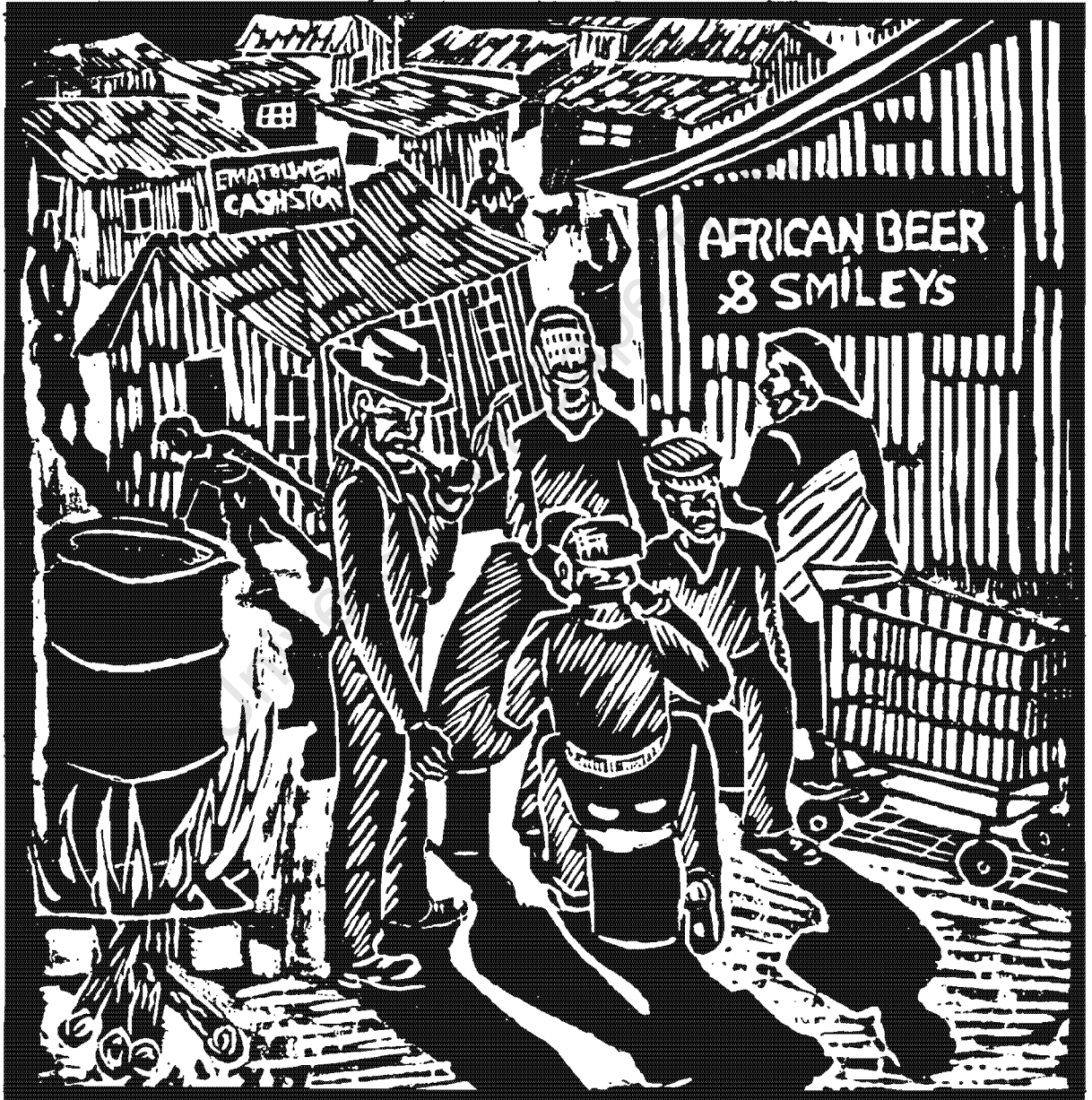
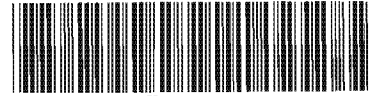


URBANISATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN NAMIBIA  
POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE RURAL-URBAN RELATIONSHIP

Briony Frances Liber

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Science, University of Cape Town, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Philosophy in Environmental Science.

Cape Town, 1998

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Masters of Philosophy in Environmental Science in the University of Cape Town. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Signed by candidate

Briony Frances Liber

20<sup>th</sup> day of July, 19 98.

## Abstract

*Central to a policy for sustainable urbanisation in Namibia, is the recognition of rural-urban relationships. The cross cutting spatial and sectoral issues, of circular migration need to be incorporated in an urbanisation policy. Government policies based on the assumptions of linear development theories such as 'urban bias', which isolate rural from urban as two mutually exclusive areas, mask the fact that poverty is experienced by urban and rural dwellers alike. At the crux of sustainable urbanisation in Namibia, is the ability of urban areas to absorb rapidly urbanising populations by way of provision of adequate urban infrastructure and services, housing and employment opportunities. In turn, this requires appropriate urban local governance, management and planning. The adoption of approaches which embody flexibility, adaptability, cooperation between the urban roleplayers, and speed of response are key to a sustainable urban environment.*

*In the absence of urban conditions which can support a rapidly increasing population, migrants and the urban poor are forced to maintain a foothold in both rural and urban areas as a mechanism of risk diversification and survival. Mere survival, as embodied in circular migration in Namibia, does not suggest a process which can attain economic, social and biophysical sustainability. The implication is that the longer the conditions of circular migration remain entrenched in Namibia, the less likely the attainment of conditions of sustainability, and the more likely the further degradation of the environment, which ironically would probably further necessitate the split of households across the spatial continuum.*

*Policies, such as Namibia's National Resettlement Policy, which target beneficiaries spatially and sectorally, tend not to have the expected benefits of poverty alleviation, and instead, often unintentionally, have the disbenefit of further entrenching poverty and circular migration. Fundamental then, to the sustainability of urbanisation in Namibia, is the integration of rural, urban and environmental policies, in turn requiring multi-sectoral and multi-spatial policies based on a thorough understanding of the forces underpinning circular migration.*

University of Cape Town

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## List of Abbreviations

BLA	Black Local Authority
CBO	Community-based organisation
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (Zimbabwe)
DFA	Development Facilitation Act
DLG	Developmental Local Government
LDO	Local Development Objective
MLRGH	Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing
MLRR	Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation
MSS	Metropolitan Sub-Structure
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NLNGF	National Local Government Negotiating Forum
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SMME	Small Medium and Micro Enterprise
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TLC	Transitional Local Council
TMC	Transitional Metropolitan Structure
UDS	Urban Development Strategy
UMP	Urban Management Programme
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
WADCO	Ward Development Committee

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*"Definitions based on a sharp distinction between urban and rural settlements often assume that the livelihoods of their inhabitants can be equally reduced to two main categories: agriculture based in rural areas, and a reliance on manufacture and services in urban centres... [however] ... straddling the rural-urban divide is, in some cases and for some groups, an important part of survival strategies. Policies which neglect this may increase their poverty and vulnerability" (Tacoli, 1998b).*

## 1.1 Introduction

Namibia is a land of vast disparities, socio-economically, geographically, and politically. In common with most Sub-Saharan African countries, Namibia (Figure 1.1) has had a long history of colonial domination. In combination with this, environmental degradation, war, political upheaval, and a rapidly growing population have taken their toll on the economy and the environment. On the eve of Independence in 1990, colonialism in Namibia had left a legacy of inequality and a dualistic economy. The differences between a white wealthy minority and a black subsistence majority, were visible. The legacy of segregation has been maintained, with race being replaced by *class* as a mechanism of division and land, in all its forms, remains the issue of contention (Werner, 1993). The issue of land was central to the war which culminated in the independence of Namibia in 1990 and access to land, specifically rural land, was identified as being a government priority in terms of alleviating poverty (National Planning Commission, 1995).

