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**The Effects of a Globalised Agricultural System on South African Farm Workers: A Political  
Ethnographic Exploration of Malapeng Citrus Farm in Limpopo.**

By

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## Declaration

I, Gabriella M. Vermeulen, declare that this dissertation on “The Effects of a Globalised Agricultural System on South African Farm Workers: A Political Ethnographic Exploration of Malapeng Citrus Farm in Limpopo,” is a result of my own single-handed endeavours and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. The dissertation is being submitted for the degree of Master of Political Sciences in the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. It has not previously been submitted for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

Gabriella M. Vermeulen

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Pretoria, June 2022

## Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval (see Appendix A).

The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.

Gabriella M. Vermeulen

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## Abstract

The South African citrus industry was extensively regulated during apartheid. However, after 1994 the industry (as part of the agricultural industry) has been extensively deregulated and liberalised. This dissertation applies a Bourdieusian lens to ethnographic data gathered at Malapeng citrus farm in Limpopo in order to understand how the lives of farm labourers are being shaped by the global agricultural economy that they are situated in. The data is discussed in two data chapters, each looking at a different level of analysis. The first data chapter discusses the micro-field on Malapeng and interrogates power and capital in relation to an institution referred to as farm bank. The second data chapter investigates the global field that Malapeng is situated in, and the impacts of state withdrawal. The dissertation finds that the withdrawal of the South African state has led to the outsourcing of the enforcement of labour regulations, which has created a vacuum where farm labourers are not being adequately protected by any actor in the field. This has directly created the structure of the field we see on Malapeng, where labourers are at the mercy of the farm owner, and are, in some ways, in more precarious positions than before.

Keywords: Global Agricultural Economy, Global Production Network, Paternalism, South Africa, Farm Labour, Bourdieu.

## List of Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CGA	Citrus Growers' Association
EU	European Union
GAE	Global Agricultural Economy
GLOBALG.A.P.	Global Good Agricultural Practices
GPN	Global Production Network
GVC	Global Value Chain
ILO	International Labour Organization
MRL	Maximum Residue Levels
NAMC	National Agricultural Marketing Council
NMW	National Minimum Wage
SIZA	The Sustainability Initiative of South Africa

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to Research

### *Introduction*

This chapter serves as an introduction to the dissertation with the aim to orient the reader within the research theme and clarify what I aim to achieve in the dissertation. The reader should note that the conscious and deliberate decision has been made to use the first-person 'I' throughout the dissertation where appropriate. This decision has been made as my own positionality as an actor in the Bourdieusian field<sup>1</sup> and my own stores of capital are essential considerations in the reflexive analysis that I aim to carry out in this dissertation. I start this chapter by briefly discussing the background and context of the research theme. Thereafter the research questions, sub-questions, and aims are discussed. Finally, the structure of the rest of the dissertation is discussed.

This dissertation examines how farm labourers have been incorporated into a neoliberal and deregulated global agricultural economy, and how this has affected their lived experiences of power and control.

### *Background and Context*

South Africa is the second largest exporter of citrus in the world (Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries 2018). In 2017, 77 708 hectares of land in South Africa was dedicated to citrus farming, with 42% of this land located in Limpopo (out of a total of 46,4 million hectares used for commercial farming in the country) (*ibid.*). The citrus industry in South Africa is extremely labour intensive, with an estimated employment of 100 000 people and more than 1 million households depending on the broader industry<sup>2</sup> for their livelihoods (*ibid.*). It is clear that the South African citrus industry is well developed and essential to the South African economy.

The citrus industry has changed dramatically in the post-apartheid era. Prior to 1994, the citrus industry was one of the most protected industries in South Africa. However, the industry has experienced extensive liberalisation and state deregulation (Mather &

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4: Methodology for a complete discussion on the theoretical precedents for this decision.

<sup>2</sup> This includes but is not limited to packing and logistics.

Greenberg 2003: 394). The changes seen in the citrus industry reflect the broad restructuring that has taken place in the South African economy. Since 1994 there has been a focus on macroeconomic stabilisation in conjunction with integrating the South African economy into global markets (Cochet, Anseeuw & Freguin-Gresh 2015: 1). This has changed the strategies of various actors within the industry as the field has shifted. The most significant for this research is the change in 'livelihood strategies' that has taken place amongst farm dwellers and workers (*ibid.*: 395). Wisborg *et al* (2013: 20) discuss various sources of livelihood on farms in addition to wages earned from employment. These additions include social grants, small scale farming (food gardens), and livestock keeping. However, some sources require farmworkers to have access to land and other natural resources on and around the farm (*ibid.*). Access to these resources is mediated through the farm owner and are not an inherent right that workers have in terms of South African labour legislation, a fact that is essential to this research, as these livelihood strategies are restricted by the owner on the farm where the fieldwork was conducted<sup>3</sup>.

Although agriculture makes a significant contribution to the South African economy, farm workers are some of the least protected labourers in the country. Until March 2021, farm workers had an industry specific minimum wage that was lower than the national minimum wage (NMW). Farm workers earned a minimum of R18.68 per hour, whereas the national minimum wage was set at R20.76 per hour (Government of South Africa 2020). As of April 2021, farm workers are paid the national minimum wage, which is R23.19 per hour in 2022. The equalisation of the agricultural minimum wage has been met with severe opposition from farmers and farmer organisations, with magazines such as *Farmer's Weekly* encouraging farmers to apply for minimum wage exemptions (Phillips 2021). The agricultural sector is a considered a special case when it comes to minimum wage discussions. The sector is export oriented and subject to trade agreements and international competition. Therefore, it was widely feared that fixing a minimum wage in this sector that is too high could lead to considerable retrenchment.

Studies that examine minimum wages in South Africa have seen different results after the introduction of a minimum wage depending on the sector. In most sectors there was no

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<sup>3</sup> This is further discussed in Chapter 6: Farm Bank.

significant long-term decrease in employment, except for the taxi industry (this is, however, attributed to a decline in the industry before NMW laws were introduced). A notable exception is agriculture. Cottle (2015: 26) states that “these findings contrast strongly with those of the agricultural sector, in which minimum wage laws appear to have contributed to an overall decline in the likelihood of employment of as much as 13% in the four years after the law was introduced.” However, there is no simple relationship between job losses and a minimum wage, as the industry saw significant economic growth during the period of retrenchments. According to the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) (*ibid.*: 28) the industry saw eventual stabilisation of employment, and there may be other reasons for the retrenchments, such as mechanisation on the farms. This suggests that the industry should be able to absorb the new minimum wage. The industry faced a significant year-on-year decline of employment between Quarter 1<sup>4</sup> of 2020 and Quarter 1 of 2021 amounting to an 8,4% decrease in the period leading up to the equalisation of the minimum wage (Statistics South Africa 2021: 1–2). However, the 2021 Quarter 4 Labour Survey found that there was a year-on-year increase of 7,1% in the amount of people employed in the agricultural sector (Statistics South Africa 2022: 6). This is especially interesting considering the higher minimum wage in the sector in addition to the economic strain caused by COVID-19. Although farm workers now earn the national minimum wage, the struggle between the interests of the state and of labour is a recurring theme noted in this dissertation, with the state having difficulty protecting farm labourers while simultaneously adhering to neoliberal logics.

According to a 2015 International Labour Organisation (ILO) study, 65,1% of employed farm dwellers<sup>5</sup> earned R1600 or less per month, and 17,2% earned between R1601 and R3200 per month in 2011 (based on the latest census at the time of publication) (Visser and Ferrer 2015: i). Only 51,1% had permanent employment; 25,2% had part-time or limited employment and 23,6% had employment of an unspecified duration (Visser and Ferrer 2015: ii). Furthermore, only 46,4% of employed farm dwellers are entitled to sick leave. The percentage varies greatly based on whether or not farm workers are permanently employed or not (*ibid.*). Finally, only

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<sup>4</sup> January to March of a given year.

<sup>5</sup> Farm dweller denotes a person “living on farms in Farm areas of South Africa” (Visser and Ferrer 2015: 8). There is significant overlap between farm labourer and farm dweller, however not all labourers live on the farm, and not all farm dwellers are employed on a farm (*ibid.*: 7).

about 1,5% of workers received contributions to medical aid. It is then clear that farmworkers lead precarious livelihoods. While all farmworkers lead such lives, the precariousness of seasonal workers appears to be more pronounced than those who are permanently employed.

Claasen and Lemke (2019: 418) illustrate that farmworker households are some of the most marginalised population groups in the country and that farmworkers (and their families) face many socio-economic challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, little to no education, and limited access to government services. In fact, farm workers are the most likely group in South Africa to experience food insecurity (Devereux, Hall, and Solomon 2019). This is despite a range of policies instituted by the democratic government after 1994 that encourage fair labour practices and security of tenure. Claasen and Lemke suggest that the implementation and enforcement of these laws have mostly failed, and farm workers are reliant on informal networks and the farmer that they work for in order to survive. A key insight that the authors offer is that farm workers should not be treated as impassive or weak actors. The workers are asserting agency through their social networks to cope with the various insecurities that they face (Claasen & Lemke 2019: 428). I explore this agency specifically in Chapter 6: Farm Bank, where the strategies of farmworkers to accumulate various forms of capital is explored through a Bourdieusian lens.

### *Research Questions and Aims*

As South Africa has integrated into the global agricultural economy (GAE) farm workers have been incorporated into a global power structure. In this dissertation I explore the influence of this integration into the global agricultural economy on farm workers and how the global structures affect and shape their lives on a micro-level, including through the ways in which the local farm enterprise's decision-making and cost calculations are shaped through its own incorporation into the global.

In this research I look at Malapeng<sup>6</sup> citrus farm in a town in the Limpopo province. The farm is a collection of four properties that primarily exports various types of citrus fruit<sup>7</sup>. This study

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<sup>6</sup> In order to protect the identity and the privacy of those involved in the research, the name of the farm and the names of all participants have been changed.

<sup>7</sup> The farm also produces sunflowers.

centres on the permanent farmworkers who are employed at Malapeng. There are 43 permanent workers, the majority of whom live on the farm. There is also a yearly influx of South African seasonal workers who help with picking and packing during the on-season (the South African picking season runs from February to September, depending on which types and cultivars are being picked).

We may understand the citrus economy as a 'field' in the Bourdieusian sense (Wacquant 1989), in which different actors are engaged in relation to one another. In this context, I will examine the farmworkers in relation to *farm management* (which is itself fragmented or hierarchized into different levels), the *farm enterprise/owner* in relation to the *national agricultural economy* (where the state is an important actor in terms of providing regulations for the industry), as well as in relation to the *global agricultural economy*, which creates conditions for labour and sets prices.

The principal question with which this project is thus concerned is:

How can we read the lived experiences of South African farmworkers on a citrus farm in Limpopo within the broader field of national and global agricultural food production through which their lives and struggles are articulated?

The sub-questions that will be considered are:

1. How do we understand farmworkers' lives within the national agricultural economy which is engaged in various agricultural and land reform policies and programmes?
2. How do we understand farmworkers' lives within a broader global agricultural economy into which the citrus farm with which this project is concerned is incorporated?
3. How do we understand farmworkers' lives in relation to various other actors in the field of agricultural food production including farm management (black and white), farm owners and other farmworkers?

The aims of the dissertation are as follows:

1. To produce an understanding of the lives of farm workers within the national agricultural economy and the larger global agricultural economy within which they are incorporated.
2. To explore the lived experiences of the farm workers in relation to the decision-making and cost calculations that go into the production of citrus.
3. To understand the lives of farm workers in relation to the other actors that they encounter in the field of power within which they are incorporated.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has provided context for the dissertation, as well as set out information regarding the research question. Including the introductory chapter, the dissertation consists of seven chapters. The second chapter, a literature review, is organized thematically around the history of the South African agricultural economy and the global agricultural economy. The chapter highlights key points regarding how and why the South African agricultural economy is still a 'dual' structure, the relationship between farm workers and the state, and the nature of global value chains/global production networks (GVC/GPN)<sup>8</sup>.

Chapter three, the conceptual framework, defines and explains the key concepts that are used in the dissertation. This includes Bourdieu's key theoretical concepts (field and capital), paternalism, and GVC/GPNs. These key concepts are employed throughout the dissertation as explanatory tools to analyse the data that has been collected. The chapter only focuses on major concepts that are used in the dissertation. Other minor concepts are defined as necessary where they are used.

Chapter four discusses the methodology of the research that has been carried out. The broad methodological framework and specific methods are discussed. Thereafter data collection and the analysis of the data is explained. The chapter closes by discussing the limitations of the research and the ethical considerations that were essential to carrying out the research without causing any harm or distress.

Chapter five is the first of two discussion chapters. The first data chapter looks at how Malapeng has been integrated into the GPN. After briefly discussing what this GPN looks like

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<sup>8</sup> There is an ongoing academic debate regarding whether GVC or GPN is more appropriate to use. This debate is discussed in chapter three: Conceptual framework.

the chapter moves to discussing the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) in South Africa and how this body has taken over responsibilities previously assigned to the government led, the theme of 'outsourcing' regulation by the state is expanded on, on a larger scale by examining the role of non-state actors in regulating labour conditions on farms. The chapter finds that farm workers have largely been left unprotected due to the neoliberal nature of the value chain that they are embedded in.

The second and final data chapter focuses on Malapeng as a social field and largely focuses on the lived experiences of the actors on Malapeng. The chapter starts by discussing livelihood strategies in the South African agricultural sector, and the limiting of these structures by the owner of Malapeng. The absence of a diversity of livelihood strategies available to workers of Malapeng has given rise to the use of what is called 'farm bank'. The farm bank serves as a source of loans for permanent workers and is ostensibly completely separate from the official structures of Malapeng. The chapter goes on to illustrate how farm bank is being used by certain workers to control others by looking at the case of two workers, Dineo and John, who were in the midst of a power struggle during the fieldwork.

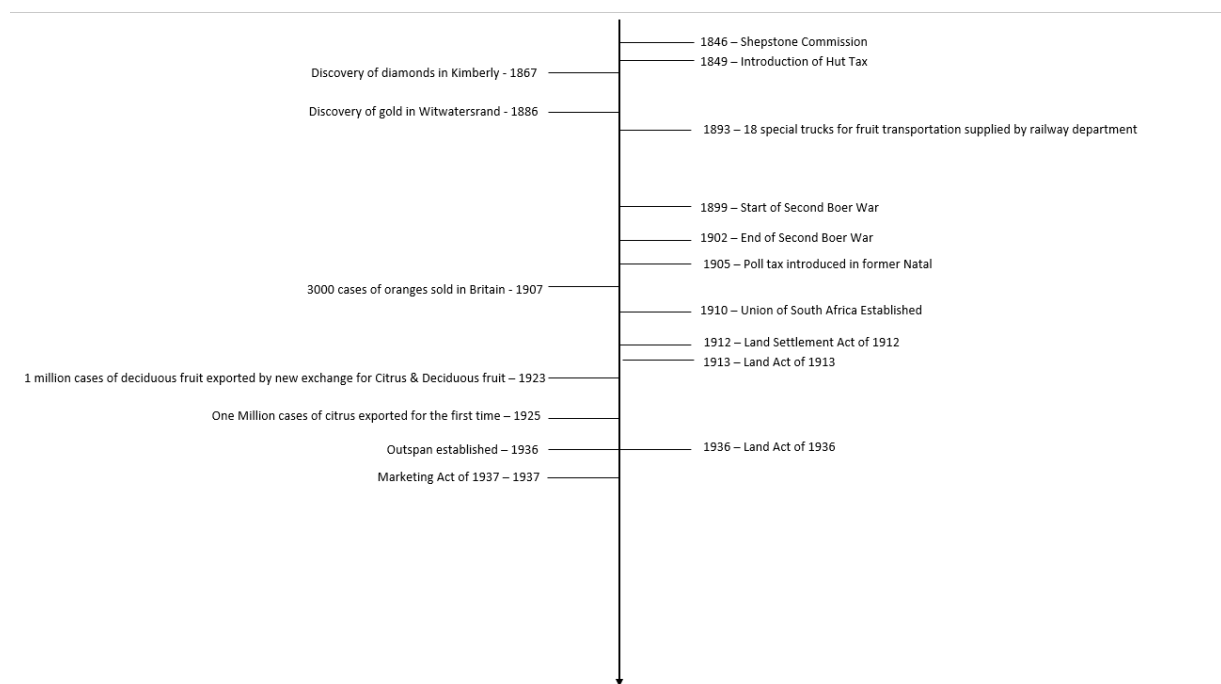
The final chapter summarizes the main findings of the dissertation by revisiting the research questions and aims as set out in this chapter. No new information is introduced, rather, key points throughout the dissertation are discussed and emphasized.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### *Introduction*

This chapter provides a thematic literature review to contextualise the research. I do so in two stages. I start the chapter by discussing the creation of the South African agricultural sector and subsequently discuss the agricultural field post-1994. I then move on the global agricultural economy. The literature review illustrates that farm workers in South Africa have very little, if any, tangible protection. On a national and a global level, the protection afforded to workers seems to be largely theoretical, with neoliberal approaches consistently favouring capital and profit over the health, safety, and wellbeing of workers. I suggest that standards such as GLOBALG.A.P.<sup>9</sup> excludes workers, and that they are unaware of the standards that are supposed to protect them in many cases.

### *The Creation of the South African Agricultural Sector*



*Figure 1: Timeline of the development of South African Agriculture*

Understanding the development of the South African agricultural sector is essential to understanding the 'field' of power (in the Bourdieusian sense)<sup>10</sup> into which farmworkers are

<sup>9</sup> Global Good Agricultural Practices (GLOBALG.A.P. is a global standards body which is discussed later in this dissertation.

<sup>10</sup> See chapter three for a comprehensive discussion of Bourdieu's concept of fields.

incorporated. In this section of the review, I opt for a chronological discussion of how 'black' agriculture was systematically destroyed while 'white' commercial agriculture was developed in South Africa. This is also visually represented in a timeline (Figure 1). The benefit of this chronological approach is that various developments on either side of the agricultural divide (black peasant vs white commercial) can be viewed together and therefore provide a more complete picture of the development of the agricultural sector. Although the agricultural sector as a whole is discussed, special attention is paid to the citrus sector of South Africa due to its specific relevance to this dissertation.

Atkinson (2007) argues that "the story of farm labour in South Africa is largely one of transformation of an independent black peasantry into a landless workforce defined by race" (*ibid.*: 15). Drawing from Greenberg and his work on race in capitalist development, Atkinson makes the point that in order to secure a steady labour supply (which is an essential prerequisite of capitalism) a racially oppressive political and social system is needed in the early stages of capitalist development. As the settlers wanted land *and* labour, they relied on racial dispossession and subjugation to access cheap labour. Furthermore, the point is made that in South Africa (and other similar contexts), racist sentiments were prevalent before capitalist relations developed. Capitalism merely formalised pre-existing racist sentiments into a system of labour control (Atkinson 2007: 20-23). This is very well illustrated by Atkinson (2007: 23) in the following statement:

*"The unequal racial order originated in the spheres of land and labour. As far back as the seventeenth century, when the Khoisan lost their cattle and faced increasing poverty, they began entering the service of European farmers as labourers. They received, in exchange, food and lodging, some tobacco, and security against attacks by settlers and other African groups. The complete destruction of Khoisan society was the first stage in the creation of a highly developed pattern of racial domination and unfree labour"*

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a thriving black agricultural sector in (now) South Africa (Cochet 2015: 12; Atkinson 2007: 25-26 ). This was largely due to many black farmers already using ploughs and carts, and an increasing market for livestock and other agricultural products in the area (Cochet 2015: 12). At the same time, the colonial settlers were starting to attempt an expansion of local markets into international markets. For example, in 1841, the Cape

Colony attempted to export a shipment of various dried fruits to Australia, though this ultimately proved unsuccessful (De Beer, Paterson, and Olivier 2003: 21).

