60] Groundnuts and soybeans require less or no fertilisers compared to maize and tobacco. On the other hand, maize is, as farmers put it, "heavy". A bag packed with maize weighs more than a corresponding volume of groundnuts.

Emergent farmers have also invested money in solar panels, car batteries and generators for lighting and charging of electronic equipment. Among them are those who have offered customers to charge their mobile phone from the owner's solar panel or car battery. The use of radio and mobile phones has spread and expanded farmers' sources of information about how farming and rural business ventures can be managed and in what direction the market develops. Farmers who have had the financial means have utilised mobile phones to communicate with people in their social and market network; be updated on price changes; notify buyers about products they want to sell; search for sales channels and negotiate prices.

In sum, emergent farm actors' investments and consumption patterns have contributed to new off-farm linkages within the local economy and business opportunities for residents and visitors. The processing of sunflowers into oil in Mkanda trading centre is an example of how a crop has generated new market values and attracted more stakeholders to the area:

> In 2015, a businessperson based in Lilongwe opened a small factory in Mkanda trading centre with the goal of producing cooking oil from sunflowers. The factory is the only stationary mechanical processing plant in the area except for mills where maize, groundnuts and soybeans are grinded into flour. Previously, farmers who produced sunflowers sold it to local traders, or transported it to buyers in Zambia. Once the machine – imported from China – had been installed and the factory opened, producers and traders began to deliver sunflowers to the plant, mainly between April and August.
>
> The seller can choose whether to sell raw material to the factory or have it processed into oil – which is consumed directly in the household, sold in the local market or offered to traders. When the sunflowers are sold as raw material, the seller earns about 100 kwacha[61] per kilo. However, in periods when the supply of sunflowers is relatively low, the price can increase to about 150 kwacha per kilo. If the producer or trader wants to process the sunflowers into oil, the person has to pay the factory manager 50 kwacha per kilo.
>
> In practice, those who sell sunflowers as raw material can use the money to pay the factory manager and extract oil on the spot. Alternatively, the seller may leave with the payment for the raw material, but later return and buy oil after the main crop sales season, when the most active household expenditure period has ended. The factory owner keeps the sunflower cake, which is sold to the processing industry, where it is used as animal fodder or manure.
>
> Those who buy sunflower oil from the factory usually come between September and November. In the factory, the customers pay about 800 kwacha per litre for the product. The sunflowers can be stored up to two years in the factory without great risk of deterioration.

[61] Kwacha in the thesis refers to Malawian kwacha.

> From 1 kilo of sunflowers, about one-third of a litre is produced. In the trading centre, one litre of such oil is sold for about 1 000 kwacha. Producers and intermediaries who sell the oil in the trading centre pack it in bags or bottles of different sizes and offer it at prices that give them profit. Still, the local cooking oil is cheaper than corresponding products from companies like Sun Seed, which refines the oil to a higher degree. The sunflower oil sold at the factory or in market stalls is bought by residents for home consumption and small-scale business operators who fry sweet potato; Irish potato; chicken; pork; buns and other food. Their operating costs have reduced as they are no longer limited to the use of imported cooking oil.

Trade relations in Mkanda EPA

While the poor state of infrastructure has limited emergent farm actors' mobility between urban and rural areas and across the border, it has also reduced their competition with external actors and increased their bargaining power in relation to smallholders (cf. Chirwa & Zakeyo 2003). Emergent farm actors have become increasingly involved in the trading of commodities with buyers and sellers in Zambian trading centres. An informant points out that much of what is sold in the trading centre has been imported from Zambia.

> We export maize flour; soybeans; groundnuts and tobacco. When food is scarce in the area or specific crops are cheaper in Zambia, traders import produce from there.

The interaction between the neighbouring countries has also stimulated labour exchange. Informants describe how some migrants who have gone to Zambia have come back with money of a relatively high value. Other migrants have returned to their farm with little to eat, a negligible income from the cultivation and little money for investments.[62]

The growing trade in Mkanda EPA has resulted in an increased number of market actors. A description is given below of main agricultural market relations in the area:

> **Actors on the market:** Emergent farm actors sell agricultural commodities to consumers or traders in the local and regional market; companies they are contracted with and intermediary buyers who have contracts with large-scale wholesalers, retailers and processors like the NFRA; Mulli Brothers; Farmers World; Kulima Gold; Export Trading; Chibuku Products; Rab Processors and the Zambian Food Reserve Agency (FRA) as well as feed manufacturers such as Central Poultry; Feltons and Multifoods.
>
> Among the large-scale traders, there are those who have contracts with the government through the NFRA; the World Food Programme (WFP) and other NGOs. Some traders, such as owners of local retail and wholesale

[62] Out-migration occurs when residents seek labour or higher payment outside Mchinji District. Men travel to Zambia or places like Malawi's capital, Lilongwe, during the food shortage period. They provide labour on farms or as artisans. Migrants in Mkanda EPA may consist of wealthier farm actors who invest in land and trade, middle class people who have been employed in the area or poorer citizens who seek jobs as tenants and casual labourers.

shops, also buy crops from farmers in the area and sell the accumulated farm produce to large-scale agribusinesses. A few large-scale market actors operate in the area on a more permanent basis and rent warehouses in Mkanda EPA, where they store the purchased products for an extended period of time before selling it. Others visit the area, collect products for a limited time and transport it to the company they represent.

Large-scale estate farmers either sell products directly on international markets (e.g. tobacco companies with its own production); to companies with whom they have contracts or intermediary buyers representing the aforementioned wholesalers, retailers and processors.

Mobile traders (including intermediary buyers) represent the primary link between Mkanda trading centre and more distant markets and warehouses (cf. Jayne et al. 2010:29). They are contracted by large warehouse owners or agribusiness companies and have bigger trucks than what emergent farm actors use. They can connect emergent farmers to large-scale buyers in urban areas (primarily Lilongwe and Blantyre), give access to export markets and provide information about how markets develop. There are also mobile traders who travel by bus and minibus to markets in Malawi and Zambia and buy second-hand clothes; shoes; electronics and household products from Indian and Chinese owned companies, which they return with and sell in the trading centre.

The relationship between ADMARC and the NFRA: In practice, ADMARC buys different types of crops from small-scale farmers. The crops are stored in warehouses and silos until the products are sold on the market. A given quota of the maize bought by ADMARC in a specific year is transferred to the NFRA, where it is stored in silos, unless the stocks are already full and the excess product is exported. The quota that ADMARC buys depends on factors such as the government's intention and budget; the maize harvest volume and how much of the crop that is already stored at the NFRA – which also receives maize from contracted private intermediary buyers (registered bidders including large-scale traders, estate farmers and farmer organisations).

The benefits for the government of retaining maize in ADMARC's warehouses include reduced transport costs and shorter lead times between purchases, storage and sales. An advantage for the government of transporting maize to the NFRA's silos is that it can be stored up to five years without any significant risk of loss or damage. The government then also has centralised control over the supply of maize and can distribute it in the country depending on where there is a possible shortage of food.

The market phase April-May: Local traders (including emergent farm actors) and intermediary buyers who represent large-scale companies buy crops such as maize from net-food buyers at the beginning of the harvest season (April-May), when the price is at its lowest and the sellers have run out of food or money (cf. ibid.:36). As described for previous periods, there

are also emergent farm actors who make agreements with farmers before the growing season and provide them with inputs and possibly other resources on the condition that they sell their harvest to them at an agreed price. Farmers with higher margins (and alternative income sources) (i.e. emergent farmers) may sell some produce during this period and continue to sell crops other parts of the year. Some of the producers selling crops during this period expect that they will have to buy maize later in the season.

Local traders (including emergent farm actors) make a profit by collecting maize bought in smaller quantities and selling it to larger traders – either directly or through mobile intermediary buyers. There are also some large-scale companies with staff in the area who buy products directly from producers. Wealthy traders and buying companies store the purchased crops until later in the year when the demand is expected to increase and the selling price rise.

Some of the competition early in the harvest season between the locally based and large-scale traders is driven by the fact that the agribusiness companies strive to accumulate as much maize as possible before ADMARC sets a floor price and starts buying produce from small-scale farmers (provided they have something to sell, have the means and time to visit ADMARC's facility, accept the buying price and the parastatal has money available to pay with).

The market phase June-August: Once ADMARC enters the market (in June-July), the minimum maize price offered to the farmers increases (ibid.:37). By then, the price paid by the private traders (large-scale companies and intermediary buyers, such as emergent farm actors) tends to be slightly higher than what the parastatal offers. It is mainly locally based traders who sell maize to ADMARC. The purchase prices tend to increase and a larger number of producers start selling significant quantities of maize and other food crops.

The market phase September-November: In September-November, producers who have kept food crops off the market sell maize and other products to obtain revenues and finance the preparations for the upcoming farming season (cf. ibid.:36). They sell the produce to local traders and intermediaries (including emergent farm actors) who deliver it to distant and/or large-scale buyers. Farmers using irrigated technology harvest the crops in such fields and use it as food for the household members and labourers, but also sell it in surrounding markets. Some producers also sell their products to ADMARC. By this time, private traders' storage space tends to be full and their purchases decrease. The local demand for staple food increases as more households run out of supplies.

The market phase December-March: In December-March, large-scale traders who have stored crops sell the commodities through local traders (including emergent farm actors), wholesalers and retailers when the demand and selling price is high (ibid.:38). Traders also travel to other areas where

they buy produce, return with it and sell it. ADMARC sells maize and other crops to an extent that is partly due to the availability of food in the households. During years when the harvest is low and food scarce, it becomes critical that maize is supplied from the NFRA via ADMARC, where a limited amount is sold at a regulated price and quantity (20 kilo) per person until the warehouse is empty. Farmers (including emergent farmers) with remaining staple food stocks and irrigated crops left in the fields consume it; use it as payment for labour; share it with extended family members or sell it on the market.

Apart from buying produce, farmers exchange food with each other. Net-food buyers depend on help from relatives; NGO support and government interventions; crops sold by ADMARC; loans from money lenders or other financial institutions; payment through labour supply and leasing or selling land as well as other household assets. They also change their diet and reduce how much they eat in a day (cf. Chirwa & Zakeyo 2003).

During the marketing season, traders put up posters and boards with information about the price at which they buy specific crops. The price can change daily and vary depending on the buyer. Several informants explain that if a smallholder arrives with a bag of maize, while an emergent farmer comes with ten bags of the corresponding crop, the buyer will offer the small-scale farmer a lower price or refrain from buying it.

> For me as a farmer, it is valuable if I can establish a relationship with a trader, as it helps me to secure a market channel, while the trader can predict what kind of crops will be delivered in terms of quality and quantity. (Male emergent farmer).

Farmers' relationship to land inheritance, entitlements, sales and leases

The tenure conditions changed when the new Malawi National Land Policy was approved in 2002, which formed the basis for the new Land Act passed in the parliament 2016 (Government of Malawi 2016). As a response to the growing land pressure and scarcity (even though agricultural land in the country has remained uncultivated); the depletion of natural resources; the population density and the speculative holding of urban plots in the country, the government expressed the need to redistribute parcels; improve the population management and family planning; secure land users' property rights and motivate landholders to make more productive and environmentally sustainable investments (Government of Malawi 2002; Deininger & Xia 2017). As a result of the policy process and objectives, the following categories of land are acknowledged in the Land Policy and Land Act:

Private land includes customary estates (registered customary land); leaseholds (a contract that gives someone the exclusive right to use and transfer public, private or customary land for a fixed period of time) and freeholds (large-scale plantations or estate land that is held in perpetuity by the

owner, without time limits or government interference placed on the owner).

Under the Land Act, the state has the authority to lease customary and public land to individuals; groups; organisations or corporate bodies. Customary land that is registered as a leasehold is converted to public land. At the end of the lease period, the land reverts to the landholder(s) or the state. There is no minimum size of a leasehold, but estates are considered to be land that is 10 hectares or more.

Public land is acquired, held, managed and used by a government body or traditional authority in trust for the people of Malawi. Public land includes tenure owned by the government, such as properties with public infrastructure and buildings established to serve specific common interests, e.g. in the form of schools and health care centres. Public land also consists of areas intended for settlement schemes; national parks; forest reserves; recreational areas and historically and culturally significant sites. In addition, the category includes lapsed leaseholds and land vested in the government as a result of uncertain ownership; abandonment or land that cannot be used for any particular purpose.