Spatially, Namibia remains a largely rural nation with up to seventy percent of the population considered to derive their livelihood directly from the land. However, this masks the fact that very few households actually survive solely from the produce of their land. The majority of rural households tend to supplement their subsistence incomes with other non-agricultural sources which include pensions, projects such as knitting and hair braiding and, significantly in terms of this thesis, maintaining a transient lifestyle between urban and rural areas in a bid to access off-farm employment (MPhil, 1998; Devereux and Næraa, 1996).

The fact that the majority of the Namibian population is spatially located in rural areas tends to hide two other very important themes which are essentially the subject of this thesis:

- Spatially-based and sectorally specific policies maintain and entrench the *status quo* of an unsustainable process of circular migration in Namibia;
- A lack of appreciation for, or understanding of, the intricacies of rural-urban relationships (which are social, economic, political, ecological, environmental and, biophysical) undermines the ability of households in Namibia, to improve beyond a subsistence lifestyle, with implications in terms of social, economic and ecological sustainability.



Policies of both the colonial and the independent Namibian governments have attempted to maintain a largely rural population. Under the colonial regime, the government was loathe to allow permanent urbanisation of the black population even though they formed an important source of urban labour (Simon, 1983; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). As such, policies forced migrants to maintain a transitional lifestyle, never gaining full acceptance into the urban economy, nor remaining completely in rural areas and thus having difficulty maximising a positive contribution to either. Since Independence, government policies have promoted rural development without a parallel or similar investment in urban areas (National Planning Commission, 1995). For instance, policies such as the *National Resettlement Policy* aim to resettle people in rural areas at great cost and to the exclusion of urban areas and urban dwellers. Of concern here, is the fact that the independent government, consciously or not, is maintaining the *status quo* in terms of poverty and circular migration patterns by basing its policies on theories of urban bias (Lipton, 1977). The assumption that urban dwellers have historically been favoured to the neglect of rural dwellers, and that the majority of Namibians reside in rural areas, seems to guide policy making in Namibia. Furthermore, these policies, which are based on a reaction to a perceived urban bias, obscure the crucial connection between environmental constraints, poverty and ecological degradation as causes for 'pushing' people to migrate to urban areas.

The lack of appreciation or understanding of the range of relationships which link rural and urban areas and stretch households across a spatial continuum, means that policies which target households on a sectoral or spatial basis, or with a lack of understanding of micro-scale household relationships, fail to have the intended benefits or impacts of either improving rural livelihoods or alleviating poverty. The net effect is that Namibian government policies which intend to alleviate poverty, instead tend to undermine the ability of households to improve beyond a subsistence lifestyle.

Of particular concern is the implication of an inability to move beyond subsistence. The scenario of an ever increasing downward spiral of environmental degradation, fed by poverty and in turn feeding the need to maintain a pattern of circular migration, does not suggest the attainment of social, economic and ecological sustainability.

## 1.2 Motivation for research

In 1998, a study was conducted, by the Masters of Philosophy in Environmental Science (MPhil) class of the University of Cape Town (UCT), to produce a baseline report on the environmental implications of resettlement in Namibia in the case study regions of Oshikoto and Omaheke (MPhil, 1998). This study raised a number of concerns in relation to both the theory behind Namibia's *National Resettlement Policy* and the way in which implementation of the policy is taking place in practice. The concerns which were identified in the baseline report included (MPhil, 1998):

- The unsustainable costs of resettlement in terms of biophysical and environmental degradation;
- The economic costs of resettlement both to the government, in terms of the opportunity cost of the investment, and to the settlers in terms of their ability to sustain themselves in the long term;
- The inference that the policy supports only those who are willing to remain in rural areas, and in the process ignoring the realities of urbanisation and the inability of rural Namibia to support a vast and rapidly increasing population;
- The requirement of giving up land elsewhere, ie in communal, urban or other rural areas, which presents a concern in terms of household survival strategies;
- The sectoral nature of the resettlement programme in terms of its narrowly defined support of agriculture (MPhil, 1998).

These concerns and the conclusion that resettlement in its current form in Namibia "*may be a potentially unsustainable way of trying to achieve poverty alleviation, with the possibility of the environmental and economic costs outweighing the political benefits*" (MPhil, 1998: 42) motivated the recommendations that firstly, alternative ways of poverty alleviation be considered and secondly, that urban areas be recognised for their potential as areas for resettlement (MPhil, 1998). In turn, the need was recognised for research into the patterns of urbanisation in Namibia, and to consider factors which could lend support to a process which is seemingly inevitable, but unfortunately ignored by government.

### 1.3 Purpose of research

The purpose then of this research which follows on from the MPhil project, is to initiate a discussion of the realities of urbanisation in Namibia, within the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, and to proffer suggestions which could be incorporated into a much needed urbanisation policy. It is immediately acknowledged that urban areas in Namibia, similar to other Sub-Saharan African countries with a history of colonial domination, are plagued by high unemployment and existing squatter and informal settlements, and the idea of supporting further urbanisation is probably anathema to many decision makers.

However the problems facing urban areas are to some extent considered to be a direct result of the Namibian government's previous and continued refusal to plan for, and accept, the urbanisation process, or to encourage permanent urbanisation. The problems of urban Namibia are also related to inherited models of planning, governance and urban management which are too rigid and lack the capacity and resources to cope with the demands of rapid urbanisation. The rate of urbanisation in turn, is a function of degradation of the rural environment which cannot support an increasing rural population (Devereux and Næraa, 1996; Frayne, 1997a).

Thus there is the recognition that an urbanisation policy for Namibia, if it is to be sustainable, needs to target both rural and urban areas in tandem. The aim of such a policy would necessarily be two-fold: improving rural conditions with the intention of stemming the flow of migrants, while at the same time increasing the capacity of urban areas to deal with the issues facing these areas in terms of present and future populations numbers.

### 1.4 Aims of research

With this in mind, the aim of this thesis is to research the form in which urbanisation is manifest in Namibia, with a view to exploring the conditions necessary to address the current *status quo*. This requires exploring the factors which underpin the process of urbanisation in Namibia, as well as questioning the relationship between the environment and urbanisation in terms of the long term social, economic and ecological sustainability of this process. The importance of healthy, strong urban centres is recognised in terms of achieving a sustainable process of urbanisation, and

thus it is a further aim of this thesis to examine the regional literature for lessons in terms of improving the capacity of urban local governance, planning and management to address the challenges of rapid urbanisation in Namibia. In turn, this requires the following:

- To review the theories which underpin urbanisation within the Sub-Saharan Africa context so as to gain a better understanding of the assumptions which tend to guide policy making.
- To consider urbanisation within the context of the environment and sustainability debates with a view to determining whether circular migration in its present form in Namibia can be considered sustainable.
- To discuss urbanisation in Namibia in terms of its historical and current underpinnings and the government's approach to the process.
- To adapt lessons from other Sub-Saharan Africa countries with specific reference to Zimbabwe and South Africa, so as to make suggestions in terms of improving the capacity of urban areas to cope with rapid urbanisation in Namibia.