Following the failed export attempt, the colonial government initiated a sequence of events leading to early taxation practices and further subjugation of Africans. The subject of early taxation practices illustrates initial policies which aimed to extract wealth from the native African population by European settlers, arguably the defining feature of the development of the South African agricultural system. Ndlovu (2017) argues that the Natal colony was in desperate need of finance, and Britain was not willing to supply the necessary capital. The only sources of tax revenue the colonies had access to were indirect taxes such as levies, duties, and customs (*ibid.*). The administration decided that they could not tax the European settlers due to their small population size, their opposition to direct taxation and:

*“[T]he perceptions that Africans should pay for the infrastructural developments and the security provided by the Natal government (Bundy, 1972: 374), and partly because of the perceptions that there were taxed (European) and untaxed (African) classes (Ramdhani, 1985: 19). Additionally, the white settler community complained of the ‘injustice’ of the fact that they had to purchase the land they required, whereas Africans could ‘squat’ without paying any rents, duties, taxes or any other forms of expenses (Ramdhani 1985: 19)” (Ndlovu 2017: 6).*

As a result, the decision was made that the native African population (who outnumbered the European settlers) would be the subject of direct taxes. It was clear, however, that a new system of control would be needed in order to extract the necessary wealth from the Africans, and that this system would need to be coercive in nature (*ibid.*). In Natal, a ‘location commission’ was established, headed by T. Shepstone in 1846. Shepstone was central to the connection of the system of taxation and the creation of ‘native locations.’ The commission demarcated 10 native locations that ostensibly prevented conflict between the colonial settlers and the Africans, and subjected Africans to Roman-Dutch law, using the paternalistic claim that African bad social habits needed to be addressed. Around two thirds of Africans were moved to these native locations (Ndlovu 2017: 6).

Shortly after this, in 1849, the so called ‘Hut Tax’ was instituted in the Natal colony, and later spread to the Cape colony. This was the first formal direct tax introduced in the area. The Hut

Tax charged seven shillings to each African man staying in a hut, which was the primary mode of residence at the time (Ndlovu 2017: 7). Other taxes such as the Dog Tax and Wheel Tax were also levied on the native African population by the colonial government, although the collection of these taxes was delegated to chiefs as per the colonial policy of indirect rule. These taxes were payable in cash, but in areas where there was no opportunity to earn cash, cattle and other agricultural products were accepted (*ibid.*).

Following the introduction of the Hut Tax, the colonial government moved to a policy that would use tax to create African labour. As the colony needed more labour, more taxes were instituted. Furthermore, taxes now had to be paid in cash (Ndlovu 2017: 7). As Africans could no longer pay taxes with cattle or agricultural products, they were forced to engage in wage labour in industries such as agriculture. Taxes therefore became a key element in ensuring the creation of an African labour pool for European settlers (*ibid.*). It also ensured revenue for the colonial government, as it is estimated that by the “1870s, Africans contributed 75 percent of all revenue in Natal.” (*ibid.*). This system also marked a key point in the political disenfranchisement of black Africans, as almost none of these taxes were reinvested in the native locations and the African population had no say in the government. By contrast, the white settlers had political representation while being subject to almost no taxation and further reaping the benefits of cheap labour from the native areas (Ndlovu 2017: 7-8).

During this time, the Cape Colony was experimenting with the export of fresh agricultural products. A prominent example of this would be the *Grantully Castle*, which left Table Bay in February 1889 to England with 320 boxes of fruits (mainly grapes). The fruits arrived in England in an inedible condition and the export was considered a failure (De Beer, Paterson, and Olivier 2003: 22). The first successful export of fresh fruit was in 1892 with 14 cases of peaches sent from Table Bay to England. The demand for agricultural products started increasing around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the full scale export of fruit starting in the Cape Colony in 1898 (De Beer, Paterson, and Olivier 2003: 29). This brought concerns over labour supplies as farmers started commercialising their operations. Additionally, the growing mining sector placed more pressure on the labour supply than what white farmers were used to. As a response to this dilemma, the labour system became increasingly coercive (Atkinson 2007: 26-27; Cochet 2015: 14). Many white farmers were adamant that the “independent livelihoods of black workers were the root cause of this labour shortage” (Atkinson 2007: 32).

As the agricultural markets grew, white landowners increased their dependence on wage labourers, which led to the eviction of tenant farmers that had previously been staying on the land. The wages earned by the Africans were significantly lower than what they had previously received during sharecropping arrangements (Cochet 2015: 14). In addition to this, white areas saw improvement of transportation infrastructure, a prominent example being the Cape Colony providing 18 specialised trucks for the transportation of fresh fruits to the Europeans in 1893 (Cochet 2015: 14; De Beer, Paterson, and Olivier 2003: 29). This enabled white farmers to amass wealth and market access while Africans' access to markets and ability to ensure their livelihoods were systematically infringed upon.

In 1910, the Union of South Africa was established along with a constitution that formally excluded non-whites from the political process by banning them from voting (South African History Online n.d.). The period after the creation of the Union of South Africa is succinctly summarized by Du Toit (2017: 2) as:

*“Colonial policy created systems that systematically disadvantaged African farmers in their competition with whites (Bundy 1988). This was not only in order to protect settler agriculture: the interests of the mining industry and its need for cheap labour also required a change of economic relations in the countryside. Government policy promoted the forcible and coercive incorporation of South Africa’s black rural population into the social and political formations of the industrial economy. Fiscal and economic policies were adopted that pushed African farmers off the land, forcing them to sell their labour in the mines (Wolpe 1980, Ndlovu 2017). At the same time, segregationist policy actively discouraged the development of a settled black urban working class”*

Soon after the Union of South Africa was established, the first Land Act was implemented. Rich (1976) discusses the 1913 Natives' Land Act and makes a compelling argument as to whose interests were being served by this act. Rich details the failure of the 1895 Squatter's law, which was unenforceable without an overall legal framework that dealt with 'natives' (Rich 1976: 6). Part of the difficulties that were faced was the resistance from the Africans to whom the law applied to. It is notable that the African resistance stoked fears of the so called 'black peril' among the white population while it increased political consciousness among the Africans (Rich 1976: 7-8). It is due to this failure that the government proposed the Native Occupation Land Acts Bill of 1908.

Rich states that “the main objectives of the Bill were to reduce the number of Africans allowed to live on any one farm, as well as establishing African townships and village settlements” (*ibid.*: 10). This bill was divisive, as those who felt threatened by African farming were appeased, whereas those who made a profit from leasing out land to African farmers (while maintaining ownership of the land and rights to any mineral thereon) were facing potential losses. Furthermore, the proposed Bill did not seem to satisfy white farmers, as Rich quotes a white farmer in saying: “the general dissatisfaction at present existing amongst our people will in no way be abated or diminished by it (the Bill) as there is no provision made against natives squatting on Crown lands and the low annual rent of £1 per annum” (Rich 1976: 11). The Bill was therefore not pushed, but the consideration of a ‘Native policy’ was taken more seriously, although officials felt it necessary to wait until the establishment of the Union (*ibid.*: 12).

After the establishment of the Union, Rich argues that the frustration of failing to legislate the issue around ‘squatters’ may have played a significant role in the new policy direction. Additionally, the political shift towards segregation – which Rich (1976: 12) defines as “an ideological rationalisation of capitalist industrialisation in a racially divided society” – also played a role. Rich later states: “The real significance of segregation in terms of land policy was that it took up existing master-servant practices which had been maintained on an ad hoc basis in the colonial era and systematised them into a coherent and rational policy to buttress an agriculture that was starting to become commercialised” (Rich 1976: 12). The reader should note again the connection being made between racial segregation and capitalist ambitions. These sentiments were aided by the 1912 Land Settlement Act, which encouraged white settlers on land, as well as land companies starting to rent to whites rather than Africans (*ibid.* 12-13). These policies contributed to pressure for a Native policy which segregated the races. Rich points to a marked shift in position shortly after the union was established that is essential to understand the creation of the South African agricultural industry: there was now a push to ban Africans from buying land in specific areas, which had not been the general position excepting for the Orange Free State (*ibid.*).

Rich argues that it was the “modernising sections of settler agriculture who saw the elimination of African squatting and farming on the halves as essential if ‘closer settlement’ and capital-intensive agriculture were to be achieved” (Rich 1976: 2). Rich interprets the

reasons for this as a result of the need for a more 'entrepreneurial' agriculture in South Africa after the end of the Boer War. African 'squatters' were seen as an obstacle to more modernised agricultural practices as they occupied valuable land, posed as significant competition for a young white agricultural market, and their (relative) independence contributed towards a labour shortage on white farms (*ibid.*: 3-5). This must be contextualised within the context of relative African prosperity during the Boer War, as Africans in agriculture thrived while white agriculture was disrupted (*ibid.*: 5).

We must be cognisant of the fact that by 1913 there was a separation in capital that is felt to this day: the interests of mining and agriculture had diverged and now competed (Rich 1976: 17). The government of the day was arguably more focused on mining than previous administrations, and the 1913 Bill can be read as a compromise to mediate between mining and agriculture (*ibid.*: 17-18). The effects of the 1913 Bill were felt especially hard in the Orange Free State, where farmers evicted any Africans who would not take on employment as farm labourers.

However, this was not uniform across the Union of South Africa, as in other areas white farmers felt they were still seriously being threatened by African competition. The relative failure of this act paved the way for the 1936 Land Act. Finlay (1976) argues that the South African markets were always dependent on export markets for domestic and export prices. As such, the market crisis in the 1930s "meant that not only did rural wage levels fall well behind the urban wage levels, but that farmers also resorted to squeezing labour tenants in an attempt to cut the costs of production. This involved, for example, cutting down on the amount of cultivable and grazing land granted to labour tenants, while not increasing the cash wage to a corresponding degree" (Finlay 1976: 4). This led to an increase in migrant labourers from the farms, which increased the labour shortage, and ultimately, argues Finlay, necessitated the 1936 Land Act (*ibid.*).

During this period, the state heavily supported the European agricultural sector, especially during the depression and post-depression years (Finlay 1976: 5). This corresponds with the sudden increase in exports of agricultural products, with 1 000 000 cases of citrus being exported in 1925 (De Beer, Paterson, and Olivier 2003). State support eventually led to the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act, as well as the 1937 Marketing Act. The Second Land Act aimed to address the continuing 'squattening problem,' which had not been adequately addressed by

the 1913 act, stop the 'congregation' of Africans in urban areas, and address the breakdown of the labour tenancy system which encouraged Africans to move to urban areas (Morris 1976: 7). Morris explains the act in the following way:

*"The key section was Chapter IV. By its proclamation to any particular district the Act aimed at regulating and controlling the distribution of labour tenants amongst farmers, and controlling and eliminating the incidence of squatter peasants on white-owned land. It also contained regulations requiring the registration of labour tenants, the payment of a small licence fee and placed a limit on the number of labour tenants any one farmer might have living on his land, in order to 'counter wastage' in the distribution of farm labour. The minimum period of service required for labour was also regulated throughout the Union, being set at 122 days per year. The main principles of Chapter IV were however directed against the squatter peasantry still in existence in the countryside"* (Morris 1976: 7).

It is clear that the act tried to drive 'squatters' from agricultural land and create space for the further development of white capitalist agriculture (Morris 1976: 7). The squatters were either turned into farm labourers or moved to the reserves. It must also be noted that chapter IV of the Act served to decrease the available farm labour rather than increase it, as Africans simply moved to districts where the Act was not immediately in force or demanded land in the reserves. This led to the suspension of the chapter (Morris 1976: 8).

The 1937 Marketing Act made provision for the "controlled marketing of agricultural products in order 'to ensure for farmers a reasonable share of the national wealth of the country and a civilised standard of living'" (Finlay 1976: 6). The Marketing Act allowed for the establishment of a citrus scheme, under which:

*"...a Citrus Board was established with the power to set local prices and, more importantly, appoint a single channel marketing agent for domestic and overseas markets. Although the Citrus Board and Citrus Exchange were, in legal terms, separate entities, most members of the Board were also directors of the export-marketing organisation. Not surprisingly, between 1940 and 1997, the Citrus Board appointed the Citrus Exchange as the single channel exporter"* (Mather & Greenberg 2003: 396).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The dissolution of the Citrus Boards and the creation of a replacement, the Citrus Growers' Association, is discussed in Chapter five.

What is essential to note is that these two Acts signal the role of the state in both shaping the agricultural sector as we know it today, as well as disenfranchising African peasants further. It is clear then that the dual agricultural system and the almost exclusively black labour force in agriculture is not just a lingering consequence of apartheid. Rather, the system of apartheid became necessary to ensure cheap and constant labour to white farmers. The capitalist development merely took advantage of already-existing racialized dispossession to attain a labour supply (also see Wilson, Kooy, and Hendrie 1977 for an extensive discussion on farm labour in South Africa).

### *The Agricultural Field post-1994*

According to Anseeuw, Liebenberg, and Kirsten (2015) the transformation of the South African agrarian sector post-1994 is minimal. They discuss the three most important features of the South African agricultural sector. These features are the deregulation of the economy (and by extension the agricultural sector) since the late 1980s, the efforts to deracialise the agricultural sector and South Africa's spatial configuration since the end of apartheid, and the persistent dualistic structure of the agricultural sector, which is divided into white commercial farms and black subsistence sectors (Anseeuw, Liebenberg & Kristen 2015: 28). Their chapter finds that the reforms that have been pursued by the South African government have not significantly contributed to transformation (social/racial, economic, and spatial) (*ibid.*: 43). As Bernstein (1998: 25) noted:

*“In South Africa after apartheid, the land question retains a powerful symbolic and material charge, generated by the long history of dispossession and continuing widespread rural poverty and insecurity. There is also a widespread politics of land, and by extension, of farming and livelihoods. At the same time, land and agrarian reform is politically marginal to the concerns of the ANC<sup>12</sup> and the government.”*

It is important then to note that black workers' access to national and global agricultural and agrofood markets are mediated through white-owned farms which are operating in an agricultural sector that has been designed to exclude black Africans. Cousins and Scoones (2010: 32) concur on the creation of a dualistic and racially divided agricultural sector in South Africa, which they suggest persists with a white-owned capitalist farming sector that

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<sup>12</sup> African National Congress

monopolises national and global markets, on the one hand, and a black peasant sector on the other.

Alford (2020) proposes the use of *antagonistic governance* to “conceptualize and describe the dynamic processes of contestation and compromise that exist within and across private, public and civil society governance, and that serve to forge, challenge and transform hegemonic stability in Global Value Chains (GVC) or Global Production Networks (GPN).” (Alford 2020: 43). In this article, Alford comes to several important conclusions that help to contextualise this research. The most important of these relates to the situation of precarious workers in South Africa. Alford (2020: 50) states that:

*“Public governance in South Africa in fact comprised a very low level of regulatory protection for large numbers of precarious workers, in the form of minimum wages below living standards and an insufficiently resourced Department of Labour (DoL) inspectorate to monitor on-farm working conditions. It is therefore possible to situate the protective role of the state as part of a theoretical as opposed to real tension with its role of facilitating competitive markets, to be accommodated depending on power relations within the GVC/GPN”.*

Alford introduces us to the idea that the state is failing to protect precarious workers, with corporate interests taking precedence. Although the state may claim to be improving labour standards, this is not translating into actual improvements. This is supported by Wisborg *et al* (2013: 11), who argue that the approach the ANC has taken to land reform does not link issues such as labour rights and tenure security to rural transformation. Although anti-apartheid protests called for the nationalisation of farms, the 1992 ANC land manifesto illustrated a change in focus. The manifesto accepted private ownership of farms and focused on creating a “new class of black smallholders” (Wisborg *et al* 2013: 10). The land manifesto also aimed to overcome the apartheid spatial legacy through restructuring the commercial agricultural industry of South Africa. It is telling that representatives of rural communities (353 communities were represented) came together only two years after the land manifesto to create a land charter. This charter called for the protection of the rights of farms workers, the protection of tenure, and an end to child labour, amongst other things (*ibid.* 11).

Devereux (2020) discusses the violations of labour rights of farm workers in post-apartheid South Africa. His specific research focuses on female workers in the Cape provinces. However, his findings are consistent with other studies done across South Africa and are therefore useful to contextualise and understand the conditions of farm workers in post-apartheid South Africa. Devereux (2020: 383) finds that although there is sufficient legislation meant to protect farm workers, there is a systematic failure by various actors in the agricultural field to comply and enforce the requirements. He specifically mentions farmers (many of whom do not comply with basic requirements such as providing contracts to workers and paying at least minimum wage), the government (who fail to enforce the relevant legislation) and trade unions (to hold other actors accountable for the good of the workers).

Devereux (2020: 385) argues that the progressive legislation created by the ANC government has not been adequately implemented due to the neoliberal logic that the ANC champions. At the core of this is the idea that the government interfering and regulating the relationship between employers and employees is contrary to the core belief of allowing market forces to run their course. It is clear that the ANC is struggling to balance its revolutionary roots and its newer capitalist loyalties. Devereux (*ibid.*) goes further and argues that recent policies have served the interests of commercial farmers, and not farm workers. He gives the example of farmers being able to apply for exemption from paying minimum wages. This once again illustrates that farm workers are not adequately protected by the state, and in some cases, the state goes as far as to explicitly place the interests of capital above that of the workers. Devereux (*ibid.*) reaches the conclusion that “farm workers have arguably been left more vulnerable than before.” This is because of a combination of two main factors. Firstly, the lack of state enforcement of legislation and policies meant to protect farm workers. Secondly, the restructuring of the agricultural sector and, in some ways, the weakened relationship between workers and farmers. Although farmers no longer have total control over the lives of farm workers, the workers no longer have access to the benefits of ‘racialised paternalism.’ The paternalistic system that used to be prevalent on farms provided many workers with permanent accommodation and employment and other informal benefits such as the provision of meals and transport when needed.

Pons-Vignon and Anseeuw (2009) similarly argue that working conditions in post-apartheid South Africa are markedly more precarious than before. Furthermore, they argue that the

state's new economic and social policies accompanied by the market liberalisation that has been pursued (and therefore the withdrawal of the state) that has led to this precariousness. In the case of agriculture, they state: "far from achieving their objectives, however, the new laws are rarely enforced and, in some cases, have had a negative impact on the working and living conditions of farm worker... Furthermore, the above-mentioned measures implemented to protect workers' rights have often increased tensions between farm owners and farm workers, exacerbating the atmosphere of mistrust and conflict" (*ibid.*: 894-895).

We can conclude that the situation of farm workers is therefore still precarious, reminding us again of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* living 'bare lives.' The state has withdrawn as much as possible due to the neoliberal development programme it has pursued. As such, farm workers have little to no protection from the state as they do not enforce the policies that have been created to protect labourers. Furthermore, these laws and regulations have embittered the relationship between farm owners and labourers which has jeopardised much of the paternalistic 'protection' the labourers would have received from the farm owners.

#### *The Global Agricultural Economy*

The South African citrus market is focused on exports, and therefore considering its integration into the Global Agricultural Economy is essential. Alford, Barrientos, and Visser (2017) illustrate several key points related to the South African fruit industry's integration into global markets. Firstly, the authors discuss how farmers have reacted to the demands made by global buyers. As buyers demand higher quality products at lower prices, farmers have compensated through the casualisation and "the increasing use of precarious workers with poorer wages and conditions" (Alford, Barrientos, & Visser 2017: 722). As the buyers have the ability to buy from other countries (should their standards of quality not be met) labourers have a very limited ability to organise and protest poor working conditions. Furthermore, the authors state that the expansion of global production has undermined the efficacy of national legislation to protect workers' rights and working conditions.

Secondly, the authors discuss changes specific to South Africa. At a global level, South African producers are subject to increasingly stringent demands from buyers. At a national level, the fruit sector has been subject to extensive liberalisation and post-apartheid employment legislation that aims, albeit with very limited success, to improve labour standards. According

to the authors “these combined changes contributed to a reduction of on-farm permanent workers and increasing use of off-farm and migrant workers” (*ibid.*: 723). The casualisation of labour is linked to the sector’s integration into the global market, as a response to the buying power of global markets to which the local industry is responsive and attuned. This is confirmed by Cousins *et al.* (2018: 5) in their discussion around agrarian transformation in the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Bain (2010) discusses the use of the term ‘governance’ when it comes to global value chains. Using the term ‘governance’ when discussing global value chains points to a trend wherein “[the] power, authority and sanctions of the state are no longer central to governing” (Bain 2010: 3). Within the contemporary context of globalisation and global neoliberal reforms, governance at this level includes a broad spectrum of agents. In addition to this, Bain notes that the global value chains have become more ‘buyer-driven’ commodity chains, as opposed to producer driven (Gereffi *et al.* 1994 cited in Bain 2010: 4). Buyer-driven in this context does not refer to the consumer, but rather corporations such as supermarkets. This implies that the governing of the GVC/GPN that Malapeng is inserted into is largely run by corporations. Similar to the South African national context labour and capital are competing in this arena.

