



DEVELOPMENT IN SWAZILAND MYTHS AND REALITIES

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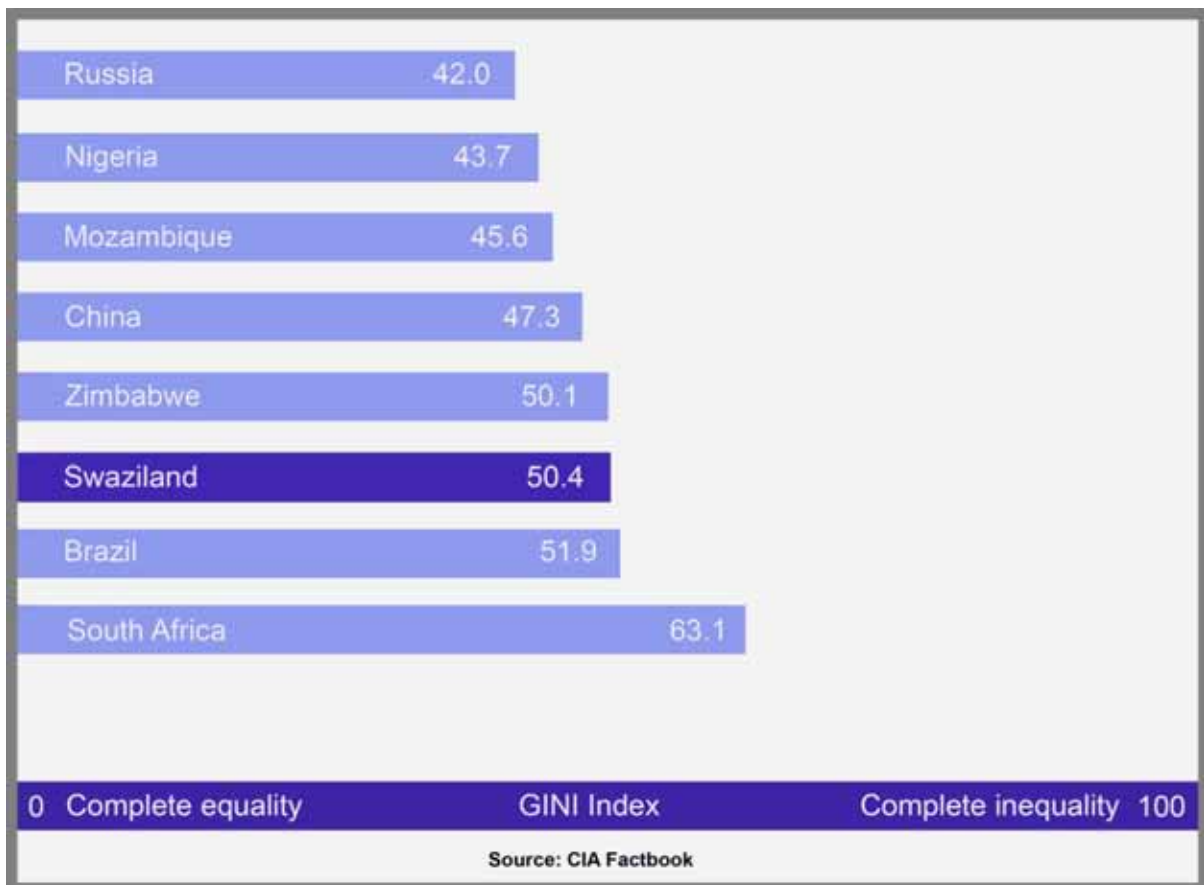


Mbabane blending into countryside.

Introduction: the convergence of Swaziland's multiple crises

Locked between South Africa and Mozambique, Swaziland is a small country with a population of 1.4 million. From the attractive mountainous highveld landscapes around Mbabane which gently blend town and country it is hard to think of Swaziland as experiencing a deep structural crisis. The politeness and conviviality of its people are coupled by their strong sense of identity as well as cultural distinctiveness and respectful public relations between different racial and cultural groups. These tend to reinforce an image of the country as a peaceful, harmonious place in a different league from the harsh realities of neighbouring South Africa, or other conflict-ridden parts of Africa where political and civil unrest is the norm.

Despite appearances, Swaziland is marred by deep social and economic inequalities that have a long history and are now coming to the fore in a potentially explosive mix. Swaziland's GINI coefficient, the international standard indicator of income inequality, is very high. At 50.4, it makes Swaziland the 18th most unequal society in the world. To put it in regional perspective, South Africa ranks second worldwide. Swaziland's income inequality is higher than Zimbabwe, Mozambique and even Nigeria. In global comparison, it is very close to Brazil and is much higher than China and Russia, all major economies characterised by large income inequalities.¹



Income inequality by country.

Nearly 90% of the population lives on 5 US dollars a day or less, and virtually all of them are black Swazis. The unemployment rate is 41%. Workers in the formal sector receive appallingly low wages and little social protection. The rest get by with precarious informal economic activities or subsistence farming. The remaining 10% is composed of a mixed group of a small indigenous wealthy elite well connected in business and politics, whites and foreign capitalists, and a small but growing indigenous middle class. The latter struggles to break through the invisible ceilings of racial discrimination and political patronage by the royal establishment. The upper tier of the private sector is firmly controlled by foreign capital, most of it from South Africa and other Western countries, with some investment from Taiwan and other Asian countries. Foreign capital is in many cases allied in joint ventures with the royal investment fund Tibiyo Taka Ngwane, this is controlled by the royal elites and is not accountable to any parliamentary scrutiny.

Despite these major inequalities, the system has been relatively stable since 1968 when Swaziland gained independence from British colonial rule. Compared to many other African countries the cohesive political system, and a political deal that mitigated potential conflict with whites and foreign capital, guaranteed stability and

social peace. Despite overcrowding and soil degradation, the rural areas under customary tenure have provided a buffer from complete destitution for most Swazis. The vast majority cannot aspire to more than a meagre wage and have very limited possibilities to establish themselves as urbanites living in decent conditions. As in many other African countries, the informal economy has also increasingly become a major complement and source of income for rural and urban households. Many of these informal activities benefit from resources held under communal tenure in the customary system, fostering vernacular markets - for land and housing for instance - outside the remit of the formal markets regulated by title deeds. These are only accessible to a small portion of the population with enough wealth to invest.

The post-colonial equilibrium, founded on major inequalities, is however coming under threat, posing a double challenge to economic and social development. A convergence of multiple crises has further aggravated the fundamentals of underdevelopment laid down by the colonial past:

- 26.5% percent of Swazis are HIV-positive;
- A sovereign debt crisis is looming due to the public budget's excessive reliance on fluctuating revenues from customs duties in the Southern African Customs Union;
- The formal economy is stagnating and is heavily dependent on sugar production for export – the latter is also under threat due to ongoing renegotiations of preferential trade agreements with the European Union;
- Rural areas, where the bulk of the population live, suffer from overcrowding and declining subsistence production and are increasingly dependent on migrant workers' remittances.

Narratives of development

The historical trajectory of underdevelopment, aggravated by the more recent crises, poses major challenges for development in Swaziland. In the build up to the 2013 parliamentary elections, some attention was raised on the more immediate issues threatening the stability of the economy and society of Swaziland.ⁱⁱ On the whole, however, mainstream knowledge about development in Swaziland, and other parts

of Africa, has remained largely silent about the longer-term causes of underdevelopment and poverty.