Unallocated (non-individualised) customary land is also public for the residents within a Traditional Land Management Area (TLMA). Such land includes dambos (wetlands that occupy a shallow, seasonally waterlogged depression near drainage sources such as lakes and rivers); community forests; grazing areas; marketplaces; business locations and burial grounds. The land is held, occupied or used for the benefit of the community, where the rights and management are dictated under customary law.

The traditional authorities' main role is to preserve customary land as an asset base for current and future generations in the community. Traditional leaders do so together with Land Committees (that operate at different levels and include headpersons and elected members from the TLMA) by demarcating, registering, allocating and managing customary land as trustees for the inhabitants; enforcing land management policies; upholding civil justice in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area; protecting the community's cultural values and general welfare; giving advice to the government on traditional affairs; mediating in land disputes and witnessing and acting as notaries in land transactions.

Mechanisms for land registration

After the new Malawi National Land Policy was implemented, communal land has become more formally registered and demarcated through customary estates.[63] The registration of land can be a time-consuming and costly process, especially for poorer farmers, who might question its value if they perceive that the control of property held by an authority is beyond their reach (cf. Lust, Swila & Dulani 2016). The processing of registration and claims may include fraud, corruption, theft and delays (Ngwira 2003). Comparatively educated and wealthy farmers – generally men (including emergent farmers) – in Mkanda EPA with the ability to follow the process and access to responsible authorities have more likely been able to obtain land titles and secure individual property rights:

> According to the Land Policy and the Land Act (Government of Malawi 2002; 2016), all customary landholders are encouraged to demarcate and register their property for farming and residential purposes and as a means to secure the holding; mobilise *capital*; access credit and make investments. The registration of customary estates involves Land Committees that allocate land and grant certificates with the approval of the appropriate traditional authority.
>
> In order for a certificate or transaction of a customary estate to be valid, it must be signed by the chairperson of the Land Committee; witnessed by a traditional leader; approved and recorded by the Land Clerk (employed by the local government: the District Assembly) and confirmed by the grantee(s) of the customary estate, who should also pay an application fee. The certificate issued must be registered by the District Land Registrar to be valid.
>
> The grant and usufruct of the customary estate depends on whether the applicant is considered capable of using the land productively and in accordance with the stipulated terms and conditions – requirements for payment of any fees, charges and taxes. To protect the customary estate from alienation without consent, the titleholder is encouraged to keep a survey plan where the boundaries of the land are marked and the interests registered. However, customary land granted to someone who is given use rights and demarcated by responsible community representatives may be recognised as the owner of it, whether registered or not.
>
> The registration and administration of public land classified as government land or leaseholds and the issuing of TLMAs is controlled by the Commissioner for Lands – a public officer – who may delegate such matters to subordinate officers in the District Commissioners Office (where land is regis-

[63] Customary estates are owned, held or occupied as private land by individuals; families; groups; clans or associations that have registered the property as such within a TLMA (Government of Malawi 2002; 2016). Someone with the entitlement to a customary estate has usufruct to it and can lease it; bequeath it; sell it or use it as mortgage – unless there are overriding interests of the community or the state – which has sovereign rights over it. The community retains a residual interest in the land and regulates who can take over the property and how it should be used (Chirwa 2008; Matchaya 2009).

tered in the Land Registry). The commissioner and local government authorities also use the Land Clerk to give the Land Committees advice on the management of customary land. The Land Committees make recommendations to the commissioner on whether leaseholds should be granted; extended; revoked or returned to the customary owners. The administration of leaseholds also includes collection and disbursement of ground rent as well as enforcement of covenants.

An emergent farmer and community leader comments on the transition from communal-based to individual-based power relations regarding land rights:

> The village head no longer has any real power over how customary land is transferred in the community. You cannot just approach the chief with money or gifts such as a chicken to get land. You have to negotiate with the property owner.

Customary land distribution among family members

The residents in Mkanda EPA have mainly accessed customary land through inheritance, marriage or distribution of unallocated tenure (although the latter is rare in the present because of the individualisation and competition related to land) (cf. Chirwa 2008; Matchaya 2009). In general, little land has been available for community members who have left their parental home. Heirs to landholders in poor households have inherited minor plots from the family's land, which has given rise to individual tenures that have been too small for the inheritor to meet basic needs; adopt productivity-increasing production methods and harvest a surplus for sale (cf. Chirwa 2006).[64]

Informants comment that an heir (e.g. an emergent farmer) who has managed to accumulate more *capital* and financial means than the other family members can allow the siblings to use his or her inherited plot and instead focus on individually purchased land. Alternatively, if some family members have been unable to utilise their inherited land productively or been uninterested in cultivating it, the more successful sibling may buy out the others or let them keep the land, but take over the use of it. In return, the more succesful sibling can provide for the others – or push them away.

> While some members in a family expand their arable area, others can no longer live off the land. Only few farmers can still make ends meet from the land they have inherited. (Emergent farmer and community leader).

Family members without the ability to expand or diversify their resource base have had to cultivate their plot more intensively; experienced how the soil lost fertility and been increasingly exposed to volatile markets. On the contrary, households with fewer descendants and enough working *capital* have had more land for division, but also better prospects to afford the children's education; care for the family members' subsistence needs;

[64] Historically, if a family no longer had enough land to accommodate their children's households, the village head could create additional agricultural holdings from the stock of unallocated customary land. Currently, the access to non-inherited land has become limited to actors who can pay market prices for (additional) arable fields.

utilise public and private services and benefit from agricultural commodification.[65] The same informant explains:

> The land and other assets you inherit depends on the legacy of your kin. When your ancestors consulted the village head about land to cultivate, they were asked how much land they needed. If they responded that they wanted a large area of land, they had to prove that they had the power and ability to utilise it well. If not, the village headman would reallocate some of the land to someone else.

Estate land distribution within families

Relatively small estates (which has been a central form of property for the materialisation of emergent farmers) has been held by individuals or families who have either formally divided it and individually registered parts of the land, or let one or more heirs take over the property. Interviews with small-scale and emergent farmers reflect that even in cases where the property has remained intact as a coherent unit, the relatives may divide it informally among themselves and allow each individual family to use a certain part of the estate (similar to what is described about emergent leaseholds in chapter 5). Such a solution has required that the family members have been able to agree with each other about how the division should be done, what meaning it has and what activities can take place there. By doing so, they have avoided the costs and administration it would entail if each individual household had registered their own land. At the same time, the extended family has retained the rights and other policy-related benefits that an estate provides.

Alternatively, according to informants, if one inheritor – an emergent farmer – has taken over the entitlement, the siblings may allow the registered person to manage the entire estate, but agree that the profit should be shared with them. On the other hand, if the entitlement to the property is in the name of the household head, that person may operate in the land market independently of the other family members and deprive them of the benefits of property ownership. In addition, in cases where the person named on the land certificate has been absent from the household, the remaining members who have managed the property have not been able to use it as collateral or secure rights to the tenure in other ways. A community leader comments that because land entitlement is limited to those whose names are registered, the children of someone who has passed away without having transferred statutory rights to them have been likely to suffer if other family members have claimed that land.

Who of the potential heirs who inherited the property has depended on how the landholder has drafted his or her will (legal declaration), including whose name(s) has/have been stated in the document (Government of Malawi 2011).[66] Who has taken over the

[65] Commodification is a process where the elements of production and reproduction become subject to mechanisms of market exchange (Bernstein 2010:124).

[66] If the former titleholder has not left a valid will of his or her property, the spouse is entitled to his or her household belongings, while the remaining property should be divided between the spouse(s) and the children above the age of 18 or other dependents of the intestate. How the shares are distributed is affected by the wish of the previous property owner; the basic necessities provided by the intestate during his or her lifetime and any contribution from the spouse or child to the value of the estate. If no special circumstances are noted or conflicts arise among the heirs about how the shares of the property should be distributed (provided they are more than one), the law requires that they share the value of the property equally (Government of Malawi 2011).

control and use of the property has been influenced by factors such as one's literacy; age; gender; financial capacity; status; skills and motives for using the land. In general, members of households where the educational level is relatively high have been more likely to hold their land together, rather than divide it between them (cf. Muriaas et al. 2016:15).

Sociocultural dynamics related to land

Informants characterise how the dynamics of land rights that are regulated within and between families have included gender differences and how it has affected who has become an emergent farmer:

> A man who is farming on land within a matrilineal system (where the lineage is traced through the female line[67] – which is common in Mkanda EPA) is expected to eventually pass on the land to the female descendants. If he is getting married, he moves to the wives' native home, or remain in his village with the wife (depending on conditions such as where land is available and the relationship between the couple and their relatives). The children belong to the women's lineage (more specifically the wife and her brother(s)) (Ngwira 2003). Women who live in their husband's home are often excluded from certain roles and expected to work harder, be more compliant and gain less power than the "owners" of the community. In case the couple gets daughters, they are likely to want to expand the landholding and provide fields for the children. If the couple only gets sons, the land will eventually be taken over by the wife's sisters or other female relatives (cf. Peters 1997).
>
> The husband in a maternal household may desire to acquire land for himself and restrict the property rights of such tenure to himself and/or his children (because the husband in a matrilineal family may worry about losing his rights to use the wife's family land in the event of a divorce or the spouse's death, or lack the expectation of access to land if he were to returns to his natal village). Alternatively, he can quickly remarry to secure access to land (cf. ibid.).
>
> If the non-local partner in a marriage that has ended returns to the natal home, the land allocated to the person may be treated as a temporary transfer until other individuals (usually the children) make claims of it (cf. ibid.). However, if land is scarce, the divorced woman or widow may lose her custodial rights as well as the household property and be chased away.
>
> Traditional leaders do not move to their wives' home. Instead, the wife is allocated land and house especially set aside for her, while retaining her customary land rights. Consequently, traditional leaders may have access

[67] Women's access to land is often regulated through the family head, who is almost exclusively a man (unless the woman is a single adult or parent in the household). The husband (who tends to be the one making the payment if the family buys property and therefore considers himself to have ownership of it) is often the person who controls the use of the household's land and its products. The woman is limited to administering property that is considered feminine (such as cooking utensils) (Ngwira 2003).

> to more than twice as much land as other residents (Holden, Kaarhus & Lunduka 2006:99).

Disputes among family members about how property should be distributed, accessed and inherited have resulted in land being unused for shorter or longer periods. There are informants who talk about how some family members have left Mkanda EPA in search for alternative means of survival. Others have moved after getting married, or remained, but spent most of their time supplying farm labour. At the same time, different groups have continued to compete for land: Malawians from even more land constrained areas; relatively successful farmers with the intent of expansion; businesspeople, civil servants and professionals who want to diversify their income;[68] traditional leaders who strive to retain, increase or transform their power (from being based on control over communal resources to increasingly being drawn into monetary forms of value); residents who return to their family land after their retirement and representatives of large-scale agribusinesses seeking to expand or increase the value of their *capital* holdings.

Informants have experienced how unutilised or unclearly marked land has been encroached by others (including emergent farmers) who may eventually claim the right to it. They also talk about farmers who have lost land after taking a loan that they have not been able to repay and agreed with the lender to use the property as redemption.

> You need to pay attention to your land and show that you are actively using it. You cannot leave your land for long, unless you have someone you trust who can take care of your holding while you are away. (Male emergent farmer).

Several emergent farmers comment how they and other residents have marked their property boundaries with trees, bushes or more permanent signs to increase the individual control over the land.

Land sales practices

The practice to sell and buy customary land has become more common in a context where community members see themselves as landowners, rather than holders of customary rights (Kishindo 2004). In Mkanda EPA, there have been situations where chiefs have treated land in trust of the community as their own and sold it to individual buyers (cf. Jayne et al. 2019) (even though they only have the mandate to allocate usufruct or occupancy rights within their area of jurisdiction).[69] A recurring situation told by different informants is as follows:

> A village headperson witnesses the transfer of ownership between two parties who sign documents that are not legally binding. The buyer may reside

[68] The salary level of civil servants such as teachers; nurses; police officers and extension officers varies, but is on average around 100 000-200 000 kwacha per month.

[69] Sales of customary land by village headmen and other traditional authorities can be a sign that traditional leaders are pressured by influential political leaders; civil servants and businesspeople. Traditional leaders may also sell land to affluent groups with the expectation of financial reward in exchange. Moreover, they can commit such acts in return for gifts, favors or money from strangers or original community members (Kishindo 2004).