Tennent and Lockie (2012) illustrate that the global agricultural economy is regulated and organised by private standards such as GLOBALG.A.P. Global Good Agricultural Practices (GLOBALG.A.P.) is “a global organization with a crucial objective: safe, sustainable agriculture worldwide. We set voluntary standards for the certification of agricultural products around the globe – and more and more producers, suppliers, and buyers are harmonizing their certification standards to match our Company’s Purpose.” (GLOBALGAP n.d.).

These standards regulate many aspects of the production network, including food safety and quality, and worker health and safety (Tennent & Lockie 2012: 32). However, the authors point out that the system is not uniformly governed and that some actors are using these private standards (as provided by GLOBALG.A.P., for instance) to pursue their own strategic goals. At the heart of this is the academic debate between ‘standards as barriers’ and ‘standards as catalysts.’ The authors mediate these two camps by pointing out that even if global standards are a defining feature of the relationships between different actors in the value chain, the dynamics and implications of these relationship vary based on a range of other factors (*ibid.*: 32-33). An essential conclusion that Tennent and Lockie come to is that

these global standards do in fact affect the relationships between farmers and the labourers on their farms (*ibid.*: 39). The authors illustrate that private standards have restructured labour relations, and suggest that they may even increase inequalities, as farmers are more discerning of who they hire.

Bain and Hatanaka (2010) extensively discuss the role of third-party certification in GVC/GPNs. In one of their examples, they look at how GLOBALG.A.P. functions in Chile. This serves as a useful comparison to South Africa, as the Chilean government has also taken a neoliberal approach in their policies, and widespread noncompliance to labour laws are rife in the agricultural sectors of both states. They find that the verification of GLOBALG.A.P.'s standards is limited for several reasons. Firstly, workers are excluded from the process (Bain & Hatanaka 2010: 67). Furthermore, due to the techno-scientific approach taken to third-party certification, potential debate and action regarding worker and producer wellbeing is removed from the realm of political discourse (*ibid.*: 58).

Secondly, the authors found that GLOBALG.A.P.'s standards "prioritize auditability – the convenience of checking off a list – over a more substantive evaluation of the content of standards and their consequences for worker health, safety, and welfare" (Bain & Hatanaka 2010: 67). In GLOBALG.A.P.'s case it is the organisation itself (as opposed to the third-party certifier) that determines how compliance should be audited and measured. The audits rely on growers maintaining paperwork and relies on the auditors to trust that the growers are being honest. In some instances, such as the requirement of biannual meeting to address workers concerns, the accuracy of the data is deemed to be irrelevant to the auditor. It is not necessary for the auditor to verify that worker concerns were accurately documented or that they are being addressed by the grower (*ibid.*) When discussing the growers' compliance to national labour laws, the following stands out:

*"In the 2004 version of the protocol these were replaced with a single 'control point' stating that 'a member of management [is] clearly identifiable as responsible ... for ensuring compliance with ... national and local regulations on worker health, safety and welfare issues' (EUREPGAP, 2004b, p. 21). Rather than independently confirm that growers are in fact abiding by the law, GLOBALG.A.P.'s standard simply requires that certifiers verify that someone is responsible for complying with the law. They are not required to corroborate that this person*

*is in fact ensuring compliance; whether labour laws are abided by is outside the bounds of the certification procedure.”* (Bain & Hatanaka 2010: 66)

The authors raise the concern that since workers are excluded from this process, a grower might pass the inspection and be GLOBALG.A.P. certified without the workers understanding or even knowing about the standards. This dissertation concurs with this suggestion, with none of the participants except the farm owner being able to answer questions about GLOBALG.A.P.<sup>13</sup> As on a national level, it seems that farm workers’ protection is largely theoretical.

Another theme that is prevalent in the literature is the role of individual actors in the global production networks. Multiple authors illustrate that farmers, unions, and civil society groups across the world leverage global standards to their benefit or adapt on a local scale to have these standards work in their favour. Ortiz and Aparicio (2007) illustrate this in the fresh fruit industry in Chile, where workers renegotiated capped wages. This theme is further expanded on by Patell-Campillo when they argue that “actors’ strategies, regulation, and historical trajectories also influence and, in certain conjunctures, transform chain governance” (Patell-Campillo 2011: 79). However, Varga (2015) argues that the performance of producer organisations “can be the result at times of how value chains emerge, and of whether producers rather than wholesalers can keep control over certain links in the value chain” (Varga 2015: 85-86). Varga speaks to the rise of large buyers that concentrate power in the value chain around wholesalers, not producers. This suggests that the agency of smaller actors is severely limited due to the structure of the value chain<sup>14</sup> that they are incorporated into. In the case of the South African citrus industry there is little to suggest that workers have the ability to effectively express concerns and negotiate with other stakeholders for more favourable circumstances.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has performed a literature review centred around two main themes: the South African agricultural economy and the global agricultural economy. Several key points have been illustrated that are important for the remainder of the dissertation. Firstly, the racialised

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<sup>13</sup> See chapter five for the full discussion on how workers and GLOBALG.A.P. interact on Malapeng.

<sup>14</sup> The specific structure that Malapeng is embedded in is elaborated on in chapter five.

and dualistic nature of the agricultural economy in South Africa is not accidental. Black workers were proletarianized with the explicit goal of providing a cheap labour pool to white farmers. Secondly, this system of labour supply has not achieved an acceptable level of reform in the post-apartheid era. The democratic government has attempted to balance the interests of labour and of capital. However, the interests of capital (both national and global) have been consistently favoured, which leaves farm workers unprotected by the state. Additionally, as farmers have moved towards a more corporate set-up, farm workers have also lost the 'benefits' of racialised paternalism. Arguably, the lives of farm workers are still precarious, as they are invisible and dispensable to the state, their employers, and the unions.

The chapter then moved on the global agricultural economy that South Africa is being inserted into. It illustrated that South African agricultural sector in general, and by extension the citrus industry is integrated to global value chains that are governed by standards such as GLOBALG.A.P., which illustrates a shift in power to non-state actors. The expansion of global production has undermined the efficacy of national legislation to protect workers. This leaves workers in South Africa in a particularly vulnerable situation. A second key theme is that GLOBALG.A.P. in particular excludes workers from their standard setting and auditing process. It prioritizes the ease of the auditing process over a substantive investigation into the wellbeing of workers. So-called 'clean audits' are a distinctly corporate concept aimed at stakeholders such as consumers rather than the actual wellbeing of workers. This section also touches on the agency versus structure debate in the context of global value chains, as it is unclear whether South African farm workers have the ability to lobby for more favourable conditions at a global scale.

This dissertation is situated provides ethnographic data with the aim to understand the lived experiences of the labourers who are active in the context that has been set out in this review. The following chapter delves into the conceptual framework that is used in this dissertation. It clarifies several key concepts mentioned in this chapter, as well as the previous one.

## Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

### *Introduction*

In this chapter I discuss Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' and highlight key concepts within this framework that the reader should be aware of. In addition, I discuss two other relevant concepts, namely paternalism and global value chains/global production networks, and orient them within the Bourdieusian framework that is applied throughout the dissertation. The underlying paradigm of this research is relational in nature. Bourdieu argues that the social world is not made up of interactions, but rather objective relations. In other words: "the real is relational" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 96). Even the concepts that are applied in throughout the dissertation are relational and heavily dependent on one another to be meaningfully understood.

### *Field, Capital, and Habitus*

This study makes use of Bourdieu's concept of 'field' to define the field of power which constitutes the citrus economy, and the actors which engage within that economy and in relation to each other. Bourdieu's social field cannot be separated from the concept of capital. As such, the two interrelated concepts are defined here. Field is the main underlying concept in this research, as all other concepts and actors operate within the field. These actors include the farm owner, farm management, the workers (seasonal as well as permanent), the state, the national agricultural economy, and the global agricultural economy. It is essential to understand how the two concepts interact with one another in order to properly understand them. Maton (2012: 50) describes the relationship with an equation<sup>15</sup> which he unpacks as "one's practice results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play in that social arena (field)." (Maton 2012: 50). This equation illustrates how Bourdieu's concepts come together to explain the practices (actions) of individuals in a specific context.

Habitus is an essential part of Bourdieu's canon and can be understood as an actor's disposition. Maton (2012: 51) clarifies the concept by stating that:

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<sup>15</sup> "[habitus(capital)] + field = practice"

*“Simply put, Habitus focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances, and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others. This is an ongoing and active process – we are engaged in a continuous process of making history, but not under conditions entirely of our own making”*

In short, we can understand habitus as the dispositions that actors have that has been shaped by the fields in which they find themselves in. Furthermore, habitus will partly determine how actors choose to operate in the field and in turn structure their futures. One cannot understand an actor’s practice without understanding their disposition and where this disposition stems from.

‘Field,’ as discussed by Bourdieu, refers to a structured system that consists of different positions that are relational (i.e., there are dominant and subordinate elements within the field that interact with and are defined by each other). The different positions in the field are relational in nature, meaning that each position or element gets its individual properties from its relation to the other positions in the field. According to Bourdieu, “in analytical terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 96). There are three different actual types of fields that are useful to explain how Bourdieu’s social field operates: a soccer field, a science-fiction force field, and a force field (this refers to scientific forces such as magnets). Each of these have explanatory power to help us understand what exactly Bourdieu means when he speaks of a social field.

Firstly, one can think of a social field the same way one thinks about a soccer field. One must firstly consider the boundaries: there are internal divisions in the field and an external boundary (Thomson 2012: 66). It must be noted that the external boundary of a social field is not as easily definable as that of a soccer field. Bourdieu clarifies that:

*“The question of the limits of the field is a very difficult one, if only because it is always at stake in the field itself and therefore admits of no a priori answer... Thus, the boundaries of the field can only be determined by an empirical investigation. Only rarely do they take the form of juridical frontiers (e.g., numerus clausus), even though they are always marked by more or less institutionalized “barriers to entry” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 100).*

Furthermore, both fields have rules and basic skills that a newcomer must learn if they want to participate in the 'game' (Thomson 2012: 66). Additionally, the actions of players and where they can go (their practices) are limited and defined by their position in the field. In addition to that, the actual physical condition of the field also limits what players can do, and therefore how the 'game' is played (*ibid.*). Finally, the comparison to a soccer field reveals to us the nature of the social interactions that are taking place within the field: the 'game' that occurs in a social field is competitive, and players (or agents) employ a variety of strategies to either maintain their position or improve it. The 'prize' that is at stake is the accumulation of different types of capital (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the dominant actors in a field can make the field function to their advantage but always have to struggle against the resistance of those who are being dominated (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 102).

A social field can also be likened to a force field that one would see in science fiction media (sci-fi). A sci-fi forcefield is "constructed through the erection of a barrier between what goes on inside and what happens outside" (Thomson 2012: 67). As such, fields operate semi-autonomously<sup>16</sup>. Life inside the forcefield is hierarchical, with those who are dominant having say over how the social world operates (*ibid.*). Inside the field there are regular rules and patterns of behaviour that have been constructed by the people within (in other words, a logic of practice); agents understand how they are supposed to behave according to their position in the field, and "this understanding not only feels 'natural' but can be explained using the truths, or *doxa* that are common parlance within the field" (Thomson 2012: 68).

Thompson explains that people do not occupy only one field at a time. There is a collective social space which Bourdieu refers to as a 'field of power', which is made up of different fields (Thomson 2012: 68). One can understand the field of power as a meta-field since it includes other fields such as the economic field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 18). Bourdieu uses the term 'field of power' in lieu of 'ruling class', and therefore shifts the focus away from individuals who are dominant to the relations that "obtain between the social positions which guarantee their occupants a quantum of social force, or of capital, such that they are able to enter into the struggles over the monopoly of power, of which struggles over the definition of the legitimate form of power are a crucial dimension" (*ibid.*: 229-230).

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<sup>16</sup> The reader should keep in mind this concept of relative autonomy for the section on global fields.

Finally, a field can be understood as a force field (in the sense of natural sciences). It is useful to think of a magnetic field, with opposing poles that influence each other. Bourdieu argues that there are two hierarchised poles in a given field: economic capital and cultural capital (Thomson 2012: 68). As such, a field could be explained as a plane with two axes. The vertical axis would be economic capital and the horizontal axis would be cultural capital and relative positions of actors in a field can be mapped or plotted based on this conceptualisation (*ibid.*). In a field there is distinction, which is defined by the “volumes and type of cultural or economic capital at stake in the specific field” (Thomson 2012: 70).

Swartz (1997: 118–126) explains why this metatheory is useful in social research. Field analysis encourages the researcher to recognise underlying (and often invisible) relations between actors in the field. These relations shape the actions that are taken by participants. Furthermore, it draws attention to “patterns of interest and struggle that shape the existence of these empirical realities” (*ibid.*: 119). It is only through extensive empirical study that such relationality between the different actors can be explored and revealed.

Positions in the field are organised around different types of capital. Capital, in this context, refers to more than just economic capital. (Power 1999: 50; Wacquant 1989: 39). We can understand capital as broader cultural or social exchanges between agents in a field. Capital can be accumulated as well as transformed into other forms of capital. The main forms of symbolic (non-mercantile) capital are social capital and cultural capital.

Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as recognition or prestige that actors acquire in a given field (Bourdieu 1991d, 230). Symbolic capital “- another name for distinction - is nothing other than capital, of whatever kind, when it is perceived by an agent endowed with categories of perception arising from the incorporation of the structure of its distribution, i.e., when it is known and recognized as self-evident” (*ibid.*: 238). In other words, symbolic capital should be thought of as the recognition of the value of capital in whatever form it takes in a given field. Moore (2012: 100) explains the difference between economic capital in the following way:

*“The fundamental difference between economic and symbolic capital, that is crucial to understanding how the concept operates within Bourdieu’s system, is that in the former, the instrumental and self-interested nature of the exchange is transparent. Mercantile exchange is not of intrinsic value, but is always only a means to an end (profit, interest, a wage, etc).*

*Bourdieu contends that this is also true for other forms of symbolic capital, but that they, in their distinctive ways, deny and suppress their instrumentalism by proclaiming themselves to be disinterested and of intrinsic worth.” (Moore 2012: 100).*

What is essential here is the misrecognition employed when it comes to symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is misrecognised as legitimate capital (exchangeable with economic capital) and is construed as something that is natural and innate rather than arbitrary distinctions based on how the field is structured (Moore 2012: 100). This misrecognition is closely linked to Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence, which I discuss later in this chapter when orienting paternalism within this framework.

Symbolic capital can be broadly divided into cultural capital and social capital. Bourdieu (1986) explains that cultural capital can be converted into economic capital in certain conditions and is present in three states. Firstly, cultural capital can exist in its embodied state (*ibid.*: 243). Cultural capital is best understood in its embodied state, as Bourdieu argues that in its fundamental state it is “linked to the body and presupposes embodiment” (*ibid.*: 244). Cultural capital cannot be acquired or transferred instantly (as opposed to monetary capital) and cannot be gifted or purchased. Embodied cultural capital can refer to the accent, manners, or way of carrying oneself of an individual. Bourdieu further elaborates that cultural capital is “predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognised as capital and recognised as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition” (Bourdieu 1986: 244). This is due to the nature of its transmission and acquisition is more disguised than that of economic or monetary capital. Embodied cultural capital is accumulated through a lengthy process of self-improvement, such as the manners taught at an elite private school.

Secondly, cultural capital can also be found in an objectified state, with its properties determined by its relation to embodied cultural capital. To understand objectified cultural capital, one could think of a painting. A painting can be acquired materially via the use of monetary capital, but the consumption of the painting requires cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986: 246). Bourdieu gives us another example: “To possess the machines, he only needs economic capital; to appropriate them and use them in accordance with their specific purpose (defined by the cultural capital, of scientific or technical type, incorporated in them), he must

have access to embodied cultural capital, either in person or by proxy” (*ibid.*). It is important to note that it is not the painting or the machine in and of itself that represents objectified cultural capital, but rather the appropriation thereof to be used as a weapon in the fields of cultural reproduction.

Finally, cultural capital has an institutionalised form. This state of cultural capital is best illustrated by the example of academic qualifications. Bourdieu uses this example to explain institutionalised cultural capital:

*“With the academic qualification, a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and even vis-à-vis the cultural capital he effectively possesses at a given moment in time. It institutes cultural capital by collective magic, just as, according to Merleau-Ponty, the living institute their dead through the ritual of mourning”* (Bourdieu 1986: 246).

In this institutionalised state, cultural capital can easily be exchanged for monetary capital and therefore establish the worth of the cultural capital as well the potential economic exchange on the labour market (in keeping with the example of an academic qualification). What is essential here is the scarcity of the capital: if everyone had a degree from an Ivy League university then it would no longer be considered valuable in the same way it is now (*ibid.*).

Symbolic capital can also be found in the form of social capital. Bourdieu very succinctly defines symbolic capital as:

*“[T]he aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group —which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word”* (Bourdieu 1986: 247).

These relationships are symbolically maintained and cannot be reduced merely to proximity (*ibid.*). In other words, the farm labourers on Malapeng do not have social capital merely due to their general proximity to the owner. If they do have social capital in relation to him, it is

due to a relationship of symbolic exchanges which is being maintained by both parties. Bourdieu argues that the volume of social capital that any agent holds is dependent on the size of the network the agent can effectively mobilise and on the volume of capital each of those being mobilised is in possession of. As such, social capital is always in some ways dependent on economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986: 247).

Agents' position in a field are defined by the relative stores of capital (in all its forms) that they possess, and the struggle in a field centre around the acquisition of capital or profits derived from relevant profits. As such it is essential to understand the specific forms that capital takes on Malapeng in order to understand the struggles that define the field.

### *Paternalism*

This dissertation relies heavily on Du Toit's (1993) investigation into paternalism on South African farms. It must be noted that Du Toit relied on scholars such as Foucault in his definition, specifically his work on discourse and institutions. Bourdieu, however, critiqued Foucault and attempted to move beyond the limitations of analysis based on Foucault. I make no claim to be able to move beyond the 'limitations' of Du Toit. However, I will attempt to reorient his definition within a Bourdieusian framework. Although there is nothing lacking in Du Toit's work, I would be remiss in not orienting such a central concept of this dissertation in my chosen theoretical framework.

Du Toit's core conceptualisation of paternalism reads as follows:

*"It does not merely refer to a vaguely benevolent authoritarianism but to a very specific set of institutions — to what Foucault would call a 'discursive formation.'*

*A discourse analysis of the discourse of farmers and workers focuses on one crucial point. Paternalism is more than a set of economic relations. It is more than workers' dependence on the farmer, and more than their isolation from the outside world. Paternalism is also a specific way of understanding these relations, a particular interpretation of this dependence."* (Du Toit 1993: 320).

Du Toit argues that the most important aspect of paternalism is the fact that it is 'organic' and 'hierarchized' (*ibid.*). This can manifest as the owner being the patriarch of the farm and all those who form part of the institution. However, Du Toit illustrates that this can manifest in

more subtle discursive ways, such as the workers in his study refer to entering employment on a farm as entering a family (*ibid.*: 320). Du Toit articulates the importance of this as “If working on a farm is to be part of a family, the most important day-to-day question is one’s relationship to and one’s place within this ‘family.’ (Du Toit 1993: 320).

It is here that I would introduce the reader to Bourdieu’s concept of ‘symbolic violence’ and ‘symbolic power’<sup>17</sup> and argue that paternalism (at least in this context) can be read as a manifestation of symbolic violence. Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as: “the *violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 167). Thompson (1991: 24) defines symbolic violence by contrasting it with overt violence and arguing that:

*“[I]t is ‘gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such, chosen as much as undergone, that of trust, obligation, personal loyalty. Hospitality, gifts, debts, piety, in a word, of all the virtues honoured by the ethic of honour.’”*

An explanatory example would be giving a gift that could never be repaid, and therefore exerting power over the receiver of the gift through the debt that is created.

