



Ethics in Wine Making

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Historical Background

Women who live and work on commercial farms in South Africa today remains one of the most marginalised and vulnerable demographic groups in South Africa society. The women of farms Project (WFP) is a South African NGO working to empower and strengthen farmwomen who live and work on farms to claim their rights and fulfil their needs. WFP has a vision of a society that treats women who live and work on farms with dignity and respect.

Environmental Justice

The advent of democracy for the majority of South Africans was met with euphoria. The newly democratically elected government of 1994 had the huge task of improving the quality of life for all South Africans especially those constituencies that had long been marginalised. The achievement of these goals necessitated a restructuring of the public sector, a radical departure from the apartheid regime. However, the emergence of democracy in SA coincided with the rise of globalisation and economic liberalism based on market fundamentalism — a global order that advocates for the liberalisation and deregulation of state economies, promoting large scale privatisation in sectors of South African industries. These domestic and international developments saw SA in a peculiar position; ensuring equitable growth and development whilst simultaneously pursuing a globally competitive economy, would indeed prove to be a considerable challenge ^[1].

The perceived failure of the more socially democratic Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) geared towards improving economic growth, social delivery, and employment opportunities, served as an impetus for the introduction of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) economic policy framework. However, as Mhone and Edigheji suggests, a critical question remains as to whether the objectives of development, democratisation and good governance can be met in the context of globalisation with a policy framework informed by the Washington Consensus^[2]. Thus, while some have welcomed the prospects of what Bond refers to as the 'spread of exploitative economies' and 'the exposure of natural resources from the South to the pull of the global markets', others have maintained that it will only perpetuate the inequalities

of the past ^[43]. Bond argues that the adoption of a neo-liberal approach to sustainable development has done nothing but disservice to the vast majority of poor South Africans ^[44].

As such, in the past decade a new dimension of environmentalism has emerged in South Africa. Historically the perception of environmental movement was seen as a white middleclass movement – more concerned about plants than people. The contemporary environmental justice movements seek to address the political and social dimensions of environmental protection and link these to pertinent issues such as land use, trade, gender, urbanisation, workplace safety, employment, food security, education and democracy and the like. This list alone is not nearly prescriptive of the range of issues that currently face South Africa today, where the majority of the population struggle to have their basic needs such as water and electricity met ^[45]. One may ask how sustainable development can be achieved when the vast majority of the population is excluded from even getting basic services. Neo-liberalism has demonstrated its failure in distributing resources fairly and equally amongst all South Africans. As Butler further argues, in the South African context, a neo-liberal approach has undermined any notion of good governance on the part of the elected government because of the resultant exacerbation of inequalities and poverty among marginalised groups. These are the very groups previously disadvantaged under apartheid, such as black South Africans, women, rural people etc. ^[46].

What is Environmental Justice?

The conceptualisation of sustainable development has come a point where the crisis of nature needs to be balanced with the crisis of justice. It has become common knowledge that human activities, especially those of industrial nature have brought about widespread environmental destruction. However, this pursuit of development primarily driven by aspirations towards rapid economic growth has also resulted in environmental injustice. The consequences of this development are largely felt by poor constituencies whilst the rich continue to reap benefits ^[47].

Groundwork, a leading South African NGO dealing with environmental justice issues, offers the following working definition of environmental justice:

Environmental justice obtains where relations between people, within and between groups of people, and between people and their environments are fair and equal, allowing all to define and achieve their aspirations without imposing unfair, excessive or irreparable burdens or externalities on others or their environments, now and in the future.

Essentially, environmental justice deals with assessing whether such mutually reinforcing relationships amongst and between society and the environment are fostered. The basis of environmental justice therefore lies in the adoption of appropriate policies that will

produce relationships that will allow all members of society to realise their rights without infringing upon the rights of others ^[8].

Human Rights and Environmental Justice

Human Rights are broadly grouped into two categories: The first group of rights also referred to as first generation rights are those pertaining to civil liberties e.g. right to vote and freedom of speech. The second group of rights are those related to economic, social and cultural rights and often referred to as second generation rights, including rights such as the rights to work and to fair working conditions, rights to decent standards of living (water, housing, health care, etc.) and the like. As argued by Groundwork, socio-economic rights are key to environmental justice. However, along with these they include property rights as it has a profound effect in environmental justice ^[9].

Property rights have become of utmost importance in environmental justice because it concerns the rights to resources of production (i.e. land and/or natural resources), capital and labour and of consumption. In the Bill of Rights, property is defined as 'those resources that are generally taken to constitute a person's wealth', where the term person also include corporations. As Hallows and Butler argue, property can be anything that can be converted to money or that which provides an income. Property becomes wealth when it yields enough income to create a surplus, which is then re-invested to create more wealth. As such, the accumulation of wealth is ultimately based on people's labour. They argue that there two crucial things influencing human labour adversely; either limiting people's access to adequate resources to survive unless they work for 'persons' with accumulated property or through ensuring that wages are so that workers are not able to accumulate wealth. They further argue that the second condition in South Africa is atomically created given that a significant number of people have no property of their own and are unemployed. Thus, addressing property rights is crucial to furthering environmental justice rhetoric as it deals with how resources are distributed amongst people ^[10].