While inequality is often cited as a risk factor, its different aspects and root causes are rarely discussed in detail. Many of the conventional narratives that inform development knowledge and practice focus on issues like reduced capacity, inefficient use of resources, incompetent political leadership and a civil society struggling to emerge as a strong driver of positive change. These accounts tend to put the spotlight on internal factors and blame the crisis on the inability of Swazi society and political leaders to rise up to the challenges. They avoid any reference to wider structural factors like the historical legacy of colonialism and the negative impact of the rise of free market reforms throughout Africa and the globe in the last few decades. The picture might be changing somewhat in the global public debate about economy and society – for instance see the enormous success of books like Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the 21st Century*, clearly showing the links between unregulated markets and the rise of economic and social inequalities. But overall there is much work to be done in the production of relevant knowledge for development practitioners and policy makers to show that these issues are at the core of the development challenge, and the fight for poverty in the developing world.

Mainstream development narratives also tend to put an excessive emphasis on the individual behaviour of target beneficiaries of development interventions, a clear example being the focus on “behavioural change” in HIV/AIDS programmes.ⁱⁱⁱ Here the causes of underdevelopment are often attributed to cultural factors. The allegedly stifling effects of custom and tradition on development are mentioned, together with the need to modify social and cultural behaviour to produce positive change.

Some of these discourses dangerously replicate the old colonial stereotypes about Africans which depicted them as inevitably embedded in a culture that fostered poverty and failure. Many of the recent debates on leadership and entrepreneurship as a way out of poverty provide an instance of this. The model offered as a way forward is the ‘enlightened’ liberal democracies of the West, where - almost by magic - leaders are good, corruption is low, things work well and economic development benefits most people. What is left out is that Europe built its fortune on empire and the exploitation of labour and resources from the colonies. The provision of social protection and wealth redistribution worked for Europeans, but the beneficial effects

of economic development in Europe never trickled down to the colonies that Europe exploited.

Nor have the levels of exploitation diminished. Europe continues to extract human and material resources from Africa, without offering a fair deal to these countries and their people. The rise of xenophobia and the increasing importance of illegal labour markets, where migrants are exploited for cheap labour taking up the jobs that Europeans don't want to do, are a further example of structural global inequalities.

All in all these conventional development narratives set a new hierarchy between the 'developed' countries (now commonly referred to as the global North) and the 'developing' ones (the global South). They propose that the best way forward for development is for the global South to follow in the footsteps of the global North. In this context development solutions remain external to the context of action. Accordingly local people in beneficiary countries are given a very limited choice: they either embrace models and behaviours brought from the outside, or they can continue to be trapped in the poverty and underdevelopment allegedly of their own making.

The aim of this booklet is to offer a different perspective on some of the key questions concerning the social, cultural and economic contexts of development in Swaziland. We want to critically engage with some of the 'myths' of conventional development discourse and to push practitioners, policy makers and interested citizens to think critically about them.

Our research

The insights provided here are drawn from a collaboration between Bob Forrester and Vito Laterza. Vito first arrived in Swaziland in 2000 and completed his high school in Waterford Kamhlaba as a United World College scholar in 2001. Driven by his curiosity and passion for Swaziland, he came back for two years of long-term ethnographic research in 2007 and 2008, as part of his PhD on labour, religion and politics in Swaziland in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, completed in 2012. Vito has conducted anthropological research on Swaziland ever since.

Bob Forrester was born in Swaziland and has spent much of his life in the country. He brings to the collaboration an extensive wealth of knowledge as a heritage specialist and photographer as well as his involvement in local development projects. Bob and Vito are working on a public anthropology manuscript on Swaziland which aims to understand the complex connections between development, tradition, politics and economy in the country, bridging historical and contemporary perspectives. The manuscript will be peer-reviewed as an academic anthropology monograph, but its writing style will make it accessible to a wider audience of practitioners, policy makers and citizens.

The findings of our project are based on several years of rigorous anthropological and historical research on the country. We are grateful to the *sahee* foundation for their generous support of this research, including this booklet.^{iv} Extensive work on secondary academic and policy sources on issues of economy and development in Swaziland is coupled by an ethnographic approach that systematically and critically engages with what people do and think in their everyday life activities. Vito's ethnographic research constitutes the backbone of this project. He spent two full years in Swaziland talking to people, observing their livelihood practices, work and family lives, and engaging with their often unheard perspectives on the country and critical development issues.

Research participants help ethnographers think outside the box of the conventional narratives imposed from the global centres of power, and to value local perspectives that inform life on the ground. These local perspectives are often missed by development practitioners and policy makers who tend to trust knowledge from the outside more than insider knowledge.

Ethnography is the core method employed by social anthropologists. In this context, knowledge is constantly produced in partnership with participants, rather than about them as mere 'objects of study'. While many social anthropologists engage in different ways with the development public, the potential of this method for the production of relevant knowledge for participatory local development is still largely untapped. By moving beyond the confines of academic circles, we are trying to make a modest contribution to these issues. We could not have done so however without the generous help and assistance of numerous research collaborators and participants who kindly offered their time and knowledge so that we could learn more

about the lives of people living and struggling with poverty and underdevelopment in Swaziland.^v

The myth of culture: why ‘Swazi culture’ is the wrong answer to the wrong question

We are often asked by people who work in development to provide them with some insight into ‘Swazi culture’. It is unsurprising that people would ask anthropologists, as historically social anthropology has become known to the wider public as the study of human cultures around the world. Ironically, the word ‘culture’ is rarely used by social anthropologists today. If it is used, then it is with many qualifications and as an object of reflection, rather than something real out there to be mapped and interpreted, as the old school anthropologists used to do. Anthropologists are now painfully aware that culture was in itself a construct used by colonial rulers for specific political purposes. This is often not conducive to any form of meaningful social and economic development for local communities, and is part of a wider discriminatory project that saw African cultures as inherently inferior to Western ‘civilisation’.

People often tend to assume that there is a monolithic set of habits, behaviours and rules that constitute this ‘thing’ we call culture, and that everybody who grew up in a specific social background has been inculcated with it via different processes of socialisation and learning. The assumption is that to map ‘culture’ is an essential step towards understanding how people who belong to that specific culture behave. ‘Knowing the culture’ becomes an important managerial tool, a source of knowledge to avoid risks and devise solutions and interventions that are thought to work because they are informed by cultural knowledge. Culture defined in this way was a creation of the colonial project, and not for dissimilar purposes. The study of culture was used by colonial officers to map the social terrain of the colonies and to provide clear boundaries to the social, political and economic activities of the colonised – in other words to rule them.

But why was culture so central in the colonial enterprise? What role did it play in the system of racial discrimination and underdevelopment of the African population? How did the legacy of this system affect the period of political liberation and the

attempts at developing African economies after independence from colonial rule? These are all questions that are at the basis of understanding the contemporary challenges of social and economic development in Swaziland. Once we shift our focus on these questions, we will understand more clearly why 'culture' is the wrong answer to the wrong question.



Swazi women performing a traditional dance.

Economy and society in Swaziland: a brief history

The radical social and economic transformations that led to the establishment of formal colonial rule under the British and the full integration of Swaziland into the South African regional economy gained momentum in the last decades of the 19th century. The Swazi state emerged at the end of the 18th century and consolidated throughout the first half of the 19th as an alliance of clans ruled by the royal Dlamini aristocracy, chiefs from other clans were assimilated, creating the Swazi nation. During the reign of King Mswati II (1845-1865), the Swazi state expanded to the outskirts of Delagoa Bay (today Maputo) at the coast, the trans-Pongola region to the south and the Mpumalanga lowveld to the north.