## 1.5 Methodology

The research undertaken in this thesis is based primarily on a *literature review* of empirical treatises to provide a theoretical basis against which to compare urbanisation in Namibia. Information on urbanisation in Namibia is based on a few key sources of *secondary data* as well as *primary information* gathered in the process of compiling the baseline report on resettlement in Namibia (MPhil, 1998).

There are however relatively few sources of information on urban issues, urban management and planning, local governance or the government approach to urbanisation in Namibia. For this reason, South Africa and Zimbabwe were chosen as *mini case studies* from which lessons could be applied to the context of Namibia in terms of improving the ability of urban areas to cope with rapid urbanisation. These countries were identified as sharing with Namibia, a history of colonial domination, and in the case of Zimbabwe a large and rapidly urbanising rural population.

## 1.6 Structure of thesis

In *Chapter 2*, the theories which have influenced decision making in the realm of urbanisation and development in Sub-Saharan Africa, are discussed. The current popular debate of 'urban bias' forms the major part of this chapter, while the theories of linear migration (a category in which 'urban bias' unintentionally still seems to fit) give background to the debate. An argument is developed which suggests that within the Sub-Saharan context, the assumptions of urban bias have misdirected policy decisions, with the effect of entrenching poverty and maintaining a pattern of circular migration. This chapter concludes with the notion that an understanding of circular migration and a more holistic view of the interlinkages between urban and rural areas, would better suit policy making in its attempt at poverty alleviation.

The discussion of how policies should best address urban areas and rapid urbanisation is continued into *Chapter 3*, where greater attention is given to the issues of environmental sustainability and urbanisation. In approaching an answer to the question of how to achieve sustainable urbanisation the importance of considering the rural and urban environments holistically, and in parallel, rather than in isolation, is reiterated. It is concluded that at the crux of the urban areas ability to contribute to sustainable urbanisation, is appropriate governance, management and planning. Without this urban areas are likely to continue to be plagued by visible poverty, unemployment, density, lack of basic services and infrastructure, each with a myriad of associated negative social, economic and ecological impacts. At the same time, rural areas are submitting to the pressures of rapid population growth, environmental constraints and degradation and an inability to support an ever increasing population. The combined result is that households are forced to maintain a foothold in both rural and urban areas in order to survive.

The applicability of the regional theory in terms of circular migration as a mechanism of survival, becomes even clearer in *Chapter 4* which moves forward with a discussion of urbanisation within the context of Namibia. In this chapter, the state of urbanisation in Namibia is addressed in terms of the factors underpinning the process, and the way in which the lack of a coherent policy on urbanisation is likely to lead to the reinforcement of an increasingly unsustainable environment.

The conclusions drawn in the previous three chapters are integrated in a discussion in *Chapter 5* so as to move forward in defining the direction of further research and policy foci. Essentially this chapter seeks to discover how the theories discussed in *Chapters 2* and *3* apply to the reality of urbanisation in Namibia as discussed in *Chapter 4*. A further aim of this chapter is to seek out where the contradictions lie and thus what actions are necessary to achieve a sustainable process of urbanisation. This chapter concludes with a list of issues which should ideally be addressed in the rural and urban contexts of an urbanisation policy. Furthermore, the recommendation is made that if urbanisation is to be sustainable then a fundamental requirement in achieving this, is the integration of urban, rural and environmental policies. In turn this requires multi-sectoral and multi-spatial policies based on a thorough understanding of the forces underpinning circular migration, and strong urban local governance, management and planning which has the autonomy to address local urban issues, locally.

In light of the recognition of the important role which urban centres play in the sustainability of urbanisation, *Chapter 6* focuses on the issue of adapting urban local governance, management and planning to meet the challenges of rapid urbanisation. In so doing, lessons are taken from the context of Sub-Saharan Africa with specific reference to the experience of Zimbabwe and South Africa, and applied to Namibia.

# 2

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## Theoretical Perspectives on Urbanisation

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*"Blacks have always had to live in an environment that was neither beautiful nor clean. We have not had the proper housing, roads or services because the authorities would not accept that we were a permanent part of the city scene"*  
(President, National Environmental Awareness Campaign, Soweto,  
in Schreiner, 1996).

## 2.1 Introduction

Urban areas and their associated growth have long been subjects of contention for planners, geographers and urban theorists. Some theorists suggest that urban areas serve as a predetermined end point in the development process and thus urbanisation forms a necessary and linear step in the transition of developing nations, to modernity. Others would argue that urban areas have in fact been unfairly favoured at the expense and subsequent underdevelopment of rural areas. However, as urban problems related to the inability to cope with rapid urbanisation, became increasingly evident the question that continually seems to arise, is whether urban areas are in essence good or bad?

The current popular debate is that of 'urban bias' and a discussion of this debate limited to the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region, will form a major part of this chapter. However early neo-classical theories of development (such as Modernisation and Dependency) will be considered to give a background to the discussion. While outdated, the assumption of linear development inherent in these neo-classical theories still unfortunately seems to inform much of urban management policy. The argument will be developed that urbanisation in SSA is most definitely not characterised by linear migration, as proposed by neo-classical theorists, and which seemingly remains an inherent assumption in the 'urban bias' debate. For this and numerous other reasons, it will be argued that the 'urban bias' debate fails in its attempt at relevance to the SSA region and policies based on this thesis will be shown to have been a failure. In its place it will be suggested that policy makers consider the relevance of the patterns of 'circulatory migration' as well as begin to view 'urban' and 'rural' in a more holistic and inter-related manner, rather than seeing them as two completely opposing ends of a development spectrum.

## 2.2 Neo-classical theories of linear development

Within the neo-classical paradigm it is suggested that migration forms a rational response informed by reasonable knowledge of alternative conditions. Hence, migration is considered to follow an inevitable linear path of progression within a dualist model of development in which there is a transition from traditional to modern. These theories assume that development tends towards equilibrium and therefore migration is a self correcting mechanism (Dewar et al, 1982).

### 2.2.1 The city as a positive influence on development

Modernisation theory was the dominant form of neo-classical development analysis in the 1950's and 1960's (Slater, 1986). In this theory it was proposed that 'development' would occur in a linear fashion moving from underdevelopment (characterised by the traditionalism and backwardness which was identified as being 'Third World') to modernity (as characterised by advanced, developed 'First World' nations). This was envisaged to occur via the *trickle-down* of capital, technology, values, institutional arrangements and political beliefs from the 'core' to the 'periphery'. Modernisation was based on the experience of the countries in the northern hemisphere and the various stages of economic growth that had occurred throughout the agricultural and industrial revolutions were expected to be replicated in the developing countries of the South (White, 1994). Fundamental to this expectation, was the assumption that redistribution of resources would occur as a product of growth, as had more or less happened in the North.

Likewise, this trickle down was expected to occur from urban to rural areas. In other words the city was meant to have a positive influence acting as a catalyst of transformation of the rural areas (Slater, 1986). In terms of the modernist account, a stable, settled urban working class would emerge through a series of stages from the 'classic migrant labour system' characterised by young men with links to the rural area, through 'circular migration' patterns, to the fully urbanised household, epitomising 'development' by having broken all ties to the rural area (Ferguson, 1990). It is argued by Ferguson, that such a linear image obscured the realities of migration which are essentially characterised by a diversity of relations maintained by migrants, and can not be reduced to a generalised model (Ferguson, 1990).

Regional planning was derived from modernisation theory with the aim of attaining economic and social development of the periphery and in so doing, create an homogenous development surface (Simon, 1990). Rostow's model of economic development through five stages from 'traditional' to 'modern', and Friedmann's four stage model are examples of this form of interventionist planning, which effectively promoted the idea of regional growth points (Simon, 1990; Dewar et al, 1982).