When Bourdieu refers to ‘complicity’, he does not intend to blame the dominated for their domination. Rather, he is referring to the fact that at its core, symbolic violence is a violence that is not recognized as such. The dominated will see the relationship and act of violence as completely natural. Thompson (1991: 23) succinctly explains this in his introduction to *Language and Symbolic Power*:

*“The efficacy of symbolic power presupposes certain forms of cognition or belief, in such a way that even those who benefit least from the exercise of power participate, to some extent, in their own subjection. They recognize or tacitly acknowledge the legitimacy of power, or of the hierarchical relations of power in which they are embedded; and hence they fail to see that the hierarchy is, after all, an arbitrary social construction which serves the interests of some groups more than others.”* (Thompson 1991: 23).

We can clearly see the links between symbolic violence and paternalism. Both refer to relations of power and necessitate a hierarchy. Both seem natural to those who are involved,

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<sup>17</sup> Thompson states that these two terms refer to the same phenomena.

as it is misrecognised as a legitimate way of being. Finally, both require discursive efforts to enforce this particular relationality.<sup>18</sup>

This misrecognition of violence and domination as such becomes essential in the contemporary context of the South African agricultural field. Bolt (2016) discusses the idea of mediated paternalism on farms in South Africa. Bolt points to the contemporary shift towards managerialism on farms, where owners consider themselves businesspeople.<sup>19</sup> He states:

*“Farmers rarely need to resort to overt coercion, or even present themselves as having the capacity to coerce. On the contrary, their denial of brute force is absolutely central to their self-presentation as export-oriented businessmen. Subject to regular state and supermarket inspections, farmers adopt a corporate style and retreat from their workers’ everyday lives. Yet their authority remains conspicuously unchallenged”* (Bolt 2016: 913).

We see this dynamic play out on Malapeng, as discussed in Chapter Six: Farm Bank, as such it is of particular importance for the reader. Bolt illustrates how farm owners rely on mediated paternalism (through senior black employees) and separate themselves from everything outside the purview of the farm, presenting themselves in economic terms. This further serves to hide their power and enforce the misrecognition that Bourdieu speaks of.

### *Global Fields*

The terms ‘Global Value Chain’ and ‘Global Production Network’ are often used interchangeably (see for example Kaplinsky and Morris 2001 for its usage). However, in this section I will attempt to distinguish between the two and explain my preference for one over the other. A Global Value Chain can be defined as:

*“The full range of activities which are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the different phases of production (involving a combination of physical transformation and the input of various producer services), delivery to final consumers, and final disposal after use.”* (Kaplinsky & Morris 2001: 4).

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<sup>18</sup> This is further expanded on in chapter four: Methodology.

<sup>19</sup> Note that this dissertation purposefully uses the term ‘farm owner’ as opposed to ‘farmer’ as a discursive recognition of this shift.

According to Alford (2020: 45), the key objection to the GVC approach is “that the GVC approach is overly linear, neglects wider institutional environments and, in particular, the central regulatory role of the national state.” In contrast to this, the GPN approach “conceptualize[s] global production as constituted by networked relationships between firm and non-firm actors, ‘embedded’ in different regulatory and institutional contexts, which in turn affects developmental prospects in those locations” (*ibid.*). The key difference between the two terms is perhaps best captured by Alford, Barrientos, and Visser (2017) as:

*“GPN analysis builds on the global value chain (GVC) approach, which focuses mainly on inter-firm commercial relations coordinated globally by lead firms (Gereffi et al., 2005). GPN analysis complements this by highlighting the societal, institutional, and territorial embeddedness of commercial activity as well as asymmetry of power relations across actors (Coe et al., 2008). Embeddedness in a GPN context is not viewed as societally or territorially bounded, but involves multi-scalar networks of commercial and institutional actors that intersect at local, national and global levels (Henderson et al., 2002; Hess, 2004). Embeddedness is neither static nor linear, but a contested process constantly evolving through (dis)articulations between commercial drivers of global buyers and societal actors, particularly labour (Bair and Werner, 2011; Havice and Campling, 2013; Pickles and Smith, 2016).”*

It is due to GPN’s attempt to focus on acknowledging the roles of states, institutions and power in the process of production (Mayer & Phillips 2017: 137) that makes it valuable in this dissertation. However, it is clear in the literature that the GPN school of thought has not as of yet achieved its goal of emphasising the role of politics in production. As such, my decision to rely on the term GPN rather than GVC is purely semantic in nature, as much of the scholarship overlaps at the time of writing. Literature from both fields of thinking will be used in this dissertation, especially since the two terms are so often used interchangeably.

As Bourdieu’s theory of field is often used in local (or national) contexts, it is essential to discuss what a global field would look like, as well as establish how this relates to GPNs. In an attempt to scale up Bourdieusian fields to a global scale, Buchholz (2016) makes a compelling case for the use of ‘relative autonomy’ as a way to define transnational or global fields. In her paper, Buchholz (2016:34) abstracts key ideas that define a field and apply them to a global scale. To do this, she relies on the relative autonomy that fields have. Her definition of relative autonomy has three key features: firstly, a field must have an autonomous ideology. Secondly,

“the establishment of autonomous principles of constructing hierarchy, manifested in what Bourdieu would term a distinctive type of specific symbolic capital, which, at the subjective level, becomes associated with specific interests.” (Buchholz 2016: 38). Finally, she refers to the creation of institutional infrastructure via specific institutions in that field.

Buchholz summarises this definition neatly as: “based on analogical equivalencies, a global field can be delineated along three basic analytical characteristics: (1) as a sphere of specialized practice; (2) with a relatively autonomous logic of competition, and (3) on a multi-continental scale of geographic expansion.” (Buchholz 2016: 38).

We can apply these analytical principles broadly to GPNs, to the global agricultural economy, and more specifically, to the citrus production network that is examined in this dissertation. In the first place, the citrus GPN qualifies as a sphere of specialised practice in its unified goal of producing and ultimately selling citrus or citrus products. Secondly, there is a relative autonomous logic of competition. The growing, packing, and exporting of citrus in the specific GPN that I am examining has a clear logic of practice and competition based on the complexities of the various stages of production. Finally, as the GPN we are examining is inherently global in nature, it clearly fulfils the final characteristic.

As such, we can establish that Bourdieu’s logic of fields can safely be applied to the global agricultural economy for the remainder of this dissertation.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter I have discussed Bourdieu’s concepts which have been applied throughout this dissertation. Field and capital were defined, and the main types of symbolic capital (social and cultural) were elaborated on. Thereafter, I defined paternalism by drawing on Du Toit’s seminal work and oriented it within a Bourdieusian framework as a form of symbolic violence. The two terms will be used interchangeably throughout the rest of the dissertation and the reader should keep in mind that these terms are used to mean violence which is not recognised as such. Finally, this chapter differentiated between global value chains and global production networks and justified the preferencing of GPN due to its expanded definition. Thereafter, I discussed the definition of a global Bourdieusian field and illustrated that we can delimit the global agricultural economy, and more specifically the citrus production network

as a Bourdieusian field. This is especially important in chapter five, where Malapeng is situated within this global field.

The following chapter discusses the methodology used in the dissertation. Thereafter, I turn to two discussion chapters that apply field analysis on a macro-level (in the broader citrus economy) as well as on a micro-level (on Malapeng).

## Chapter 4: Methodology

### *Introduction*

In the following chapter I discuss the methodology used in this dissertation. This chapter is not 'purely' methodological in nature, in that it includes theoretical elements and self-reflexive analysis. As per Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 29-30):

*“The practical organization and carrying out of data collection— or, to be accurate, data production— are so intimately bound up with the theoretical construction of the object that they cannot be reduced to ‘technical’ tasks left to hired underlings, survey bureaucracies, or research assistants... Like method, theory properly conceived should not be severed from the research work that nourishes it and which it continually guides and structures.”*

The relationship between theory and methodology cannot be overstated when one uses a Bourdieusian framework. The reflexivity that I aim to achieve in this dissertation is all-encompassing. Even the decision to make use of a political ethnography was founded in the theoretical need for reflexivity. As such, the reader should refer back to the Conceptual Framework throughout this chapter.

In this chapter, I expand on my selected methodological framework in five steps. Firstly, the broad methodological approach is discussed and defined. Beyond this I give a justification for why a political ethnography is appropriate in this study. Secondly, I discuss the specific methods for data collection used in this research. Thereafter, the methods of data analysis are discussed. Fourthly, the main limitations of the research are discussed. Thereafter, the ethical considerations of the research are considered. Finally, a brief conclusion summarises the key points the reader should keep in mind for the following chapters.

### *Methodological Framework*

In this dissertation I use a political ethnography as my methodological framework. According to Halfpenny (1984: 8, quoted in Harrison & Callan 2013: 54), “[e]thnomethodology is founded on the view that every occurrence within the social world is unique or indexical: that is, every event depends for its sense on the context within which it occurs, where the context is made up of the time, the place and the people involved.” This means that ethnomethodology can give insights as to how various actors make sense of the structures

around them. This methodology therefore creates an opportunity to study how actors respond and relate to a system that is shaping their lives.

It is useful to think of an ethnography not as one method of research, but rather “a collection of research methods bundled together to help us understand the meanings that people in a group or of a place give to the things they themselves do or value” (Miller & Deutsch 2009: 138) The use of multiple research methods in an ethnography allows me to analyse and understand what is being studied from multiple perspectives. This creates a holistic understanding of the phenomena being studied. It is also specifically appropriate for field analysis and a focus on capital accumulation.

Benzecry and Baiocchi (2017) extensively discuss what is ‘political’ about a political ethnography. Their central findings were essential in my decision to use a political ethnography in this study. The authors argue that political ethnographers move away from formalised Politics, and towards the realm of politics as everyday occurrences (Benzecry & Baiocchi 2017: 232). An essential insight that the authors deliver is that there are no pre-conditions for how and when politics arises or exists, as they are defining politics as an inherently relational concept. Thus, the overall methodological approach of this dissertation is relational in nature. As Wacquant (1989: 15) argues of Bourdieu, “against all forms of methodological monism that purport to assert the ontological priority of structure *or* agent, system *or* actor, the collective *or* the individual, Bourdieu affirms the primacy of relations.”

In addition to this, I take a broad definition of politics defined as power (Heywood 2019: 45-46). Through a political ethnography, this research therefore examines the power relations between different actors working at Malapeng citrus farm as revealed by their relationships with food production, each other, and the agricultural economies within which their activities and lives are made meaningful. In order to delimit the study, it must be made clear that it is not an interrogation into the citrus industry, although understanding how the industry operates is important to this study. Furthermore, the dissertation is not concerned with measuring farm workers’ participation in formalised Politics or within formal organizations or institutions (due to the use of the definition of politics as power).

#### *Data Collection Methods*

Two methods that fall under the umbrella of ethnographic methodology were employed for this study. Firstly, I used observation. This took place during a seven week visit to the farm. For this, I made use of dynamic informed consent as set out by the American Anthropological Association (2000). This allowed me to take part in informal discussions that proved to be essential to the conclusions of the study. Informal discussions were held with no less than nine other workers on the farm. As such, the sample size could be said to be 15 individuals who were on Malapeng in various capacities. The length of this visit was severely limited due to the ongoing pandemic. Therefore, the observations made more closely resembles a mapping of social interactions than traditional participant observation. It should be noted that efforts were made to exclude me from participation. On one occasion a worker explicitly told me that they would not show me how to do something or allow me to help them as they had been tricked by white people before, and that if they showed me, I would return as their replacement.

The second ethnographic method used was semi-structured interviews<sup>20</sup>. Six interviews were conducted, each lasting an average of 40 minutes. These interviews serve the purpose of gathering holistic and detailed information relating to the research question. Due to technical difficulties, only five of these interviews were recorded. However, the sixth interview generally concurred with the other interviews, and notes were made of important points. The interviews consisted of the farm owner, a member of management, and four workers who are employed on a permanent basis (one which was not recorded). Each participant signed an informed consent form<sup>21</sup> and willingly participated without any coercion.

The research made use of snowball sampling. During the initial stage of data collection, the names and numbers of potential participants were collected. Workers who were comfortable doing so were asked to refer me to others who would be interested in speaking to me. I then contacted potential participants via SMS or WhatsApp to enquire about a private discussion. The participants were allowed choose the site of this discussion (on the farm or at any nearby location that they are comfortable with). All participants asked to be interviewed on the farm.

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<sup>20</sup> See Appendix B and Appendix C for examples of questions asked. I would like to acknowledge the instrumental role played by my supervisor, Safiyya Goga, in formulating the questionnaires for my interviews.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix D for the informed consent form.

Neither the farm owner nor members of management had any part in choosing who participated and were not present during the interviews.

### *Data Analysis*

For this dissertation, there are two types of analysis that need to be discussed. Firstly, field analysis as per Bourdieu's preferred methodology to understanding a field needs to be discussed. Additionally, the specific method of analysis used to understand the data that had been collected is essential.

Bourdieu explains that to carry out analysis in terms of 'field' there are three 'moments' (or levels of analysis) that must take place (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 104). Firstly, one must determine the position of the field in relation to the field of power. The larger field of power can in this context be defined as "political power and government; although there are a number of mediating institutions and fields: royalty, international business, and so on." (Grenfell 2012: 220). This was done in Chapter 5: Global Value Chains where Malapeng is relationally situated within the broader agricultural economy.

Secondly, Bourdieu explains that we must "map out the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority of which this field in the site." (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 105). This process was carried out throughout the period of my fieldwork through observations. I attempted to identify the formal and informal structures of power on Malapeng as well as how capital is distributed. The outcome of this analysis is combined with the third step in Chapter 6: Farm Bank.

Finally, the habitus of specific agents in the field need to be identified (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). One should not focus on the history of the actor in isolation, but rather their relationships to others in the field (Grenfell 2012: 220). This analysis was carried out via the interview data and observations and is expressed in Chapter 6: Farm Bank. All three levels of analysis are important to completely understand a given field. This broader method of analysis allowed me to conceptualise and understand the field as a relational whole.

To adequately analyse and understand the data that had been collected, I relied heavily on Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power* (Bourdieu 1991b). Thompson provides an excellent

summary of the work in his editor's introduction: "[Bourdieu] portrays everyday linguistic exchanges as situated encounters between agents endowed with socially structured resources and competencies, *in such a way that every linguistic interaction, however personal and insignificant it may seem, bears the traces of the social structure that it both expresses and helps to reproduce*" (Thompson 1991: 2, emphasis my own). Throughout the collection Bourdieu moves away from traditional linguistic analysis in multiple ways and argues that linguistic analysis cannot be effectively carried out by only looking at the grammar and form of language. We cannot understand language and linguistic utterances without understanding the context – the field – that they are situated in. Bourdieu explicitly argues that "linguistic relations are always relations of symbolic power" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 142). As such, understanding the linguistic market on Malapeng allows one to understand how symbolic power is exercised and distributed.

#### *Limitations of Research*

There were two main limitations to the study that were considered. Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic. Although lockdown had been relaxed, there was still a risk of spreading the virus. To account for this special precaution was taken during the fieldwork. This included wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, conducting interviews outside, and regularly checking symptoms (such as a raised temperature or the presence of a cough). Due to possible exposure, I was required to self-isolate for 5 days during the fieldwork period until a negative COVID-19 test confirmed that I had not been exposed and was therefore not a danger to those around me. Overall, health concerns were prioritised, which explains the limited time spent in the field.

Secondly, there was a potential language barrier. The main languages spoken by the workers are English, Afrikaans, and Sepedi. To accommodate for this, I conducted the interview in the language that the participant was most comfortable with. All interviewees were comfortable conducting the interviews in English, and consequently there was no issue with the language barrier. Some sections of interviews were answered in Afrikaans which I translated into English for the purposes of analysis. The analytical significance of this is not lost on me, as there is a rich social history related to speaking these languages in South Africa, especially by black labourers.

The overwhelming presence of English and Afrikaans (a colonial language and the language of apartheid, respectively) is an indicator of what is linguistically considered valuable at Malapeng, which is referred to as 'linguistic capital' (Thompson 1991: 18). Thompson explains that:

*"The more linguistic capital that speakers possess, the more they are able to exploit the system of differences to their advantage and thereby secure a profit of distinction. For the forms of expression which receive the greatest value and secure the greatest profit are those which are most unequally distributed, both in the sense that the conditions for the acquisition of the capacity to produce them are restricted and in the sense that the expressions themselves are relatively rare on the markets<sup>22</sup> where they appear."* (Thompson 1991: 18).

It is essential to note the implicit hierarchy of language that is being articulated by the actions of these specific actors. A knowledge of English or Afrikaans is seen as more valuable and prestigious than any other South African languages, which Bourdieu would refer to as the 'legitimate language' (Bourdieu 1991). This can be attributed to both the larger composition of the citrus field and the archetypical Afrikaans farmer, as well as the use of English by the owner and in the main office. At various points of my fieldwork different participants were vocal about their ability to read and write in English and/or Afrikaans, and how this separated them from other workers. I was told that some potential participants were apprehensive about being asked to participate but boasted about their proximity to me and the research that was being conducted. A similar situation is described by Bourdieu when discussing fieldwork that he had participated in. He states:

*"It is clear that the interviewer, as an 'educated' city-dweller, will only encounter strongly corrected French or silence; and if he uses Béarnais himself, this may well ease the tension of the exchange, but, whatever his intentions, it cannot fail to function as a strategy of condescension likely to create a situation no less artificial than the initial relationship"* (Bourdieu 1991: 78).

What Bourdieu is discussing here is the self-censorship that is employed by those who have less symbolic and linguistic capital in a context where they are speaking to someone who has the linguistic competence that is closest to the recognised legitimate language of that field.

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<sup>22</sup> Thompson uses 'Field' and 'Market' interchangeably.

He reflexively includes the interviewer or researcher in his analysis of when different forms of French were used in that specific setting. Two key insights from this passage assisted me in understanding the significance of all the interviews being conducted in colonial languages.

Firstly, is the idea of 'self-censorship'. According to Bourdieu all linguistic exchanges are more than just communication, but also "an economic exchange which is established between a producer, endowed with a certain linguistic capital, and a consumer (or a market), and which is capable of procuring a certain material or symbolic profit" (Bourdieu 1991: 66). As such, all linguistic exchanges (including, if not especially, between myself and the research participants) have the ability to generate profit (such as the prestige of their proximity to me, an actor with more symbolic capital than the labourers). Bourdieu posits that the linguistic relation of power is not only dependent on the linguistic forces at play, rather, but the whole structure of power is also present in each interaction. In other words, the distribution of linguistic capital is related to the distribution of other forms of capital. In this context, individuals assess the linguistic market they are acting in and modify (or self-censor) their speech (what is said and how it is said) based on how it would be received. Success would mean profits such as prestige whereas failure would lead to sanctions such as a negative impact on their reputation (Thompson 1991: 19).

One must note the role of anticipation in this process. The individual makes an implicit assumption of the structure of the market and pre-emptively modifies their discourse accordingly. As such, this is self-censorship based on anticipated sanctions or rewards (*ibid.*: 20). In Bourdieu's own words he describes self-censorship as:

*"In the case of symbolic production, the constraint exercised by the market via the anticipation of possible profit naturally takes the form of an anticipated censorship, of a self-censorship which determines not only the manner of saying, that is, the choice of language-'code switching' in situations of bilingualism - or the 'level' of language, but also what it will be possible or not possible to say"* (Bourdieu 1991: 77).

If we accept Bourdieu's argument that linguistic capital is linked to and reflects other forms of capital then we must recognise that the farm labourers chose to have their interviews done in English as a form of self-censorship that recognised and reinforced the existing capital distributions on Malapeng, specifically related to race and language.

Secondly, is the strategy of condescension. Bourdieu defines this as:

*“The strategy of condescension consists in deriving profit from the objective relation of power between the languages that confront one another in practice (even and especially when French is absent) in the very act of symbolically negating that relation, namely, the hierarchy of the languages and of those who speak them.”* (ibid.: 68)

The strategy of condescension involves the actor with more power in an exchange ‘condescending’ to the actor with less power by using the non-legitimate language. In trying to show sympathy by subverting the hierarchy of value the speaker is in fact reinforcing that hierarchy as the act would have no meaning if the language the speaker chose to use was not less valuable than the legitimate language. I refer the reader back to Bourdieu’s quote relating to his fieldwork: *“a strategy of condescension likely to create a situation no less artificial than the initial relationship”* (Bourdieu 1991: 78). This catch-22 creates some difficulties with accurately analysing the data gathered. By virtue of having more symbolic capital than many (if not most) of the participants any interaction with them served to reinforce the existing hierarchies, and all the information I have has been subjected to self-censorship based on what the participants judged was appropriate to say to me.