Chiefs and royals thrived on the extraction of surplus labour for maize production on their fields by commoners and trade with the Boers of the Transvaal, as well as sailors stopping in Delagoa Bay en route to India. Commoners paid tribute to their chiefs and were usually linked to them through clan ties. However there was also a significant degree of migration from one chiefdom to another. Despite these tributary relations, commoners enjoyed the control of vast amounts of land and relied on kin to carry out economic activities in the homestead, mostly based on maize subsistence production and cattle keeping – cattle were an important storage of wealth and circulated as currency through the practice of *lobola* as payment for brides to the bride's family.

While integration into the regional and global networks of trade was already at an advanced stage, most Swazis enjoyed considerable autonomy from outside interference in their economic and domestic activities. Despite this, young males were at the disposal of chiefs and kings for war. The 19th century was characterised by constant wars in the region, caused by the concurrent developments of African states' expansion – most notably the Zulus, the Swazis and the Pedis, amongst others – and encroachment of Europeans, involved in ambiguous alternations of war and trade with the African groups.

In the latter decades of the 19th century the dynamic equilibrium of the Swazi economy was radically changed by rapid economic growth and urbanisation brought about by the mineral revolution, started with the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley in 1867 and followed by several gold rushes. White migrants from Europe came in droves in search of fortune in the growing mining sector, and large-scale European and American investor companies were driving the development of mines and towns. The kind of social change experienced was no less dramatic than the start of the industrial revolution in England at the end of the 18th century.

White capitalists and settlers were involved in a wide variety of economic activities for profit. What started as aggressive tactics of capitalist expansion soon developed into outright threats of violence and annihilation in cases where the ruling African elites did not comply with the schemes of the Europeans. Swaziland was no less attractive than other southern African territories. The Boers from the neighbouring South African Republic had already started to obtain grazing concessions from the

king in the 1860s. The Boers were interested in Swaziland also as a potential corridor to the Indian Ocean.

From the 1880s onwards, fuelled by a gold rush in the north-western part of the country, a constant stream of white pioneers flocked into Swaziland and made deals with King Mbandzeni. To maintain political control the king signed away most rights over mineral and agricultural resources as concessions, however formally maintaining control over all national resources as the king of the Swazi nation. The benefits he and the royal aristocracy reaped were minimal and they were effectively being exploited by white concessionaires. White intermediaries soon gained so much power that they controlled the concessions business on behalf of the king.



19th century concessionaires at King Mbandzeni's capital.

By the end of the 19th century, the 'conquest by concessions' had been complete, to the point that concessions were signed to whites over all forms of royal revenues and key administrative functions over the running of the state.^{vi} White expansion was backed by the threat of force from the Boers and the British, who had already established a colony in Natal in the first half of the 19th century. Swazis had seen what happened to ethnic groups that opposed armed resistance, like the Zulus and the Pedis. They consciously alternated collaboration and tough diplomacy with the whites to avoid any outright confrontation that could result in war and ultimately defeat, given the huge imbalance in terms of military power.

Formal colonial rule started in 1902, after the British defeated the Boers in the Second Anglo-Boer War. They assumed formal control of Swaziland as a protectorate. The main purpose of colonial rule was to ensure that Swazis were forced to actively participate in the growing regional capitalist economy, driven by the rapid growth of mineral extraction in South Africa and causing rapid urbanisation across southern Africa. In order to exploit Swazis as cheap labour, however, colonial governments needed to break down their primary reliance on the subsistence economy under the political control of the monarchy and the chiefs. Until then Swazi commoners were relatively autonomous in their subsistence production. Most of them had no interest in voluntarily joining the mines and the plantations, which they soon discovered were run as exploitative racist enterprises with very harsh working and living conditions.

The main way Swazis were forced into working on the mines was by imposing a compulsory tax payable only in cash, something most Swazis had no access to, and to expropriate their land. In the early 20th century hut and poll taxes came into full force and became the main recruitment drive forcing Swazi men into working in the white-dominated expanding capitalist sector, so that they could pay tax.^{vii}

At the same time the land partition of 1907 left Swazis with less than one third of the overall land. The other two thirds were reserved for white farmers and the colonial government's expansion plans. The effects of the institution of 'native areas' reserved for Swazi occupation - under the political control of chiefs and the monarchy - was that land was allocated very unevenly and many chiefdoms found themselves with a fraction of their original land. Overcrowding, soil degradation and overgrazing all have roots in the colonial partition of land. A substantial number of Swazi homesteads were also deliberately left on what became farms under title deed owned by whites. In theory Swazis had the option to go back to overcrowded chiefdoms. But in practice most entered highly exploitative tenant arrangements where they basically worked for free, or for very minimal wages, just to pay rent to white farmers on what previously was their own land. They derogatorily became known as 'squatters'. The term, still used today, ideologically justifies the appropriation of land by white farmers and redefines the rightful occupants of that land as illegal aliens. Some Swazis continue to live today in the homesteads of their forefathers and have no rights either under title deed or customary tenure.

Setting aside the significant minority of tenants left on white farms as labour, the main purpose of colonial rule was to institute a dual system. In it Swazi reserves provided some buffering from complete destitution, but at the same time the most productive agricultural land and the rapidly growing towns were under the firm control of white businessmen and big companies with investors from Europe and America. Urban areas became the exclusive domain of the whites, and black people there had to undergo several restrictions, including the inability, except for a few overcrowded townships, to purchase title deed land. The racial bar meant that all managerial jobs in the colonial service were firmly in the hands of whites, and blacks could only access the lower ranks. Education for blacks was severely underfunded and of poor quality, while whites sent their children to whites-only schools generously funded by the tax revenues extracted from Swazi commoners.^{viii} A large number of men became migrant workers in South Africa and lesser paid farms and small mines emerging in Swaziland. But they continued to move back and forth on short contracts so that they could help in their homesteads' agricultural activities with labour-intensive seasonal tasks. Women and children became the main source of domestic agricultural labour.

Large-scale economic development with major investment in asbestos and other mining operations, timber, sugar, and other cash crops started just before World War II and continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Meanwhile the impoverishment of Swazi rural areas administered by chiefs continued unabated and peaked in the first half of the 1940s. Taxation, the draining of male labour who had migrated in search of cash wages, increasing population pressures and overcrowding in the reserves all put a tremendous pressure on the ability of Swazi homesteads to feed themselves. As a result, disease and malnutrition grew substantially. Women and children were increasingly entering formal employment, pushed out by increasing rural poverty.

In the war years the main state drive for increasing food crop production in Swazi areas was aimed at reducing food imports and colonial expenditure and producing commodities for the British war effort. The colonial government started Special War Production Areas in the reserves with the expectation of incorporating Swazi subsistence farmers in commodity production and spreading better production techniques widely among rural Swazis. The campaign was a failure and overall crop production levels declined in these years. Despite the co-operation of the king and

his council in enforcing this policy, silent resistance from chiefs and commoners was widespread, and most farmers simply refused to follow instructions provided by the colonial office.

This was an important moment in colonial policy; for the first time the issue of transforming subsistence farmers into petty commodity producers came to the fore, a challenge that continues to reappear in development programme after development programme up to the present day. Swazi historian Hamilton Simelane provides a convincing argument explaining the reluctance of chiefs and farmers to comply with colonial plans:

Whenever the actions of the colonial government concerned land, peasants were reluctant to comply. The Swazi considered that Europeans had tricked them out of their land. As a result, they were reluctant to introduce European farming methods and improvements for fear of being robbed of their land.^{ix}

What is important to remember is that such fears are widespread today. Many development projects on customary tenure land (formally known as Swazi Nation Land) have huge problems in delivery due to silent resistance by rural dwellers who do not want to lose control over their land.