> outside Mkanda EPA and lack the means or incentives to use the land immediately after the purchase. Another person approaches the former owner and expresses the desire to buy the same piece of land. Only the previous buyer, the seller and the traditional leader know about the former sale.
>
> The village headperson agrees to witness a second sale of the same land. The former owner and the traditional leader share the money from the payment. The latest buyer may start setting up permanent structure on the property. The first buyer appears and notices that someone has occupied the tenure. Both buyers claim that the land belongs to them and refer to their signed documents. If they cannot settle the dispute, they may go to court and initiate a legal case.
>
> Regardless of the outcome, the parties risk losing investments and not being able to utilise the land while the case is ongoing. The insecure conditions of land sales have made farmers reluctant to engage in transactions unless the seller can prove ownership of the property in question (cf. Peters & Kambewa 2007).

In Mkanda EPA, sales of land have usually been limited to transfers within families or communities, or wealthier farmers selling property to non-family members (cf. ibid.). Informants give examples of when land sales have been a sign of profound and lasting vulnerability or tension in a family. For instance, selling can take place when the landowner needs money in the present more than future access to land. The owner might have more land than the household can cultivate. The landholder may lack heirs who have the ability or interest to take over the tenure. The farmer may have debts. The parents may find it difficult to pay for school fees and other household expenses when the children have become more numerous or reached higher education levels.

Relatively well-to-do farmers – emergent farmers – can sell land if they need money to meet the needs of poorer relatives, including their children. A relative may be asked to cover expenses for social events, such as a funeral. A household head may have to pay for medical treatment of a family member. The landowner may want to invest in an off-farm business. Illness or migration in a family that means that fields are not used can also cause relatives to sell that person's land.

Based on empirical sources from the field work, the buyer has typically been a rural-based businessperson; a former, retired or active employee; an expanding small-scale farmer; an established emergent farmer or an investor. Informants indicate that someone who has bought land or leased it for a longer period may have stronger incentives to implement structural changes on the holding (e.g. investing in irrigation and thorough soil treatment).

Land rental practices

Land leases have also become common in Mkanda EPA. Informants have experienced that when someone rents out land it can signal distress (food insecurity) and inability to utilise the land productively. The landowner may have reached a high age or become ill. The landlord might have insufficient financial means and labour power or be preoccupied

with working at estates or other farms in the region or neighbouring countries. The income from the land lease can give the owner opportunities to buy fertilisers, seeds and agrochemicals for the following cropping season; obtain food and other necessities during periods when there is a shortage or make other investments. After the end of a growing cycle, the landowner has either extended the lease period (to the same person or another leaseholder) or returned it for own use.

Among the emergent farmers interviewed in Mkanda EPA, there are those who have rented out land to other relatively well-off farm actors. Such landlords have had more arable land than they have been able or willing to use. Some may lease land as a strategy to diversify their sources of livelihood. There are also emergent farmers whose siblings have worked in other parts of Malawi and who have cultivated or rented out their land while they have been away. An informant who has rented out her family members' land says that by doing so, she has allowed "local residents to use the land".

In some cases, well-off landlords – e.g. estate owners – have rented out land for a certain price and in turn rented plots at a comparatively low cost from farmers whose property is further away from the trading centre. Farmers share stories about how they or other landowners who have been unable to use the land productively have come to work for the leaseholder or buyer – sometimes in the same field as they have leased or used to possess – in exchange for food; money; inputs or basic services.[70] Their dependency on the landlord or buyer has possibly deepened, especially if their agricultural income has been consumed before the next growing season. An informant explains:

> You are in need of money. You rent out land and get paid. You spend the money. You get a bad harvest. You go hungry. You search livelihood alternatives, but eventually return to the leaseholder. You explain: "I need money for food. Can you give me some? If you do, I let you use more of my land. I can work for you." Eventually, the landowner may have lost the control of all land.

Resource-poor households renting out land have risked being further excluded from fertile land areas and lucrative agricultural markets (cf. Chamberlin & Ricker-Gilbert 2015). On the other hand, emergent farmers who have leased land have been reluctant to fertilise the fields, partly because they have rarely had the opportunity to rent the same plot for more than one season at a time.

> Customary land for rent mainly consists of fields where maize was grown last season, because the owner wants you to grow groundnuts or other legumes so that they can utilise the nitrogen in the soil. When I have harvested the crops from the land I rented, I have usually had to leave the land, especially if I have managed to get a good yield. The landowner does not like if I have done well when that person has not been as successful. If I had fertilised the land with animal or compost manure, it would have been a waste for me considering the time it takes for the nutrients to dissolve in the soil. (Male emergent farmer).

[70] In such a situation, selling labour power can be seen as a more attractive livelihood source than using the land for own production.

Wealthier farm actors have potentially leased land from several landlords during the same season. Large-scale estate holders, who tend to live in other parts of Malawi (e.g. Lilongwe) and have someone running the farm for them, have generally entered into more long-term leases. Emergent farmers, on the other hand, who rent land have stayed where the fields are located. An informant summarises the current land lease situation:

> There are people who have a lot of land that they rent out. They do well. There are people who have a lot of land that they cultivate. They do well. There are those who cultivate some of their land and rent out part of it. They may do well. There are farmers with little land, of which they rent out most or all of the holding. Unless they earn their living from other sources, they do not do well.

Land implications of the transformation in the estate sector

The falling tobacco prices and the declining estate burley production towards the late 1990s gave rise to leasehold land that was not cultivated.[71] As a result, conflicts between estate owners and smallholders have arisen about the right to land. Some estate land has reverted to customary tenure. Some families have received a larger piece of land than they had before. However, former estate owners have maintained indirect control over large-scale leaseholds and maintained the unequal access to land (cf. Jul-Larsen & Mvula 2009; Kishindo & Mvula 2017).

While parastatals such as Press Agriculture and Chamwavi Group have withdrawn from the primary production in Mkanda EPA, relatively well-off farmers; former or active civil servants; professionals; businesspeople and agribusiness companies have leased or bought estate land from the current or former owner. The Malawian government has welcomed large-scale international corporations as actors who can bring *capital* into agriculture; create employment and stimulate investments in infrastructure, social services and other public goods (Kishindo & Mvula 2017).

Such actors have been able to access land relatively cheaply, while community members' claims on that kind of property have largely been ignored or undervalued (cf. Wily 2011). Existing large-scale estate users in Mkanda EPA have at times left the land dormant for speculative purposes or lack of funding. Emergent farm actors who have gained access to estate land may let their children inherit the farming operations and family-controlled *capital*, which has facilitated the entry into agriculture and market expansion for the next generation of privileged farmers (Jayne et al. 2019).

The large-scale leaseholders have negotiated with government actors to gain access to lucrative loans and aid packages within the framework of investment treaties and international trade laws, which has given them new levels of individual protection (Wily

[71] One reason why land has not been utilised is that the tobacco quota allocation system has allowed estate farmers with favorable production conditions to reach their tobacco share with only half or less of their leasehold land area (Stambuli 2002).

2011).[72] The current large-scale estate users have produced tobacco; maize; legumes; sunflowers and seeds for the domestic and export market. Some of them hold 1 000-2 000 hectares of land in Mkanda EPA.[73] One large-scale estate manager who has been staying in the area for a long time has noted that some of the actors who have leased large-scale estates have remained in the area for one or two seasons, before seeking land closer to urban markets. Others, who have found reliable markets from their position in Mkanda EPA and possibly planned to settle here, have stayed longer.

Apart from land, labour has remained the main local economic resource in the estate sector, supplied by tenants; contract farmers; permanent labourers and casual labourers. Skilled labourers may be recruited from the head office and spend a significant part of their income outside the local economy (cf. Chirwa & Matita 2015:17). On the large-scale estates, emergent farmers have continued to act as managers; supervisors; advisors; clerks, secretaries; drivers; carpenters and mechanics, but have also had a broader role in making surrounding resources available to the estate owner, such as providing labourers on their behalf.

Emergent farmers' presence in agricultural institutions and organisations

The international oil price spike, the global food crisis and the financial crisis, which peaked in 2008, have triggered a rush for land and investments in agriculture among domestic and international actors (Hall 2011). Higher international food and oil prices have increased the cost of imported commodities (including fertilisers) and agricultural production in Malawi (Holden 2013). The food price spike and the Malawian government's response to it has benefited large-scale, politically connected maize traders. Bidders for government contracts have in turn attracted more emergent farm actors to seek profit opportunities in Mkanda EPA (cf. Jayne et al. 2010:54).

The last two decades have been marked by a rising urban and rural population in Malawi, whose food demand has increased and consumer preferences diversified (Jayne et al. 2019). At the same time, the net-food buyers have been further pushed back socioeconomically by relatively high food prices (Chinsinga & Chirwa 2013). In summary, the recent rise of emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA has taken place in a period with significant GDP growth on the continent; food price volatility; land market expansion and removal of restrictions on private trade, which has led to a wider range of investment sources, monetary injections, income types and agricultural positions.

Emergent farmers' participation in contractual farming

Since 2000, changes have taken place in the tobacco industry with implications for emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA: the expansion of contract farming;[74] the creation of district

[72] The land deals are supported by investments from European and North American banks; foreign wealth funds; parastatals and financial investors seeking investment alternatives to international financial markets (Hall 2011).

[73] There are 24 estates in Mkanda EPA that are larger than 100 hectares. The largest estates are owned by Press Agriculture, Chamwavi Group and Central Poultry.

[74] In 2012, a contract farming model called Integrated Production System (IPS) was implemented in the tobacco industry (Makoka et al. 2016).

markets (as a measure to reduce trade inefficiency, auction floor congestion and attractiveness of cross-border trade); the discontinuation of the previous licensing system for intermediary tobacco buyers; the introduction of minimum prices and greater recognition given to matters such as credibility, traceability and quality control (Chirwa 2009; Prowse 2013). Interviewed emergent farmers have used their own tenure or leased or subleased estate land as a path to contract farming – promoted by the government as a means for increased productivity and control of price levels and the production process in the sector (cf. Shaba et al. 2017).[75]

Based on empirics from the field work, emergent farmers involved in contract farming have tended to be middle-aged men. They have had a greater landholding size than the majority – usually a minimum of 5 hectares. They have established beneficial relationships with extension service providers, who have played a key role in recommending companies or organisations which recipients should enter into business agreements, government schemes or CSO projects and programs.[76] While their household has relied on farming as a major source of income, there are those who have been employed or had significant community positions. What follows is an account of basic conditions in burley contract farming (contrasted with certain elements of non-contract farming of the corresponding product) that has affected the production conditions for emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA:

> Contract farming is based on an agreement between a farmer and processing and/or marketing firm on production of certain commodities, supply of inputs and payment for delivery (Eaton & Shepherd 2001). In the IPS model, a farmer who can set aside at least 1 hectare for tobacco (Makoka et al. 2016) and has access to other required resources signs a contract with the buyer, either as an individual or through a club (where the members may consist of relatives or producers with similar interests and who live in the same area). The producer and buyer agree on how much land is to be used for the contract and tobacco to be produced in the specified area.
>
> The contract farmer is responsible for finding labour for the crop production. The farmer must accept systematic monitoring of the production process by the buyer's inspectors. They also need to follow regulations on procurement; land preparation; fertiliser application; planting; cultivation; harvesting; bailing; marketing and transportation (Place & Otsuka 2001). They have to make investments in tree planting; terracing; water management (including irrigation) and relevant infrastructure. They must have a deposit to receive loans. They have to deliver a certain quota to get credit next season. They need to have knowledge of how tobacco is grown within a crop rotation system (ibid.).

[75] After the previous tobacco production system in Malawi collapsed, producers and intermediary buyers have experienced high rejection rates on the auction floors and difficulties in obtaining credit and buying the inputs needed (Shaba et al. 2017).

[76] Farmers who share social, economic and cultural traits and interests with extension workers or leading farmers are likely to be included in the list of recommended names handed to the client. An extension worker or other emergent farm actor who recommends farmers to a certain project may expect to receive seeds, livestock or other assets in return.