### *Ethical Considerations*

As this research pertains to farm workers (a potentially vulnerable and marginalised group) special attention needs to be paid to ethical considerations. In order to protect the identities of participants the name of the farm has been changed, and all participants are provided with a pseudonym. All participants were provided with a letter of introduction to the study and signed an informed consent form (including consent to having interviews recorded). The letter of consent was explained to all participants, and they were given the chance to ask questions at any time during the process. Furthermore, the values laid out in the University of Pretoria’s code of ethics for research were closely observed. This is to ensure that all participants are treated with dignity and justice, that they are not coerced or pressured into participating. As per the code of ethics, the study was carried out in such a manner to ensure no harm comes to any participants.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter I have discussed the Methodology used in this dissertation. The use of a political ethnography was discussed as well as the specific methods that were used to collect data (semi-structured interviews and observation). Thereafter, Bourdieu's three levels of field analysis as well as the key concepts from *Language and Symbolic Power* were explained in order to clarify the methods of data analysis that were used. While discussing the limitations of the research, I drew attention to the analytical significance of the relative lack of a language barrier during my fieldwork. Finally, the ethical considerations were discussed. The key ideas the reader should keep in mind is that all methodological decisions in this study were made to be in line with the Bourdieusian framework that I chose to use. This includes the definition of politics as power, the use of a political ethnography, and the methods of analysis.

The following chapter situates Malapeng within the larger field of power in South Africa as well as globally. Through this I illustrate how the integration of Malapeng into this global agricultural economy enables, if not encourages, the types of relations that are apparent in Malapeng. Thereafter the second data chapter interrogates the relationships of power on Malapeng between specific actors. Finally, the conclusion links these two chapters to show how South Africa's integration into the Global Agricultural Economy has impacted the lives of farm workers.

## Chapter 5: Global Agricultural Integration

### *Introduction*

This chapter is concerned with the first and second sub-questions, namely: how do we understand farmworkers' lives within a broader global agricultural economy into which the citrus farm with which this project is concerned is incorporated? And: How do we understand farmworkers' lives within the national agricultural economy which is engaged in various agricultural and land reform policies and programmes? It does so by exploring Malapeng's situatedness in the global value chain it is a part of which includes Malapeng's relationship with the South African state.

The following section provides an overview of the production network that Malapeng is embedded in. This section is not a comprehensive value chain analysis, nor does it aim to be. By discussing what the citrus export industry in South Africa looks like, this chapter aims to provide context to the previous chapter and address the sub-question mentioned above. The second section relates to how Malapeng interacts with the South African state. The section looks specifically at the language used around the state and the role of the Citrus Growers Association as an intermediary between Malapeng and the state. The section thereafter looks at the governance of GPNs and the role that states play in this process. This bridges the gap between the state and global integration by examining how the two interact when it comes to the lives of the farm workers.

In this chapter I argue that the logic of practice that is reproduced in the global agricultural field defines and enables the relationality that we see on Malapeng. In the global field that Malapeng is situated in, actors relate to one another in neoliberal and corporate ways. The state is uninvolved or absent on multiple levels, which has created a field dominated by private interests that ultimately exacerbates the precarious nature of labourers in the South African citrus industry.

### *Citrus Production Network*

This section discusses the value chain that Malapeng is embedded in. The section starts 'upstream' with the producer (Malapeng) and moves down to the global importers. The key actors that will be discussed are Malapeng, the citrus growers' association, GLOBALG.A.P.,

and the South African state. The relationship between these actors can be visually conceptualised as is done in figure 2.

## MACRO FIELD

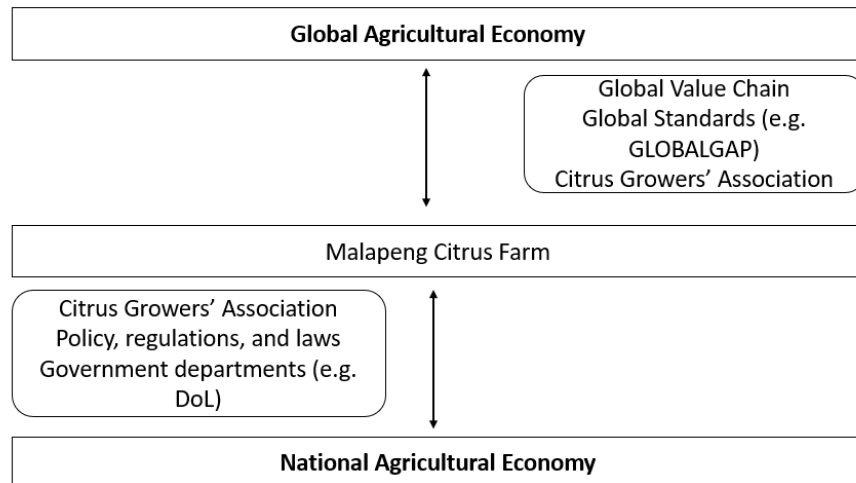


Figure 2: Macro-field<sup>23</sup>

The citrus is produced by Malapeng across three different properties in the Mookgopong area. The 'main' farm (where the offices and farmstead are located) also has a private packhouse where the fruit is sorted and packed. The fruit is sorted according to quality and approved for export or for local markets. This is the first value addition that the citrus undergoes and shortens the value chain as the sorting and packing is not outsourced. Malapeng hires trucks to transport the fruit either to the harbour or local markets, depending on the quality of the fruit.

Fruit that is of export quality is sent directly to the harbour (specifically the Durban port), where it is exported under a wholesale exporting agent. When the fruit arrives at the harbour, it is placed in cold storage and inspected. Once the fruit is found to meet the government's minimum export standards, it is released from cold storage and transported. The citrus is

<sup>23</sup> I would like to acknowledge the role played by my supervisor, Safiyya Goga, in conceptualising and producing this diagram, which was presented at the following conference: Vermeulen, G. and Goga, S. Critical Food Studies (CFS) Virtual Humanities Conference on November 18, 2021. *Farm bank: Race and the production of authority and conflict on a Limpopo Citrus Farm*

exported under the brand of the exporter, who chooses who to sell to and where. Once the fruit arrives at the intended importer, it is inspected again. Thereafter it is received by the importer. The export agent pays Malapeng weekly during the picking season and can provide advanced payments before the season if needed, which is then subtracted from the weekly payments.

As far as possible, Malapeng sends their citrus to the market agent for export. According to the owner, they export to:

*“A variety of countries. We export [to] Canada, UK, European Union, both new and old. Russia, all the -stans<sup>24</sup>, Middle East, which includes Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait. India, Bangladesh, Thailand. Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, China. Malaysia, Singapore. Philippines”* (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 25 February 2021).

It must be noted that the countries that Malapeng export to change from year to year based on production factors such as the size and quality of the fruit. The export agent decides where to send the fruit based on market preferences (e.g., certain markets prefer smaller fruits or sweeter fruits). These production factors are influenced by the weather and rainfall (amongst others). Where they export to is also influenced by non-tariff barriers such as the import standards that each importer requires, this includes GLOBALG.A.P. as a basic requirement for export to the European Union (EU). These standards are linked to how the value chain is governed and shaped and require further discussion.

The Citrus Growers’ Association assists in gaining access to global markets. Although they do not have a specific ‘input,’ the nature of the GPN is shaped by their efforts. We must note the limited involvement of the state. Regulations such as the minimum export requirements are decided by the state, and they assist in inspecting the fruit at the harbour. This limited involvement of the South African state and the reliance of producers on the CGA is worth discussing, as it illustrates a larger trend of state withdrawal from the production network.

*The South African State: Citrus Growers Association*

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<sup>24</sup> The owner is referring to Central Asian states, which include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan (amongst others).

As discussed in Chapter Two: Literature Review, the 1937 Marketing Act allowed for the creation of a Citrus board. During this time, all citrus was exported through a single agent, and was heavily reliant on the state. The control boards were paid 'administrative' levies as well as 'special' levies which were used to fund the operation of the control boards (Treurnicht 1979: 16). However, in 1996 new legislation on marketing was passed, and "exports were liberalised and growers were now in a position to choose an independent exporter" (Mather 2003: 4). Shortly after, in 1997, the Citrus Growers' Association was established. The roles of the CGA are: "Providing the industry with access to global markets, optimising cost-effective production of quality fruit, continual commitment to research, development and communication with all stakeholders, and caring for the environment and the community within which we operate." (CGA n.d).

The owner of Malapeng described the role of the CGA within the industry as:

*"I think... one of the reasons why [the] citrus industry has been one of the more successful [agricultural industries in South Africa] is that we have very strong growers' association. A lot of their time [and] money goes into the technique, also ensuring that your varieties of everything on a technical basis that there's investment, that there's research done into what is relevant to our industry, and we all contribute to that and then they take that money and that it's given to a research institute, which we have, and obviously the universities which we also support. So that that's the main focus of them, but there was still a lot of what they call markets. They think they do empowerment projects. A lot of their focus [is] also market access, so it's basically two pronged, it's making sure that we maintain access to markets, and then obviously we gain access to other markets. The one thing about the export industry is that I don't decide alright, I want to send oranges to Japan, just load them on a boat and send them to Japan. There is a huge amount of phytosanitary protocols, there's all of that which has to be negotiated, and even though that's a governmental function, they have to be supported. So, if you want to go to, say, Japan says but you've got this moth, then you've got to provide scientific evidence that it's not a danger for them. The government doesn't have the capacity to do that so then growers association goes and does all the research and gives that information to the government and says, no, it's not a threat. And the government presents that to the Japanese or whoever. And that's the function [of the Citrus Growers Association]. So that's what's why I say that the citrus association and a lot of other*

*industries don't have that, and as a result, they flounder. So, you need a very strong, technical and political support in order to maintain your export markets.”* (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 25 February 2021).

The following chapter will further illustrate the owner’s attitude to the role of the state. The state is seen as an external entity that should not encroach on the owner’s authority on his farm. He sees the government’s role as limited to infrastructure and providing healthcare and education. This theme recurs in the industry as a whole, with the CGA replacing key government functions such as ensuring access to markets and conducting research for the betterment of the industry. The CGA has gone as far as to propose a ‘South African Citrus Rail’ to improve the logistical capacity of the citrus sector in South Africa in light of the worsening roads in Limpopo. The CGA signed a memorandum of agreement with the Limpopo Department of Roads and Transport and Transnet Freight Rail in 2011 (CGA 2011: 13). The project seems to have stalled, but it is worth noting the conceptualisation of the CGA as taking over where government capacity is lacking. The owner again mentions this at a later stage during his interview: that government capacity is lacking and therefore the CGA steps in.

The CGA and its takeover of previous government responsibilities needs to be understood in the context of neoliberalism and the global deregulation of markets. This was not a ‘hostile takeover,’ but rather a direct response to government withdrawing from the South African industry. It would not be accurate to conceptualise the state as a passive agent in this process. Rather, the state created a facilitative environment for the CGA to take up these roles and actively created the legal frameworks required to ensure the success of the CGA. Agricultural statutory levies were paid to agricultural boards pre-1997.<sup>25</sup> As of 1997, these levies are paid to and administered by the CGA. The government of the day helped move the funds to the growers’ association to administer (National Agricultural Marketing Council 2010: 5-6).

This is a clear indication that the democratic government actively outsourced these duties as it pushed to create a deregulated market in South Africa. The outsourcing of government oversight is not limited to the roles the CGA fulfil and is not unique to South Africa. As the following section will illustrate, the role of the CGA is but an example of a larger trend of

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<sup>25</sup> The Marketing of Agricultural Products Act, No. 47 of 1996 came into effect in January 1997 and marked the official date of ‘deregulation’ of the agricultural industry.

outsourcing globally which has led to a failure to regulate the rights and protections of farm labourers and has directly enabled the structure of the field we noted on Malapeng in the previous chapter.

#### *Governance in the Global Production Network*

Mayer and Phillips (2017) extensively discuss the outsourcing of governance in global value chains. The arguments they make rely on a typology of forms of government that are usually required in markets: facilitative governance, regulatory governance, and distributive governance (Mayer & Phillips 2017: 135). Several key points in their paper are relevant to this chapter. Mayer and Phillips argue that states are active agents in the creation of a world where GPNs can flourish. Furthermore, the authors illustrate that states have actively outsourced or delegated regulatory governance to private actors (*ibid.*: 136-137). Although this is often attributed to a lack of regulatory ability by the state or a natural outcome of globalisation, this is not the sole explanation. Beyond these explanations the authors illustrate that especially developing countries are attempting to attract foreign investment and increase exports and therefore aim to be a 'low cost' point in the GPN (Mayer and Phillips 2017: 143–44). The practical results of this process include the limiting of regulatory costs for producers, keeping wages internationally 'competitive', and limiting workers' organisation. Enforcement mechanisms that are supposed to protect workers are often underdeveloped, or simply not implemented, and national policies often reflect the practice of outsourcing (*ibid.*).

This argument seems to be applicable to the case of South Africa. Although the agricultural minimum wage has recently been increased to be on par with the national minimum wage, it has historically been kept lower precisely to ensure globally competitive wages. Note that 'globally competitive,' in this case, refers to lower wages. This can be interpreted as an attempt to be a low-cost point in the relevant GPN. If one considers whether or not South African national policy reflects the practice of outsourcing and facilitating foreign investment, one need only to look at the article by Alford and Phillips (2018) in which they illustrate how the South African government purposefully outsourced the regulation of GPNs of South African fruit markets to private actors.

The article specifically looks at labour standards in South Africa and illustrates that South Africa has a unique model of neoliberalism where state-based regulation is layered over private standards (Alford & Phillips 2018: 106). This arrangement is complicated by the state having a lack of enforcement capacity. This lack of capacity is not the sole reason for the delegation, as illustrated by Mayer and Phillips. Ultimately this leads to the state creating regulatory frameworks, the enforcement of which is left to private entities (such as the ethical auditing done by GLOBALG.A.P.), who also cannot effectively enforce the regulations. When asked about GLOBALG.A.P., the owner of Malapeng echoes this sentiment, stating that:

*“I think the idea of systems like GLOBALG.A.P. and ethical trading and all these things, the idea is great, but unfortunately, it has become just another barrier to entry for a person, or another way or another cost in the chain, which doesn't really add value. So, I think systems like GLOBALG.A.P. what they are trying to do is wonderful. **But I must admit, I'm a little bit cynical because I maybe I've seen what people in the industry get away with and effectively, it's maybe the policing of it or in any system like that. You can have the best system in the world, but the people that have to implement it, the farm level hasn't bought into the system, I mean truly bought into the system. If they just see it as a cost and another hoop [to jump through], then they have no respect for it and then they're not going to comply truly with the system. So, their files will all be in place, pieces of paper will be stamped, all of that, but the reality is you [have to] live it.”** (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 25 February 2021).*

Elsewhere in this interview, the owner points out that GLOBALG.A.P. is just enforcing pre-existing South African laws. Several things become clear from this. Firstly, there has been a purposeful outsourcing of regulation by the South African government to private entities while the actual regulations are created by the state. Secondly, this arrangement has led to ineffective governance in the GPN and therefore the increased precariousness of farm labourers. The owner of Malapeng clearly recognises the bureaucratic nature of GLOBALG.A.P. and agrees that as long as the necessary paperwork is in order, one could get away with almost anything. GLOBALG.A.P. certification can therefore be read as a symbolic means to legitimation in the GPN. The certification is essential to access essential markets, not necessarily the requirements that are listed as essential to attain said certification. I would remind the reader of previous discussions of legitimate discourse. In this context

GLOBALG.A.P. certification provides Malapeng with the means to legitimately participate in the GPN. However, this certification is arbitrary and mostly symbolic in nature.

In his discussion of SIZA<sup>26</sup>, Swanepoel (2017: 306) argues that while the auditing done by SIZA might have improved the material wellbeing of workers, it does not empower them. This seems to be similar in the case of GLOBALG.A.P., as the problems workers face relating to livelihood strategies and relationships of power that are discussed in Chapter Six: Farm Bank cannot be addressed by GLOBALG.A.P.. Ethical auditing, such as GLOBALG.A.P., is closely connected to the managerial hierarchy of power that is becoming more entrenched on Malapeng. It is not surprising that ethical audits have been accused of “advancing and entrenching neoliberal capitalism” (Cross 2011 quoted in Swanepoel 2017). GLOBALG.A.P. therefore provides the owner with language and legitimacy both in the global field of power his farm is situated in, and the internal field at Malapeng by legitimising his managerial practices. Furthermore, Swanepoel argues that the “labour arrangements that auditors encounter on farms are embedded in how farm workers and farmers perceive and situate themselves within a labour hierarchy that has been deeply shaped by apartheid and colonialism, as well as by the more recent shift to a neoliberal, deregulated market” (Swanepoel 2017: 303).

Barrientos and Smith (2007) came to similar conclusions in their research about global ethical trade practices. Their research found that ethical trade initiatives are seen as technical tools akin to other technical standards that producers must comply with (Barrientos & Smith 2007: 725). These standards are seen as a merely technical requirement relating to a disembodied production input called ‘labour,’ rather than as relating to real workers and their wellbeing. The authors write that: “Codes constitute outcome standards passed down from buyers or are viewed as part of the prerogative of management which, often from a paternalist perspective, ‘knows’ what is in the best interests of its workers. They are rarely viewed as a means of providing workers with agency or empowering them to access or collectively negotiate their rights.” (Barrientos & Smith 2007: 725). The findings in the study are paint a complex picture of the impact of ethical codes on workers. It finds that the benefits of codes are more closely related to outcomes standards, rather than the rights of workers. The

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<sup>26</sup> SIZA is a South African ethical auditing scheme that Malapeng is currently not participating in.

authors argue that this can be attributed to the framing of codes as technical compliance tools, rather than a real commitment to the wellbeing of their workers (*ibid.*:727).

A salient point that the Barrientos and Smith (2007: 726) relates to the engagement of workers in these codes. They found that examples where codes are more technocratic (as discussed above) tended to have low engagement with civil society and workers, as opposed to examples of good practice where companies were specifically interested in the wellbeing of workers and therefore engaged with civil society and the workers to move beyond codes as merely a technical tool. The disengagement of workers is illustrated by “limited awareness among workers about codes of labour practice” (*ibid.*). Throughout the course of the interviews on Malapeng a general lack of knowledge about ethical codes such as GLOBALG.A.P. was apparent. The participants who did have knowledge about GLOBALG.A.P. knew more about the technical requirements - Such as phytosanitary regulations and maximum residue levels (MRL) - than the requirements around labour. Furthermore, the general language around labour requirements referred to formal health and safety rather than the material wellbeing of workers. Elsewhere in his interview, the owner insists that it is ‘good business practices’ that ensures that he does not mistreat his workers. The language used here is telling of the owner’s attitude towards compliance: he uses technocratic language that clearly aligns with the conception of labour codes as merely technocratic tools, rather than focus on the genuine wellbeing of the workers at Malapeng. Furthermore, this is an implicit admission that it is not the regulations nor the enforcement of the codes that have impacted the workers. Rather, it is his own ‘good practice’. This aligns with Alford and Phillips (2018), who illustrated the lack protection afforded to workers due to the practice of outsourcing that is pursued by the South African government. It therefore becomes clear that there is a lack of effective governance (whether private or public) in the citrus GPN. This vacuum allows for the continued re-production of domestic governance on Malapeng (as discussed in the following chapter).

Distelhorst *et al* (2015) discuss what makes for effective regulation of labour practices in GPNs. They find that the most reliable indicator is national context, not “repeated audits, capability building, or supply chain power” (*ibid.*: 1). Within the national context, there are two key dimensions that serve as predictors for labour code compliance: the strength of regulatory institutions and the robustness of civil society. These findings are in line with what

this chapter has discussed. Here it essential to note that the strength of regulatory institutions refers to compliance enforcement and the risk of punitive measures for non-compliance (Distelhorst *et al* 2015: 12).