Just before World War II the first major non agricultural enterprise in Swaziland opened. Havelock Mine (later renamed Bulembu) was a large asbestos mine. The opening was just in time to supply the Allies with asbestos, and the mine was the first significant company tax contributor in the country.

After the war ended the British saw Swaziland's large-scale foreign investment in terms of agribusiness. Some capital intensive projects were on a vast scale, these were started by the Colonial Development Corporation from 1948 onwards. Usutu Pulp established one of the largest artificial forests in the world at Mhlambanyatsi and once the trees had matured, a pulp mill at Bhunya. In the north-east of the country, a major canal carried water from the Komati to the very fertile basalt soils in the lowveld for irrigation, establishing the sugar industry at Tshaneni and Mhlume.

On a much smaller scale there were also efforts to address the worsening conditions of rural Swazis with the ambitious Native Land Settlement Scheme, from 1948 to 1954. The colonials wanted to create a class of petty commodity producers firmly

inserted into the formal economy and outside the reach of the customary system, by giving them sole rights to their plots which would eventually lead to full individual tenure. 346 078 acres of land was made available for this purpose, from crown land and land purchased from settlers. Strict conditions on usage imposed by government - including limitations on the number of cattle per plot - made Swazis reluctant to join. By the end of 1950 less than 3000 people lived on the allocated plots, against a projected goal of 27 000. The king and the chiefs did little to encourage the uptake of these plots, as the land was not under customary tenure, and the scheme fundamentally threatened both royal and the chiefs control over Swazis. The scheme was abandoned.

Ultimately the land originally envisaged for small producers under individual tenure ended up under the firm control of the monarchy, as part of a larger transfer of land back to the Swazi nation prior to independence. Some of this land was allocated to chiefs to administer, but large tracts went under the direct control of royals, who used it for commercial production, often in alliance with whites and large-scale foreign capital. The sugar industry is perhaps the most successful example of the enduring alliance persisting to the present day.

Independence regained: political freedom, economic dependence

Independence brought political freedom in the public political arena, but economic dependence and underdevelopment continued, albeit in somewhat changed forms. The prominence of British foreign capital in the formal sector was rapidly replaced by the dominance of South African capital. No radical redistributive policies were implemented. The monarchy, now in full control of the state, made it clear that the privileges accumulated by whites would not be under threat as long as they accepted political rule by the monarchy. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there was rapid economic growth largely fostered by South African investment (from the mid-1980s companies relocated to Swaziland to escape sanctions) but wages and working conditions for workers changed little, remaining at very low levels.

Overt forms of racism, like racial insults and racially discriminatory terms, were quickly curtailed, but subtle forms of racial discrimination in the private sector remained. Middle and top management continued for a long time to be dominated by

whites from colonial settler families in Swaziland and from South Africa. At the same time the public sector, as in other African countries after independence, rapidly localised and produced the creation of a small but growing middle class, which maintained extended family networks in the rural areas, but rooted itself in urban life.

Indigenous Swazi influence in the economy increased only among the royal elites, who continued their alliance with white capital via the royal investment fund Tibiyo Taka Ngwane. This produced a small elite of indigenous Swazis who controlled large tracts of land, and who shared the benefits of economic growth with whites and foreign capital. Asian traders and investors have also been increasing in significance, especially with the Taiwanese investment in textiles and clothing manufacturing from the 1990s through the first decade of the 2000s.

Recently localisation in the private sector has been slow. Some sectors, like the sugar industry, have made some progress especially since the demise of apartheid in neighbouring South Africa. Despite this, all key sectors of the formal economy are still characterised by a phenomenon known as the upward floating colour bar.^x This occurs when the number of black managers increases at the lower and middle level, but there is still a highly disproportionate amount of non-blacks in the upper tiers. We need to clarify here that by management we include not only line management (which is considered middle management) but also directors, top managers and all non-executive positions on company boards. Furthermore, evaluation of progress in localisation needs to include patterns of ownership, as ownership is a strong indicator of effective control, and in small and medium-scale businesses owners are in most cases the top managers of their companies.

While the number of black Swazi managers has substantially increased at the lower and middle levels of management, whites and other expats of various nationalities continue to occupy a highly disproportionate number of top positions as managers and business owners. The only significant exception to this trend is the parastatals.

A good example of this structure is the Royal Swazi Sugar Corporation (RSSC). The RSSC is the biggest player in the Swazi sugar sector, running two of the three sugar mills in the country and overseeing more than 20 000 hectares of land dedicated to growing sugar cane. It is one of the few big private companies that have a large stake from indigenous elites, with majority ownership by the royal investment fund Tibiyo Taka Ngwane. Despite this, the RSSC board of directors is composed of three

whites, eight black Swazis and one Nigerian. The executive committee that manages all operations on the ground is composed of two whites and four black Swazis. The managing director, who is a member of the executive committee, is white. This means that whites occupy 28% of top management positions, while they constitute less than 3% of the total population.

Swazi ownership is prominent in small-scale businesses and in the informal economy, but there are many medium-scale businesses that continue to feature a strong presence of whites as owners and managers, for instance in the tourism, timber, handcraft and construction industries.

We often hear arguments made to justify this worrying situation with reference to an alleged lack of skill among black Swazis. The truth is that only 44.4% of manufacturing businesses and 23.6% of retail businesses have a top manager with an undergraduate degree or higher qualification – and this data only refers to the top manager in the company, not any other managers.^{xi} Meanwhile, there are thousands of Swazis with degrees from the University of Swaziland, South African universities and universities in the global North. They would provide a strong pool of applicants for management positions if they were offered the opportunity.

Another argument often made criticising concerns about low levels of localisation in the economy is that the civil service reaches near 100% levels of localisation. This however is problematic for two reasons. First, all current frameworks analysing the economy in academic and policy circles clearly separate business from government; while parastatals are business entities, the civil service is not. Secondly, with the exception of South Africa, which has a much bigger white population than Swaziland, all other countries in the region rapidly localised their civil services soon after independence. Localisation of the civil service was virtually complete in Swaziland several decades ago, there is nothing ‘new’ or ‘promising’ about this development.

The biggest wave of job growth in recent years is also sadly exemplary of the slow pace of localisation and the general continuation of very exploitative conditions for workers. The Taiwanese-owned textiles and clothing factories rarely employ black Swazi managers, preferring Taiwanese and Chinese managers. In the last couple of years the Taiwanese ownership in this sector has been decreasing, and many South African businesses have taken their place, taking advantage of cheap labour and

weak unions. Black Swazi managers are the exception rather than the rule, with whites in a dominant position as owners and managers.

In all sectors of the formal economy, real wages continue to be very low, much lower than in an already notoriously exploitative labour market like South Africa, and working conditions are often harsh and unsavoury.

Workers maintain rural ties, as they did during colonialism. They cannot really afford to buy land and housing in the private title deed market. Rural areas, despite their declining productivity in subsistence agriculture, still offer some buffer from urban poverty caused by very low wages. Many Swazi households engage in informal businesses cutting across rural and urban spaces to supplement their meagre wages and limited subsistence production. The state has not done well in public service delivery. While improvements have been made, 33.5% of rural Swazis do not have access to clean drinking water, a major factor further contributing to disease and poverty.^{xii} Only 35.2% of the overall population has access to electricity.^{xiii}

This type of economy presents two major problems for development. First, economic growth is so unequally distributed that its impact on the wider populace, who are relying on very low wages or even lower earnings in the informal economy, is minimal. Second, the dependence on cash is a crucial factor for all strata of the population, so the meagre wages and informal economy springing from large-scale economic development play an important role in keeping this very unequal equilibrium. Yet the basic factors determining growth and decline in the formal markets are outside the control of Swazis – rich or poor, politically connected or not.