By the 1960's however, it had become clear that cities in the developing world and in SSA in particular, were not functioning as catalysts of change. Nor had the poverty

situation of developing countries been abated, as had been expected as a consequence of 'redistribution through growth' (White, 1994; Slater, 1986). Instead of people remaining in rural areas and being developed *in situ* via trickle-down effects, migration to cities was occurring at an ever increasing rate. As socio-economic problems in urban areas, such as housing shortages, unemployment and lack of access to services and infrastructure were acknowledged, and rural areas remained undeveloped, terms were introduced to describe the failure of modernisation, including 'over-urbanisation' and 'hyper-urbanisation'. The city became the problem and urbanisation was considered excessive (Slater, 1986). Interventionist solutions which were proposed, included keeping people in the rural areas and policies aimed at reducing or reversing rural-urban migration.

### 2.2.2 The development of underdevelopment - challenging modernisation

The first notable challenge to the idea of the city as a beneficial influence on the development of rural areas, was that as developed in the form of dependency theory. Dependency theorists such as Frank rejected the notion that the development of the 'First World' and the underdevelopment of the 'Third World' were separate phenomena, and secondly, that contact with the 'First World' was necessarily a beneficial experience for the 'Third World' (Slater, 1986, Corbridge, 1993).

The dependency argument basically turned the assumptions of modernisation on their head, by asserting that relations between modern advanced societies (First World) and peripheral traditional backward societies (Third World) actually have a negative effect on the latter<sup>1</sup> (Slater, 1986). The Third World's economic development was argued to be dictated by the First World and local autonomy or real development was impossible as it was subject to the interests of foreign capital investment (Simon, 1990). In terms of this argument conditions were created whereby 'underdevelopment', 'external dominance' and 'siphoning off the surplus' were characteristic of backward peripheral societies, which in turn resulted in the development of the more advanced core societies (Simon, 1990; Corbridge, 1993).

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<sup>1</sup> In the same light urban and rural areas can be likened to First World and Third World areas respectively in terms of their 'relative development'.

Corbridge (1993) argues that it is the fact that capitalism failed to take root, productively in peripheral areas, that has inhibited the industrialisation and development of these societies. In this vein, Corbridge argues that it is necessary for these nascent societies to be assertive in initiating local programmes of development in order to break the pattern of 'dependency'.

In reaction to this perceived dependency, many SSA countries, at their independence, adopted state-centred interventionist strategies, including regulatory approaches to urban development. However, most of the nations of SSA have arguably remained far from achieving that goal of 'true independence' (Rakodi, 1997). More recently a number of aid donors, similarly to Corbridge (1993) have called for developing countries to look within themselves for answers to their problems, in terms of local knowledge and solutions rather than looking to First World experience, which is often inappropriate and arguably increases their dependence (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998). While this might be viewed by some as a form of 'neo-colonialism' and a mechanism of maintaining underdevelopment, it seems plausible that the Third World will further decline if it continues to apply inappropriate knowledge and technology.

### 2.2.3 Radical critique of the neo-classical paradigm

Radical theorists increasingly attacked the neo-classical argument in terms of its assumptions of a singular path of development, the existence of a dual economy, and the attainment of long term equilibrium. Furthermore the idea of model building was rejected on the basis that models are empirically incorrect and strive to generalise, thus losing the specifics of each situation (Dewar et al, 1982).

In response to the neo-classical method of model building, radical theorists advanced a 'framework' or method of directing studies of urbanisation in specific contexts. This framework was initiated by the recognition of the historical tendency of capital to concentrate with a simultaneous concentration of management and labour. The argument was that centralisation relies on the concentration of labour which in turn resulted in the basis for the formation of large cities. The catalyst, it was argued was the 'forceful dispossession' of labour from rural areas - with twofold results: capitalist classes taking control of the land for agricultural and industrial production and the migration of the landless to the larger cities where inevitably they would form a surplus labour pool. In spite of this it was argued that migration would continue because of

high opportunities for survival through informal means. Wages, in the framework, are kept low through surplus and thus the disequilibrium increases. Within this framework, precise urbanisation varies with context which Slater argues is influenced by factors which include: degree of dominance of foreign capital; role of state in terms of urbanisation policies; class conflict; development of capitalism and its tendency to concentrate populations (Dewar et al, 1982).

With the late 1960's and early 1970's came the realisation, that rapid economic growth had not led to development and a lessening of poverty, and in fact poverty had increased across much of SSA, and was often attributed to being a result of the association of the 'underdeveloped' with the 'developed'. In seeking an explanation for the continuation of poverty and the lack of substantial 'development' of the Third World, the argument of 'urban bias' increasingly found favour with theorists and policy makers alike (Lipton, 1977; Hardoy and Satterthwaite, 1989; Gilbert and Gugler, 1987).

### 2.3 Debating 'Urban Bias'

The city, in contemporary discussions, continues to be the subject of countless debates most of which revolve around the question of rural-urban balance (or lack thereof). The supporters of both rural and urban sectors contend that the imbalance and failure of society is a result of the excessive allocation of resources to the other sector (Gilbert and Gugler, 1987). One of the most influential arguments in this regard, has been that of 'urban bias' as put forward by Lipton (1977).

In brief, Lipton's (1977) argument of 'urban bias' focuses on the advantages that urban dwellers receive as a result of government policy which he suggests consciously aim investment at urban areas to the detriment of rural areas<sup>2</sup>. This bias, according to the argument, encourages significant investment in urban public services and infrastructure, concentrating public employment and infrastructure in the cities and artificially increasing the value of manufactured goods so as to encourage diversity away from agricultural production. A direct result of this apparent bias has been the

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<sup>2</sup> According to this argument national policies have been detrimental to agricultural development in at least two ways: firstly, macroeconomic decisions involving trade, tariff structures and price controls result in product prices not reflecting true scarcity values; and secondly, public sector investments in urban infrastructure and services disregard the opportunity costs and furthermore, recover costs from beneficiaries. Examples of these bureaucratic failures from Africa are cited in Becker et al (1994).

encouragement of out-migration in order for rural dwellers to attain some of the perceived benefits accorded to urban areas (Lipton, 1977)

Lipton argues that in terms of this perceived bias, the most important conflict in Third World countries is between the *urban classes* and the *rural classes*. The urban classes according to Lipton, hold the power, in terms of skills of articulation and organisation, to distort the allocation of resources in their favour. In order to rectify this perceived bias, Lipton called for a shift of resources and investment to the rural sector (Lipton, 1977). This shift of resources was clearly intended to have an impact on the migration process, however as Potts (1997) and Rakodi (1997) point out, migration is a complex process, subject to a wide range of structural forces which need to be taken into account when determining policy. In hindsight, it is clear that a lack of recognition of the complexity of the rural-urban relationship and an inability to take an holistic view, contributed to the failure of a blanket approach to reducing 'urban bias'. This in essence, is possibly because *urban* and *rural*, should not and cannot, be viewed in competition with each other, in light of the fact that they are intricately linked, via relationships which are economic, social, biophysical and ecological in nature, thus precluding the formation of separate homogenous sectors or societies.

### 2.3.1 Influence of 'urban bias' on policy decisions

The shift in resources which Lipton called for, was in the late 1970's and 1980's, influential in determining aid strategies. For instance, the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP's) were introduced in many SSA countries, (under strong pressure from the International Monetary Fund) with the aim of redistributing the resource imbalance (Becker et al, 1994, White; 1989). Structural Adjustment had three basic facets:

- reform the system of economic incentives in favour of tradeable commodities for export - policies included devaluation, trade liberalisation, price decontrol and tax reform with the aim of improving small farmer incomes;
- comprehensive restructuring of debt; and most importantly in terms of its visible impacts;
- streamlining the public sector through reduction in public expenditure, privatisation, reorientation of public sector investment especially in favour of

agriculture, introduction of user charges and removal of subsidies (Rakodi, 1997).