This research suggests that is not an inherent feature of the GPN that is resulting in workers in the South African agricultural sector being exploited. Rather, it might be a direct effect of the outsourcing of regulation by the state. By outsourcing the regulation rather than improving its own enforcement capacity the South African state is ensuring a lack of protection for workers. Beyond this, civil society is a second key indicator for compliance. In the case of Malapeng there was a pronounced lack of trade unions or other worker's associations. During my observation it was made clear to me that joining a union results in being terminated. Although there is no empirical evidence for this, the general sentiment might be instrumental in explaining the distinct lack of a union presence.

There are two key (and related) conclusions that can be reached from this section. Firstly, as the state has withdrawn from the governance of the GPN, private actors and certification standards, such as GLOBALG.A.P., have taken up the responsibility of governing the production networks. Secondly, this form of governance is technical in nature and while it often discursively recognises the need to protect labourers, it does not do so in practice. I would argue that legitimate discourses, in the Bourdieusian sense, are being created and reproduced to neutralise the power inequalities that are apparent in this field. We see the use of technical and neutral language that attempts to naturalise and depoliticise the power relations in the field. This, in turn, has created a discursive framework for the owner of Malapeng to rely on to legitimise the forms of relationality that is reproduced on Malapeng<sup>27</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter I have discussed the Global Production Network that Malapeng is situated in, as well as how that impacts the lived experiences of labourers. The chapter illustrates that the GPN is primarily governed by private entities such GLOBALG.A.P. and the CGA. This is due to the deliberate outsourcing of regulatory tasks by the South African state. Although South Africa has robust labour laws meant to protect workers, the outsourcing of the enforcement of these regulations means that the workers remain unprotected and are at the mercy of their

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<sup>27</sup> As noted in the second section of chapter six: *Precarious Livelihoods: Changing Strategies and Relationships*.

employers. We can conclude then that it is the structure of the larger field in which Malapeng is situated in that enables the power dynamics that we see in Chapter Six: Farm Bank in various ways.

The following chapter discusses the micro-field that is found on Malapeng and illustrates how the larger context that has been set out in this chapter is translated to Malapeng.

## Chapter 6: Farm Bank

### *Introduction*

In this chapter I aim to answer the third sub-question as discussed in the introductory chapter, namely: How do we understand farmworkers' lives in relation to various other actors in the field of agricultural food production. This includes farm management (black and white), farm owners and other farmworkers such as seasonal labourers with whom they compete for jobs and whose lives and livelihoods are arguably even more precarious. I do this by looking at the so-called 'farm bank' which acts as a tangible expression of how different forms of capital is organised on Malapeng.

The power struggles (between the farm bank committee and members in general, and between individual committee members and specific members) clearly expresses how individuals use their position in the field to shape the behaviour of others and ensure their own security and stability. A key factor in this struggle is access to capital. As permanent workers are paid close to minimum wage, and nowhere near a living wage, they need to turn to other livelihood strategies to ensure that their needs are met. However, almost all other livelihood strategies have been banned and restricted. Workers do have the option of high-interest loans from the nearby town, but this is considered dangerous and generally avoided. That leaves most of them with one loan option in case of emergencies: farm bank.

The following section discusses the restriction of livelihood strategies and how the more neoliberal, managerial relationship further contributes to the precarious lives that the workers on Malapeng live. The section thereafter looks at the structure of farm bank and how it was founded. The section establishes that the conceptualisation of farm bank as outside of the official structures of the farm while still being administered by official management is an expression of the variable structure of the field of power on Malapeng. The fourth section discusses the relationship between two permanent workers, Dineo and John<sup>28</sup>, and how farm bank is being used in their power struggle. The final section summarises the conclusions this chapter reached that are important for the rest of the dissertation.

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<sup>28</sup> The names of all participants have been changed. However, details that are important to effective analysis (such as race and gender) have been left unchanged.

The findings of this chapter largely agree with what Bolt (2015) found in his research on what he calls Grootplaas. Bolt dedicates a chapter to discussing the relationship between traditional paternalism and neo-liberalism in contemporary farms in Limpopo. Bolt argues that “contrasting visions and interpretations of white agriculture are emphasised and de-emphasised strategically by particular farmers and employees” (Bolt 2015: 161)<sup>29</sup>. In his chapter dedicated to this topic, Bolt discusses the rivalry between the two most senior workers on Grootplaas as each of them align to one of the styles he discusses (paternalism and managerialism). This chapter takes a similar approach by looking at the rivalry between two workers who are strategically accumulating different forms of symbolic capital more or less based on the competing styles of management. Like Grootplaas, Malapeng is indeed caught between these two competing approaches to the maintenance of labour hierarchies. This impacts how key agents in the field conceptualise and understand the field. At its core this is a struggle around symbolic capital: which other (competing) forms of capital are being recognised as valuable by the actors at Malapeng, and how does this shape the behaviour of these actors?

#### *Precarious Livelihoods: Changing Strategies and Relationships*

The lives of the permanent workers on Malapeng encapsulate the precariousness that was set out in previous chapters. However, many workers consider themselves better off at Malapeng compared to the surrounding farms. Malapeng only employs South African workers (this policy is followed for both permanent workers and seasonal/casual workers), so the vulnerability that is associated with migrant labourers from Zimbabwe in this area does not necessarily apply to them (see Bolt 2015 & Rutherford 2001 for complete discussions around Zimbabwean farm labourers both in Zimbabwe and South Africa). Almost all the workers interviewed agreed that they are either not earning a fair wage, or not earning enough to support their families. A notable exception answered the question by comparing to other farms: “Yeah. Compared to the other farms it is a fair salary.” (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 20 March 2021). There is a consensus that even if the wage is ‘fair’, it is not enough. The owner seems to be aware of this, as we can see from the following quote:

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<sup>29</sup> This chapter will use the terms managerialism and paternalism throughout to refer to these competing styles of management.

*“I think in terms of the industry, we are paying a fair wage. What is a fair wage? Answer that question. What is a living wage? Is this, what is your expectations? So, I mean, if I could pay my people more in terms of the business, could afford to pay more, I think I would, but that's a double-edged sword as well. If I pay people more, then they have to give me that value as well... I don't know how, you know, some of the staff survive on the salaries that they earn. But in terms of the area, we pretty much above average in terms of what the area pays, but I think we would like to, but then the same stage, I am also running a business. **And I can't afford to pay people more than the value they give me.**”* (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 25 February 2021).

There are two main points from the quote that are notable. Firstly, the owner conceptually differentiates between ‘living’ wages and ‘fair’ wages. According to him, the wages they are paying is fair, *in the context of the industry*. This speaks to the worker who agrees that his wages are fair compared to surrounding farms. There is a notable disconnect between the assertion that the wages are fair, and the fact that he is not sure how some of his staff survives on the wages they earn. We must consider this within the context of the South African agricultural field as set out in the literature review. The workers on this farm, and indeed in the industry as a whole, are constrained by ‘rules’ of the agricultural field as they have developed over time. The rules of the field (which in this case works in the favour of the owner) limits the thinking around what is a fair wage by comparing it to the larger industry; an industry known for low wages, extensive exploitation, and illegal wage practices.

The second notable point of this quote is the language used, to quote Thompson on Bourdieu “there are no neutral words” (Bourdieu 1991b: 40). The owner speaks of the issue in terms of value, affordability, business. We see that the workers are valuable to the owner not by virtue of being people, but because of the value they add to the business. Furthermore, due to the owner’s accumulated capital (monetary and symbolic) he has the power to shape the field on Malapeng. His use of managerial language can be read as an attempt to exert symbolic authority by establishing legitimate language use on Malapeng. Although he wonders how some of his workers even manage to survive, he does not do anything to interfere or assist. As illustrated throughout this chapter, the owner equates assistance to interference, which he characterises as negative. Throughout the interview, the owner clearly delimits his own role within a managerial frame of reference, rather than a paternalistic one, which has

resulted in a supposed change of the relationship between the owner and the workers. This is not an accident, and the owner clearly frames it as a deliberate choice (see quote below). Note that the owner states that the choice was made because workers could not survive within this paternalistic system, as the money they were paid was not enough to keep their household running as workers were establishing homes outside of the farm. This reasoning is exceptionally interesting when considering the previous quote wherein he states that he is unsure how many of his employees survive on the wages they currently earn.

*“We, in the 80s when my dad did it, we moved from a very paternal system to more of an employee-employer relationship. The paternal system, which was the traditional system of agriculture was basically you fed all your workers, you would give, they would literally give mielie meal, they were given protein source of some sort, and they would give tobacco. And then at the end of the month would be given a small amount of money. But they were accommodated, when the child was sick or the employee was sick, they were driven to the hospitals, to a doctor, you know. They were fed twice a day at work, so food was made at work in the cafeteria, it was taken to them, they were fed. As the employees were moving off the farm and had homes, obviously that little bit of money that they were getting wasn't enough to keep the house going. So, we changed totally into a corp- normal<sup>30</sup>, normal employee relationship. They would get given a salary and then it was their choice. So, they would get paid, and they were given money, but they had to bring their own food to work, they, if they if they wanted to go and buy food for home, then they'd go buy food for home.”* (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 25 February 2021).

When prompted about this statement and the fact that the owner had previously mentioned that the state fails to govern people in the isolated rural areas, he continued:

*“You asked me, do we provide private health care? No. You find that you are assuming roles which is not your responsibility, and it's a slippery slope when you go down it. So, an exception, there is always going to be an exception here and there, and in those exceptionals [sic], you will take it. But ultimately, you're dealing with human beings, you're dealing with adults here, you are dealing with people that make their own decisions and you're not dealing*

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<sup>30</sup> Note the use of 'normal' in place of 'corporate'. This clearly illustrates that the owner is prioritising the managerial framework as the legitimate way of being on Malapeng.

*with children. So, I can't make a decision for you. OK, so the one greatest thing about this country is that it's still a democracy. I truly believe it's still a true democracy. You know, the government that's voted in is the government that the majority of people want in power. You know, there's not a whole bunch of fraud and things like that. **So, ultimately it is not my role. I'm an employer, I must keep my employees safe, I must keep them motivated and I must keep my business running, so that I can pay their salaries. And that's my responsibility as an employer. It's not my responsibility to provide health care, it's not my responsibility for education. That is a government's responsibility.** But my employees have the power, even though they are a small group of people, but they have the power to make changes to their own personal situation. And that is ultimately their decision. You want to help them, but change your own destiny, you know? By helping them, you basically just make it easier for them to change their own destiny. If the government is not working, maybe it's just my opinion that the government is not working. Maybe it is working, then it's fine. And maybe the healthcare is good enough, maybe their education is good enough. Just from my point of view it's not, but that doesn't mean it's the truth. That's just my opinion, understand? Don't take my opinion and force it on my employees. It's up to them and they make their decisions, and they are human beings and adults, they're not kids. I'm not going to treat them like kids.* (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 25 February 2021).

The two quotes taken together give us a clear image of how the owner views his relationship with the workers he employs. He acknowledges that he is unsure how some of them survive and is clearly aware of state failure to protect and support the employees on Malapeng. However, he has made sure to distance himself from these issues by framing it as a managerial (neoliberal) relationship. Notably he segues from workers making their own destinies to the responsibility of government, suggesting that the workers cannot 'take care of themselves' but handing the responsibility to the state. By taking a distinctly managerial stance that places the individual 'in charge of their destinies' and ending his responsibility at paying a salary the employees are left in a position where nobody is concerned for their welfare<sup>31</sup>. What is suggested in the literature by Devereux (2020) is therefore confirmed here. The workers are facing new forms of vulnerability by virtue of the changing relationship between them and the farm owner. Additionally, the owner considers any 'interference' in the lives of his

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<sup>31</sup> The failure of the state to protect the workers is discussed in chapter five: Global Value Chains.

workers to be infantilising and ultimately bad for them. We see this especially in the later part of the quote where he states that the failure of the state to protect the workers is just his opinion (and should not be forced on his employees) and his direct assertion that he will not treat his workers like children.

It must be noted, however, that the owner is merely emphasizing his favoured framing of the relationship between himself and the workers of Malapeng. He strategically weaponizes the concept of democracy to distance himself from responsibility for the workers he employs. The onus is placed on the state and the failure of the state to provide basic services such as education. Further than that, the responsibility is placed on the workers themselves, for voting for the ANC government. The owner goes through great pains to use neutral, scientific (economic) language in an attempt to normalise and naturalise the difference between himself and his employees. This phenomenon is discussed by Bourdieu when he reflects on the creation and constitution of classes in *Description and Prescription* (Bourdieu 1991a). Bourdieu argues that the description and construction of classes or groups can easily become self-fulfilling prophecies or incite the dominated class into action against the description of them. Of particular interest is the language used by the elites of the given field:

*“Having an interest in leaving things as they are, they attempt to undermine politics in a depoliticized political discourse, produced through a process of neutralization or, even better, of negation, which seeks to restore the doxa to its original state of innocence and which, being oriented towards the naturalization of the social order, always borrows the language of nature... This politically unmarked political language is characterized by a rhetoric of impartiality, marked by the effects of symmetry, balance, the golden mean, and sustained by an ethos of propriety and decency, exemplified by the avoidance of the most violent polemical forms, by discretion, an avowed respect for adversaries, in short, everything which expresses the negation of political struggle as struggle. This strategy of (ethical) neutrality is naturally accomplished in the rhetoric of scientificity” (Bourdieu 1991a: 131–32)*

We see then, in the language of the owner, the attempt to naturalise and obscure the political nature of the ‘employee’ (as a ‘class’) and the difference between himself and the labourers on Malapeng. Furthermore, by framing it as a product of economics and democracy – natural forces out of his control – he further hides his own role in creating and maintaining the hierarchies on Malapeng, including the category of farm labourers. Bourdieu argues that the

naming and description of this class becomes a prediction of sorts, with the owner symbolically designating what and how his employees should be – not as a political action but a natural way of being. We see this symbolic violence extended when the owner discusses the lack of (legitimate) cultural capital that the labourers possess:

*“The quality of education they [the government] provided the youth is not great, but youth are coming to you, educated but not really employable because they're not educated and don't have computer skills, all these things. So that impacts my ability to uplift people, because you've effectively got to retrain them from the beginning.... **So, on all levels, the government's lack of capacity, impacts on us. And as a result, because it's more expensive, more difficult to do business, obviously you're less inclined to invest in the business.**”*  
(Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 25 February 2021)

Here the reader must be reminded of the owner's previous quote wherein he stated that higher wages need to correlate to higher value added to the business. Computer skills have no practical value for the majority of the farm labourers who engage in 'menial' labour. Therefore, the only real loss of profits is symbolic in nature. The owner is essentially justifying the distribution of power on Malapeng as something natural and self-evident due to a lack of 'essential skills,' without acknowledging that it is an arbitrary requirement based on the actual needs of Malapeng. Furthermore, these skills are virtually unattainable by his employees. He does offer to send some to training, but this is mediated through his own will and therefore solidifies his superior position in the field of Malapeng. This logic contributes to the limited livelihoods of the labourers on Malapeng and cannot be interpreted as anything but symbolic power. The power, and in fact violence, being perpetrated by the owner is being misrecognised as such, as we can infer from various labourers boasting about their own distinction when they have a higher level of cultural capital (e.g., the ability to speak and write English or use computers) than their peers. There is a naturalisation of the disparities and complicity in sustaining the hierarchy on Malapeng that Bourdieu defined as integral to symbolic violence.

As another way of restricting of the livelihood strategies of the labourers on Malapeng, the owner has banned the buying and selling of all goods if not done through officially sanctioned farm shop. The farm shop is 'rented' to one of the labourers who has an exclusive mandate to sell necessary items on Malapeng. She does provide some credit for those purchasing from

her store, but several participants confided in me that they only bought from the shop in cases of emergency as the goods being sold are considered to be overpriced. The shop is not a space through which other workers can sell their own goods.

Workers are not allowed to trade amongst themselves to earn extra income. However, it is unclear how successfully this rule is enforced. During my time on Malapeng some alluded that informal shops are set up during the picking season, whereas others denied the existence of any such shops. One can attribute this 'inconsistency' as the process of self-censorship Bourdieu discusses, implying that the information was withheld from me by some because they were either unsure how the information would be received or that they did not trust me enough to not report the existence of any 'illegitimate' shops. An incredibly important point to note is that the discussion around *ad hoc* buying and selling was the only time a labourer explicitly mentioned race in an interview: "If we do that, we just keep it secret because we know that we are black. We have to protect each other. So, we just keep quiet" (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 24 February 2021).

The labourers are clearly aware of the racialised nature of the hierarchy on Malapeng. There is a distinction being made between 'us' versus 'them,' the nature of which is left vague and undefined for the majority of the time. However, in this instance the difference between the labourers and the management is conceptualised according to race. One can attribute the conspicuous absence of race from the conversation in a very racialised context (as set out in the literature review) to euphemising and self-censorship based on what is considered sacred on Malapeng. We see here the owner's symbolic and discursive dominance, as he has worked towards legitimate discourse on Malapeng being centred around managerial ways of thinking as opposed to paternalistic and racialised ways. Additionally, my own positionality as a white researcher may have contributed to the reluctance of the participants to discuss race with me. I am firmly positioned in a relatively more privileged position on Malapeng due to my race and language. As such, participants' awareness of my position may have contributed to the level of self-censorship and euphemising.

We also see that the workers are clearly affected by this particular restriction, as one participant made clear:

*“Yeah, yeah, it's more difficult because I take care [of] my home. My house now is suffering. I don't have enough money. You see, sometimes the guys, if you want the money was coming to me to say no, we want to borrow some money. Then I give them. The end of the month they pay me”* (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 27 March 2021).

This participant used to sell airtime, loose draws (single cigarettes) and provided small loans to those who needed it. He makes it clear that if caught selling anything, you will be fired. When asked how he is compensating for this shortfall, the worker says that he is just saving as much as he can. The topic of workers selling goods among themselves came up in the interview with the owner as well, when asked about the ban he explains:

*“It relates to conflicts in the workplace. Because what was happening was, every farm would have one or two little spaza shops. And then one worker would start a shop and maybe a bit more entrepreneurial and they would sell stuff, but invariably it would be on credit. And then the end of the month would come and one of the employees couldn't pay the money to fully pay the money and then there's conflict at work, because now there's unhappiness between two employees, for a matter which is totally unrelated to their work, since it's a private matter and we got to an extreme where we had one employee who was in a supervisory role and despite a direct order the person made a decision which was not based on what was best in the company's interest, or indeed the employee's interests; but ultimately her interests. Because she was the spaza shop [owner] and it would have involved that the employees – it was casual workers – that would lose hours that weren't going to work certain hours. And she was fearful that by doing that, they wouldn't be able to pay her debt back. So, she made a decision which ultimately cost the business a lot of money. And so, you know, I think that was that was sort of the conflict and everything and that that was just the last straw. So, people selling invariably; selling equals debt, debt equals conflict. That's just the way it is. That's what it always... So that's why we don't allow them to sell anything other than obviously [the worker] who specifically has got the shop. I mean, that's the function, she used to work for us. She's taken over the shop, that's her function, that's her job. Well not her job, her, it's her business.”* (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 25 February 2021).

When a senior manager is asked about the ban on selling goods amongst workers, they also mention the senior worker that the owner brought up, only the real issue, according to the manager, is that the worker had been selling alcohol and wanted to keep selling after her

dismissal. The language and sentiments that are evident in his answer speaks again to his managerial mindset; decisions need to align with what is best for the business. No mention is made of the fact that workers are far away from the closest stores or the fact that their wages are, by his own admission, not living wages. Furthermore, the assertion that selling amongst themselves equals debt is re-contextualised when we remember that there are those who avoid buying from the farm shop unless they need to buy on credit, and therefore create debt.

In addition to this, workers are not allowed to keep livestock. A similar reason to the other restrictions is given, the owner believes that the livestock would become his responsibility and he would rather avoid that conflict, as it is unclear to him who would inoculate, take care of, and medicate potentially ill animals. It is interesting, however, that one of the senior (white) managers who lives on the property owns several sheep that he keeps in a pen next to his house. It is made clear to me that he is completely responsible for his sheep. Often the sheep roam freely around the farm. The analytical significance of this is twofold. In the first place we see that it is not the presence of livestock that is inherently problematic to the owner: rather he does not trust the labourers to be responsible for their livestock. The owner trusts the senior manager to take care of the sheep and is not concerned about any potential conflict. We can interpret this as another instance of the infantilisation of the labourers by the owner. Secondly, we must acknowledge that this restriction of livelihood strategies is keenly felt by the workers due to the role of livestock as a store of wealth in black communities in South Africa.