The main drivers of growth are low wages, low levels of industrial strife due to increasingly ineffective unions, and external market conditions influenced by fluctuations in demand in importing countries and international trade agreements. Entire industries exploiting cheap and precarious labour can come and go in a few months, as the recent exclusion of Swaziland from the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) shows. AGOA guaranteed preferential tariffs for textiles and clothing products manufactured in Swaziland for sale in the US markets.

The persistence of inequality and economic exclusion

It is clear that without a wider understanding of the economic structure of the country and its dependence on foreign capital, we can't really address the root causes of underdevelopment. The legacy of the colonial system is crucial here. We need to understand the role of race, but also other factors. Setting aside for a moment the continued importance of race and ethnicity in the redistribution of power and wealth in the private sector, there is something deeply structural that the economy has inherited from the colonial system, with very few significant changes. The formal economy is geared for production for external markets. Some of the wealth is accumulated by a small wealthy elite at the national level, but most of it is in the hands of multinational capital. The local population sees very few benefits from this model, at the same time it provides the cheap labour required for production. This latter aspect is changing somewhat, as capital-intensive changes in production are reducing labour needs.

While the national leaders certainly have some responsibility, it is clear by looking at the wider picture in Africa that they can do little to modify the basic terms of this raw deal. The levers of economic and institutional power to determine the shape of the national economy are elsewhere. The terms of international trade are negotiated at international institutions - even much bigger African countries have very little influence on the final outcome.

The bottom line from the perspective of most Swazis is that wages have remained very low and exclude them from the benefits of economic development. They do not have access to credit lines in the banks, and cannot rely on savings to accumulate wealth to ensure a sustainable future for their children. The economy is characterised by a substantial gap between the upper-middle classes - who can meaningfully participate in consumption and accumulation of wealth in the formal sector - and the majority of the population which is excluded from this due to their very limited buying power. Economists refer to this phenomenon as economic dualism.^{xiv}

This is bad news not only for those marginalised by this system, in the longer-term it is bad news for business as well. When a substantial number of people in the lower income classes see their earnings substantially raised, they can buy more goods. This drives the expansion of the formal sector further, helping the state enlarging its

tax revenue base and its capacity to deliver public services. This virtuous circle has occurred historically only in some economies; mostly in Europe but also in Australia and parts of East Asia. Economies like Swaziland continue to be trapped in a pattern of low levels of economic development of the formal sector and widespread exclusion of the majority of the population from middle class consumption. More worryingly, the rise of economic inequality brought about by free market reforms throughout the world is producing new and dangerous forms of dualism in the global North as well.^{xv}

For as long as large-scale businesses in Swaziland base their operations on cheap labour and limited social inclusion of local communities, the benefits of economic growth for the majority will be few. However the side-effects of low wages, and environmental and health hazards brought about by large-scale industrial operations, will continue to be many.

There is high variability in working conditions covering dignified treatment of workers, health and safety standards and levels of workplace stress. Unfortunately, widespread low wages across all workplaces tend to blur the distinction between good and bad employers. This creates negative reputations for those who are on the better end of the spectrum. This is something important to remember when assessing the development outcomes of businesses which have obtained Fair Trade certification, for instance.

The paradox of tradition: the protective function of customary tenure

It should be clearer now why stereotypical representations of Swazi workers as 'inefficient' or 'incompetent' and the attribution of these traits to 'culture', that are unfortunately still widespread in the business and development sectors, tend to obscure the history and contemporary reality of exploitation. Many Swazi workplaces are battlefields, where management is often carried out through authoritarian methods in pushy and highly inappropriate ways that harm the dignity of workers as persons. Even in workplaces where more respectful relations occur, wages are still so low that there can be no reasonable expectation of high levels of workers' commitment.

Likewise one cannot meaningfully talk about the development of entrepreneurship and leadership skills without mentioning the fact that black Swazis continue to be exposed to subtle and less subtle forms of racial discrimination in the private sector. Until more effort is put into localisation, it will be difficult to attract and retain talented black Swazis in the private sector. Within the civil service and parastatals there are other obstacles; many complain of high levels of nepotism – similar complaints are made about white-dominated companies as well. It should be noted however that the rapid expansion of the civil service since independence – a common trend across post-colonial African countries – has provided the impetus for the growth of a middle class of skilled Swazis who otherwise would struggle to find opportunities in the private sector.

Thousands of people with university degrees and higher qualifications often leave for South Africa. Despite similar obstacles, South Africa offers higher wages and far more opportunities, given its much bigger market size. Those who have not been adequately supported and lucky enough to be able to make it to higher education are likely to disappear into the masses of exploited workers or unemployed youth.

It would be a mistake to discard the system sustained by customary tenure in rural areas as merely a haven of poverty and underdevelopment. This system infiltrates and overlaps with the formal system at all levels, both in urban and rural areas, and performs an important function of social protection from the negative effects of the unregulated expansion of large-scale formal markets.

We can now go back to the initial myths on culture that we were trying to debunk. The customary system is not sustained by some abstract cultural programme passively inculcated into people's minds as a static and inescapable condition of life. Rather, it is a lively and dynamic result of adaptation, interaction and resistance to historical, political and economic developments largely influenced by the imperial project in the past and current global trends in the world economy today.

While few Swazis are ardent traditionalists in ideology and outlook, most are embedded in social and economic relations that connect them to the customary system. The key resource here is land under customary tenure. Any Swazi has the right to land under customary tenure by paying allegiance to a chief – the practice is called *kukhonta*. The customary rural areas are still so central to Swazi livelihoods today that according to the 2007 census about 78% of Swazis live in rural areas.

While the rest are classified as urban residents, most of them keep strong links with a rural homestead. This piece of land is crucial to shield most Swazis from outright destitution. They get it at a minimal price, a one-off payment to the chief in the order of a few thousand emalangeneni or through inheritance, and they can keep it indefinitely and pass it on to their kin. In practice, an informal market has grown where people can sell their plots if they decide to move elsewhere.

Despite concerns from international institutions like the IMF and World Bank about the security of tenure, customary tenure is generally secure and has *de facto* evolved into a vernacular form of private property. Infrequent evictions are connected to disputes between chiefs over boundaries. But, all in all, most Swazis feel that they are much more secure under this mixed system of individual and communal relations than they would be in a formal market where they have little buying power to stop the advance of large scale capitalist speculation.

With the constant growth of the informal economy as a way to compensate for the lack of jobs and poor wages, there are increasing overlaps between the customary system and formal markets, or what the academic literature often calls vernacular markets. For instance many Swazis build houses in their backyards in areas under customary tenure that are near the main urban and industrial centres, and then rent these to migrant workers and other urban dwellers. Customary tenure gives a precious and scarce resource to Swazis that not only provides a safety net from bouts of unemployment and a place to retire to, but is also a resource that can be used to produce alternative sources of income, including agricultural activities like growing crops and rearing livestock.

There is no doubt that the customary system was initially enforced by colonial rule as a 'reserve' to segregate and relegate the majority of the population, as well as to stifle any attempt to rise to the status of the controlling white minority. The paradox is that this system was gradually appropriated by the discriminated people to pursue their own interests - and this continues today. Certainly there are major constraints, but people do not just passively wait for external help; they actively manoeuvre the few resources they have to aim for a better life. Many of these aspirations are broken by conditions of poverty, but nonetheless most people try - and many are successful - in creating better conditions for themselves and their families.



Urban sitting room with beds.



Mixed purpose housing near Matsapha.