> The contracted farmer uses the contract as a collateral to receive credit and finance the purchase of certified tobacco and maize seeds; fertilisers; agrochemicals; plastic sheets; strings and other resources (Shaba et al. 2017). The sum of the credit loan is deducted from the final sale of the crops. As part of the credit, the farmer receives a cash advance in the form of a monthly allowance between January and March to buy food, employ additional labour and buy poles for the tobacco barns (ibid.).
>
> Tobacco farm actors who grow tobacco independently (and/or buy it from non-registered farmers) pay a fee and register themselves at the TCC, before delivering and selling the crop on the auction floor. The tobacco sold by the independent seller is auctioned to bidding companies. Non-contracted farmers have sometimes had to wait for more than two months after the tobacco has been bailed until it has been sold on the auction floor. Consequently, they have had to spend time and money on contacting transporters through TAMA and getting information about when their tobacco can be delivered. When the storage time in the TAMA depots is extended, the weight decreases and the quality deteriorates. In contract farming, such transfer costs are lower for the producer because the buyer is responsible for the transportation of the bales (ibid.).
>
> When a contractual sale takes place, the tobacco is auctioned between the contracting parties, where the contracting company buys specific grades of tobacco from the grower at an agreed price. If the grower is dissatisfied with the price, the person can sell the tobacco to another buyer on the auction floor (Koester et al. 2004). Although contracted burley producers generally face higher production costs than non-contracted tobacco farmers, they are likely to make more profit as they tend to produce higher quality leaves and get a better price (Makoka et al. 2016:39).

Through their involvement in contract farming and other elements of the tobacco trade, emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have become vertically integrated in relationships with various tobacco companies (cf. da Silva 2005).[77] Emergent farmers have also engaged in contract farming where they have multiplied commercially registered seed varieties – such as maize; soybeans; pigeon peas; cowpeas and groundnuts – for multinational seed corporations (e.g. Pannar Seed Co; Funwe Seed and Monsanto). Informants talk about how the seed production has required considerable financial means and *capital*[78] and generally excluded farmers with less than 10 hectares of land (cf. Chinsinga 2011a). Apart from tobacco leaves and certified seeds, emergent farmers have cultivated crops like maize; soybeans; groundnuts and sunflowers on contract.

[77] The corporation Alliance One leases land from large-scale estates to produce tobacco. Premium TAMA leases estate land for tobacco production and involve farmers in contract farming. Limbe Leaf as well as Japan Tobacco Incorporation contract farmers.

[78] A contract farmer who cultivates basic seeds (produced from breeders' seeds) or certified seeds (produced from basic seeds or a higher class of seeds) must meet specific criteria: No maize should have been grown during the previous season in the selected field. The land strip to the specific field must have a certain minimum distance to the adjacent fields. The field must be of a certain standard that is inspected by company representatives during the vegetative growth phase (Mloza-Banda, Kaudzu & Benesi 2010:16-17).

Contract farmers in Mkanda EPA who have used their own land have maintained individual property rights; been offered various services and gained access to a guaranteed market for their produce (cf. Prowse 2012). Interviewed small-scale farmers, on the other hand, have been excluded from contract farming because they have been deemed to lack the status of land; collateral; production capacity; business skills and ability to achieve the *surplus value* required in contract farming (cf. Shaba et al. 2017; Kumwenda & Madola 2005). The emergent farmer informants who have produced seeds or crops through contracts have increased their land size over the years. They have gained access to mechanised technology such as tractors; harrows; ploughs and motorised pumps for irrigation. They express how they have developed new skills and increased their market contacts. The more successful farmers have achieved higher agricultural productivity, crop quality and household income.

In contrast, informants also describe how they and other contract farmers have experienced difficult situations when they have produced a smaller volume or lower quality of produce crops and/or seeds than expected. They have then not always been able to deliver the agreed goods and ended up in debts and had the contract cancelled.

Emergent farmers' capital growth through farmer groups and organisations

A number of institutional models have developed in Mkanda EPA through Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs); commercial banks;[79] CSOs; development programs and farmer organisations. The various associations have helped small-scale and emergent farmers to improve their bargaining power; reduce the production and marketing costs; improve or gain new skills; share information and expand their network (cf. Mapila, Makwenda & Chitete 2010). Female and male farmers interviewed have experienced how participation in the mentioned types of institutions has enabled them to gain better control of productive resources, earn higher incomes and develop more reliable sources of livelihood. Credit for inputs and extension services has remained limited if one is not part of a club; contract; organisation; scheme or microfinance group (cf. Kachule & Dorward 2006).[80] Below is an overview of the impact of such institutions for farmers in Mkanda EPA:

> Microfinance institutions, including VSLAs, offer an alternative to the conventional banking logic regarding how financial risks and markets are viewed in rural areas. In Mkanda EPA, they are organised through clubs or groups with 15-25 members. The institutions rest on principles such as joint liability; compulsory savings; participatory monitoring; loans granted to members based on collective efforts and the individual's savings as well as flexible lending conditions and repayment schedules, where the loan terms do not require significant collateral (Chirwa 2004:11).

[79] There are emergent farmers who have a savings account in commercial banks. Some emergent farm actors in Mkanda EPA also receive loans and lend money with increased interest to farmers and small-scale business operators.

[80] Critical resources for extension services are controlled by major input suppliers. For instance, activities on demonstration plots – used in development programs and projects – are sponsored by agribusiness corporations, where the focus almost exclusively is on crop varieties and production conditions that reflect a limited view on food security and the value of agricultural resources (Chinsinga 2011b).

Through VSLA membership, households with little *capital* can obtain credit for off-farm businesses; farm investments; household needs and dealing with vulnerable situations, but also developing their skills in business and production management. Some VSLA groups in Mkanda EPA include women who prepare and market food, manufacture household utensils and sell fish, vegetables or fruits.

After all, the services provided in the VSLAs are limited – because of the institution's interest in protecting the depositors from misusing the shared assets. Consequently, the withdrawals from the savings are small or slowly managed. Informants state that the associations tend to exclude members who are considered unreliable in terms of repaying loans.

The members' engagement is closely linked to the agricultural cycle and small-scale business opportunities during the harvest season. Several informants have been part of VSLAs with unstable creditworthiness; dropouts during the food-deficit months; lack of interpersonal trust and access to long-term financing; social exclusion as well as weak governance (cf. Fisher, Pozarny & Estruch 2017:52).

Development agencies; VDCs; Area Development Committees (ADCs);[81] traditional authorities and extension officers are engaged in various programs and projects aimed at natural resource management; animal husbandry; reproductive health; food security; parenthood; education; financial management; business development and public work (e.g. construction of roads or buildings). Such programs are partly intended to help farmers refrain from offering labour for low pay during the food-deficit period and focus on their own farm and off-farm activities. However, the programs generally lack long-term funding that can create structural changes in smallholders' livelihood portfolio (Slater & Tsoka 2007).

Emergent farmers' engagement in Nkhunguyembe Cooperative

A farmer organisation worth noting in Mkanda trading centre is Nkhunguyembe Cooperative.[82] Prior to the growing season, the members and non-members affiliated to the cooperative receive seeds and other inputs on credit in proportion to their respective land size. After harvesting the crops, they sell them through the organisation. Unlike the affiliated non-members, the members (who pay an annual fee of 5 000 kwacha) store produce in the cooperative's warehouse at no additional cost and are prioritised in the sale of products through markets offered by the cooperative. The shareholders form the management, which mainly consists of emergent and large-scale farmers. The cooperative has sold groundnuts, soybeans, maize and sunflowers to intermediary buyers; wholesalers and processors (e.g. Sun Seed).

[81] A representative body of VDCs.

[82] The cooperative was registered in 2014 and has about 500 members (including smallholders, emergent farmers and some large-scale farmers). About 70 percent of them are men and 30 percent women. About 50 of the members are shareholders. If the non-members are also counted, about 1 000 people are associated with the cooperative.

Unless the cooperative has entered into an agreement with a buyer before the growing season, the members discuss what to produce and later seek suitable buyers that demand the specific crop. After the sale, the members are paid according to the selling price and what and how much crops they have delivered. Interviewed members of the cooperative state that several factors have affected their possible *surplus value* created through the cooperative: the members' respective production costs and how the agreement with the specific buyer has been made; infrastructural conditions (e.g. the access to electricity, telecommunication and passable roads); the market price levels; the timing of the sale and payment and the degree of vulnerability to fraudulent traders, intermediaries, managers or staff (cf. Nkhoma 2011:100-103).

Value creation through Nkhunguyembe Cooperative

One woman's experience of being a member is that "during years when we have found buyers before the growing season, we have been able to plan our activities more thoroughly, including how much we can produce and sell through the cooperative". The members have participated in courses focused on financial and business management; farming methods; natural resource use and household matters, but also been involved in community development projects. The same member says that she has improved her skills in calculating which products and volume she should save for household consumption and how much she can sell to cover expenses and make investments. Through the membership, she has become less dependent on supplying labour to other farmers and reduced the risk of putting herself into debt. Another member is of the opinion that the participation in the cooperative has given her more time to compare crop types and price differences before deciding what to produce. She has started growing sunflowers and cowpeas after meeting advisors and buyers who "tell us which commodities are in demand and can give a high price".

A recurring impression given by members is that they have strengthened their marketing and bargaining position. They have reduced their transaction costs (e.g. by sharing means of transport; critical infrastructure; technological services and other resources). By selling products in larger volumes, they have been able to devote less energy to find buyers who offer acceptable prices. They have experienced improvements in their ability to make investments and cover expenses for school fees; medicine; soap; salt; clothes and other basic needs.

Membership differentiation in Nkhunguyembe Cooperative

While farmers have benefited from being members in the cooperative, they have experienced challenges in arranging transport; finding reliable buyers; coordinating the handling of crops and delivering the goods to the buyer within a reasonable time. Part of the difficulty has been that the cooperative has competed with sellers who have had greater control over the means of production (e.g. large-scale estates or other resourceful farmers). Periods with few market alternatives and when the products have remained unsold for a long time have challenged the members' endurance, trust in the management and willingness to deliver crops to the cooperative. A member comments:

> Sometimes we have had to wait for three to four months or more after the harvest before an acceptable market opportunity has arisen, our products have been sold and we have been paid. When the cost

> of storing the crops has increased, the cooperative's margin has decreased and thus also the motivation of members to remain. However, those of us who can endure the time until the sale takes place are still likely get a higher price for our products than we would have received on our own.

There have been members with small margins and lack of trust in the management who have removed their products from the cooperative's warehouse and sold it directly to traders. Alternatively, they have avoided delivering crops to the organisation during the following season. In situations where the number of members and the fund in the cooperative has decreased, the cooperative's management ability, service provision and competitiveness have been challenged (cf. Nkhoma 2011:107). Informants believe that more farmers then have been discouraged from participating in collective efforts and instead relied on individual market relations, where the buyer has had the upper hand.

According to informants with experience of the cooperative, the organisation has mainly been characterised by members sharing educational background; market knowledge; social recognition; mutual trust in collective responsibility; financial means; collateral and goals that have enabled them to control and monitor how resources are used. Their joint actions through the cooperative have partly been driven by uncertainty among the members about who will make a profit in a given year and the belief that income differences will even out over time for the benefit of the majority when parts of some farmers' *surplus value* is distributed among others. By sharing risks; funds; investments and costs of e.g. access to and responsibility for the use of credit, inputs and other resources for sustained or increased productivity as well as competence development, emergent farmers have positioned themselves on markets where they have created *surplus value* through trade in aggregated products and services (cf. Bebbington 1999:40).

On the other hand, interviewed farmers with small margins have had little incentive to join organisations such as the cooperative where the ability to generate, hold and invest *surplus value* is required. They have lacked enough *capital* and ability to control and evaluate whether their contributions are being used for a common good that they can benefit from. Informants reflect that net-food buyers' ways of trying to meet basic needs has undermined collective efforts among them, partly because of a belief within the class that potential participants would misuse shared resources for their own needs and benefits.

Socioeconomic effects of natural resource pressure and competition

The majority of the Malawian population is dependent on biomass energy sources for their daily needs (Munthali & Murayama 2013). Water services, electricity and other societal resources have been controlled by state-owned enterprises and partly funded by donors. The services have rested on a commercial logic (Chirwa 2004:19).[83] High electricity charges and irregular power supply have meant that people connected to the mains have mainly used it for lighting, while charcoal and firewood have been used for cooking and heating (Munthali & Murayama 2013). In Mkanda EPA, most households have relied

[83] For water suppliers, pipeline installation in dwellings; yards; plots and communities is primarily a matter of whether financial returns can be expected, rather than if social needs are met. In addition, most rural households are not adapted for tap water inside the house (Chirwa 2004:19).

on boreholes and wells where groundwater is pumped into a tank before it is distributed – a process that requires electricity (cf. Chirwa 2004:20). The lack of (accessible, reliable and affordable) electricity; telecommunications and tap water has limited farmers' ability to process and add value to their produce and develop off-farm businesses (cf. ibid.:16).

However, emergent farmers in the empirical material have had relatively good access to clean drinking water and electricity in their households, which has contributed to their wellbeing, status and income opportunities. Among the emergent farm actors, some have invested in diesel generators as a supplementary energy source when power outages occur.