Underpinning Lipton's argument was the assumption that urban workers were paid above-market wages in a secure formal sector. However, the empirical evidence fails to inform this assumption (Rakodi, 1997). It was expected that as a result of adjustment policies, urban employment opportunities would contract, real urban incomes would decrease, prices of goods and services would increase reducing the access of urban poor to these services. In parallel, the conditions of rural areas would improve (Rakodi, 1997). The tendency has been to assume that if the bias could be reversed then the wage gap between rural and urban areas would diminish. This process, it was argued, would lead to the end of rural-urban migration or possibly even a reversal of migration patterns back to rural areas (Rakodi, 1997; Harris, 1992; White, 1989).

### 2.3.2 Challenging 'urban bias'

In a growing body of work, Lipton's 'urban bias' argument is challenged in terms of both its assumptions and implementation (Sapire and Beall, 1995; Harris, 1992; Gilbert and Gugler, 1987; Stren and White, 1989; Rondinelli and Kasarda, 1993, Becker et al, 1994). The intention of reversing urban bias has arguably been too successful - all the expected changes occurred, bar one. Rural-urban migration has not diminished noticeably, but with reduced urban budgets, the inability of urban governance to cope with the continued influx, has arguably resulted in devastating urban conditions for many urban dwellers.

Opponents of urban bias argue that development aid has been informed by the 'urban bias' thesis for too long and now tends towards the demonstration of a 'rural bias' (Sapire and Beall, 1995). In the same vein, White (1989) suggests that the problems of urban areas have merely increased since the introduction of SAPs. Perhaps the aim of reducing the rural-urban gap has been achieved, but the evidence suggests that it has been at the expense of urban living conditions resulting in the urban poor being hardest hit (Potts, 1997; Rakodi, 1997). Furthermore, rural-urban migration has remained unabated (although arguably altered in character), thus maintaining the pressures on urban areas, which are increasingly unable to cope due to economic constraints.

2.3.2.1 Empirical evidence challenging policies informed by 'urban bias'

Hardoy and Satterthwaite's book *Squatter Citizen Life in the Urban Third World* (1989) recounts the myriad of problems which face the urban poor everyday, including homelessness, unemployment, environmental problems relating to health and the lack of adequate service provision, suggesting that there is very little evidence that the inhabitants of most urban areas have ever benefitted from an apparently skewed allocation of resources. It is suggested by Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1989) that if a bias has been in evidence, then perhaps it has been in the larger of capital cities, and then only experienced by the better off sectors of urban society, but most definitely has not benefited the majority of urban dwellers.

Yet donor policies have been based on the very concept that all dwellers of urban areas have been unfairly advantaged at the expense of rural dwellers. However, time and again, the literature and empirical evidence disputes this view. While some countries' assessments of Structural Adjustment Policies were successful, not all reported positive impacts (in particular the SSA countries), and Africa as a whole has not experienced significant improvements as a result of adjustment policies (Potts, 1997; Simon, 1997). Across SSA as a whole, debt rose threefold in the 1980's and the majority of SSA countries experienced a decline in per capita GNP of about two percent per annum over the same decade (Simon, 1997). However, it must be stated that methodological difficulties have made it difficult to assess Structural Adjustment Programmes in a way that would be useful for policy adjustment (Rakodi, 1997).

Furthermore, environmental disasters such as floods and droughts, and war have also contributed to the decline of many SSA economies, in particular those at the southern tip of the continent including, Namibia, Botswana, and Mozambique (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998). As a result, Structural Adjustment, can not in all fairness take sole blame for the decline in urban conditions. But then neither can the concept of 'urban bias' be wholly applicable when environmental disasters, and war have been the factors behind the split of many rural households, so as to take advantage of urban opportunities, and not the fact that urban areas have been favoured as some theorists would lead us to believe.

On the whole however, empirical evidence has shown that not only has urban poverty increased as a result of economic reform measures and conditions implemented as

part of Structural Adjustment Programmes, but so too has rural poverty in some economic sectors (Rakodi, 1997; Simon, 1997; Gugler, 1996). Furthermore, it has been argued that adjustment policies have particularly failed in their aim of addressing the bias against small farmers.

Gugler (1996) lists problems which have resulted from structural adjustment implemented in some SSA countries: large scale retrenchments in the public sector, increases in the price of food, public transport and housing subsidy cuts, and adjustments to the foreign exchange rate which affected food, fuel and medicine prices on a daily basis. In Zimbabwe and Zambia, the standard of living of urban dwellers has been shown to have declined as a result of SAPs, with those urban dwellers below the poverty line in Zambia having increased from 4% to 17% between the years 1975 and 1991 (Sapire and Beall, 1995; Rakodi, 1995). So too have the urban poor of Kampala suffered neglect as a result of policies which favour the rural elite in the name of greater regional equality (Gugler and Gilbert, 1987).

In Tanzania and Zambia, full liberalisation of food trade resulted in prices which made food unobtainable to the urban poor and this situation was exacerbated by decreased urban wages. To quote Potts: "*In many cases the levels of income reported are so low that it is hard to see how households can feed themselves, let alone cover other necessary costs*" (Potts, 1997: 450). Coping strategies were noted to have been developed by the urban poor, which include the increase in the informal employment sector, and the increase in food-growing in urban and surrounding areas (Potts, 1997). Another significant coping mechanism is that of strengthened rural-urban linkages (Potts, 1997; Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990).

Cost recovery measures and privatisation of services also hit the urban poor hardest. Debt crises and general financial restrictions faced suppliers, resulting in the inability to provide adequate services. Increased user charges meant that the majority of the poorer urban dwellers either stopped using services such as health and education, or reduced their use to a minimum, thus impacting on their health and well-being, with the most severe impacts affecting children and women (Potts, 1997; Stren and White, 1989).

Despite the formal sector's inability to absorb excess urban labour, urbanisation rates have continued unabated. In spite of pro-agriculture policies, people continue to be

attracted to urban areas even though these areas now suffer from environmental damage, deterioration of living conditions and a declining ability to administer and deliver services and infrastructure (Rakodi, 1997). The continued migration to urban areas seems to suggest that rural living conditions have not improved, as anticipated by adjustment policies.

In contrast however, Becker *et al* (1994) report that in terms of real wages, the SAP's were 'successful' in reducing the rural-urban wage differential. Unfortunately, it is insufficient (and too easy) to argue success merely in terms of economics. Measuring the rural-urban gap is difficult since households in both sectors tend to have an income that is both irregular, and of a non-monetary form (Potts, 1997). Furthermore, in diversifying their risks, households tend to have an 'income' which is sourced from both rural and urban areas. If there has been a decrease in the urban-rural wage gap, it is probably because the wages of the poorest of urban dwellers have further declined, rather than the wages of rural dwellers having increased.

Other social measures tend to support the idea that the implementation of SAP's, as determined by the 'urban bias' thesis, have probably increased the range and intensity of problems experienced in urban areas. This point seems to have been recognised as a recent outcome of World Bank and UN initiatives to promote urban economic development through management and maintenance of the urban environment and infrastructure. Policy documents of the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) share goals of urban environmental sustainability, urban economic viability and productivity and strengthening of local government capacity, and investment seems to be shifting back to urban areas (Rakodi, 1997; Erbach and Gaudet, 1998).