Custom is central to how these relations and economic activities develop, but not in the way envisaged by the static concepts of culture we have briefly described in the beginning. *Emasiko emaswati*, loosely translated from SiSwati as ‘the customs of the Swazis’, refers to a flexible and shifting set of practices that change over time and adapt to changing circumstances. The way traditional courts settle disputes focuses on process and the achievement of social consensus in the community, rather than the fixed application of universal rules to individuals separated from their social ties. Proverbs and accounts of previous similar situations from members of the community help the chief and his court to find a suitable solution that is not merely punitive, but usually involves both parties in a commitment to restore relations and enables a healthy society to continue. What matters most are the relationships between individuals, cutting across age, gender, race and religion. To sever or ignore these ties in the name of abstract individual rights is in itself seen as going against the grain of the values of social harmony and peaceful living.

Persons are not seen, as in the Western tradition, as separate autonomous individuals. Rather, persons are constituted by a bundle of relationships, they are intrinsically connected to other people, most especially kin, but also to neighbours and the souls and legacies of dead ancestors and prominent national heroes. An ethics of mutual care is at the basis of social reproduction: all humans deserve to have their basic needs attended to, including food and shelter, and it is the community’s responsibility to make sure that the more vulnerable and destitute are taken care of. In this sense, deep economic inequalities without some form of redistribution are seen as extremely selfish behaviour and ultimately acting against the healthy reproduction of community and society.

It is acknowledged that people struggle over scarce resources in often extreme conditions, and individual drive and merit are recognised as forces that drive economic activities and social and political matters. However, people are often reminded of their responsibility to their kin and wider society. These important social values are often critiqued and discarded by mainstream development speak as obstacles to economic development and an archaic remnant of a static culture. The criticisms miss the fact that these values perform an important protective role, shielding people from complete dispossession and the loss of human dignity.

These idioms and practices of mutualism and reciprocity are often used to empower groups of individuals in collective economic activities. There is a logic employed to make claims on richer kin and powerful notables, like chiefs and royals, in order for them to give back food and resources to their poorer kin and subjects. The same logic is also employed by entrepreneurial individuals, family heads, and generally people with high status like chiefs and royals, to mobilise the labour of kin and community members for productive activities. People mobilise kin and neighbours to make their land productive; for instance to maximise maize production or to build houses at much lower costs than they could ever afford on the formal market.

While these logics and activities are often simplistically associated with 'Swazi culture', in reality the basic workings of this system extends to all realms of society, both in urban and rural settings, and well beyond the confines of traditionalist identities. These practices are part of a much wider Pan-African movement sustained by a pragmatic humanist philosophy that sustains dignity, identity and conviviality in hostile economic conditions. Africans across the continent have developed flexible mechanisms to deal with structural discrimination in order to appropriate and subvert the logics and rules imposed upon them by colonialism in the past, and by the structures of global capitalism now. Obviously countries and different geographic areas develop their own specific relations of society, politics and economy over time, but it is important to bear in mind that Swaziland is no isolated cultural enclave, but rather a place firmly inserted into regional and global relations. Swaziland is very much part of the world as we know it, and it is not an exotic curiosity leftover from an imaginary past.

There is no doubt that the flexible realm of custom has important connections to the political leadership of the country and the rule of the traditionalist monarchy. The monarchy has historically drawn from custom to develop an ideology for nation-building and for the maintenance of social order under its leadership.^{xvi} However, custom and its principles extend far beyond the realm of monarchic rule. Most Swazis continue to draw upon customary practices and idioms to pursue their own interests and aspirations outside the arena of national politics, where the debate is monopolised by the opposition between ardent supporters and critics of the monarchy. Most Swazis do not fit either side and maintain a detached perspective on these political fights. It is important that development practitioners and interested

citizens focus on the lives and aspirations of this 'silent' majority if they want to implement suitable development interventions.

Some recommendations for development knowledge and practice

The dominant principles and assumptions behind mainstream development knowledge, imported from the global North, are often at odds with the principles and workings of this grounded African humanism. They also tend to ignore the complex history of political, social and economic relations that have produced the current situation of underdevelopment and poverty in Swaziland and other African countries. We can now make a few recommendations for development practitioners, policy makers and citizens who want to engage with the challenges of development in Swaziland.

Making development local

As obvious as it sounds, the main theme that cuts across this discussion is the need to make development local and effective for people in Swaziland. There is no doubt that development organisations should make an effort to localise their staff and management as much as they can. The upper levels of management and decision-making of many development organisations are still disproportionately occupied by whites and foreigners of different nationalities and ethnic and racial groups. While this mirrors similar trends in the private sector to some extent, it is also an inevitable side-effect of a field that is largely controlled by foreign donors, and one where a large proportion of skilled and managerial staff continues to be recruited in international networks in the global North.

It is important that black Swazis are given as much space as possible in this process. There are already a wide number of talented people from local communities involved in development and with the right emphasis and support, they can drive localisation further. If development practitioners are to act as role models for the people they work with, then there is a need for their management structures to be demographically representative of the larger population.

This does not mean that foreigners or people from minority demographic groups should not continue their meaningful participation in these matters. But the balance of power needs to shift until it becomes normal for managerial posts to be occupied by black Swazis, making it easier for foreigners and people from other groups to interact meaningfully without the burden of being constantly questioned as agents of external forces that are not in line with local interests.

The issue cannot be narrowly confined to demographic factors. The external nature of development knowledge affects all development practitioners formally trained and educated in institutions that continue to teach this kind of knowledge. There is a deeper need to transform the mind-set of development knowledge and practice and to look at solutions that emerge from the local context, driven by people on the ground. We need to abandon the assumption that anything from the outside, especially if it is from the North, is better than anything coming from Swaziland. This is a much more difficult process than driving localisation through a narrow quota approach. It can only be carried out in alliance with like-minded people, organisations and networks across other parts of Africa and the global South which are also struggling with similar issues. Ultimately it is an example where an emergent international network of locally-embedded people and institutions can make headway to subvert and change the realities of development interventions largely imposed by top-down institutions controlled by few. A good example is the World Social Forum, an annual meeting where people and organisations from across the world discuss and develop alternative models of development in line with the needs and aspirations of the global South.

In terms of knowledge production, there are a vast number of local researchers who are producing different kinds of relevant knowledge who should be recognised for their passion, rigour and indefatigable work. Some are local intellectuals living, like most Swazis, outside the comforts of middle class life, others are university professors in Swaziland, South Africa and overseas. Many others are involved in development work in different parts of Swaziland. They are already making an impact and it is key that their knowledge is taken as a major driver of new development thinking and different ways of conceiving and devising interventions. Our own research and the summary of findings presented here would not have been possible without their vital contribution.

Until development practice and interventions stop being perceived by many Swazis as external and 'foreign' to their interests and aspirations, the long-term impact of development projects on the social and economic landscape is likely to be limited.

A consideration of historical developments is crucial in this regard. Since the early days of colonialism, Swazis have developed what anthropologist Laurel Rose calls 'the politics of harmony':

Swazi rulers persuaded commoners that all Swazis should display harmonious behaviour, and thus cooperative and conciliatory behaviour, if they, as Swazis, wanted to avoid further intervention in their affairs.^{xvii}

This conciliatory and harmonious behaviour continues to distinguish the interactions with development projects of many Swazi rural dwellers and traditional authorities up to the present. But as Rose poignantly shows in her study of disputes on customary land tenure, it is far from a real show of commitment. In public meetings with development practitioners, authorities and community members will in most cases express agreement with development interventions. But in practice they will consciously refuse to buy into the proposed interventions to keep at bay what they see as fundamentally 'foreign' forces - and thus retain autonomy and control over their land. This is a well known strategy to avoid overt confrontations, and has very little to do with the widespread notion among development practitioners and policy makers that there are cultural traits that inhibit people from succeeding.

