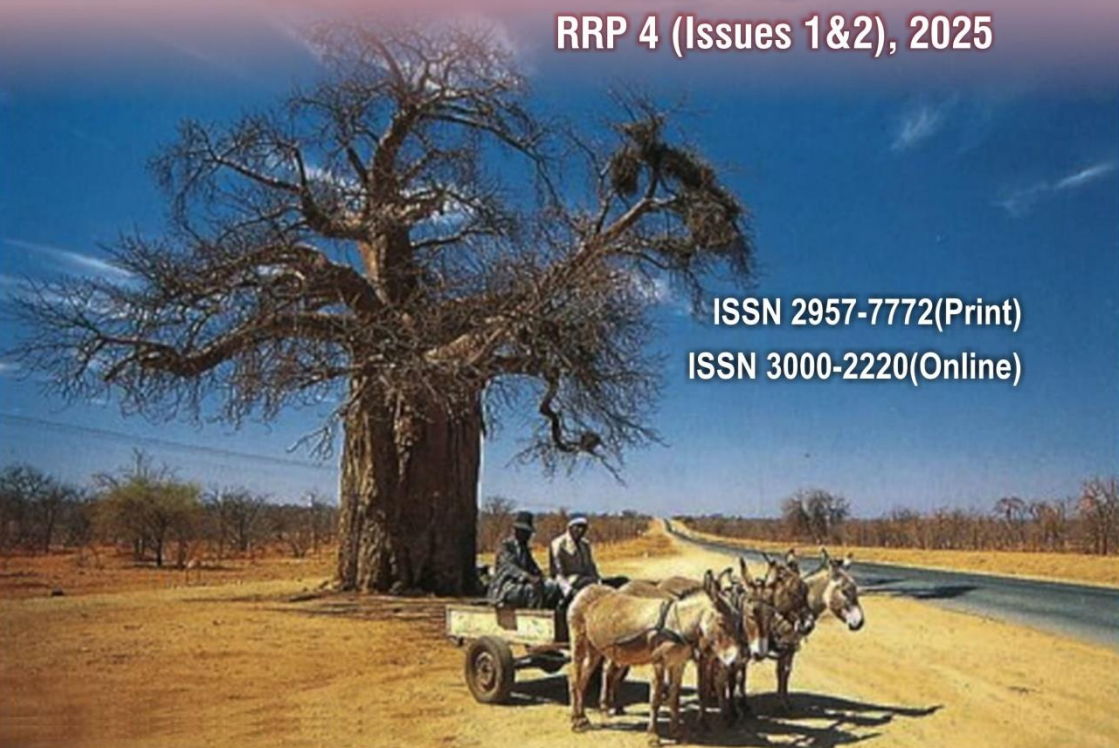




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JOURNAL PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Review of Rural Resilience Praxis* is to provide a forum for disaster risk mitigation, adaptation and preparedness.

CONTRIBUTION AND READERSHIP

Sociologists, demographers, psychologists, development experts, planners, social workers, social engineers, economists, among others whose focus is that of rural resilience.

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SCOPE AND FOCUS

As much as the urban territory is increasing by each day, the rural economy, especially in many developing countries, still retains a great proportion of the extractive and accommodation industry. Retaining some space as rural remains critical given the sectors role in providing ecosystem services to both wildlife and humanity. In this light, rural resilience as practice beckons for critical studies especially in the face of the ever-threatening extreme weather events and climate change that then impact on the livelihoods and lifestyles of the rural communities. Review of Rural Resilience Praxis (RRRP) comes in as a platform for critical engagement by scholars, practitioners and leaders as they seek to debate and proffer solutions of the rural sector and trying to champion the philosophy of the right to be rural. The issue of conviviality between the different constituencies of the sectors, compiled with the competing challenges of improving rural spaces while also making the conservation and preservation debates matter is the hallmark of this platform of criticality. The journal is produced bi-annually.

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Italicise *et al.*, *ibid.*, words that are not English, not names of people or organisations, etc. When you use several authors confirming the same point, state the point and bracket them in one bracket and in ascending order of dates and alphabetically separated by semi-colon e.g. (Falkenmark, 1989, 1990; Reddy, 2002; Dagdeviren and Robertson, 2011; Jacobsen *et al.*, 2012).