The Africa Bureau of USAID goes a step further in its recent strategies for SSA. USAID has a number of strategic level plans which are more holistic in their approach by identifying urbanisation as an issue in the urban context (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998). Significantly USAID's 'Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development' considers urbanisation and urban issues, and aims to identify needs, opportunities and potential partners, as well as the capabilities and approaches for addressing these issues (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998).

### 2.3.2.2 Overgeneralisation of 'urban bias'

Lipton's thesis is criticized for being a generalization at both the macro scale and micro scale. In other words, at the macro scale, it is argued that the generalisation of 'urban bias' makes it impossible to apply equally in all parts of the Third World (Gilbert and Gugler, 1987). Empirical evidence has shown that the urban bias thesis does not particularly apply to India (the country on which the thesis was based) on the basis in the years of formulating the urban bias thesis, the living standards of the urban poor declined rather than those of the rural poor. African and Latin American countries have also displayed neglect of the urban poor in the years in which the urban bias thesis was formulated (Gilbert and Gugler, 1987).

Stren (1989) and Rondinelli and Kasarda (1993) describe the inability of many African urban administration's to manage and supply even the most basic of urban infrastructure and services. The effect of economic adjustment policies on many of these urban areas was devastating for those who could not afford to buy their way out of the system, for instance by means of contracting private firms to dispose of their waste. In Nigeria, for instance, the irregular supply of electricity and water resulted in many of the wealthy and powerful purchasing private generators and water storage tanks to tide them through the electricity cuts and water shortages. Obviously the poor, to their detriment, are unable take similar actions (Stren, 1989). As a result of the inability to deliver, local governments have increasingly sought to privatise many urban services and infrastructure, so as to address, more efficiently, the increased demands on urban services as a result of rapid urban population growth, and increasing financial constraints on government (Rondinelli and Kasarda, 1993).

Furthermore, at a different scale, the idea of an 'urban class' and a 'rural class' as put forward by Lipton, is challenged on the basis that urban dwellers do not form an homogenous class and that urban dwellers do not have equal access to the services and infrastructure of urban areas (Sapire and Beall, 1995; Harris, 1992). The assumption that urban dwellers, as an 'homogenous class', have an advantage in their ability to articulate themselves, is clearly a false assumption. One only needs to consider the urban poor who have been marginalised to realise that they hold very little (if any) advantage over their rural counterparts. They are generally voiceless and unable to articulate their needs. Furthermore where their needs have been articulated, most have been ignored by those who hold political power.

It must be stressed that if indeed an 'urban bias' has been present in government policies, it is very unlikely to have favoured all urban dwellers and sectors, equally, if at all. Basing policies on the 'urban bias' thesis has arguably resulted in conditions which have increased the hardships endured by the urban poor (Gugler, 1996; Stren and White, 1989).

In the same vein, neither do rural dwellers form an homogenous 'class'. Rather than portraying conflict as a function of where people live (urban versus rural) it has been suggested that it would be more useful to consider the ways in which policies which have been portrayed to display an 'urban bias', instead favour some rural groups at the expense of others. An example would be food subsidisation policies which favour large scale commercial farmers rather than small scale farmers. In general it can be posed that policies discriminate against the poor, no matter where they live (Gilbert and Gugler, 1987).

#### 2.3.2.3 Dubious economic development - urbanisation assumptions

While it is fairly widely accepted that a positive correlation exists between levels of urbanisation and successful economic development, the direction of causality has yet to be determined (Becker *et al*, 1994; Simon, 1997). A lack of reliable data is a primary reason for the inability to determine causality. In addition, Simon (1997) suggests that at a macro-level, increasing indebtedness, economic crisis, the impacts of adjustment programmes, war, and environmental constraints, and at a micro-level, individuals decisions to adopt risk minimising and economic diversification strategies, have served to further confuse the picture. Sapire and Beall (1995) argue that in the case of SSA, cities are clearly not operating as 'engines of economic growth' and the process of rapid urbanisation is putting increased pressures on cities. Cities are arguably far from demonstrating the benefits of an 'urban bias', but rather indicate the inability of cities to cope with the increasing demands which are being placed on infrastructure, administration and urban services, and the subsequent hardships that the urban poor have to face daily.

It is further proposed that in the absence of urban biases, disparities between the urban and rural sectors would still be evident as a state of disequilibrium is apparent at all stages of the development experience. To quote: "*The very process of economic development involves per capita differences between rural areas, between urban*

centres, between regions, and even between rural and urban sectors" (Becker et al, 1994).

In some cases it is argued that there is clear evidence of policies which favour urban areas (or rather certain sectors of the urban population), however the validity of generalising such an event is questionable. Gilbert and Gugler (1987), Harris (1992) and Becker et al (1994) furthermore question whether, in the light of rapid urbanisation, the deliberate transfer of resources to urban areas should be surprising or even undesirable. Cities arguably represent the opportunity for enhanced social development as a result of economies of scale. With this in mind, Gilbert and Gugler (1987) question the fairness of describing such a situation as 'urban bias' if higher productivity and greater welfare can be achieved in urban areas as a result of higher concentrations of people.

Frayne (1997a) goes a step further and suggests that urbanisation provides an opportunity to achieve global sustainability and thus while strategies for slowing the urbanisation rate to manageable proportions may be desirable, this should not be done at the expense of investment in urban areas: "without significant urban investment the potential offered by urban growth will not be realised, and conditions for poorly educated families with few resources may well be little better than they were in the rural areas" (Frayne, 1997a: 6). The urban-environment debate will be considered in the following chapter.

#### 2.3.2.4 Reducing the rural-urban wage gap - and yet migration continues

Harris (1992) criticises the urban bias thesis on the basis that not only are its assumptions questionable, but it also has inadequate empirical underpinnings. Harris argues for instance that the assumption that migrants are sensitive to income differences, is flawed, and rather that migration is more often a function of either relative deprivation or a conscious strategy to diversify income and risk, and would thus be impervious to the changes introduced by the Structural Adjustment Programmes (Harris, 1992). Many migrants in SSA have for instance been forced to urban areas as a result of drought and rural strife, rather than through choice or for reasons purely economic (Gugler, 1996). Their urbanisation is a quest for pure survival rather than a rational choice or an attempt at seeking out the *bright lights* of the city (Tacoli, 1998b; Fall, 1998). Furthermore, the evidence shows that rural-urban migration

in SSA has not declined in response to the impacts of economic adjustment policies (Gilbert and Gugler, 1987).

In developing this argument it is suggested that if 'urban bias' existed as a distinct reality, then it would be reasonable to assume that migrants would benefit more by remaining permanently in urban areas. Yet, in SSA in particular, circular migration patterns are evident and have generally not been affected by economic policies. In fact as Mabin (1990), Potts (1997), Ferguson (1990), Smit (1998) and Krüger (1998) argue, circular migration patterns are more frequently being considered to be the 'norm' rather than a passing stage in a developmental process artificially tampered with by government policies.

Instead of full urbanisation and 'modernisation' being achieved and thus rural links diminishing, as was envisaged by the host of linear development theories, rural-urban linkages have in fact strengthened<sup>3</sup>, for instance in the Zambian Copperbelt (Ferguson, 1990), Zimbabwe (Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990), Durban, South Africa (Smit, 1998) and Botswana (Krüger, 1998). Ninety percent of the retiring and laid off copper workers that Ferguson interviewed were returning to rural 'homes' rather than remaining in the urban areas as the literature on linear development would lead us to believe (Ferguson, 1990). Furthermore, Ferguson refutes the idea of providing a generalised model of migration which he argues "*only helps to mask the existing diversity of paths of work and migration, turning one very real and important form of rural-urban connection into a stick figure 'typical worker' that obscures the others*" (Ferguson, 1990: 411).