Patterns of the state of the soil

According to interviewed farmers, the fertility of the soil in the area has decreased over time. In general, the average yield has declined among smallholders (Chirwa & Dorward 2013:269; Chirwa & Zakeyo 2003). The crop production has been affected by agricultural methods such as continuous cultivation in the same field without proper fertilisation or with excessive use of inorganic fertilisers;[84] late land preparation and planting; poor protection of the topsoil; lack of use of crop residues for green manure and inadequately applied conservation measures for biodiversity (cf. Chirwa & Zakeyo 2003; Stambuli 2002).

The material from the fieldwork gives the impression that smallholders have had little or no margins or incentives to leave their plot(s) in fallow; apply crop rotation systems with any significant diversity; maintain the biomass in the soil and plant trees.[85] In addition, an informant explains how the widespread use of manual tools – hoes; axes; shovels; sickles and machetes – have limited the depth of most farmers' tillage, which has affected the nutrient uptake of the plants. Emergent farmers with access to mechanised technology; more labour power; livestock; larger landholdings and fertilisers have had better conditions for preserving or supplying nutrients to the soil in such a way that the yield per unit area has been maintained or increased.

Patterns of deforestation

Forest products have functioned as a livelihood source (Munthali & Murayama 2013) and commodity within the local and regional economy. At the same time, residents in Mkanda EPA have experienced how the clearing of land for farming, housing and market areas as

[84] The degradation of the soil fertility has made the use of inorganic inputs more critical for farmers to maintain a certain level of harvest (Stambuli 2002). Informants state that organic fertilisation from farm animals and plants has been used only moderately – mainly by those who can afford the labour required; have the skills and capacity to manage and apply it correctly; can accept the time required the decomposition; own livestock and have access to grazing areas.

[85] The focus on maize as the most important crop in food security policies has discouraged farmers from growing legumes to any great extent. Consequently, such crops have only been included marginally in intercropping models that can contribute to store carbon in the soil and provide nitrogen to the plants; link agricultural and nutritional values; enable more efficient use of fertilisers and increase the protein value of the food (Snapp et al. 2010; Chibwana, Fisher & Shively 2012).

While maize has a relatively high grain yield potential; allows labour efficiency and is adapted to high temperatures (Chirwa & Dorward 2013:255), the crop is sensitive to water and nitrogen deficiencies, dry spells and stock management. Over time, the dominance of maize has reduced the nitrogen of the soil and contributed to erosion (Ortega et al. 2016).

well as the use of wood for tobacco production; fencing; construction and consumption of firewood and charcoal has continued to cause deforestation and affected the hydrology, erosion control and carbon sequestration in the surroundings.

According to interviewed farmers, the loss of wooded areas and the privatisation of communal land have restricted residents' access to timber; fuelwood; food; fodder; fibre; dyes; medicine and other non-timber forest products (cf. Bandyopadhyay, Shyamsundar & Baccini 2011). Several of the informants say that the pressure on natural resources has reduced the areas where, for example, women can find firewood, fetch and use water and gather wild edibles. As a result, women have had to walk longer distances and spend more time on activities such as preparing meals.

Households in Mkanda EPA have become more dependent on buying wood products from local forest owners and traders (including emergent farm actors). Emergent farm actors with alternative sources of income and *surplus value* have had opportunities to benefit from trade in wood and charcoal products, while small-scale farmers have had to spend more time on getting hold of forest raw materials (and thus had less time to work in their arable fields).[86]

Patterns of the state of the water and irrigation

In Mkanda EPA, sand and gravel have been used for brickmaking, other building needs and the manufacture of handmade objects for everyday use. Farmers have extracted the resources from land on slopes and in catchments. Informants mention how silt in the surface runoff (e.g. from irrigated land) has reduced the soil nutrient in the nearby land; caused pollution and altered the water flow in streams, wells and the Rusa River that runs through parts of Mchinji District. The way the river and other water sources have been used as a common-pool resource (Peters 1999:44) has restricted the residents' access to water and deteriorated its quality. An informant comments on the state of the water sources on which the majority relies:

> There are few trees left on the riverbank, nutrients are flushed into the water and the water level has decreased. The water most of us depend on has not been purified properly. We do have boreholes, but they are inadequate and difficult to maintain. Fortunately, we have water taps in some places, which somewhat facilitates our household needs.

Another informant, who has been a civil servant in the forestry sector and is now chairperson of a VDC and runs a farm, shares his views on how government and NGO actors have handled food security and natural resource issues:

> I have experienced an increase in the presence of NGOs where the emphasis is on how much crops can be produced within a specific area and time. My impression is that their approach to food security has stimulated the opening of gardens and irrigation schemes near the riverbanks and at the foot of the

[86] A farm actor involved in charcoal production must spend days away from the farm and monitor the burning of the wood during the rainy season, when many poor households have depleted their food reserves and the rainfed cultivation requires a lot of work. Therefore, many small-scale farmers are excluded from engaging in charcoal production (Munthali & Murayama 2013).

> hills. After the vegetation has been cleared to create land for farming, the runoff of nutrients and water has increased.

A form of agriculture that has required close access to water sources is irrigation farming. Emergent farmers irrigating their fields say that they have been able to harvest crops and make money for a larger part of the year, increase the value of their produce and utilise or increase their production capacity even when the rainfall is irregular (cf. Chizimba 2010:87; Peters & Kambewa 2007).[87] A type of irrigated land that has become more valuable, but also less accessible in Mkanda EPA (cf. Peters & Kambewa 2007), is streambed and wetland gardens (dimba).[88] The gardens have been used by farmers to maintain tobacco nurseries and grow maize, rice and vegetables (e.g. Irish potato; sweet potato; cabbage; tomatoes and onions) – crops that have served as food and income sources during the dry season. While small-scale farmers have used watering cans and buckets to water their gardens, emergent farmers have invested in tanks, treadle pumps and motorised pumps – connected to the Rusa River and streams.

For instance, an irrigation scheme with 69 members in Mkanda EPA have used three treadle pumps on the land allocated to the participants. They have cultivated, marketed and sold produce cooperatively and used part of the revenue to buy inputs and plant new crops. The group's leader describes how they have developed a learning environment for how crops can be irrigated; agreed on norms and rules on joint efforts; expanded their market access through contracts with buyers and reduced the vulnerability of individual members' livelihood.

Some of the irrigated crops grown by emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have been sold to end consumers (possibly through local traders); in the spot market in Mkanda trading centre or other trading centres and in urban markets. In cases where the producer has established a relationship with large-scale buyers and exchanged information on the market availability, demand and price levels of irrigated crops, the person has reached a larger customer base. On the other hand, farmers who have sold irrigated crops at nearby markets have more likely been price searchers rather than price takers, since the value chain in such cases is relatively short (Chirwa & Matita 2015:27).

The spread of irrigated agriculture has also affected the water flow (cf. Peters & Kambewa 2007) and limited livestock owners' grazing and water sources for their animals. A farmer pays attention to the increased pressure on communal grazing areas and what it has meant for the farm animals:

> During the dry season, the water in the dambos dries quickly when people use it in their gardens. The grazing farm animals may need to move far to get water from the river. After the growing season, the livestock owners keep their goats, cattle or pigs on the farm and feed them with leftovers from the harvested crops. If your land is small and you have no other feed source, your farm animals will not

[87] Irrigation systems allow farmers to grow crops up to three times a year (Chirwa & Matita 2015:28). A farmer who cultivates irrigated crops often does so in combination with rainfed agriculture.

[88] Irrigation has been encouraged by national authorities; extension officers; donors and NGOs as a way to increase the food security and value of agricultural products (Peters & Kambewa 2007).

> get enough to eat.[89] You may have to sell an animal and buy fodder for your remaining animals. If you do not have access to extra fodder, you are limited to having a few chickens and goats. During the rainy season when the grass is plentiful, the livestock owners let their animals graze near the road. Those with enough money can hire a herder who cares for and moves the livestock depending on where there is grazing and water.

The informant continues:

> Someone who owns a garden can have their crops destroyed by animals. If that happens, the landowner may request compensation for the lost value in the garden, but also be forced to seek livelihood options outside the landholding. Therefore, a farmer who expects a good return one day may lose the investment the next day.

As described in other parts of the thesis, one farmer's quest for survival and success can become another farmer's adversity.

Chapter analysis of emergent farmers' materialisation through patronage

From the 2000s, *patronage* linked to agricultural support programs and poverty alleviating interventions have been distributed through government-controlled and private corporate bodies (Cammack, Kelsall & Booth 2010:39). Corruption, clientelism (the provision of goods and services in exchange for political support) and opportunism have been institutionalised (ibid.). Corruptive modes of action have trickled down from the top of the government hierarchy to civil servants in the lower levels of public institutions. More civil servants and professionals have invested in agricultural commodities and services as a result of the worsening mismanagement of public resources; the increased legitimacy of private acquisition of agricultural values and the desire to secure alternative sources of livelihood.

The narrow range of commercial input suppliers and their limited product portfolio and distribution channels has served as an instrument for *patronage* and enabled ways to acquire wealth for former and current seed company officials; contracted seed growers and retired or active public employees (cf. Chinsinga 2011b). For instance, it has not been possible to enter into agrodealership and sell inputs through the FISP without substantial financial and institutional support from a seed corporation (Chinsinga 2011a). *Patronage* has been allocated to emergent famers through contractual relationships with large-scale companies; institutions where credit is distributed; trade agreements with wholesale, retail and processing companies and the state's recognition of customary estates and leaseholds as prioritised means of generating wealth from rural communities.

[89] The development of more intensive and separated feeding systems has required that livestock owners have sufficient purchasing power to afford fodder products without compromising the household's food needs and use of crop residues for other purposes.

Chapter analysis of emergent farmers' materialisation through the prevailing food regime

Emergent farmers have been drawn deeper into corporate *capital* control and transnational trade linkages (cf. McMichael 2013:6) in a world of speculation about future world market prices (McMichael 2005:266-267; Bernstein 2010:82-84, 99). Subsidy programs as a solution to food insecurity and land reforms where individual property rights are favoured have expanded the privatisation of basic resources. Emergent farmers have materialised such interests in their local environment. They have become involved in agricultural value chains that have reflected more complex national, regional and global trade patterns. They have been integrated into the creation and exchange of values that have included supermarkets; animal protein; energy sources; retail and wholesale operations; urban consumption trends and simplified and standardised mechanisms for food production (cf. Bernstein 2010:81; Wittman 2009).

The value of money circulating through emergent farmers has increasingly been determined by the extent to which credit can be charged, rather than how wages are formed (cf. McMichael 2000). Recurring social and ecological crises and a volatile agricultural economy have made *capital* owners and their intermediaries (e.g. emergent farmers) to extend the frontiers of accumulation through securitisation (tradable debt) – where money is created from expected revenue (McMichael 2005:296).

In the absence of broad societal reforms that improve the structural conditions of wellbeing among the population, the path to wellbeing for the residents of Mkanda EPA has passed through inheritance or other forms of access to family-based *capital*; possession of scarce natural resources; farm and off-farm investments with money from salaries or businesses; income diversification; utilisation of market fluctuations and the lack of basic resources among the population; institutionalised forms of collective action and formalised trade relations with agribusinesses.

8 Social relations concerning how emergent farmers have materialised

In this chapter, I develop the reasoning about how emergent farmers have materialised through social relations of production and reproduction within their class and in relation to the other classes described in the thesis.

The significance of natural resource commodification and gender relations for emergent farmers' materialisation

As shown in the thesis, the contemporary history in which emergent farmers have materialised has been influenced by overall trends such as volatility in food prices; unpredictable weather patterns; ecological and socioeconomic crises; a growing population; land competition and more complex agricultural value chains. Farmers in Mkanda EPA have experienced how the entry and production costs in agriculture have increased (Bernstein 2010:105) as a result of higher food prices, growing land shortages and increased market competition.

> There is a scramble for land in Mkanda EPA among actors who can profit from the demand for maize; groundnuts; soybeans; vegetables; livestock produce and other products in the region or further afield. We have relatively good rainfall patterns and fertile soil conditions compared to other parts of Malawi. (Emergent farmer and VDC chairperson).