These subtle politics are very difficult to unveil - and they are a very effective tool protecting people from undue intrusion in their affairs. The only alternative is to change the development frameworks and the assumptions, and thus the way in which local partnerships are carried out. To dispel fears and the quick activation of 'harmony' strategies, development practitioners need to build trust: this takes time and effort - and a substantial change in symbolic and managerial behaviour.

The need for flexibility and a holistic approach to development

Flexibility is at the basis of the Swazi social system, this is how people have been able to retain a relative degree of autonomy from the harsh external constraints

imposed upon them. People have to make do with what they have. They work in uncertain and precarious conditions and they cannot easily rely on linear planning as a successful economic strategy. Working with few material resources, people already know that plan A is rarely going to work. They know that an overly structured approach is actually detrimental to achieving their goals. A key ability consists in knowing how to improvise in critical situations and how to harness the complex mix of conditions and situations to one's own advantage. This is in itself a major skill that those who live in highly structured and bureaucratised environments usually lack.

Human relations are crucial in the life lived on the boundaries between formal and informal, between rural and urban, between custom and the hyper-modernity of capitalism. Establishing clear boundaries between homesteads and nuclear families does not benefit people who have little in terms of material resources. Boundaries between different individuals, different families and different owners are blurred in complex mixes of social and communal, sustained by an ethic of mutual care and collective responsibility. Flexibility and ambiguity over ownership, division of labour and other economic productive tasks are not the result of low levels of formal education, as some development narratives want us to believe. They instead constitute a conscious collective strategy to escape the attempt by big capital and international institutions to constrain people in the straightjacket of the 'poor'.

If development activities continue to rely primarily on bureaucratic planning embedded in a system that prioritises individual rights and private property, local communities will tend to resist them. One needs to acknowledge that most formal development interventions have strict requirements from donors to follow bureaucratic procedures of accountability. However development practitioners should be able to devise interventions that accommodate both the requirements of funders - and the complex and shifting socio-economic reality of the people who are the target of the interventions. Without a radical rethinking in this direction, most development actions are likely to have a limited success in terms of the real goals they aim to achieve - while often they succeed in bureaucratic terms, by the standards of reporting set by funders.

It follows that interventions need to take into account the complex set of different social and economic factors at play in the lives of the communities targeted. No matter how specific an intervention is (i.e. bringing clean water or building a school),

people who live in these communities have long been thinking and acting across a wide variety of domains which are conventionally separated by dominant northern knowledge frameworks. Precisely because the system underpinned by these northern categories has not worked for them, people have mobilised social, psychological and economic resources across a wide spectrum of institutions. These include extended families, informal savings associations, religious organisations, but also more formal institutions like trade unions and civil society support groups. People's lives occur at the intersection of these different spheres and development knowledge and practice need to consider these as integral to their interventions.

Going beyond abstract ideals of democracy: a context-specific approach to human rights and equality

One major challenge for development interventions is applying basic principles of democratic participation and social equality within their own operations. The problem is not with the principles of democracy and human rights per se - but with the way much development discourse and practice tends to uncritically adopt these principles as part of an abstract ideal to be imported from the more 'enlightened' liberal democracies of the North into the local context. Anthropological research has clearly shown that interventions in the name of freedom, democracy and human rights across Africa have often created highly unequal outcomes, perpetuating the problems they aimed to solve.^{xviii} This literature cautions against the advocacy of abstract ideals of democracy without looking at practical ways to make effective and incremental change in line with local interests. While we should not abandon the principles, we need to think about their implementation in a different way.

One example is the emphasis on the widespread incidence of gender inequality in Swaziland. While there are worrying patterns that need to be taken into account - especially when it comes to abuse and violence on women and children - the expert accounts rarely take a comparative attitude. And when they do, they rarely include the incidence of similar patterns and statistics in the global North. Structural factors imposed by the global inequality of the current world order are also too often glossed over. The focus tends to remain on cultural influences and local conditions, which are then blamed for such inequalities. Another problem with such accounts is that the frames applied to analyse the social situation and identify gender inequalities are

influenced by assumptions about equality and gender relations that rarely hold in societies across the world.

While sources of gender inequality are rightly pointed out, the importance that local views give to women is often forgotten. Women have substantial power in the homestead and urban domestic economy, through control of agricultural and other informal activities for instance. In the past the levers of administrative power in a polygynous homestead resided in the mother of the male head, somewhat mirroring the dual gender balance of the monarchic system, where the Queen Mother is, at least in principle, the counterbalance to the power of the King. In general, these complex histories of gender relations are ignored in favour of simplistic models exported from abroad that would easily explain and map the situation providing a quick analysis for developing interventions.

Similar observations could be made about the much talked need for democratic procedures in community organisations and development projects. A focus on 'culture' once again tends to stereotype Swazis as being inherently prone to submit to established hierarchies and having little wish to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives. The reality is very different. While customary practices favour a notion of respect – *inhlonipho* in SiSwati – that socialises people into making overt shows of respect and acceptance of authority figures like chiefs and princes, this is very far from a blind compliance to any capricious order from above. Often, even in organisations outside the formal realm of custom, people with status and charisma talk the most and communicate decisions in formal meetings. However these decisions are very rarely taken without participation from members of an organisation. Most decisions are effective only if they have a widespread consensus. This is usually established informally beforehand outside formal meetings, for instance when neighbours in a rural area casually meet or in work breaks where farming cooperatives are concerned.^{xix}

Rather than applying blanket notions of democratic participation and equality, development practitioners should be attuned to these subtle mechanisms. Swazis highly value the freedom to express their opinions and are not happy to uncritically accept decisions imposed upon them without consultation, or that go against their own individual and collective interests. Ideals of equality, respect, mutual care and

participation are all present in different ways in the local context, they are not something that needs to be imported.

Beyond narrow conceptions of 'civil society': redefining development to include local institutions and emergent world society

Mainstream development narratives frequently mention 'civil society' as a crucial engine for development. However, civil society tends to be narrowly defined to fit the ideal model of northern liberal democracies. Civil society is commonly understood to include NGOs, trade unions, churches and human rights advocacy organisations, among others. But we rarely hear of the inclusion of other equally vital local institutions and sites of associational life like informal saving funds, traditional courts or the age regiments. We need to widen the scope to come up with a much broader view of society to include important local institutions that underpin the everyday life of people and their economic and social relations. *Lobola* (brideprice), for instance, continues to play an important role in Swaziland and the rest of southern Africa as a form of alliance between the extended families of the bride and groom. It fosters mutual exchange of labour and goods through alternative routes to cash accumulation in the formal sector.

Kinship groups and kinship idioms extended to neighbours and other rural dwellers enable a whole host of ties of solidarity and social bonding that can be conducive to social and economic development. Rather than defining a community as 'poor' in accordance with outside bureaucratic abstract standards, we should focus on the inherent resilience of local institutions and social formations in spite of the difficult conditions imposed by large-scale markets and inadequate public services. Society, rather than big markets or the state, is the primary locus where development thinking and interventions should occur. Society should not be defined in isolationist self-sufficient terms either: social formations negotiate at all times with big companies and states, and they need to mobilise essential large-scale infrastructures to provide for the needs of its members. For instance, M-Pesa, the mobile banking system started by Vodacom in Kenya and now in Swaziland, is a private market initiative that has brought great benefits to a wide number of people who would not otherwise have easy ways to transfer small amounts of money across wide distances quickly and at a minimal cost.