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The Emerging Spatiality of Rural Settlement Patterns in Zimbabwe: A Critique

EDWIN NYAMUGADZA¹, TAFADZWANASHE JAMES MAGAVUDE², NOTION MANZVERA³

Abstract

The study critically examines the geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe. The population of Zimbabwe remains, in spatial terms, largely rural, with most of the people living in areas that lack clear spatial planning. Zimbabwe has experienced unprecedented illegal sale of state land by land barons (commonly called, in colloquial vernacular parlance, *Sabhuku* deals), who exercise authority, be it traditional or state authority. The study problematises the lack of spatial planning and control of rural settlement development as Zimbabwe continues to experience unplanned development of settlements. The research adopts a qualitative research methodology as the approach best explains social facts without reducing them into codes and statistics. The research utilises a case-study research methodological design. It uses secondary information as a method of data collection, using journals and news reports. It utilises thematic data analysis. The research findings reveal that the geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe bears a colonial legacy, with nucleated rural designs being one of the colonial settlement patterns. The study shows that scattered rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe are a result of the land reform programme that aimed to address colonial legacies in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The research concludes that the Zimbabwean rural settlement is an ambivalent balance between colonial legacies and post-colonial ambitions to address inequalities by creating scattered rural patterns to address nucleated settlements. The research recommends policies that address land barons and land use changes.

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Keywords: *land use, colonialism, post-coloniality, spatial planning, nuclearism, inequality*

INTRODUCTION

Settlements, as places for human habitation and life, encompass various forms of population concentration within specific geographic environments (Yao *et al.*, 2023). The definition and understanding of rural settlement exhibit subtle variations across different academic disciplines and theoretical frameworks (Doxiades, 1972). Rural settlements are fundamental social spaces formed by residents based on their production and living needs, serving as the basic units of traditional agrarian societies (Yang *et al.*, 2024). Significant social entities reflect the relationship between people and the land, historical backgrounds, and socio-political relationships (Palmisano *et al.* 2016). Low-population density, close-knit social structures and reliance on local resources characterise rural settlements (Jones, 2011). The distinctive feature of the countryside stems from its antithetical position to the city and its rurality is expressed as multiple social spaces overlapping in the same geographic area (Clope *et al.*, 2006). Cloke (1977) defines rurality as a condition of place-based homeliness shared by people with common ancestry or heritage inhabiting traditional, culturally defined areas or places statutorily recognised to be rural. Rurality has been defined through the prism of land use, the relevance between architecture and landscape and lifestyle in rural settlements (Gencer and Yuksek, 2022).

In addition, spatial patterns and the influencing determinants of rural settlements are the most important indicators for understanding the constituent structure of rural regional systems (Chen *et al.*, 2022). Settlements refers to a place where people concentrate and settle down for living and production purposes (Ma *et al.*, 2018). A rural settlement is a complex natural human landscape system under specific geographical conditions and has a long period of natural, economic social and cultural organisation (Azhdari *et al.*, 2018). Rural settlements are anchors of farmers' lives and production and constitute an important part of rural land utilisation (Shang *et al.*, 2024). Rural settlement consolidation is an important aspect of comprehensive land improvement and a significant product in the process of economic development (Liu, 2021). The patterns of rural settlements are important to

understand in the sense that rapid urbanisation and industrialisation have been taking place around the world.

The study problematises the geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe as communal areas have been at the centre of controversy due to the issues around unlawful redistribution of land, leading to changes in settlement patterns. The geography of rural settlement in Zimbabwe has changed, with most of the rural areas witnessing mass changes in communal areas as a result of the unlawful land deals. The study is significant as it adds to the existing literature on the geography of rural settlements, informing academics and policy-makers on the settlement patterns changes in Zimbabwe. The objective of the study is to understand what influences the geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe. It is significant in informing scholars and readers on the implications of rural development on the changes of settlement patterns. The study structure commences with an introduction, conceptual framework, a literature review and is followed by a methodology section. It also presents the findings, followed by a discussion of the findings and a proffers of conclusion and recommendations. It is against this backdrop, that the study interrogates the geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe with a view to understanding the changes in rural settlement morphology in Zimbabwe.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study utilises the theoretical optic of land use changes to understand the geography of rural settlements pattern with insights emerging from Zimbabwe. Land use and rural modifications caused by human factors are everywhere and indirect drivers of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, leading to the depletion of the ozone layer (Moylan, 2017). Rural land use, such as agriculture, causes problems, such as GHG emissions and pollution, for the environment as most of economic activities in rural areas are not sustainable for future generations' land use. Surya *et al.* (2024) assert that as a result, disputes have arisen due to the negative implication of land use on combating climate change, protecting biodiversity and sustaining vital ecosystem services as a result of unsustainable land use.