However, as Potts (1997), and Potts and Mutambirwa (1990) argue, these rural-urban linkages have undergone a number of changes in response to the demise of urban economies. These changes include:

- *Adaption in household composition* - While the major trend seems to be that families are now migrating as a whole, young, single people still seem to dominate migration. One must also be careful to note that migration patterns

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<sup>3</sup> However Fall (1998) notes how rural-urban linkages in Dakar, Senegal are not linked to seasonal agricultural work but rather to occasional festivals and family ceremonies, concluding from this that linkages are in fact decreasing as migrants remain in urban areas over time. This scenario is however quite different to a number of other case studies where rural urban linkages provide an important safety net for the vagaries of urban life. The point to note here is that generalisations should be made with utmost caution.

differ according to area and conditions. For instance in Zimbabwe women are more frequently spending their time in urban areas to save on transport costs and earn cash, while in Uganda, it has been noted that urban households rely on their rural counterparts to supplement their food supply (Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990).

- *Increases in rural-urban transfers* - Cash remittances used to form the dominant rural-urban transfer, however the trend seems to indicate that cash remittances have declined as urban households have little cash to spare, and instead, food from rural areas seems to dominate transfer patterns. As Krüger (1998) argues, the maintenance of rural-urban linkages provides a safety net for migrants. When urban areas fail to provide food and incomes for migrants, they can fall back on rural subsistence produce. In the case of Botswana, rural assets provide a further essential task in securing a livelihood for vulnerable urban households as rural assets indicate ones level of reputation and influence in the Tswana society (Krüger, 1998).
- *Declining in-migration and increasing out-migration* - Potts (1997) disputes the dominant view of net-migration by arguing that urbanisation rates have fallen in response to declining urban economies. Potts qualifies the use of census data, however as Simon (1997) and Rakodi (1997) have noted, census data can be notoriously unreliable and is subject to seasonal changes and thus should be used with much scepticism. Potts cites Ghana, Zambia (Ferguson, 1990), Tanzania, Nigeria and Zimbabwe for having experienced a decline in rural-urban migration and in some cases goes as far as saying counter-urbanisation (Potts, 1997).
- *Other survival strategies* include the diversification of income earning opportunities to supplement cash earnings such as informal work like hairdressing, beer brewing and carpentry and the formation of social networks for instance 'rotating credit schemes' (*stokvels*) in South Africa (Krüger, 1998).

While many theorists argue that rigid urbanisation policies and the nature of urban land tenure in many SSA countries have served to perpetuate circular migration, it seems more likely that as Potts (1997), Potts and Mutambirwa (1990) and Ferguson (1990) argue, people move to urban areas to diversify their economic risk and tend to

maintain rural links as one of many coping strategies in the face of abject urban poverty. The ties that migrants maintain with rural areas, and the remittances that flow back to these areas, further serve to complicate the simplicity of rural-urban migration that is portrayed by the 'urban bias' argument and other linear explanations of migration (Rakodi, 1997).

Furthermore, families would arguably be migrating to benefit as a whole, and yet dual households continue to characterise most SSA urbanisation patterns as migrants maintain their rural links. If in fact 'urban bias' could be argued to be a reality, then why do circular migration patterns persist? why are rural-urban links so strenuously maintained? why are urban problems so evident in certain parts of the city? and, why is there the existence of a 'class' of urban poor if the 'urban sector' is supposed to have a distinct advantage over its rural counterparts, as purported by the 'urban bias' argument?

The literature seems to indicate that urban areas in the developing world are generally unable to cope with rapid urbanisation in terms of the provision of even the most basic of services and infrastructure. These urban governments are mainly hampered by poor management capabilities and a lack of resources. This has had the result of an increasing number of urban dwellers who are living below the poverty line in squalid circumstances. Despite empirical evidence to support the scale and nature of oscillating migration and the interactions that occur between rural and urban households, government policies still tend to neglect the significance of these linkages. In so doing policies, in contradiction with their aims, tend to reinforce the break-up of extended households and continued hardships experienced by migrants (Tacoli, 1998a). In the face of this apparent inability to cope with the situation of rapid urbanisation, arises the question: how should policy makers be trying to address urbanisation?

## 2.4 Conclusion

At the micro-level, in other words, at the scale of the individual migrant or small groups of migrants, migration to urban areas, whether temporary or permanent, can be considered to be a rational decision as cities invariably offer a degree of improvement in quality of life and an opportunity to diversify risk. However, it is at the macro-level, in other words, the level at which the national economy's ability to respond is tested, that large scale urbanisation and cities are generally viewed as problematic. It is

suggested that fundamental to this apparent problem is the refusal of many theorists and decision makers to view the rural-urban relationship holistically, instead tending to place rural and urban at two opposing ends of a development spectrum in competition for limited resources.

The shortcoming in the insistence of distinguishing urban from rural as two distinct and mutually exclusive entities, is that the nature of the relationship between rural and urban, and the way in which migrants and households relate, is fundamentally misunderstood or ignored, and thus excluded from policy decisions. The linear development models and the urban bias thesis are culprits in setting up a competition between rural and urban and thus losing the 'bigger picture'. As has been discussed in this chapter, there are very definitely a series of relationships between rural and urban areas, and it would be a mistake to view households and individuals as either rural or urban when it is clear that the relationships and linkages makes a very blurred distinction.

'Urban bias' theories and other theories which purport migration to be a linear process tend to misdirect policy makers into decisions which do not benefit the target groups for the very reason that they attempt to target people geographically, spatially and sectorally without attempting to understand the fundamental reasons for poverty. With this in mind it is suggested that policy making would benefit from viewing the relationships in a holistic light as policies which target one, are very likely to have an effect on the other. Similarly people are likely to respond to (and often preempt) policies which are not directed at them, and hence neither urban nor rural areas can or should be considered in isolation. It is suggested that rather than attempting to limit urbanisation, policy makers should recognise the patterns of and reasons for migration.

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*"Most environmental problems are political problems. They arise not from some particular shortage of an environmental resource such as land or fresh water but from economic or political factors which deny poorer groups both access to it and the ability to demand changes"* (Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992: 23).

### 3.1 Introduction

The term 'environment' typically means different things to different people, depending on the circumstances in which it is used, and varies significantly between the 'urban' and 'rural' contexts, as well as between developed and developing nation contexts (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998). With this in mind, it is necessary to define *environment* from the outset of this chapter. Environment is commonly construed to refer to 'nature', thus traditionally excluding anything of an anthropogenic form (social, cultural, economic and spatial). This definition is however, entirely inappropriate and limited when one considers that human beings are a part of nature (rather than apart from it) and are dependent on it for their very existence - with many people in the SSA region having a direct reliance on nature. Taking this relationship between humans and nature into account, an extensive approach to defining environment seems more appropriate. Thus a definition of environment would include at least the components of the natural environment (air, water, soil, plants and animals), the spatial environment (man made and natural environments) and the social environment (people, groups, society) taking into account the interrelationships between humans and their support systems (Rabie, 1996).

Despite this extensive definition, one's opinion of the environment tends to be influenced by context, as already stated. Environmental concerns in urban areas in SSA tend to have an anthropocentric bias and are related to the concept of the 'brown agenda' which focuses on concerns such as congestion, water pollution, the lack of basic services and infrastructure such as sewerage and waste water treatment. In rural areas on the otherhand, the bias tends to be far more related to the 'green agenda' which is largely resource-based in its concerns, for example biodiversity, desertification, bush encroachment and deforestation. The fact that these agendas have areas of overlap is often overlooked (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998).