In all these cases, we need to start from what people already do on the ground and the kind of economic and social relations they are involved with. Only once we have learnt enough about them, can we then develop solutions to improve their livelihoods in partnership with local communities. Solutions that take into account real society in everyday life, rather than abstract models of how societies should work, are likely to be more successful, and ultimately more participatory, than top-down solutions subscribing to principles that are external to the society in question.^{xx}

Abstract models of the kind propagated by mainstream development narratives tend to miss the fact that local institutions and people are embedded in wider regional and global networks. Many Swazis come in and out of South Africa daily, contributing to a constant exchange of ideas, goods, money and other forms of capital. It is the same for all the foreigners who live in Swaziland and travel regularly outside the country, be it to Mozambique or as far as UK or the US. People are constantly in touch with wider realities beyond national borders through the increasing spread of social media. Even when people use local idioms to express their needs, they do so with this bigger world in mind, comparing themselves to other people around the region, thinking about what might or might not work in Swaziland and why.

There is ultimately no 'local' society isolated from the global, rather they are two sides of the same multi-faceted world we all live in. The rapid spread of digital communication is making people think much more widely about their problems and possible solutions on a global scale. Keith Hart, a leading economic anthropologist and development scholar, refers to this formation as an 'emergent world society'.^{xxi} Development thinking and practice should occur at this interface, where the local meets the global, and where productive spaces for this world society have been meaningfully built by people on the ground. For this space to be truly emancipatory and non-racial, people living in local communities need to drive decisions and interventions that deeply affect their lives and aspirations, in alliance with like-minded people and organisations from across the world.

ⁱ Source: CIA World Factbook, global ranking of countries by GINI index. Accessed online 9 July 2014 at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html>

ⁱⁱ Two reports appeared in September 2013 just before the final round of parliamentary elections. They have been pivotal in putting the spotlight back on Swaziland, the question of democracy and the country's debt crisis in the international media. The first report, *Swaziland: Southern Africa's Forgotten Crisis*, was released by Chatham House (available online at <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/194142#>).

The second report, *Swaziland: a Failed Feudal State*, was released by Freedom House (available online at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/swaziland-failed-feudal-state>). On the question of political change in Swaziland see also Vito Laterza's essay "Swaziland: liberal democracy and its discontents", published in October 2013 by Al Jazeera English, available online at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/10/swaziland-liberal-democracy-discontents-201310111365375468.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ For an analysis of the deeper economic structures affecting the rise of HIV/AIDS in Swaziland and brought about by recent development in global capitalism, see the insightful article by Jason Hickel, "Neoliberal plague: the political economy of HIV transmission in Swaziland", published in 2012 by the Journal of Southern African Studies. It is available online at http://www.academia.edu/1830636/Neoliberal_Plague_The_Political_Economy_of_HIV_Transmission_in_Swaziland

^{iv} A special thanks goes to *sahee* director Cyril Alther for his continuing support and constructive input throughout the writing up stage of the project.

^v We would like to express our immense gratitude in particular to Mlungisi Dlamini, Mabandla Wiseman Dlamini, Mandla Shabangu, the late Zandile Dlamini, Nathi Motsa and Mncedisi Zwane, who have been crucial research collaborators throughout different stages of our research.

^{vi} On crucial historical events of this period, we recommend reading Philip Bonner's landmark book *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: the evolution and dissolution of the nineteenth-century Swazi state*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1983.

^{vii} A highly recommended reading on the integration of Swazi labour into the regional capitalist economy and the early establishment of the colonial economy in Swaziland is Jonathan Crush's book *The Struggle for Swazi Labour, 1890-1920*, published in 1987 by McGill-Queen's University Press.

^{viii} We recommend reading the most exhaustive study to date of racial discrimination in the colonial and early post-colonial periods in Swaziland, the doctoral work of Swazi historian Nhlanhla Dlamini, *The legal abolition of racial discrimination and its aftermath: the case of Swaziland, 1945-1973*, available online at <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/5833>

^{ix} Extract from p.78 of Hamilton Simelane's book *Colonialism and Economic Change in Swaziland 1940-1960*, published by JANyeko Publishing Centre. The book is recommended for understanding the beginning of large-scale economic development in Swaziland.

^x The concept was coined by sociologist Michael Burawoy in his study of localisation in the Zambian copper mines after independence, published in 1972 by the University of Zambia as a book, *The Colour of Class on the Copper Mines: from African advancement to Zambianization* (available online at <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/books.htm#color>). A recent study of this phenomenon is by labour sociologist Andries Bezuidenhout, "Post-colonial workplace regimes in the engineering industry in South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe", published in 2004 by the LSE Crisis State Programme (available online at <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28207/1/wp53.pdf>).

^{xi} Source: World Bank Swaziland Enterprise Survey 2006. You can register online free and get access to the full data set here: <https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/portal/>

^{xii} The technical definition is that 33.5% of rural residents have access to an unimproved drinking water source. CIA Factbook on Swaziland.(Accessed online 21 March 2014) <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wz.html>

^{xiii} Source: Swaziland, 2013 Sustainability Index report, World Energy Council. <http://www.worldenergy.org/data/sustainability-index/country/swaziland/2013/>

^{xiv} The pioneer of the economic dualism paradigm was Nobel-prize winning West Indian economist W. Arthur Lewis, who wrote, among other things, a short and enlightening book that puts this thinking in a global historical perspective, *The Evolution of the International Economic Order*, published in 1978 by Princeton University Press. A recent proponent of this framework in relation to southern Africa is the late Zambian economist Guy Mhone, who wrote the influential paper "Enclivity and constrained labour absorptive capacity in southern African economies", published by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, available online at <http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/%28httpPublications%29/B81999299E53F9ECC1256BC90047A536?OpenDocument>

^{xv} A compelling analysis on these trends and the inherent social and political dangers of widening economic inequalities is businessman Nick Hanauer's article "The pitchforks are coming... for us plutocrats", published by Politico Magazine in July 2014, available online at <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/the-pitchforks-are-coming-for-us-plutocrats-108014.html>

^{xvi} On this aspect, we recommend an excellent article by historian Hugh MacMillan, "Swaziland: decolonisation and the triumph of 'tradition'", published in the Journal of Modern African Studies in 1985.

^{xvii} The excerpt is from p.3 of anthropologist Laurel Rose's book *The Politics of Harmony: land dispute strategies in Swaziland*, published in 1992 by Cambridge University Press. It is recommended reading for anybody who wants to understand the complex and subtle workings of the customary land tenure system in Swaziland.

^{xviii} One of the key books in this literature is *Prisoners of Freedom: human rights and the African poor* by anthropologist Harri Englund, published by the University of California Press in 2006. This is highly recommended for development practitioners who wish to engage critically with the ideologies and politics of development in Africa.

^{xix} On the organisational logics and decision-making processes in farming cooperatives working at the boundary between the customary system and private property, we recommend Paul Bowen's book *A Longing for Land: tradition and change in a Swazi agricultural community*, published by Avebury in 1993.

^{xx} The approach developed by the Human Economy Programme at the University of Pretoria focuses on these often neglected aspects of the development enterprise. See in particular Keith Hart's "Manifesto for a human economy" (published online in 2013 at <http://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/seminar/Hart2013.pdf>) and Vito Laterza's article "Some notes towards a human economy approach", published by the journal *Anthropology Southern Africa* in 2013 (available online at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5zKxyOoBS46Nk53eFpoSThUbFk/edit?usp=sharing>).

^{xxi} We recommend Keith Hart's essay "Kant, anthropology and the new human universal", published online by *Anthropologies* in 2011. Available at <http://www.anthropologiesproject.org/2011/03/kant-anthropology-and-new-human.html>

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