Agriculture has caused land use problems as intensive farming practices, including excessive tillage, overuse of fertilization and pesticides and monoculture farming, can lead to soil erosion, loss of organic matter and reduced fertility (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Soil degradation has become one of the most alarming problems of agriculture and rural land use in most developing countries as the agricultural practices are not sustainable, leading to poor soil management (Collier *et al.*, 2020). Agricultural land use, such as intensive farming practices, including excessive tillage, over-use of fertilizers and pesticides, monoculture farming, can lead to soil erosion, loss of organic matter and reduced fertility (Kotsoni *et al.*, 2017). FAO (2019) observes how agricultural practices cause soils to emit other GHGs in addition to carbon dioxide and climate change exacerbating these emissions.

Land use changes have altered the geography of rural settlements in Zimbabwe, as some parts of the rural front soils and lands lose their agricultural value.

In addition, water pollution has caused changes in land use in most rural areas with people moving away from their settlements of the pollution of water bodies by chemicals from agricultural practices, causing eutrophication in rural China (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Run-off from agricultural land can carry fertilizers, pesticides and animal waste into waterways, causing pollution and harming aquatic life and the water supply in the very same agricultural fields (Collier *et al.*, 2020). The land use changes become important in defining the geography of the patterns of rural settlement as water becomes scarce in rural areas due to eutrophication. The rural patterns of settlement are affected by pollution as people prefer to settle where there is access to water and pollution is affecting this access people (FAO, 2020). Pollution affects human settlement as it disturbs the hydrological cycle by polluting water bodies, causing water problems exacerbated by climate change in rural areas, and thereby threatening food and income security for rural livelihoods sustainability.

Furthermore, deforestation has also been one of the land use changes has affecting the geography of rural settlement patterns with most of communities losing their biodiversity. Deforestation destroys natural habitats, leading to the

decline of biodiversity and the loss of ecosystem services (UNDP, 2020). Expansion of agricultural land often leads to deforestation which, in turn, reduces carbon sequestration capacity and contributes to biodiversity loss (Kalfas *et al.*, 2023). The removal of trees exposes the soil to wind and water erosion, leading to soil degradation and reduced productivity. This leads to the formation of ridges and gullies that affect human settlement due to limited sustainable livelihoods (FAO, 2020). Land use changes in rural settlement patterns are imperative to reduce deforestation and the loss of soil and trees which provide carbon sequestration.

It is important to understand the rural land use changes, as some forms of rural geography patterns are disappearing due to population growth and rural land sales by village heads in Zimbabwe. Land use change is an important determinant of the geography of the patterns of rural settlement as people settle where conditions are conducive for sustainable livelihoods, with food and income security as a guarantee for their settlement. Rural settlement is determined by changes in land use as it guarantees their survival and reduces the effects of problems like erosion which affect agriculture. The changes in land use can create sustainable patterns of settlement with people reducing deforestation and, therefore, protecting carbon sequestration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a literature review of the study in the canon of scholarship, with a view to show the history and development of the rural settlement patterns geography across Africa. Spatial inequality implies a situation where there is an unequal distribution of services and facilities across space (Kuhn, 2015). The history and root causes of spatial inequality may have resulted from various systems, ranging from economic to political systems and this varies from one country to another (Mkhize, 2018). Spatial planning in Africa has roots in colonial systems as most colonial governments situated natives in areas that were of less economic value to them to provide cheap labour for their commercial activities. In Africa, rural-urban differences go deeper than the numbers suggest due to relatively favourable government treatment of urban areas since the colonial era compared to rural areas. Under the conditions of the segregation of populations in the rural peripheries, one form of oppression experienced was spatial inequality through inconsistent

service provision along racial lines (Mukonoweshuro 1993; Mubaiwa 2013). Smith (2003) argues how the colonial government in South Africa influenced spatial disparities through centralised development, with the focus primarily on urban fabric, with African population groups being neglected in the rural hinterland as self-governed areas. This limited service lacked service delivery and other amenities, leading to many economic and social setbacks in rural areas.