On two of the four farms there are small food gardens run by the workers. In each case one specific person is in charge of the garden, but it seems everyone contributes by watering and adding seeds when possible. One of the gardeners mentioned that he does not sell any of the food that he grows. When people need food, they just come and take. These findings are all in line with what Wisborg *et al.* (2013: 20, 91–92) found in their studies about farm dwellers in Limpopo. In their research they found that sources of livelihood on farms generally include wages and grants, practices such as a food garden and keeping livestock, and access to other natural resources. However, they found that wages are the most important source of livelihood and that many farm dwellers had small gardens around where they live.

Wisborg *et al.* (2013: 94) remark that workers are reluctant to challenge the ways of the farm, even if they negatively affect them as they rely on a good relationship with the owner and

manager for many of their privileges. We can interpret this through a Bourdieusian lens by acknowledging that the labourers do not have the necessary capital, and therefore power, to meaningfully resist the power dynamics on Malapeng. Furthermore, it is important to recall Bourdieu's argument around symbolic violence and how it is impossible without the dominated being complicit in (mis)recognising the hierarchies they are embedded in as legitimate (as opposed to arbitrary) and their maintenance of said hierarchies.

A potential tool to bolster the bargaining strength of the workers would be a union, however, there are no unions present on Malapeng. According to a senior manager there are three workers who belong to a union. The reasons for not belonging to a union range from not needing one to never seeing one on Malapeng. In an informal discussion, a worker mentioned to me that in this area you will lose your job if you join a union. When probed as to whether or not that is the case on Malapeng, he merely shrugged. Whether this is true or not is not as important as the fact that the workers believe this to be true. One of the participants goes as far as suggesting that the department of labour is being bribed when they do their investigations:

*"Interviewer: Do you think the government is doing enough to make sure that you're OK?"*

*Participant 4: The government? People from the government, they came here a lot, and they don't even, nowadays they don't come. They don't do their job very well also.*

*Interviewer: So, when labour was still coming here, did they help then?*

*Participant 4: [No], no. Because it seemed like they were getting something at the office. I don't know what, but they just vanished." (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 20 March 2021).*

Other participants mention that they have seen the Department of Labour around, however all agree that the government could be doing more for them. Interestingly, when asked what the government could be doing most participants referred to the owner in their answer (either mediating through him or pointing out that the illegal workers in surrounding farms are the problem, their farmer follows the rules). The sentiments over the state and the unions give us further reason to believe that workers possibly feel as if their entire livelihood is

dependent on the owner. This attests to the power the owner holds, not only over the livelihoods of the workers, but also the legitimate discourse on Malapeng.

This section has discussed the restriction of livelihood strategies on Malapeng. The labourers receive a very low salary, are not permitted to trade goods amongst themselves, are discouraged from taking out loans, and are not permitted to keep livestock. There is virtually no union presence and a belief that the state will protect the interests of the owner, not the workers. Throughout the section I have established that the owner of Malapeng exerts power over access to livelihood strategies as well as legitimate discourse on the farm. This creates a situation where the workers are dependent on his goodwill and unable to address the struggles that they may face. We also see how the owner strategically emphasises managerial discourses and thereby obscures the paternalistic logic that is still present on Malapeng.

#### *Farm Bank: Structure and Origin*

The farm bank is an account that allows workers to take out loans in emergency situations. A committee is chosen by workers who then approve or deny loan applications from any permanent workers who put in a request. When asked about farm bank the owner explains:

*“I said to them, OK, I'll put in, it was a very small amount actually at that stage. It was 1000 or 2000 rand I gave it to them, and I said, now you're going to start your own bank system, too. If you want to loan money and things like that. When we started, it was more with the idea that if somebody had a personal crisis, like a funeral or something like that, then it was a place that they could go and lend money from. And that and then they would charge interest rates on that, and they decided how much where and what, how. It was all their decision. We administer for them, but it's not, nothing to do with us. And then they that's grown to, grown quite substantially over the years. But even that has become, became too small because the amounts of money that want to borrow” (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 25 February 2021)*

This is confirmed by a senior manager who states:

*“We have nothing to do with farm bank. It's an account that we started for them, for the workers, the permanents, the casuals do not take part in that. And then [Malapeng administration] manage[s] the admin side, but they've [the permanent workers] got all the*

*decisions and who gets how much and when and how it is allowed. I can't say anything about it" (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 18 March 2021).*

Although the farm bank is only for the permanent workers, and is run by them, they do not administer it. The payment of money from the farm bank to the worker and the repayments (expressed as a deduction on their monthly payslip) is managed by a member of management, who does all monthly payments. If a loan is approved for a worker, it is paid into their account by the member of management who administers salaries. The repayment instalments are subtracted directly from the worker's salary and paid into the farm bank account. It seems that the problems with repayment of loans are avoided this way.

Farm bank lies at the intersection between the formal and informal structures of Malapeng. The claim that farm bank has nothing to do with Malapeng gives us an insight of how the idea of the farm is being constructed by senior staff. Farm bank is relegated to the realm of the informal, and no mind is being paid to the ways in which farm bank interacts with the official structures of Malapeng. The owner takes credit for creating farm bank, and the farm administers it. Farm bank is also one of the few officially sanctioned routes to money on the farm (if there are others, I was not privy to that information). Farm bank could not exist or operate if not for the official structures of the farm; the formal structure of the farm both necessitates and enables farm bank.

The owner emphasises that he instructed the workers to start farm bank and provided the initial capital investment. However, the official farm structure is in control of the payments. The fact that the farm bank is administered for the workers speaks to an infantilisation of the staff. When the owner expands on why he started farm bank, we are again reminded of paternalistic rhetoric that the owner attempts to de-emphasise that is so common in this sector:

*"Interviewer: Can you expand a bit on the idea of loans and debt amongst the workers?"*

*Owner: I think it's my biggest concern about our workers and, you know, we see it, we see it. We aren't privy to their personal situations and things like that, but, you know, things happen. You know that a lot of our employees have got themselves caught in a debt trap. And generally, with, you know, we're not talking about commercial banks, you're talking about*

*loan sharks or high or high interest cost debtors that... And they find it very, very difficult to get themselves out of that trap. Not just because it's a trap and then it's expensive to pay off, but also because, this society is, but I don't think that it's unique to my workers, I think it's society's problem, that you desire, you want, it's easy to borrow money and you want the new shirt or a new pair of pants. Oh no, don't worry, we'll lend you the money and then they borrow the money and they [have to] pay it off. So, it's always been a concern for us that, that obviously debt gets expensive, it takes a huge amount of their salaries. One of the reasons we don't give, we don't give loans as the business is that what happens at the end of the month is obviously, they will say, OK, you want to borrow so much money, alright, so you're going to pay so much per month and 300% hunky dory. And the end of the month, you know, the bottom line is that you get, for argument's sake, five thousand or two thousand, three thousand rand. And then they look at that and they say, but I'm not being paid a fair wage for what I get done. But that's not their wage, their wage might be, two or three thousand more than that, but because they're paying off debts. So, it demotivates your staff terribly, because they don't think you're paying fairly for something because debt. And that's one of the main reasons, one of the reasons why we stopped that totally. One of the reasons why we did that as well was when somebody comes to you and says, I want to borrow money because my mother has died. I mean, this is an old, has your mother really died or your aunt or your sister or whatever? I don't know. And I don't want to play policeman things like that. Where if it's within the workforce generally they, because our workforce is large extent related, comes from the same [village]. They will know if a guy is bullshitting or not. And so obviously, the bullshitters now also don't get the money they want because they know they've been bullshitting. So, then they go to the loan sharks and those things, and then they get caught in that debt trap. And then another big problem is then they start drinking and it becomes a downward spiral. In the last, as you're aware, last three years, we retrenched quite a lot of workers, voluntary and otherwise. And a lot of those workers that have chosen retrenchment have been workers that have got themselves into a debt trap. And they were effectively at a point where they didn't feel it was worth their while working anymore because they were just working for their, their creditors. And that's a lot of them basically decided no, I'd rather not work. So, the motivation levels were gone because they were just working for, for their creditors. It's a percentage of your staff and I'd like to think the majority manage their money very well, and they've been saving and they're building houses and things like that.*

*Unfortunately, there's a percentage that don't.*" (Personal Interview, Mookgopong: 25 February 2021)

Note that the owner is placing the responsibility of debt on the spending habits of the labourers rather than the low wages that they receive and thereby obscuring his own role in the livelihood strategies on Malapeng. The owner does not lend money to workers at Malapeng as he sees potential conflict and frustration from workers. However, the way farm bank operates (repayments directly subtracted from the worker's salary) does not mitigate the problem of workers feeling that they are not being paid fairly when they are repaying debts. It merely shifts the blame from the owner to the farm bank committee and thereby obscures his responsibility. We can understand farm bank as an institutionalised form of symbolic violence: it is not recognised as violence and the owner does not have to rely on any direct threats of violence (or actualised violence) to exert his will; farm bank is constructed as a kindness (one that the workers can never repay). Farm bank is one of the few areas of legitimate access to money that the workers on Malapeng have as a direct consequence of the limiting of livelihoods by the owner and the institutional arrangements created by him to 'assist' workers. His power in the field becomes very clear when one acknowledges that, through the limiting of livelihood strategies and the creation of farm bank, the owner has created a situation where the labourers are effectively living off his goodwill, even if he obscures this and strategically separates himself from it.

#### *Dineo and John: Competing for Prestige*

The struggle between Dineo and John provides a snapshot of several key points that spring up around farm bank. Farm bank straddles the formal and informal structures of Malapeng and Dineo and John each represent the formal and informal, respectively (See figure 3 for a graphic representation). As the formal and informal structures compete different types of symbolic capital are accumulated by each of the two actors: Dineo represents the formal, corporate structures of the farm. She has influence through formal channels and proximity to the owner based on her education and literacy. One could argue that in the context of Malapeng she has access to relevant cultural capital. On the other hand, John represents the informal structures. As an older man serving on the farm bank committee, he has prestige and social capital amongst the workers that Dineo does not have the same access to. At the height of the struggle between the two during my fieldwork Dineo confided that John does

not like her. I prompted her, why did he not like her? She answered that she is young, and a woman. Her cousin had previously held an office position here on Malapeng, so they did not trust her. John went around challenging other workers, asking why they would listen to Dineo when she has not worked there for as long as them, when she is younger than them. Here we see John relying on connections based on his relationships with other workers, an easily identifiable use of social capital.

## MICRO FIELD

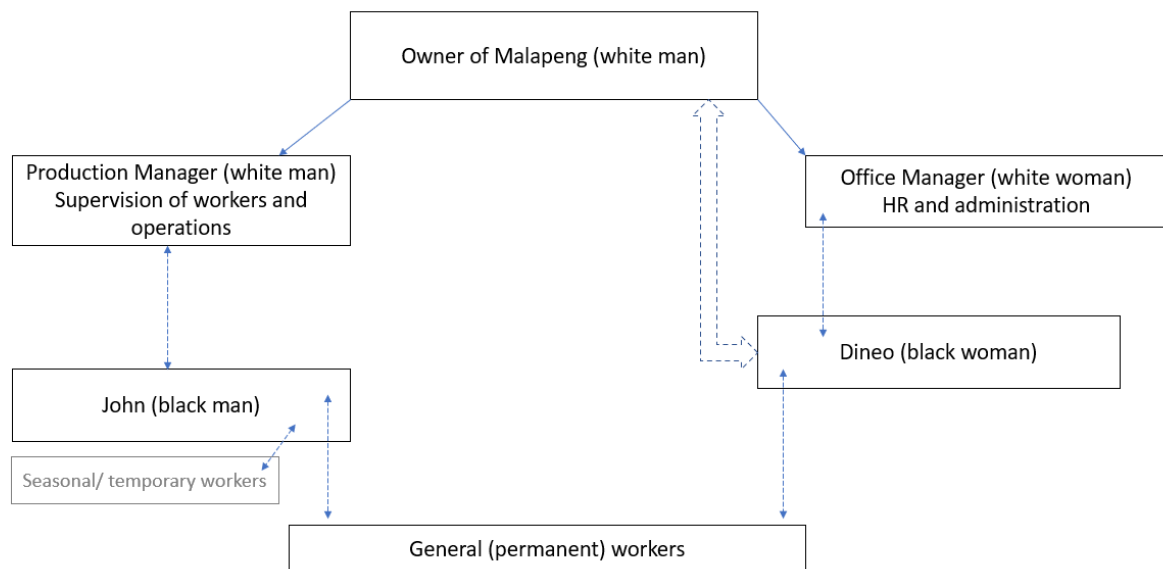


Figure 3: Micro field on Malapeng<sup>32</sup>

John used to be a manager on Malapeng. During my fieldwork he was just considered a senior general worker. I gathered that he had been demoted a few years back after several infractions considered as serious: using the farm's bakkie<sup>33</sup> (that he was allowed to use as a manager to travel between farms) and the provided diesel to make extra money (presumably giving lifts to other workers into town and back and charging for it) and committing fraud on the timesheets that he been responsible for (by means of falsifying signatures). Instead of being fired, John was demoted. The decision was made to demote him and freeze his yearly salary increase for a period due to his long service at the farm. We see here an example of

<sup>32</sup> I would like to acknowledge the role played by my supervisor, Safiyya Goga, in conceptualising and producing this diagram, which was presented at the following conference: Vermeulen, G. and Goga, S. Critical Food Studies (CFS) Virtual Humanities Conference on November 18, 2021. *Farm bank: Race and the production of authority and conflict on a Limpopo Citrus Farm*

<sup>33</sup> A two-seater truck with a cab used to transport workers and equipment. Certain senior level workers are allowed access to bakkies so that they can travel between the four properties of Malapeng.

'care' by the owner who makes a decision not based on what is 'best for the business' but rather based on John's reputation, his social capital. I encourage the reader to recall the strategic emphasis and de-emphasis of managerial versus paternalistic relations by the actors on Malapeng, as this example illustrates that tension.

During my fieldwork he was eligible for a salary increase and was seemingly trusted with more duties. During the picking season he would be a foreman and supervise the seasonal workers out in the orchards. During the off-season he was allowed access to a bakkie again and seemed to be in charge of several of the general workers. It is worth noting that the accusations of 'stealing' can be interpreted in a different light when we consider the types of interactions that are commonplace in the paternalist system that relies on goodwill. John was doling out favours with the means that came with his position of power. As very few of the workers on Malapeng have cars, access to a bakkie meant that John could gain favour by driving people around on weekends (albeit for a fee). During my fieldwork, timesheets were a persistent concern for management, to the point where certain workers could qualify for small bonuses if the timesheets that they were in charge of were completed on time. It is not difficult to see why the falsifying of signatures (and perhaps hours) and other benefits John provided could lead to accumulation of prestige via the social profits he was collecting.

John wears khakis, the way traditional farmers do, and insisted on speaking to me in Afrikaans. As Dineo claims proximity to the owner via managerial strategies, John attempts to claim proximity based on paternalistic strategies<sup>34</sup>. Dineo communicated with me in English. She frequently mentioned that her English had not been good when she started at the farm, but that she had practised and could now communicate comfortably. Dineo can also read and write effectively, perhaps because of the trade she had previously completed. In our conversations she takes pride in doing her work properly and being able to fill in paperwork the way the owner likes it. In one conversation she mentions that she used to be more of a manager, but she did not enjoy having to discipline others. Dineo is not officially a supervisor or a manager. However, she often does take on the role of one, another indication of the tension between the formal and informal structures on Malapeng. When the owner is busy

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<sup>34</sup> The reader should recall Bourdieu's discussion of the complicity of the dominated in symbolic violence. John participating in paternalistic strategies illustrates his recognition of their importance and the reproduction of the relationality that is created through paternalism.

or not around, she often has to 'check-up' on certain workers. As she travels between the different properties, she makes it clear that she is looking to see if all the work is done. She is often treated as a manager by other workers, even being called out during personal disputes (which she usually refers to an official manager). She goes as far as to tell me that the owner does not tell her what to do most days, he asks her what she is going to do. She is clearly fitting into a 'meritocratic' system that the owner is trying to strengthen. Her close association with the white senior staff comes with a level of prestige, and it clear why management wanted her to be my guide.

The division between Dineo and John becomes clear when we consider office space. Rutherford (2001: 79) discusses the use of access to different spaces as markers of hierarchy in his study of tobacco farms in Zimbabwe. Rutherford finds that only senior workers approach offices, and the different spaces that workers had access to indicated how close they were to the owner and other management. On Malapeng, the office is open to the workers. Most workers are able to come into the office to ask for clarification, access to keys they need, or other requests. However, these visits are always brief and uncomfortable. Dineo is an exception. She has a shelf full of files for the paperwork she must fill in. She has access to a computer in the office, one that only she uses. Dineo often spends hours in the office doing paperwork in the boardroom. This is a privilege that is exclusive to her.

When John needs to do paperwork, he does not sit inside the office. During my fieldwork John was given a list of seasonal workers from previous years and asked to phone each of them, seeing if they were available to work in the 2021 picking season. As John was familiar with the workers and would be the foreman he was chosen for the job (the office manager also mentioned that seasonal workers did not answer the phone when she was calling). While John worked on this, he sat at a table in the kitchen that adjoins the office. The kitchen is used as an entrance foyer to the office, and it significant that John works in this liminal space. The tension between the two can be viewed through the lens of the competing modes of management. John has accumulated symbolic capital within the paternalistic mode of management and relies on his long connection to the farm and his relationships (including with seasonal workers) to maintain a level of power. Parallel to this, Dineo is gaining prestige due to her proximity to the owner (both physically and symbolically) and has more to gain from the subversion of the paternalistic order. John does not have many strategic options left

to him. Dineo is married and lives with her husband, on a different farm than John. Furthermore, she is gaining informal favour among the workers by doing them small favours, such as transporting goods when she moves between the farms, similar to the types of favours that he was punished for. Many of the young workers grew up in same village as Dineo, so she is well protected socially. This indicates that Dineo is also accumulating prestige via the paternalistic mode of management. It is useful for the reader to recall the discussion on mediated paternalism. Dineo's position in the managerial frame of management is emphasised and publicly acknowledged, which, in turn, obscures her role in the paternalistic frame. As such, the tension between Dineo and John finds an outlet within the structure of farm bank.

During my fieldwork, farm bank unexpectedly became a very relevant issue to the workers of Malapeng. I was travelling with Dineo in her assigned bakkie, and everywhere she stopped people were speaking about farm bank. It was explained to me that the committee in charge of farm bank (several older men, including John) were acting unfairly and giving out money to certain people and excluding others. The issue is opaque to this day, with different stories depending on who you speak to. Some facts of the case, however, are clear. During my fieldwork, several people received 'pay-outs' from the farm bank, ostensibly due to the extra interest in the account. At a later stage, these pay-outs were declared to be loans that the committee had decided to give. Some claimed that the committee wanted to pay themselves and this was the ruse to achieve that. Whatever the source of the payments was, Dineo was not included. According to John, the payment to Dineo had been vetoed by another member of the committee. However, as we went around the next couple of days other committee members and several workers revealed that it had been John who was stopping Dineo from getting her share.

Dineo was told she did not qualify because she had not taken out a loan in 2020. When she pointed out that she had, in fact, taken out a loan from farm bank in 2020 she was told that the loan had been too small to qualify. During informal discussions, the committee is accused of 'apartheid' and 'corruption' – treating workers differently based on who they have a good relationship with. John has found a way to vent his frustrations through a legitimate channel on Malapeng. However, we must not mistake this as merely an individual acting out. Conceptualising his actions as those of just an individual reinforces the careful construction

of farm bank as outside the official structures of Malapeng, and therefore the role the owner plays in the strategies used by various actors in the field to gain power.