The adoption of GEAR and a neo-liberal agenda by the ANC-led government in South Africa has entrenched this country's position as a major global trade player. Trade today contributes a significant percentage to the South African GNP.

However, at a local level this opening up of the South African market has had far reaching negative impacts on many local industries such as textile, clothing and agriculture. Since 1994, there has been a significant decline in numbers of people employed in agriculture: from 1,219,648 in 1988 to 940,820 in 2002 (statistics SA, 2002).

These job-loses have served to undermine efforts to realise the constitutionally enshrined socio-economic rights of black South Africans. While most work on farms has historically been performed by permanent on-farm work force, with three quarters of work held by male workers, today as many as 60% of work in agriculture is temporary, with two thirds of temporary jobs held by women (Umhlaba, 2004).

Instead of creating jobs, commitment to trade liberalisation has resulted in decreases in employment. Hallows and Butler also assert that most local industries are increasingly outsourcing and subcontracting jobs thereby contributing to the general decline in work opportunities. As in the case for other vulnerable sectors, we have seen the concomitant casualisation and feminisation of the agricultural work force. A trend that started off being defined as an "atypical" employment category today represents the normative mode of labour contracting in the agricultural sector.

In absolute terms, women therefore occupy more jobs in commercial agriculture today than at any previous point in South African history. As the group who makes up the bulk of the seasonal labour force, it is women farm workers in South Africa who bear the brunt of this unequal trade regime. Despite their multiple burdens as mothers and care givers to the aged and sick (increasingly those who suffer from HIV/AIDS related illnesses), these women have become the temporary, casual workers with no long term security and weak bargaining position as labourers.

In the context of chronic poverty and structural unemployment, women are now in direct competition with men for jobs. Those who manage to hold on to their jobs, find their contracts restructured making the jobs even less secure. It is well known that as casual and seasonal workers, women do not enjoy the same levels of remuneration and non-wage benefits as their male counterparts. For the women without jobs, existence is narrowly confined to a dependence on tenuous patronage of male partner, the farmer or the state (through social security grants). So, despite an increase in the absolute number of women employed in agriculture, this has not translated into more secure livelihoods of women.

The dual process of neo-liberal economic reform and political democratisation therefore resulted in improved labour rights in terms of law, but a concomitant deterioration of working and living conditions of women farm workers and their families in real terms (WFP, 2003).

In their analysis of the wine and fruit industry in the Western Cape, Du Toit and Ewert provides evidence of the adverse effects brought about by current global imperatives. In these cases, upon accessing global markets dominated by Northern supermarket corporations, local producers were faced with complying with 'tough' quality and pricing standards that, simply put, diminished the size of their profits in increasing the cost of production. Caught in this dilemma, most producers transfer these costs to labour. Farmers have collectively cut off what is estimated to be about 20% of permanent labour. In a significant number of cases, wine and fruit producers have decreased the size of their labour force. In certain instances where they may have retained a few employees, the remainder is filled up by casual workers who often are women usually paid lower rates than men. This has been used as a means of reducing costs to production, as labour would be much cheaper. This loss of employment is not only about the loss in income but extends to the loss of housing entitlements that the producers had provided for the farmers whilst they were still permanent employees, so retrenched soon become homeless and seek refuge in one of the many informal settlements, which are by no means any measure of a good standard of living ¹¹¹.

End Notes

^[1] G. Mahone & O. Edigheji, 'Globalisation and the Challenges of Governance in the New South Africa: Introduction', in G. Mhone and O. Edigheji (eds), *Governance in the New South Africa: The challenges of globalization*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2003, p. 1-2.

^[2] Ibid, p.6.

^[3] P. Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002, p. 26.

^[4] P. Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002, p. 28.

^[5] K. Cole, 'Ideologies of Sustainable Development', in K. Cole (ed), *Sustainable development for a democratic South Africa*, London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 1994, p. 235.

^[6] M. Butler, 'The cost of living: How selling basic services excludes the poor', *South African people and environments in the global market*, South Africa: Groundwork, August 2002, p. 4.

^[7] D. Hallowes and M. Butler, *The Balance of Rights: The Groundwork Report*, 2004, p. 8.

^[8] Ibid, p. 15.

^[9] D. Hallowes and M. Butler, *The Balance of Rights: The Groundwork Report*, 2004, p. 28.

^[10] Ibid, pp. 33-35.

^[11] D. Hallowes and M. Butler, *The Balance of Rights: The Groundwork Report*, 2004, p. 59-60.