In addition, Frescura (2000) asserts that in Africa colonial nations were clearly identified by different features such as the segregation of residential areas. Robins (2000) posits that those black settlements, reserves or townships were characterised by poor social services and infrastructure and black people travelled long distances to their places of work using poor public transport systems. Turok (2016) is of the view that most of black people were forced to stay in the rural reserves where white businesses went to get cheap native labour. Historically, rural settlements in colonial times were cantonments of the cheap labour for white businesses, such as agriculture and local industries.. The native African people were paid taxes imposed by settler governments.

Furthermore, Miya (2020) notes that native reserves were areas of residence meant exclusively for Africans and were extant prior to the legislative frameworks that later governed spatial segregation in rural areas. Forde (2024) observes how local people were segregated and relegated to the fringes of planning and development, with most of them performing only labour provision services for the colonial settlers' factories and farms. Mkhize (2018) alludes that African people were left to govern their reserve areas with segregatory poor service delivery, making it impossible for the natives economically and socially. The self-governance was not a privilege as the African traditional leaders had limited authority with most of them required to pay the taxes imposed by colonial governments. Native Africans were excluded from development planning and service delivery. Most of them faced poor living conditions and unprecedented challenges.

However, the shift to democracy of African governments, led to decentralised governance through the creation of local which that has enabled rural areas to share equal powers with local municipalities as per municipal and rural

structures formed after independence in most African countries (Harrison and Todes, 2015). Democratic governments in African countries eradicated the spatial inequalities and allowed service delivery in countries like South Africa which had experienced harsh conditions of segregation (Miya, 2020). New governments eradicated all forms of segregation and reduced poor service delivery in rural areas by regularising communal areas and allowing people to invest on their lands. Koelble and Siddle (2018) posit that shifting to factors affecting spatial inequality within the democratic age, there has been commendable progress in transforming governance, from centralised to democratised governance, through the demarcation of land and the subsequent emergence of local municipalities in African cities. Multiple approaches have been used to strengthen governance with the vision of spatial justice for the marginalised (Miya 2018). Governments have tried to address the spatial inequalities they inherited from colonial governments by allowing people to have service delivery and freedom to develop their settlements in patterns that fit human settlement.

The literature has gaps as the African governments in the post-colonial era continued to follow the same model of rural-urban divide without changing these models as evinced in recent rural development efforts through practices such as contract farming (Scoones *et al.*, 2022). Drawing from the above, the reviewed literature has shown that the geography of rural settlements in Africa was shaped by colonialism which relegated Africans to rural areas, denying them a chance to experience equality. The literature has brought to the fore the fact that African rural settlement patterns are a residue of the colonial era as most people lacked access to service delivery and infrastructural development, something which has persisted even under the post-colonial governments. The land use in post-colonial rural settlements has changed in the sense that native Africans can now determine their settlement patterns, unlike in the past where they were supposed to follow directives of colonial administrators.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology, research design, data collection method and data analysis methods used to examine the geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe. The study utilises the qualitative research approach. Priya *et al.* (2021) observe that the qualitative research approach is

inductive and flexible as it allows the data to emerge from the findings without reducing it into a hypothesis. The research adopted this approach as it led to the understanding of the geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe. The study utilises the case study research design, as Lee (2016) posits this research design allows researchers to understand multiple realities from many cases. The study uses secondary information as the source of data collection. The allure of secondary information is that it is time-efficient, as buttressed by Ajayi *et al.* (2019) who argue how literature review-based studies allow the researcher to build on existing studies and extend the literature and the understanding of the study beforehand in a time efficient way as data is readily available. The secondary data was collected from news reports and Google Scholar articles to give an understanding of rural geography in Zimbabwe. The findings have limitations as there is lack of control over data collection methods. This can potentially lead to biased data . The study uses thematic data analysis to analyse the findings of the study. The appeal of the thematic data analysis in this study was its ability to arrange and categorise the findings (Clark and Brown, 2017).