After several days of informal debates and discussion several non-committee members (including Dineo) took it on themselves to approach the administrative manager and ask that all payments be stopped until the conflict could be solved. The manager agreed to stop all loan payments (even though a loan had recently been approved). Farm bank's status as 'separate' from the farm is challenged here, as the decided course of action was to approach the official manager who was then swayed to freeze the farm bank. Interestingly, when this conflict was mentioned to the owner, he expressed disinterest and made clear that he did not want to hear anything about farm bank. The issue was resolved after my fieldwork had ended: a new committee was chosen, and the farm bank seems to be operating as before. It is analytically significant that the workers chose to approach the official administrator of farm bank when they faced difficulties, and that this manager 'chose' to stop all farm bank payments until she felt the issue had been resolved. We see here that the committee in charge of farm bank is not seen as the true authority. Rather, the official manager is. The owner makes a point of distancing himself from the happenings, thereby attempting to keep his power over the situation invisible.

This section has again reinforced the symbolic power of the owner of Malapeng by illustrating how his power is misrecognised and obscured. The rivalry between John and Dineo illustrates the strategic use of paternalistic or managerial discourses by actors on the farm based on their discursive needs. Dineo is framed as managerial and inside the official structures of Malapeng while her role in mediated paternalism is obscured. Conversely, John is framed as a relic of a paternalistic past, who was punished (but not fired) for participating in traditionally paternalistic rituals and remains dominant in the informal section of Malapeng. However, this obscures his access to formal structures of Malapeng, such as farm bank. By framing farm bank as informal the conflict seems to be informal rather than playing out in the obscured and de-emphasised (but still formal) structures of Malapeng.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter I have discussed the field on Malapeng in an attempt to understand how capital and power are arranged. The livelihoods of the labourers on Malapeng are precarious and

limited, and this is not an accident. The owner of Malapeng exerts both 'real' and symbolic power over the people he employs. He is able to dictate their actions as well as the discourse they feel comfortable engaging in. The owner has limited and restricted the livelihood strategies at the disposal of the labourers. Furthermore, he has created a legitimate route to monetary capital – farm bank – that he argues is separate from the formal structures of the farm; this despite several points of evidence that show how farm bank operates within the official structures of Malapeng. Although he strategically emphasises a managerial way of operating on Malapeng we see an underlying logic of paternalism in his actions and in the institutions of Malapeng. This strategy minimises and obscures the power he holds in the field of Malapeng, further enabling the symbolic power he exerts. His power over the livelihoods of his employees as well as the legitimate discourse (such as the understanding of farm bank as independent) is misrecognised as a natural way of being.

The discussion around the structure and origin of farm bank further emphasizes that the competing styles of maintaining labour hierarchies on Malapeng serve to hide the power the owner has in the field. By defining farm bank as separate from the formal structure of Malapeng rather than a paternalistic tool under his control he is able to externalise any responsibility that he might have towards the wellbeing of the employees of Malapeng as well as relegate power struggles to the realm of the private without acknowledging the substantial role he plays.

By looking at the rivalry between Dineo and John, as well as the role of farm bank, we can see an example of the actual hierarchy at play on Malapeng. Both Dineo and John are authoritative figures on Malapeng, albeit in different ways. The different types of capital that they each has collected more or less correlates to the competing styles of management as discussed in the chapter. Due to both styles being present and seen as more or less legitimate they cannot openly compete for dominance within the structures of Malapeng, be it formal or informal. As such, farm bank – a liminal institution – becomes a site of contestation. However, framing this as a conflict between two individuals would not adequately draw attention to the fact that the competition (and the form that it takes) has been made necessary and has been enabled by the structure of the field on Malapeng. Both Dineo and John are subject to severe limitations to their livelihoods and are aware of the precarious

nature of their lives on Malapeng. As such, both are using what capital they have in order to secure their own position which is made necessary by the uncertainty inherent in Malapeng.

The resolution of the contestation, which involved workers approaching a senior manager, serves to illustrate that the power dynamics of Malapeng are clear to those involved, even if it is not explicitly articulated. Farm bank is revealed to be under the purvey of the official manager, which, in turn, reveals the influence of formal farm structures on the personal lives of the labourers.

The following chapter summarises the main conclusions of this dissertation for the reader by looking at the sub-questions that were set out in Chapter One: Introduction.



## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### *Introduction*

In this final chapter I discuss the main arguments of the dissertation and highlight the most important points for the reader. It is useful here to return to the research question, sub questions, and aims as set out in the introduction, as this chapter will be organised around how these were addressed.

The research question that was investigated in this dissertation is:

*How can we read the lived experiences of South African farmworkers on a citrus farm in Limpopo within the broader field of national and global agricultural food production through which their lives and struggles are articulated?*

The sub-questions that were considered are:

1. How do we understand farmworkers' lives within the national agricultural economy which is engaged in various agricultural and land reform policies and programmes?
2. How do we understand farmworkers' lives within a broader global agricultural economy into which the citrus farm with which this project is concerned is incorporated?
3. How do we understand farmworkers' lives in relation to various other actors in the field of agricultural food production including farm management (black and white), farm owners and other farmworkers?

The aims of the dissertation were as follows:

1. To produce an understanding of the lives of farm workers within the national agricultural economy and the larger global agricultural economy within which they are incorporated.
2. To explore the lived experiences of the farm workers in relation to the decision-making and cost calculations that go into the production of citrus.
3. To understand the lives of farm workers in relation to the other actors that they encounter in the field of power within which they are incorporated.

In the following section, I will discuss sub-questions one and two. The section will clarify how these questions were addressed and the main findings that serve to answer them. Thereafter, I will discuss sub-question three and similarly draw on the main findings of this dissertation that serves to answer said question. The research aims will not be specifically discussed, as they are prevalent throughout every aspect of the dissertation. In the conclusionary section I will endeavour to address the principal question asked in the dissertation.

#### *Farm Workers' Lives within the National and Global Agricultural Economy*

In Chapter Five: Global Agricultural Integration I discussed the Global Production Network, which we have established as a global field, that Malapeng is situated in. This chapter illustrated that key state functions are being outsourced by the state in the wake of market liberalisation. At a national level, the Citrus Growers' Association has taken over the role of the apartheid era Citrus Boards, and now fulfil the duties that used to be under the purview of the state. At a global level, the state has allowed private regulatory bodies, such as GLOBALG.A.P., to act as the main enforcers of the labour legislation created by the state. However, GLOBALG.A.P. does not adequately fulfil this role of 'labour regulator.' Rather, it is a neoliberal institution that trusts farms to monitor and truthfully report the status of their labourers. This has created a situation in which the farm labourers are in a 'regulatory dead space,' where there is little to no oversight of the labour conditions in the South African agricultural industry.

What is essential to note from this chapter is not only does the global field structurally enable the conditions on Malapeng due to the regulatory dead space, but it also provides discursive tools for the owner of Malapeng to legitimise the managerial style of management with. His strategic attempts to minimise his own influence and power on Malapeng are supported by the legitimacy that is provided by symbolic tools such as GLOBALG.A.P. His preferred legitimate discourse is based on what is expected and rewarded in the larger field that shapes how he relates to those employed on Malapeng.

#### *Farm Worker's Lives in Relation to the Actors they Encounter*

This question was primarily addressed in Chapter Six: Farm Bank. In this chapter I detailed the ways in which the owner of Malapeng used his stores of capital to shape the field to his advantage. I found that the owner has limited the livelihood strategies of the labourers on

Malapeng and created a 'legitimate' route to access monetary capital which he calls Farm Bank. I illustrated how Farm Bank is a symbolically violent and paternalistic institution. However, due to the nature of symbolic power, it is not recognised as such. It is here that Bourdieu's concept of legitimate discourse became useful, as we recognised the strategic emphasising and de-emphasising of two distinct discourses – managerial and paternalistic – based on the strategic aims of the speaker.

The owner of Malapeng has symbolic dominance in this linguistic field, as he attempts to hide and minimise the power that he has over the labourers that he employs. His role in shaping their livelihoods is hidden away. Farm bank is an excellent example as we see how it is conceptually defined as separate and distinct from the official structures of Malapeng, even when it is clearly not separate as illustrated by its establishment and management. Furthermore, we see on Malapeng how legitimate discourses are reproduced by those with less symbolic capital. In the case of Dineo and John, each of them emphasises a specific discourse (managerial or paternalistic) in order to accumulate symbolic capital on Malapeng. The reader must keep in mind that neither of them rely entirely on one or the other discourse; they are merely emphasising the discourse that allows them to accumulate the most symbolic capital or prestige.

Superficially, the conflict between Dineo and John might seem like a personal conflict between the two individuals. However, through the Bourdieusian lens we can recognise that their conflict is embedded in strategies to accumulate capital, and therefore shaped by the field that they find themselves in. Furthermore, as the owner is the dominant actor in the field on Malapeng we can conclude that he has a real and material influence on how the field is shaped, and therefore how the 'game' is played. We therefore recognise the role he plays in shaping the relations between other actors on Malapeng.

In this chapter I illustrated and confirmed what has been argued in the literature: farm labourers are still in precarious positions and largely reliant – or subjected to – the (good)will of the owner of the farms on which they are employed.

### *Conclusion*

The material and symbolic circumstances of the actors on Malapeng are shaped by the global agricultural economy, and more specifically the citrus global production network that they

are incorporated into. The deregulation of the South African economy post-1994 has enabled a shift in the governance of Global Production Networks. As a result of this, the South African state has removed itself from the regulation of these GPNs. Although they create the legislative environment necessary to protect farm labourers, they outsource the enforcement of these measures to private actors, such as GLOBALG.A.P.. However, GLOBALG.A.P. does not have the capacity to adequately regulate the wellbeing and protection of the workers. The withdrawal of the state has also paved the way for organisations such as the CGA to take over the roles traditionally expected from the state. The end result of this withdrawal is that the labourers on Malapeng are not adequately protected by the state or any private actor and therefore left at the mercy of the farm owners.

On Malapeng, a relatively benign institution compared to those in the area according to the research participants, illustrates the practical results of how this GPN is governed. The owner has an overwhelming control over the lives and livelihoods of the labourers that he employs. Although his power is minimised it has a very real impact on the labourers and their wellbeing. The apartheid paternalism one expects to see on a farm in South Africa is obscured behind managerial discourses and transformed into new ways of relationality in the field but is still very much present on Malapeng.

This dissertation concludes that the global field that Malapeng is situated in practically and symbolically shapes the relations we see on Malapeng and enables the owner to strategically emphasise managerial relations that obscure his own power on Malapeng. The lived experiences of the farm labourers are on multiple levels shaped by the larger field that they are situated in. The final result is precarious livelihoods that are governed by unrecognised power and the absence of real regulatory protections.

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## Appendix A: University of Pretoria Ethical Approval



### Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotheo



29 January 2021

Dear Miss GM Vermeulen

<b>Project Title:</b>	The Effects of a Globalised Agricultural System on South African Farm Workers: A Political Ethnographic Exploration of Malapeng citrus farm in Limpopo.
<b>Researcher:</b>	Miss GM Vermeulen
<b>Supervisor(s):</b>	Mrs S Goga
<b>Department:</b>	Political Sciences
<b>Reference number:</b>	16108729 (HUM001/0920)
<b>Degree:</b>	Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 29 January 2021. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pikirayi'.

**Prof Innocent Pikirayi**  
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Studies and Research Ethics  
Faculty of Humanities  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotheo

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof I Pikirayi (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A Bizo; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Ms KT Govender; Andrew; Dr P Qubisa; Dr E Johnson; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noorik; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Rayburn; Prof M Soec; Prof E Tjalling; Prof V Thebe; Ms B Isebe; Ms D Mokalapa

## Appendix B: Interview Schedule for Group 1



### Interview Schedule for Group 1

- Where are you from?
- How many years have you been working here? When (how and why) did you come here to work?
- Where do you live on the farm? How many other workers live with you? Do you share a toilet/ bathroom/ kitchen? Do you have hot water?
- Where is your family? Do they live here with you? Are any family members involved in work on the farm?
- How often do you see your family? (if living elsewhere)
- Do you get paid weekly/ monthly for your work here at the farm? Do you think you are earning enough to look after yourself and your family? Are you able to send money home to your family? How often?
- Do your children go to school? Where do they go to school/work? What do your children want to do after school? What would you like them to do after they are done with school?
- How many hours of work do you do a day on the farm? Do you take breaks for breakfast / lunch? Do you typically cook your own food? Does the farmer ever provide meals or give you things to cook (meat, vegetables)?
- Are you able to keep your own animals here on the farm? How many/ what kinds of animals? Are you able to grow your own vegetables? Do you sometimes worry where your next meal is coming from?
- What would a typical day of working on the farm be like? (Can you 'walk me through' a typical day of work for you).

- Does the (nature of) the work change from one season to another? (Winter versus summer, etc). Do you get paid the same throughout the year or does the pay differ according to the season?
- Do you think you are earning a fair wage?
- Do you ever supplement your income through other means?
- Would you like to be able to do farming of some kind of your own? On your own plot of land?
- Where do you stay when you are not here on the farm?
- Do you know any workers on the farm from outside of South Africa? Where are they from? Do you interact with them much?
- Do you worry about losing your job? Why or why not?
- How often do you see [farm owner] Can/do you ever communicate directly with ?  
When the owner wants you / the farmworkers to do something, does he tell you directly or through someone else? Do you feel you are able to say you are unhappy about something, say about wages or working hours, to ?
- What kind of relationship do you and other farmworkers have with the farm managers? How do they treat you?
- Are you involved in any local organizations or workers' unions? When/ how did you become involved?
- Do you feel as if the state/government is doing enough to make sure you live a good life?
- Are farmworkers able to help one another if they are struggling with money or food?
- If you weren't a farmworker, what type of job would you ideally do?
- What do you know about GlobalG.A.P?

## Appendix C: Interview Schedule for Group 2



### Interview Schedule for Group 2

- How long has \_\_\_\_\_ been in existence? Can you tell me a little bit more about the history of the farm, who started it and when and how it's developed since then?
- How many years have you been in charge of the farm? How did that happen?
- Do you consider owning/ managing a farm to be similar to owning/ managing a business? Do you consider yourself to be a farmer? Or a businessman? Or a farm owner? Do you consider yourself to be a farmer (or remain a farmer) by choice?
- Have you studied any courses related to agriculture/ farming/ management of a farm?
- Do you keep close ties with other farmers/farm owners/ farm managers through associations and organizations? Can you tell me a bit about those associations/ organizations, and the ways in which they are valuable to you as a farmer/farm owner/ farm manager?
- Would you say that citrus farming is export driven? What are the implications of this for you in terms of prices of your product? How does production for an overseas market affect how you farm/produce citrus?
- Which countries do you export your citrus to? Do these change from year to year or do you consistently export to the same countries? What kinds of regulations are your citrus subjected to? Are these regulations set by individual countries to whom products are being exported or are they more general, industry-specific regulations? And if the latter, who would they be set by?
- How is your export-driven farming enterprise affected by our government's trade agreements with countries such as the U.S., and its bilateral trade agreements with trading blocs such as the European Union (EU)? Do you keep abreast of the government's trade relations with other countries/ trading blocs?

- Which global bodies set standards for the citrus industry in terms of product quality or wages or anything else? How does your farm engage with these standards and ensure compliance with them?
- Have you found farm management/ ownership challenging?
- Would you say farming has changed much in the past few decades? What would you attribute those changes or shifts to?
- What would you say are the biggest challenges facing farmers in South Africa or in Limpopo today?
- How do you view the fortunes of citrus farmers in relation to other kinds of farmers (crop farming, livestock farming, for instance)? Probe further.
- Does farming continue to be a lucrative activity in South Africa? Do you think you get out of it as much as you put in, in terms of time and energy and effort?
- Do you feel the ANC government has been good for farmers in general and citrus farmers in particular? Can you elaborate on why and how this may have evolved over the past 25 years? What do you think the role of government *should* be in relation to farmers and farming practices in this country?
- Do you feel the ANC government facilitates your access to global markets in any way? Could they be doing more? How?
- Would you say your farm is directly or indirectly impacted by labour regulations which the state puts in place or negotiates with labour unions such as COSATU? Would you say you have the ability as a single farm owner to resist government regulations of the citrus or farming industries in any way?
- How has your outlook about farming changed over time?
- How many farmworkers do you employ on the farm? Are these permanent or seasonal workers (how many of each)? Do you have a preference for seasonal versus permanent workers on the farm? i.e. Is the citrus industry quite seasonal so that you are employing more seasonal workers instead of having many permanent workers living on the farm all year around?

- What would you say are the benefits of hiring seasonal workers? And the challenges? Would you say the benefits outweigh the challenges associated with hiring of seasonal workers?
- Do seasonal and/or permanent workers tend to live on or off the farm? Do you have a preference either way?
- Would the seasonal workers available for farm owners/ manager to hire tend to be foreign nationals? (Why or why not?) Are there any particular difficulties with hiring foreign workers on the farm?
- Who tends to deal with the hiring of farmworkers for the farm?
- How would you characterize relations between seasonal and permanent workers on the farm? Do there tend to be any tensions between them? Who would manage any such tensions? How have such tensions manifested in actual challenges which you/others have had to mediate? Do you have the opportunity of interacting directly with the farmworkers? (These would be asked to both owner and manager/s)
- Is there a typical 'day on the farm' for you as owner/ manager? Could you run me through what such a day would look like and who you would tend to liaise with about different activities that need to be done/ checked?
- What would you say makes a farm successful? Would it be measured against the profits made for a financial year? Does your farm continue to be successful? Why/ why not? What are the most important 'ingredients' in ensuring the success of a farm such as yours?
- Who is involved in 'big' decision-making for the farm? (Such as whether to expand or to downsize for instance, or whether to hire a new farm manager, etc)
- How involved are you in the day-to-day management and decision-making on the farm?

## Appendix D: Letter of Informed Consent



### **Introduction to Project**

Good day, my name is Gabriella Vermeulen. I am a master's student in the department of Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria. As a requirement of my studies, I am doing a research project entitled: *The Effects of a Globalised Agricultural System on South African Farm Workers: A Political Ethnographic Exploration of Malapeng citrus farm in Limpopo*. The main aim of the project is to understand the lives of farm workers as they relate to a global agricultural system.

### **Request for Participation**

In order to assist me in completing my research project, I am requesting permission to conduct an interview with you and spend some time observing you. You have been chosen because you are employed at this farm and have insights as to how it works. The interview should be no longer than 2 hours. Additionally, I would request that you allow me to record our conversation. At the end of this letter there is a form that you can fill in to give me permission to conduct this interview and record it if you are comfortable with that.

It is important that you know that you are not being forced to participate in this project. The choice is yours alone. If you decide to say no, there will be no negative effects and you will not be prejudiced in any way. If you agree to be interviewed, you can choose to stop at any time. There will be no negative effects to you choosing to withdraw. If you are uncomfortable at any time during the interview you can choose to not answer the question or stop the interview immediately. There will be no negative consequences, it is your choice at all times if we continue or not.

### **Confidentiality**

The confidentiality of everybody who is participating is essential. The name of the farm has been changed. Furthermore, your real name will not be used anywhere in the study. The information you give me will only be used for academic purposes such as writing my dissertation and presenting my findings at conferences.

It is important to note that I am required to store the data for this study for a minimum of 15 years. This includes the recording of our interview and my notes. Furthermore, this can be reviewed by the faculty ethical board at any time. The ethical board is responsible for ensuring that my research is done properly and doesn't put you in any danger. However, you have the right to access your data at any time.

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Faculty of Humanities  
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotheo

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### **Risk Associated with Participation**

There are no expected risks with you participating in this study, except for some mild discomfort at discussing certain topics. However, if you ever feel uncomfortable at any point during the interview we can stop immediately or move on to another topic.

If you have any concerns with how the research is being conducted (e.g. my behaviour) you can contact our Postgraduate Administrator Mr Roland Henwood ([roland.henwood@up.ac.za](mailto:roland.henwood@up.ac.za) or +27(0)12 420 2687) to lodge a complaint.

### **Consent Form**

I hereby consent to be interviewed by Ms GM Vermeulen as a part of her research study on *The Effects of a Globalised Agricultural System on South African Farm Workers: A Political Ethnographic Exploration of Malapeng citrus farm in Limpopo*. I confirm that I am participating freely, without any coercion. Furthermore, I confirm that I am aware that I can withdraw at any point of the study with no negative repercussions.

I understand that this is an academic project and that all my answers will remain confidential

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

I hereby consent to my interview being recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_