Social repercussions of the natural resource competition

Manifestations of individual ownership of farm animals; crops; farmland; forests and water sources have spread in Mkanda EPA. The access to private property and how it is used has become central for farmers' *exchange value* (from which one's power to exchange commodities arises) (cf. Wood 2011:33). Informants note how the commodification and privatisation of land have made relatives, acquaintances and neighbors compete more with each other in terms of land use. They have become less willing to lend each other fields or cooperate in other ways without compensation. An emergent farmer expresses that "relatives do no longer work together or share land, seeds, fertilisers and crops to the same extent as before. Instead, we are focused on our own survival and well-being."

Residents around Mkanda trading centre have experienced how the scarcity, fragile state and commodification of natural resources have resulted in fragmentation, tensions and conflicts within and between families; communities, institutions; farm actors; long-term inhabitants; newcomers; visitors and other groups about whose claims are legitimate in specific contexts (cf. Peters & Kambewa 2007).[90] A farmer and retired teacher reflects that "we have problems with arable land because most people born here stay and die here – tied to the fields".

[90] For instance, while a garden is private property, the stream of the water source adjacent to it is controlled by state or customary institutions (cf. Peters 1999:44).

In other words, emergent farmers and other societal groups have extracted value from natural resources in ways that have undermined people's modes of action, livelihood sources and survival (Peters 1999:42). The land that emergent farmers have inherited and claimed has given them a source of *capital* which they have used to transfer wealth between generations; acquire collateral for loans and investments; increase the household security and engage in relationships where wealth and prosperity may be close at hand (cf. Chamberlin & Ricker-Gilbert 2015).

While farmers in Mkanda EPA have experienced trade-offs between their current biomass use and the consequences of an exacerbated deficiency or deteriorating conditions, the continued extraction of already insufficient resources may seem more reasonable for someone with small or no margins, or a person whose logic of production and reproduction is based on self-preserving interests, rather than engaging in communal efforts that risk being exploited by others and do not provide any predictable returns for the participant in the short term, but rather have effects on larger spatial and longer temporal scales (cf. Bandyopadhyay, Shyamsundar & Baccini 2011; Lipper 2000).

Gender-related repercussions of property rights

The matrilineal system practiced in Mkanda EPA has contributed to a relatively high proportion of female-headed households, partly because divorces have resulted in the man leaving the household and returning to his original home, or moving to property he has registered. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the adult population has worsened the degree of insecurity that female farmers may experience (Mbaya 2002; Chirwa 2008; Matchaya 2009) in a context where the man has run a higher risk of dying from the disease and possibly leaving the woman as the sole breadwinner in the household.

As disclosed in the thesis, few female-headed households have materialised as emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA. Through similar mechanisms of class relations examined in the study (e.g. between farm households with and without control over their labour power, entitlements and creation of *surplus value*), men have dominated women in agriculture. Cultural biases have often prevented women from controlling, owning and making decisions about the use and management of land and other household assets – even when the man has been cultivating his wife's land (Mbaya 2003; Ngwira 2003; Muriaas et al. 2016:22-23). The mixture of traditional customs and capitalist economics has favoured customs where the husband (rather than the head of the clan) has been regarded as the family head and expected to take care of the nuclear family; serve as the main breadwinner and make decisions about the household (including its property and economy) (Ngwira 2003).

Whereas married women in a Malawian context have been recognised higher status, respect and degree of responsibility, unmarried; divorced or childless women have generally been treated with less dignity. Married women, however, have often lacked rights to property ownership (ibid). Although the female lineage has had certain rights to customary land according to inheritance norms, registered and purchased land has tended to be in the man's name (although the names of both spouses can be stated). Because the man has usually been responsible for the payment when property is purchased, he has generally been considered to own it and entitled to decide who will inherit it. The recognition of formal rights has also made it possible for the man to use property as collateral; secure

credit; increase the production and sales (through inputs and technologies that require a certain type of *capital*); enter into market agreements and lease and sell property (ibid.). Female informants confirm that they have often lacked such control. In general, women in the region have achieved a lower level of education than men (Government of Malawi 2017b:28), which has constrained their ability to interpret information required to access and fill in forms that formalise property rights (Ngwira 2003). Their average lower income level has also prevented them from paying the fees required to register land.

As women in Mkanda EPA have often lacked control over more substantial *capital* and had low incomes, a divorce or the death of the husband can have a serious impact on their wellbeing, poverty level and exposure to shocks (cf. Doss 2006). When a man has died, land that he used may be taken over by his relatives and disputes arise among the extended family members about who is entitled to it. As a result, customary land may be expropriated from the woman and her heirs (ibid.). Informants state that if the woman were to raise the issue of land rights in court, she may have to wait 6 to 12 months before the case is closed. The longer the court process takes, the higher the cost in time and opportunities it means for the claimants (cf. ibid.). Female informants have experienced that even when they have controlled property, they have often faced poor market situations due to fraud; relatives who push them to share the money earned; the need to pay urgent debts or obligations to finance rituals such as funeral commemorations.

Gender-related repercussions of farm and off-farm activities

Women have largely been excluded from or undervalued on *capital*-intensive agricultural markets. During the period examined in the thesis, the production of most export and high-value products – especially tobacco – has been controlled by men. Membership rules in the tobacco marketing associations have discriminated women in Mkanda EPA. In addition, trade on markets that have required longer travels outside the area – including the time and effort needed to reach auction floors – has largely excluded women due to their duties in the household such as childcare, but also because adult men (if present in the household) have tried to exercise power over women's sexuality and mobility.

Female-headed households' means of livelihood and access to marketing channels have generally been limited to low-return and low-entry-barrier activities within or near the household, including own food production; low paid agricultural wage labour and a narrow range of off-farm business activities (e.g. beer-brewing, pot-making and petty trading) (cf. Takane 2007). Because women have been restricted to income sources close to home (given their domestic responsibilities and social norms about activities that are considered appropriate for them), their level of return has remained low (Munthali & Murayama 2013). They have usually lacked initial funds, competence or appreciation from the surroundings to engage in more profitable off-farm activities, such as shopkeeping or crafts that require specialised skills (cf. Takane 2007).

Women have tended to carry a double burden in terms of the hours they spend on unpaid or undervalued housework and the difficulty of finding time to study and do economically productive activities. In cases where a woman has been the only adult in the household, she has generally not had enough labour power, control over other means of production and time to do all the farming – not least labour-intensive production such as tobacco (Djurfeldt et al. 2018). In Malawi, female-headed households have had a smaller farm size with a lower maize production per hectare; used less fertilisers and owned fewer

livestock than male-headed households. They have also tended to have fewer adolescents or adults in the household. However, if grown-up children have lived in the household and contributed to labour and income or sent remittances, the woman has had a greater chance to expand the farm size and increase the degree of control over the productive resources in the household (Takane 2008).

In the focus group discussion with female small-scale farmers, participants mention that when they have lacked sufficient labour power and skills for a certain type of farming, it has become more challenging for them to maintain the fertility of the soil. In such situations, they have tended to seek work as casual labourers. Women and their children in female-headed households have spent more days on farm work than in male-headed households, while they have received lower wages than men for the same type of task (cf. Centre for Social Concern 2015:21; Takane 2007). At the same time, because the nature of farm work in places like Mkanda EPA has caused recurring ill-health, illness and chronic weakness in farm households, it has contributed to the labour shortages, low productivity and burden of care in female-headed households who have not been able to compensate for losses with additional labour power (cf. Djurfeldt et al. 2018).

In summary, female farmers have had a weak bargaining position tied to the lack of control over their labour power and access to land, which has been reinforced by customs on how women's labour should be used. Socioeconomic and cultural conditions have often prevented them from investing in productivity-enhancing means of production, generate *surplus value* and make a profit from crops, livestock and off-farm activities.

However, there have been socioeconomic differences between female-headed households in Mkanda EPA. Women in households that represent a higher a level of income, ability to make productive investments and less vulnerability to shocks have engaged in more income secure or high-return activities. For instance, they have worked as civil servants or permanent labourers; been involved in the service sector or traded tobacco through informal marketing channels (cf. Takane 2007). They have been members in VSLAs and farmer organisations where they have acquired business know-how; developed their financial skills; gained access to credit and inputs and expanded their sales options. They have had closer access to marketplaces and towns. They have used their social network (e.g. supportive relatives – including authorities in customary, public or private institutions) to gain access to labour power; obtain financing and find income opportunities. They have had more adolescents and adults present who, in the form of productive *capital*, have been in balance with the household's available farmland and other resource base. They have also been able to acquire or retain land by flexibly applying inheritance rules; utilising influential contacts and making investments in property control (cf. ibid.).

Class relations in Mkanda EPA

Based on the description of the farmer class characteristics in chapter 4 and the subsequent account of which actors have been integrated into the food value chain in Mkanda EPA, certain traits of farmer classes can be distinguished based on their relation to means of production and reproduction:

Concerning market positions: Net-food buyers (mainly poor small-scale farmers) have sold less maize than other groups, but the proportion of their total maize harvest marketed can still be significant. The poorest farmers have run out of food stock within a few months. They have had few alternatives to earn money other than selling common food crops and providing farm labour. This class has been the one that is most dependent on the market to obtain staple food. They have entered the agricultural market as labourers, buyers and sellers in situations where their main interest has been to meet their immediate needs. They have found it difficult to get access to financial resources or create margins that have enabled them to make more long-term or risky investments.

Slightly more prosperous small-scale farmers have been relatively food self-sufficient (i.e. able to provide enough food for the household members' needs until the next harvest through the value of their productive activities). More or less often, however, they have had to supply labour to better-off farmers.

Emergent farmers have been able to obtain more food and get a higher harvest than poorer farmers. They have received income from other sources than what their fields have provided and had a greater chance to alleviate the effects of challenging situations. They have been able to produce the value of their subsistence needs while achieving *surplus value*, which means that they have exchanged other products and services than what has been necessary to survive and accumulated *capital* for investments that have maintained or increased their monetary value (cf. Bernstein 2002).

Concerning production positions: Emergent farmers have harvested a variety of crops and extracted values from different kinds of livestock – e.g. cattle; goats; pigs and poultry. Resource-poor farmers may grow similar crops, but on a smaller scale and with a lower quality. They have had some chickens and possibly one or a few goats.

Emergent farmers with larger or various pieces of land and who have used their fields efficiently have had a greater ability to adapt their production according to geographical and agronomic conditions; personal preference; production costs; market prices and expected return. What activities that have taken place on the land has also depended on where it is located. Land with fertile soil; water supply; wooded areas and proximity to markets has been more expensive to rent or buy than fields of lower quality and which are further away from the main trading activities. With relatively good access to water and other natural resources, emergent farmers have been able to experiment with crop varieties and cultivation techniques. Unlike poorer farmers, they have often had formal land titles, which has given them security in market relations.

Concerning socioeconomic positions: Emergent farmers have achieved relative social and economic security through interdependent relations with other farm actors above, within and below their class. They have attained positions in society where their role has been crucial for others' living conditions and possible prosperity: e.g. as traditional leader; development committee representative; spokesperson in farmer organisations; association administrator; clerk; farm manager; employer; teacher; health professional; agricultural extension officer or policeman.

Emergent farmers have usually had several breadwinners in the household. At least one or more members of their extended family network have had a regular income outside the farm, or otherwise highly valued positions in the community. They have let their children study in primary and secondary school, or at a higher level of education. They have had a greater chance than small-scale farmers to transfer privileges to the next generation. Small-scale farm households with a weak socioeconomic position have usually consisted of adults whose productive power as breadwinners has been insufficient in relation to the children, disabled individuals and older people who have depended on them. Children in such households have tended to regularly assist with farming activities. Their educational prospects have been small.

Small-scale farmers with insufficient food supply for the household's needs have offered labour to emergent farmers and others who can pay them in food, or money to buy food. Net-food buyers have worked for, among others, emergent farmers during the growing season, which means that they have risked further reducing their ability to next year produce a value from their fields that meets their reproduction needs. Such residents have come to revolve in a cycle of poverty where low returns have held down their income levels; limited their use of inputs and financial resources; prevented them from securing basic needs and reduced their incentives to invest in own agricultural production. Low production and yield levels among small-scale farmers have led to higher maize prices; increased costs for and reduced access to inputs; greater food insecurity; worsening poverty; poorer diets; spread of diseases and deteriorating health. Such circumstances have further limited household's production capacity and revenue, while providing profit opportunities for those who can take advantage of the situation (cf. Mvula, Chirwa & Kadzandira 2002).

Main class characteristics and dynamics

An emergent farmer exemplifies certain characteristics of farmer classes on the market:

> While smallholders come to the marketplace on foot or by bicycle, emergent farmers use oxcarts or motor vehicles. Emergent farmers can sell produce to a wider range of buyers. They have done market research. They are patient. They have planned their activities and how they spend their money. Emergent farmers who store larger volumes of marketable products make it easy for traders to buy what they are looking for within hours or days.