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings on the geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe for better understanding for planners and academics on the strength and problems facing rural communities and settlement patterns which have created nucleated settlement patterns in rural Zimbabwe. Understanding settlement patterns in rural communities is crucial for effective planning, resource management and sustainable development, service delivery and community well-being. Zimbabwe's rural settlement patterns are diverse, shaped by colonial legacies, land reform and economic activities, with a mix of dispersed, nucleated and linear settlements, often clustered around resources or roads (World Bank, 2023). Colonialism created nucleated rural settlements that grouped people in reserves to provide a cheap labour pool. Zimbabwean rural settlement patterns are deeply shaped by colonial legacies, including the establishment of communal areas in marginal regions and the alienation of land for European use that continue to influence poverty and land access in post-colonial Zimbabwe (SADC, 2017a). The colonial era significantly shaped the ownership and settlement patterns with large-scale commercial farms and African communal areas, leading to distinct settlement

structures (Scoones and Murimbarimba, 2021). As a result of the colonialism, Zimbabwean rural settlement patterns show that native Zimbabweans were relegated to unproductive lands known as reserves with little or no productivity. This indicates that colonialism is one of the determinants of the geography of rural settlements as the same lack of service provision has continued even in the post-colonial era. Colonialism created a nucleated rural geography pattern in most rural areas of Zimbabwe.

In addition, Zimbabwe's land reform, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), which commenced in 2000, led to a huge restructuring of rural settlement patterns, with the redistribution of land from large-scale commercial farms to smallholder (A1) and medium (A2) farms, creating new rural-urban connections and impacting local economies (*ibid.*1). This has created scattered rural geography with A2 farmers being given vast tracks of land far from each other. The FTLRP created dispersed settlement patterns for farmers to access farming and grazing land separately to increase their productivity. Mazwi *et al.* (2021) observe how the land reform altered patterns of rural settlement in Zimbabwe as social differentiation emerged, with some farmers accumulating wealth from agriculture and investing on their land, distinguishing them from those in communal areas. The land reform created rural-urban linkages with small towns becoming more integrated into the local economy, serving as centres for trade and service, boosting rural economies by pooling many people to settle near these towns (Scoones *et al.*, 2020). The geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe has been influenced by land reform in conjunction with the need to have access to towns and other services. The post-land reform era has seen the patterns of rural settlements moving towards small towns which have expanded from being centres of government offices to employment provision centres for rural people (Scoones and Murimbarimba, 2020). The rural settlement patterns have changed after land reform with most people settling in small towns due to the need for employment during the farming off-season as climate change is affecting off season farming. The rural geography pattern has changed due to land reform with new patterns such as the scattered pattern of settlement emerging in Zimbabwe, leading to natives gaining more land for farming to increase productivity and inspire rural development.

Moreover, economic activities determine the geography of rural settlements in Zimbabwe with most of the communal areas nucleated to create access to grazing areas for livestock. Agricultural activities, particularly farming and livestock, influence settlement patterns with settlements often clustered around water sources, fertile land or grazing areas (World Bank, 2020). Scoones *et al.* (2012) underscore the fact that access to production and sustainable rural livelihoods determine the patterns of rural settlements, with most farmers settling in areas that are near the source of their income, livestock and agriculture (Ndlovu, 2022). Jani *et al.* (2019) argue how in riparian ecosystems like in the Mbire District, rural settlement patterns are determined by the distance and safety from human-wildlife conflict. This signals that rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe are determined by proximity to livelihoods and safety from the human-wildlife conflict..

In addition, access to markets also determines the geography of rural settlements as rural livelihoods demand markets for the farm products. Proximity to urban areas and market centres plays a crucial role in settlement patterns, with settlements closer to urban hubs often having better market access and economic opportunities (World Bank, 2020). In Zimbabwe, most farmers, who make up a significant proportion of rural settlers, participate in global value chains. So their settlement patterns are determined by accessibility of their farms to markets (Mumaniki, 2024). The settlements in these areas are nucleated towards the main road as the farmers in some of these areas practise farm-gate sales for their farm produce to reduce the transactional costs (Nyatsambo *et al.*, 2022). Farmers use the linear settlement pattern to access markets for their farm produce without incurring considerable costs of labour and fuel to move the products to the main road as they are all located along the road.

Furthermore, rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe are influenced by the illegal sale of land by village heads which leads to the creation of nucleated households without rural livelihoods as the residents work in towns and cities. *The Herald* of February 24, 2025, carries a story that village heads were warned against selling state land as they and other traditional leaders are facilitating the sale of state land and will be considered land barons, creating nucleated settlements in Domboshava, Seke, Nyabira, Rusape and Chesa

Farm. *The Chronicle* of September 29, 2024, contains a story that in Matabeleland North, land barons in the form of village heads, were selling state land to unsuspecting rural home seekers, creating nucleated crowded settlements in rural areas that once had scattered settlement patterns. The illegal sale of rural land presents is a growing problem in Zimbabwe that is leading to the creation of nucleated settlements with crowded population like those of urban settlements. *The Herald* of February 9, 2024, reports that rural areas were creating a cash cow for land barons who are selling state land illegally to home-seekers, creating nucleated over-crowded rural settlements.

The findings of the study show that there are various patterns (linear, scattered and nuclear) of rural settlements visible in rural Zimbabwe. The study does not seek to downplay the existence of scattered rural settlement pattern but the central argument presented herein is that rural settlements are evolving towards linear and nuclear settlement patterns due to the need to establish entrepreneurial activities and the need for land around business centres or roads to ensure limited transactional costs by farmers. The creation of linear settlements has created problems of overcrowding and the disappearance of agricultural land for productivity in most rural settlements.

THE CASE OF DOMBOSHAVA

Domboshava is a peri-urban area located 27 kilometres north of Harare. It is a rural area administered by the Goromonzi Rural District Council (Mudapakati *et al.*, 2024). Domboshava is characterised by a mixed settlement of rural communities, peri-urban residential areas, commercial farms and mining activities (Ingwani, 2019). Mudapakati *et al.* (2024) observe that Domboshava is experiencing trends of peri-urbanisation-land conflicts with the rural geography changing. The rural geography is changing in Domboshava with most communities experiencing settlement pattern changes as those that were once scattered are now living in nucleated communities due to land sales by village heads (Ingwani, 2019).

The Herald of November 10, 2022, carries a story to the fact that Domboshava land barons' activities have changed the settlement patterns in the area, creating overcrowded nucleated settlements without proper surveying carried out. The implication of these land sales in rural areas has

been the creation of large rural slums with chances of criminal activities emerging. *The Herald* of February 24, 2025, also brought to the fore that village heads have created an illicit syndicate with ordinary villagers selling their land in Domboshava to newcomers, thereby creating nucleated settlements and marking the disappearance of scattered settlement patterns. *The Sunday Mail* of March 14, 2021 reports that in Domboshava, has seen a growth in the illegal sales of land by villagers and village heads. The implication of these investments in the illegally sold land is that the newcomers risk losing this land to state demolitions. The conversion of farmland into urban-related land use in Domboshava is creating a nucleated pattern of settlement affecting sustainable land use.

THE CASE OF SEKE

Seke District is a second-order administrative region in Mashonaland East Province in Zimbabwe. *The Herald* of February 10, 2022 paints a picture of urban sprawl because illegal land sales by traditional leaders and their subjects in the district. The demand for residential stands has prompted people to buy rural land, changing the patterns of rural settlements from scattered to nuclear patterns. The illegal sale of rural land in Zimbabwe has consumed land reserves for future use, pastures and infrastructure such as dip tanks and community gardens (Refworld, 2023). *The Sunday Mail* of December 31, 2023, also prompted a story which brought to the fore that land barons and traditional leaders have been selling land in Seke, affecting agricultural land and reducing rural development that agricultural productivity achieved in rural areas in recent times. Scattered rural patterns are disappearing in rural Zimbabwe, affecting the reserves for pastures and other rural infrastructures that benefit communities.

Rural geography patterns in Zimbabwe are affected by peri-urbanisation that is stretching into the countryside. Zimbabwe has seen the growth in the demand for residential areas, which has led to people buying illegal land from village heads and their syndicates. This has created problems for the reserves of pastoral land and infrastructure for rural livelihoods, such as cattle rearing. In a nutshell, rural geography has changed with most communities moving from scattered to nuclear settlement patterns.