The informant notes that many farmers in Mkanda EPA have tended to decide what to grow based on which commodity gave a high price last year, with the hope that next year will be the same.

> Only a few farmers who have insight into the market, risk capability and ability to invest in productivity-enhancing inputs and appropriate technology act innovatively.

At the same time, the contexts of the thesis illustrate that someone's class affiliation has been fluid, where farmers have moved between a small-scale and emergent state of being. Farmers' movements upward and downward have been affected by circumstances such as whether loans have been paid; how the harvest has become; at which time and in

what negotiation situation a particular product or service has been traded or sold and to whom; the access to investment sources outside the farm; what types of investments within and outside the fields that have been made and whether they have been profitable or caused losses; the response to price differences; the ability to productively combine sources of income and skills; the degree to which income sources have been reliable; whether the search for revenues in other places has been successful and how it has affected the own agriculture; what demand that has existed for one's assets; if cheating, fraud or underpayment has characterised one's market relations; one's inclusion and exclusion as well as ability to participate in agricultural institutions; to what extent collective efforts have added value or been abused; how the household has managed socio-economic and ecological shocks; the social and economic condition of the household members (which has been influenced by factors such as the age; gender; number; health status and competence of the individuals); the need for assistance among relatives and the extent of help to them in relation to one's capacity; the degree to which family members and acquaintances have been able to provide support; who has had influence over the land and other property that one has used; one's relative cost of and access to labour power and how one's labour power has been used.

In other words, farmers' movements in the class hierarchy have been drawn between social and economic as well as location-dependent and location-independent directions that have affected whether their livelihood margins have increased or decreased within and between years. Depending on the difference between what farmers have had to pay for and what they have been able to sell (at what price), they have received; held; calculated; reused; transformed and increased monetary value or lost it; got rid of it; repaid it; paid debts for it and fell back after exchanging it. After all, what has been a shared experience among small-scale and emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA, despite their different class positions, has been having to rely on market exchanges for their production and reproduction (cf. Bernstein 2010:65, 103-104).

Class relations among emergent farmers

Emergent farmers' forms of *capital* have not only served as means through which they have made a living, but also caused them to be and act in certain ways (cf. Bebbington 1999:6): In the focus group discussion with male emergent farmers, the impression arises that they have recognised each other through shared cultural values; agricultural objectives; educational background; household status; proficiencies; societal positions; agribusiness directions, control over certain *capital* and connections with civil servants; businesspeople; professionals; traders and political and traditional authorities. The access to farm labour has been crucial to their materialisation, not least because other resources that can be used productively have been limited and irregularly available.

A participant comments about his peers that "we can trust each other because I know that someone who is on the same level as me cannot run away if we have an agreement about something. He has collateral such as a nice house and other valuable assets. I also know how the farmer has performed and behaved in the past." Another participant fills in regarding the social cohesion between emergent farmers: "If I have a problem, I can go to my friend and ask for help. That person will probably help me, because he knows that I can offer him something in return that is in his interest.

The male farmers in the focus group discussion talk about how emergent farmers have collaborated with each other and coordinated market-related information and activities, such as which buyer can be trusted and what price is reasonable for a commodity. They have shared advices; ideas, activities; loans; investments; risks; methods and practices about crop and livestock production and off-farm business ventures. As lead farmers, some of them have been responsible for maintaining demonstration plots and testing crop varieties and production techniques with the support of extension officers. They have mobilised community members for meetings; disseminated information to farmers and offered others training and contacts to external actors.

They have used each other's means of transport. They have agreed on common sales strategies and techniques in relation to the buyer. They have rented and borrowed mechanised technology (e.g. tractors) to and from each other. By doing so, they have reallocated labour power to farm and off-farm activities that have given higher returns in relation to the cost of production. The focus group participants also highlight how they have exchanged inputs and labour in ways that have reduced their labour input per hectare and freed up off-farm work opportunities (cf. Jayne et al. 2019).

Emergent farmers' involvement in institutionalised forms of dishonesty and corruption

Various examples were given during the field work of how emergent farmers have influenced how agricultural resources have been controlled, used and transformed through forms of fraud and bribery. An element of emergent farm actors' institutional influence is characterised by how they have bought and sold crops in certain situations. Stories are told about how they, among other traders, have used manipulated weights and measures or denied the producer or consumer to see the reading on their scales when selling or buying products. By doing so, they have lowered the actual buying price or increased the consumer price. At the same time, there have been situations where farmers have offered traders crops that have been soaked and therefore weighed more than if they had been dry, which has caused significant losses to the buyer (cf. Jayne et al. 2010:54).

Emergent farmers have also sold contracted crops outside their agreements and avoided repaying credit by utilising the weak tobacco tracking system and selling the commodity in another seller's name. Such acts have been performed in situations where the farmer has concluded that the cost of losing the contract is acceptable in relation to the potential benefits that can be achieved or challenging household situation that can be handled (cf. Shaba et al. 2017).

Although ADMARC should give priority to provide markets for small-scale farmers, informants disclose how emergent farm actors have bribed staff at the depots to buy larger quantities of maize at the side of the official trade. The price paid by the emergent farm actor has been higher than the official selling price for maize. The officer has kept the difference, while the emergent farm actor has sold the purchased product to consumers for a comparatively higher price after ADMARC's stocks have been depleted empty and when food is scarce.

> Officially, each buyer should queue and wait for their turn to buy the specified maize quota per person. What happens, however, is that an officer may agree with an emergent farm actor to sell maize to them in the afternoon or at night. The trader might bring a large amount of money and buy several

> hundred bags of maize. The civil servant can document the transaction as if many buyers have paid for a small amount of maize. Eventually, the officer announces that the maize stock has run out for the season – which tends to be sooner than later. (Emergent farmer).

Emergent farmers' class relationships with small-scale farmers

An informant comments that

> after the harvest, small-scale farmers may need to sell about 6-8 bags of maize to afford a bag of fertiliser. If a drought or flood occurs during the next growing season, there are few smallholders who can produce a lot of crops.

Emergent farmers' relationship with poorer farmers has been reproduced in labour exchanges:

> I usually pay labourers little by little over the season. If I plan to buy a motorised pump, lorry or oxcart; prioritise to meet a specific harvest target or need to spend money on family needs, I adjust my labour costs depending on my situation and how the market develops. (Male emergent farmer).

Emergent farmers have acted as intermediaries by receiving inputs on credit from large-scale farm actors and transferring part of it to small-scale farmers, who have been instructed to produce e.g. maize; tobacco; groundnuts; soybeans or sunflowers and give them back a specified amount of the agreed crop or seed. Part of what the emergent farmer has received from the smallholder has been transferred to the large-scale farm actor in the form of produce or monetary value. Emergent farmers have also entered into production agreements with small-scale farmers without the involvement of large-scale farm actors where they have distributed inputs, food or animals in exchange for seeds, crops or livestock. By exchanging resources with smallholders, emergent farmers have spread risks, shown social care and increased their profits. An emergent farmer indicates what he expects from sharing seeds with small-scale farmers:

> If I give a small-scale farmer a bag of groundnuts for sowing, I can expect that person to give me two bags of harvested groundnuts in return. When I lend seeds to a smallholder, I can assure myself that even if I do not produce a lot that season, the small-scale farmer will provide me with some produce.

Another emergent farmer talks about how his confidence in small-scale farmers has been challenged:

> It happens that I provide smallholders with a bag of fertiliser that they have to pay back after the next harvest by giving me some bags of maize, groundnuts or soybeans. Sometimes I also give food or money in advance to smallholders who have agreed to work for me. Later, when I need them in the fields, some of them show up while others have disappeared. I have to change my plan and risk getting a worse harvest. I can ask relatives for help with the cultivation and trade, but I have to be careful so that they do not become too dependent on me in terms of food or money.

One male emergent farmer among others mentions the benefits of distributing animals such as pigs among small-scale farmers:

> I can give a smallholder I trust a female and male pig. We agree that once the pigs have received piglets, the farmer will give them to me and keep the adult pigs. If I had raised the farm animals myself and they got sick or stolen, I could have lost them all. By letting someone else raise the pigs, I reduce my efforts to take care of the animals and feel more confident that I will make money. At the same time, I give the small-scale farmer the opportunity to increase the number of pigs, start selling them within one or two years and make a profit.

Such resource exchanges based on mutual interests have given rise to new emergent farmers. Other informants highlight more exploitative elements in their relationship with small-scale farmers: They have provided local seed varieties on credit, while claiming it is certified seeds. They have charged a higher price when smallholders have rented an ox-cart or some other asset, compared to what emergent farmers have paid. They have required smallholders to repay loans with a certain interest rate, while the repayment cost has been lower among their peers. An informant in the focus group discussion with male emergent farmers expresses how he and his acquaintances view smallholders – an interpretation shared by the other participants:

> We tend to look down on farmers with less *capital* than us. We interact with them when we want to hire their labour, get them to perform services for us, buy or rent something from them or they buy or rent something from us.

A participant who has increased the monetary value through his means of production talks about who he now identifies with:

> I have experienced how I and others who have been smallholders and advanced materially have tried to distance ourselves from our previous life situation. We start socialising with people who have bank accounts, money and coveted assets. We buy fertilisers, a radio or a motorbike. We drink tea with milk. We buy meat; sugar; bread and butter. We want to emulate those who have nice clothes; different furniture; electronic equipment and motor vehicles. We begin to think that people without money have nothing to teach us anymore.

Emergent farmers talk about how they in comparison with each other and their neighbors' life situation can worry that they will slip back to a level they may have left and do not want to belong to. Their confrontation with the difference between poorer and more privileged residents and the identification with an often volatile and individualised type of success has characterised how they have defended their interests. While exploiting smallholders to afford their life situation and maintain a self-image of someone who has managed to climb in the tough competition, emergent farmers have also responded to the community's moral expectations of them. For instance, emergent farmers express how they at times have hired more labourers than they needed to support members of the community during the months with food shortages. Such acts have potentially given them better opportunities to recruit labour or gain access to other *capital*, including land, when needed. A male emergent farmer explains:

> If you hire someone as a labourer and do not pay them according to what they expect or otherwise let them down, that person can avoid you and give you bad reputation. On the other hand, if you fulfil your obligations and show care, people will probably be more willing to work for you when you need it and see you as a good person.

Emergent farmers have also found themselves in situations where they have written off small-scale farmers' loans and shared food; fertilisers; manure; seeds or wood products with them. Several informants also give examples of how they have paid medical costs for small-scale farmers or transported them to a hospital or places in Mchinji Boma where they can sell products or perform errands. An emergent farmer comments: "If I do better than my relatives, they expect me to help them when they experience difficulties or emergencies."

In other words, emergent farmers have maintained or improved their living conditions by securing their existing assets and transforming resources into *capital* through interdependent, supportive as well as exploitative resource exchanges with smallholders (cf. Bebbington 1999:20).

Emergent farmers' class relationships with large-scale farmers and other elites

As described in the thesis, emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have through *capital* owners in the agricultural value chain been given opportunities to increase their production, productivity and income to a level that could not be achieved for an individual producer (cf. Bernstein 2010:16-17). Political, private and civil actors belonging to the upper and middle class have integrated emergent farmers into markets; production models; forms of ownership; institutions and revenue channels that they otherwise would not have had access to (cf. Bebbington 1999:40-41). As shown in the thesis, *capital* owners' and their distributors' expansion of their resource domain in Mkanda EPA has enabled emergent farmers to invest their profits in sources that can generate more profit (cf. Bernstein 2010:21) and navigate in the ecological, social and economic impermanence that has characterised the capitalist mode of production. However, emergent farmers also express in individual interviews and focus group discussions how they have experienced forms of exploitation by large-scale farm actors, including overpricing for leasing land and transport or requirements for disproportionately high interest rates on loans.

Since most large-scale farm actors have lived outside Mkanda EPA and had their headquarters in urban areas, they have had relatively weak social ties in the communities where they have invested in agricultural production. Their expansion has been dependent on risks and transaction costs being managed through emergent farmers as intermediaries and local "interpreters" with the required skills, reliability and knowledge of the place. Emergent farmers have also had specific assets that large-scale farmers have needed, such as warehouses; housing; irrigation technology and complementary food for their labourers. Such forms of exchange have helped large-scale estate farmers to make investments in the area and successfully run their farming operations – both down-stream (through commodities leaving the farm) and upstream (through how production conditions are secured before farming is performed) (cf. ibid.:91).