DISCUSSION

The study aims to show the geography of rural settlement patterns. The study findings reveal that the dominant rural settlement pattern in Zimbabwe is the nucleated pattern which came as a colonial legacy inherited from colonialism. Colonial governments created nucleated rural settlement patterns which provided a huge labour force for their farms and industrial towns and enabled them to use Africans as cheap labour. The nucleated settlement pattern in rural areas was created by the colonial governments across Africa to create cheap labour reservoirs by taking huge tracks of and forced Africans to work on settler farms to pay the imposed taxes. (Mashizha and Mapuva, 2018) Rural settlements in Zimbabwe, owing to the colonial legacy, have created nucleated settlements with crowded villages around a certain point. Another problem creating a nucleated rural settlement pattern in Zimbabwe are the land barons selling rural land to home-seekers and this is a drawback the Zimbabwe government is grappling with. However, despite the aforementioned creating the nuclear or linear settlement patterns, population growth and the need for business and reduction of transactional costs and accessibility of farm produce, have forced farmers to settle along roads to easily access markets.

In addition, the study findings reveal that to redress the colonial legacies and exorcise the ghost of colonialism, Zimbabwe instituted the FTLRP to create different rural settlement patterns. This land reform in Zimbabwe addressed the problems of nucleated rural settlement patterns by creating scattered rural settlement patterns with huge tracks of farming land set aside for native Africans. Addressing the colonial rural settlement patterns through land reform saw the majority of Zimbabwean rural residents moving out of overcrowded rural communities to new settlements. In support of the study, Moyo (2019) avers that the land reform programme has provided a chance for settlement pattern changes, with rural areas experiencing scattered settlement patterns rather than nucleated overcrowded settlements. It has created scattered rural settlement patterns that cater for farming as a sustainable livelihood in rural areas. The land reform programme addressed the effects of colonialism by creating scattered patterns of rural geography, giving a chance to Africans for increased productivity and rural development.

Moreover, rural settlements have become linear with most communal areas developing this progression towards access points such as road and service centres. The farmers are settling in proximity to the roads to reduce the costs in the transportation of their farm produce, and access to markets for their farming produce. Consistent with the study are Mafirakurewa *et al.* (2023) who aver that access to markets has changed the development of farming communities with most of them moving in a linear pattern to have access to markets as most farmers participate in farm-gate marketing.

The study further brings to the fore that scattered settlement in rural geography in Zimbabwe is present in resettlement areas. In most rural areas that were already reserves, the patterns of rural geography are changing towards linear and nuclear patterns as people are living in economic spheres of influence. The findings show that the rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe are a mixture of nucleated, linear and scattered patterns of settlements. The settlement patterns of rural communities are a residue of the colonial system of governance that segregated spatial development, relegating the native African communities to overcrowding in reserves with poor soils and infested with diseases. This caused the redressing of these problems by the land reform programme which sought to reverse some of the settlement patterns that were segregatory in nature against the native African communities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study aims to show the geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe. The findings show that rural settlement patterns in the form of nucleated patterns are a residue of colonialism. The study shows that scattered settlement pattern is a product of land reform to redress the colonial legacies of nucleated rural areas with were overcrowded, with and limited economic opportunities. The nucleated rural settlements are re-emerging due to the illegal sale of state rural land by land barons.

In conclusion, the geography of rural settlement patterns in Zimbabwe is not time and place-bound, as it keeps shifting with time. The study brings to the fore that in places that were originally reserves or rural areas and not resettlement areas, the scattered pattern of rural geography is disappearing. This is due to the need for access by farmers to markets and service centres

such as growth points. It is noted by the study that land barons are a growing rural settlement patterns determinant, which is changing the rural landscape through the sale of state land. In a nutshell, land barons are influencing the rural geography patterns in Zimbabwe, having negative implications as this can become a trend for the illegal sale of state land and prime lands for agriculture.

The study recommends that future studies look into the effects of the illegal sale of state land and the implications it has on the environment, as most of these sales are infringing on wetlands. The research proposes future studies towards the investigation of health effects of nucleated rural settlements. The study urges regional and town planning in rural settlements to create sustainable rural settlements that can provide for future generations. Lastly, the study recommends policies that protect existing rural settlements from sale of land by illage heads.

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