An informant who is a retired teacher and comes from Zimbabwe has rented out one of her houses to a large-scale farmer, whose labourers have stayed there. She says that if she has needed help from the large-scale farmer with transportation or any other service, "it has not been a problem".

A woman engaged in small-scale fish trade has lost customers when a large-scale farmer has replenished the stock of fish used as food for the labourers. On the other hand, when the estate farmer has run out of fish, he has bought supplies from her.

A male emergent farmer, who also works as a teacher, has hired tractors, ploughs and harrows from large-scale estate farmers. One estate farmer in particular has provided him with mechanised technology. In return, the emergent farmer has transported goods from the estate with his lorry. The farmer emphasises individualistic elements in his view of how he has used *capital* made available through large-scale farm actors:

> I prefer to decide for myself how I cultivate the fields. If I would have shared the tractor with others, there would be different views on how it should be used and who has access to it during which time. I may have to wait before I can use the tractor in my fields. Meanwhile, the rain may fall. My prospects for the season are deteriorating. I risk falling behind my friends, while they are making progress.

Through their positioning in the agricultural value chain, emergent farmers as a class have made a profit for themselves, while sanctioning the legitimacy of the dominant classes; supporting the interests of non-agricultural actors in society and contributing to state representatives' and private actors' social control over rural activities. Some of their *surplus value* has financed the reproduction of landlords; labourers; civil servants and traditional authorities as well as functions such as schools; health centres; electricity companies; water suppliers; manufacturers; retailers; wholesalers; processors; agribusinesses; traders and lenders in Mkanda EPA.

Emergent farmers' labour relations

A way for emergent farmers to increase their *surplus value* has been to keep down the labour costs. Informants talk about how they have done so by reducing the labourer's means of subsistence (e.g. by providing food and other basic needs of poor quality or quantity that limits the possibility of wellbeing) – which has been noticeable not least for women and children. They have transferred parts of the responsibility for livelihood to the labourer (e.g. by letting the labourer bear costs of food; shelter; sanitation and health care (cf. Araghi 2003). The labourer's living conditions have also been affected by the length of the working day and by what forms compensation has been given for his or her sale of labour (e.g. the fact that the labourer may have to wait until after a certain task has been completed or the crops have been harvested before he or she is paid). Empirical facts reveal that labourers' bargaining power regarding the working conditions has partly depended on the extent to which the person has had access to any real reproduction alternatives outside the current labour relationship – something that women have lacked to a greater extent than men.

As described in parts of the thesis, the cost of casual farm labour (i.e. piece work where people are hired on a daily or weekly basis for specific tasks) in Mkanda EPA has depended on factors such as the labourers' age, skills and bargaining power; the location where labour is demanded and the time of the year. In general, casual labourers have not received other resources besides their wage. Their wage level has been based on the type of work to be performed. For instance, four casual labourers may be given a task that includes intensive work within a given time and size of land – e.g. weeding or preparing ridges. Depending on the crop in question and how many hours the group works per day (up to 8 hours a day or more during peak seasons, 6 days a week), the workload on 1 hectare of land can be completed within a week. Under such conditions, a group of four labourers can on average earn about 75 000 kwacha per hectare, which corresponds to 18 750 kwacha per person.

In reality, however, few labourers have had such work for several weeks at a time, as the same type of work has been demanded almost simultaneously on different farms. This means that when a work effort has been completed on a farm, there have rarely been other employers in the vicinity who in direct connection have demanded more labourers – because other labourers have already done or are doing the work needed there. Casual labourers with more long-term income opportunities are those who have worked for farmers with ability and willingness to use the same individuals for different tasks that can be performed one after the other in the fields. However, as illustrated in the study, depending on how much time and under what conditions residents have worked on other farmers' fields, they have run a smaller or greater risk of reducing their ability to control their labour power (where women have been more vulnerable than men).

Permanent labourers (mainly men), who have predominantly worked on estates and performed tasks such as crop production, crop monitoring and labour supervision, have been paid at the end of the month or season. Permanent labourers have earned at least the minimum wage (Chirwa & Matita 2015:35), which is about 1 000 kwacha per day. Depending on their qualifications, permanent labourers in Mkanda EPA can earn up to about 50 000 kwacha per month, while estate managers have received 80 000-150 000 kwacha during the corresponding period. In addition to the salary, informants explain that the employer can also provide the permanent labourer with food; soap; salt; seeds and a piece of land where they can grow crops for themselves.

Emergent farmers' involvement in family-based and wage labour

There have been advantages for emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA to integrate family members in the household production. The competitiveness of family labour has partly been in social relations that have reduced the costs of e.g. access to inputs; credit; labour; land and technology – such as in situations where relatives have shared workloads; seeds; fertilisers; food; housing; household necessities; machines; household chores; market contacts and transportation without necessarily charging for it. In such circumstances, farmers have often had an implicit expectation of services in return when the need has arisen (cf. Bernstein 2010:91-92).

Therefore, emergent farmers have been able to lower the labour costs (wages) by using family members whose reproduction needs have not been fully met in monetary terms, but supplemented with the household's own farming and other productive activities. This has been made possible in part because activities for production and reproduction have been divided between men and women (and where the women's labour power has been

valued comparatively low). A result of the fact that the monetary value created by the household members through the cultivation of land has been partly hidden in the family's calculations of their expenses and expected income has been a kind of concealed subsidy in the family-based farming system (cf. ibid.:94-95). Emergent farmers' ability to replace certain market costs with social resources has been made possible not least because they have been embedded in the place (a context where economic values are organised through forms other than markets, or where markets function as social entities – including families; institutions; networks; organisations and groups) (cf. Polynai 1971; Granovetter 1985).

However, family members' bearing of hidden costs of production and reproduction has also potentially led them to cultivate the land more intensively and with lower productivity than wage labourers (Chayanov 1966). The materialisation of emergent farmers must therefore be understood in relation to how non-capitalist elements of resource exchange have meant that farmers involved in family labour may have bought or rented land at higher prices and sold products at lower prices than what has been acceptable to *capital* owners (cf. ibid.).

Despite the relatively low cost of family labour, it has been important for emergent farmers to find labourers outside the household, not least as a complement in cases where members have been busy with their occupations, studies or other non-farm activities. Also, as previously discussed, the privatisation of land and other agricultural resources has limited emergent farmers' labour supply within the extended family network. In addition, because emergent farmers have been involved in directing farm activities towards a higher degree of capitalisation (the amount of *capital* required to establish and reproduce a certain type of farming) (cf. Bernstein 2010:93), they have, depending on their socioeconomic position and household orientation, needed labour with skills to perform specific tasks – including management; administration; ploughing; spraying; driving; construction; mechanics; carpentry and other crafts.

Emergent farmers' navigation in capitalist and non-capitalist logics

Emergent farmers' production conditions have been intertwined in different logics: They have been involved in a barter economy (e.g. when exchanging local seeds with other farmers); monetary economy (e.g. when buying and selling crops) and credit economy (e.g. when receiving inputs through loans).

While large-scale farmers have been preoccupied with making profits and expanding the territories for the production and reproduction of commodities, emergent and small-scale farmers have also been involved in relationships and livelihoods that have not been entirely dominated by monetary value, but rooted in people's lived experiences (cf. Bernstein 2017). Emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have been partially fixed in place, while *capital* is placeless – because monetary value in itself is interchangeable and devoid of substance. Emergent farmers have facilitated the movement of *capital* in history by incorporating it in social practices that have incarnated and reproduced monetary value.

9 Concluding remarks

The thesis has focused on how emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have materialised through relations of production and reproduction among themselves and in relation to other farm actors. I have explored how emergent farmers as a class have appeared and what impact they have had on social, economic and ecological conditions in a specific place and over time. I have traced how social relations between *capital* and labour have been manifested through them as forms of monetary value, resource exploitation and commodity.

A reason for my interest in studying the materialisation of emergent farmers has been the recent rapid growth of this group in parts of the African continent. The appearance of the class in Mkanda EPA has raised questions about how rural societies are transformed when specific groups bring new sources of *capital* and expand their interests in agriculture; accumulate and distribute *surplus value*; make profits and change their own and other peoples' means of livelihood.

Factors contributing to the materialisation of emergent farmers

Three main political economic factors are useful for describing how emergent farmers have materialised: their involvement in land and other natural resources; their household conditions and their embeddedness in public, market and civil society institutions.

Some emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA are part of families who settled relatively early in the area and acquired large tracts of land and other sources of *capital*, which later generations have inherited and expanded. There are also former smallholders who have increased their control over land with profits from agricultural sales; off-farm incomes; investments and exchange of means of production through the financing and positions of relatively influential or wealthy relatives, acquaintances or large-scale buyers. Others have moved to the area as civil servants; professionals; businesspeople and retirees and used non-agricultural incomes as sources of investment in arable land.

Emergent farmers' control over land and other natural resources has been consolidated through their individual property rights; *surplus value* used to lease or buy arable land and extraction of resources from water sources, forests and pastures. Their ability to acquire and commodify land has depended on the extent to which they have had enough *capital* that can be put into monetary form.

Emergent farmers' household conditions have been affected by the extent to which the family members have regularly sold agricultural products without compromising their basic livelihood needs. Other factors are whether and how they have combined own farming with off-farm activities; farm labour; employment; pension; access to resources through public and customary institutions, organisations, acquaintances, agribusinesses and elite groups as well as support from extended family members. The fact that emergent farmers have had relatively good access to services from public; traditional; private and civil actors (e.g. inputs; credit; extension services and the recognition of property rights) and some of them or their family members have had positions in such institutions

has contributed to their influence in social, political and economic areas that have served as entrances to more easily accessible *capital* and profitable markets.

Emergent farmers' strategies and combination of livelihood sources have made it possible for them to cope with household challenges; achieve livelihood security and make productive investments. They have also materialised by exploiting the struggles, mishaps, losses and weak labour power and property control of poorer farmers in the context of political changes and economic, social and ecological risks and crises on various scales.

Materialisation of emergent farmers in historical phases

In the postcolonial era, emergent farmers' materialisation has facilitated the expansion of the capitalist mode of production into new territories and domains. In the agricultural value chain, they have linked the place of production and extraction of natural resources with new sources of trade; processing; consumption and profit.

Emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have appeared during periods of 1. state monopoly capitalism – when selected groups of leaseholders and small-scale farmers were favoured by the government; 2. neoliberal market reforms – when markets were deregulated and the cultivation of burley tobacco and hybrid maize increased among farmers and 3. expansion of corporate financing of and investments in arable land and agricultural production. During the most recent period, various types of crises have brought new or reshaped interests in agriculture; transnational state-private partnerships have gained market shares and increased their influence over production and trade conditions; land and other natural resources have been further commodified; products and services have diversified and class differences have increased.

Emergent farmers' impact on the surroundings

Emergent farmers in Mkanda EPA have enabled relative prosperity, a reasonably diversified economy and a more attractive environment for investors; companies; NGOs and professionals. They have served as a lever for investments in infrastructure such as roads; electricity and water pipes. They have contributed to new market connections between rural and urban areas within and outside Malawi's border. They have played a key role in increasing the value of agricultural products and specific rural activities. They have contributed to the national food security and stimulated the agricultural labour market and secondary industries. They have stimulated competence development in agricultural and non-agricultural markets.

Yet it seems that only a few (especially male) farmers have been able to pass the narrow passage that has led to increased prosperity in a place where the investments and revenues have been intended for selected groups, rather than the citizens. Those who have already had difficulty reproducing themselves and lacked sufficient means of production; higher education; regular income; collateral; influential contacts and relatively high social status have continued to be at a distance from where emergent farmers been positioned. Others, who have had the means and ability to create a certain *surplus value*, have potentially risen to a higher socioeconomic level and become emergent farmers. Emergent farmers in the study have materialised as a class that has created new social and economic values and practices in rural areas and in relation to urban areas, but whose existence has de-

pended on private accumulation of basic assets and needs in a context where social relations have created and recreated inequality.

The study gives rise to new questions worth exploring:

- How can segments of differentiation within the emergent farmer class be further distinguished and what socioeconomic, social or sociocultural consequences it has?

- What specific types of skills; methods; practices; livelihoods and ways of organising themselves do emergent farmers acquire, apply and share with each other and other farmer groups?

- How will *surplus value* be achieved and distributed in a context where the majority's livelihood depends on agriculture linked to resources that are overutilised or insufficient for most people's subsistence needs and possible prosperity?

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