The concept of 'environment' in relation to urban areas, and particularly in relation to the sustainability of urban areas, is a relatively new subject of interest (McCarney, 1995). Theorists tend to place themselves along an anti-city - pro-city continuum. The anti-city theorists generally use ecological metaphors to suggest that cities drain the resources of their surroundings and are separate from nature (Rees, 1992). Pro-city theorists are inclined to be more comparative, citing the positive roles that cities can play in development and relieving pressure on the rural areas (McCarney, 1995; Mitlin

and Satterthwaite, 1994). Other approaches in between these, point out the problems within cities with the main consensus being that urban areas are not the problem, but rather that poor management and governance, as well as poverty experienced within the Third World context are responsible for the negative images of cities in terms of their environmental potential.

And yet, what is important in terms of this thesis is not whether cities are in and of themselves sustainable, but rather what potential they offer (if any) for being the more sustainable and environmentally sensible option in relation to the rural areas of many Third World countries. In other words, is the apparently inevitable process of urbanisation to be supported by policy? or should we be seeking to deter people from making the rural-urban migration in order to seek a more environmentally sustainable option? In order to approach an answer, we need to consider the state of the rural environment in parallel with the urban environment rather than each in isolation. As Drakakis-Smith (1996a) points out, cities are not self-contained entities, and thus the central question should revolve around process, ie whether sustainable urbanisation can be achieved, and not around a product, ie a sustainable city.

### 3.2 Defining sustainable urbanisation

What then would be the definition of sustainable urbanisation? If we take the fairly widely accepted principles of sustainable development as defined by the Brundtland Commission, that is, meeting *"the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* (WCED, 1987: 8), keeping in mind that a plethora of definitions abound, we have a basis on which to develop a definition. In the context of the multiple problems which face contemporary developing cities, the concept of meeting the needs of the present is central to the idea of having something worth sustaining for the future.

As Drakakis-Smith argues in his attempt at reaching a definition of sustainable urbanisation, in the context of cities sustainability needs to adopt a human face by recognising that cities are *"not so much [...] assemblies of functions and buildings but [...] places where people live and to which they increasingly migrate in search of a better life"* (Drakakis-Smith, 1996a: iv). In this regard, sustainability in the urban context is arguably about meeting human needs, rather than being limited to, or equated with, ecological sustainability, and as such, includes among others:

- equity in the distribution of the benefits of economic growth;
- access to, and supply of adequate basic human needs;
- social justice and human rights;
- environmental awareness and integrity (Drakakis-Smith, 1996a).

Kadmiel Wekwete is even more rudimentary in his definition of sustainability in the African context. Wekwete suggests that sustainability is about *survival*, with the primary concern being access to housing, food, water supply, employment and a variety of other services, and as a consequence, leaving very little time (or interest) in the consideration of environmental (presumably ecological) questions (McCarney, 1995).

Drakakis-Smith (1996a) criticizes Mitlin and Satterthwaite (1994) of falling into the trap, which they themselves have identified, of equating sustainable development with ecological sustainability by making no mention of how to sustain and develop human resources through education or health care. Instead Mitlin and Satterthwaite (1994) limit their discussion on the sustainable aspects of 'sustainable development' to minimising use or waste of non-renewable resources, sustainable use of renewable resources and keeping wastes within the absorptive capacity of local and global sinks. However, what Drakakis-Smith fails to admit is that these 'ecological' aspects of sustainability are integral to the attainment of 'environmental awareness and integrity', and while the social and economic issues are most definitely central to Third World cities, one should not lose sight of the broader regional and global ecological dimension (Atkinson, 1994, White, 1994).

By the very nature of 'sustainable urbanisation' being conceptualised as a process and not a product, it becomes necessary to explore the dynamics of urbanisation. It has already been established in the previous chapter that 'urbanisation' and 'development' are not synonymous, and while there is a relationship between the two, the causality has yet to be identified. Hence, it can be said that there is more to urbanisation than merely economic growth (Drakakis-Smith, 1996a; Becker *et al*, 1994; Simon, 1997; Sapire and Beall, 1995). This point is important in terms of the nature of sustainable urbanisation.

Urbanisation patterns of the developing world have changed over the past decades. In general, these changes have produced 'mega-cities' of the Third World (Drakakis-

Smith, 1996b). However, this generalisation does not really extend to Sub-Saharan Africa, where most cities remain marginal, both in size and 'importance' in the global picture. Transactional changes in terms of information, capital and physical goods are also argued to have modified the face of urbanisation, allowing people to be less place dependent, and thus often supporting the ever increasing sprawl of cities. Furthermore, the often informal urbanisation of people has resulted in the 'infill' of urban open spaces as well as settlement on the more marginal lands where access to land is easier and less tenuous. Probably more pertinent to the SSA countries, is the fact that rural-urban linkages are intensifying and the range of people migrating has also changed (Drakakis-Smith, 1996a; Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990), with a very likely impact on the nature of sustainable urbanisation.

While the literature tends to attempt defining 'sustainable cities' rather than 'sustainable urbanisation' and Drakakis-Smith (1996a) fails to reach a conclusion in his attempt at defining this concept, both he and McCarney (1995) call for an integration of interests in approaching the subject. There are many publications in which urbanisation is discussed as a contributing factor to the world's apparent environmental demise, and yet very little that actually looks at the role which urbanisation can play in terms of sustainability (Drakakis-Smith, 1995).

Arguably there are prerequisites in achieving sustainable urbanisation and just a few of these as mentioned previously, would be sufficient supply of, and access to, basic services and infrastructure, equity in terms of access and use, quality of life and environmental integrity. These prerequisites, in turn, require that urban management and governance have the resources, ability, institutional capacity and willingness to address these needs (Satterthwaite, 1997; Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1994; Brugmann, 1994).

As Satterthwaite remarks, *"it is not cities or urbanisation that sustainable development seeks to sustain, but to meet human needs in settlements of all sizes without depleting environmental capital. This means seeking the institutional and regulatory framework in which democratic and accountable urban and municipal authorities ensure that the needs of the people within their boundaries are addressed while minimising the transferring of environmental costs to other people or ecosystems or into the future"* (Satterthwaite, 1997: 1682). Hence an integration of the four approaches which McCarney (1995) identifies in terms of the city and environment (ecological, poverty,

management and governance) is essential to considering sustainable urbanisation holistically.

What seems to be missing from the discussion on sustainable development and urbanisation in the literature however, is the role of rural areas in causing people to seek a better life in urban areas or diversify their incomes as a strategy for survival. Apart from colonial policies for example which forced many rural SSA dwellers, such as in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia, to enter into the cash economy, degraded and unsustainable rural environmental conditions have entrenched the rapid rate at which urbanisation is occurring. Urban areas are one part of the equation in the discussion on sustainable urbanisation - rural areas need to be considered in parallel. This next section considers the contribution which urban areas can make to the sustainable process of urbanisation, and the following section will address the rural environment.

### 3.3 Can urban areas contribute to sustainable urbanisation?

As we approach the twenty-first century, it is becoming generally acknowledged in the literature, and significantly by the World Bank, that it will be the century in which the majority of the world's population live in urban areas (Atkinson, 1994; McCarney, 1995; Leitmann, 1994) and it seems only sensible for policy makers to accept this fact and refocus policies and priorities in due recognition. This would entail considering the potential for cities to contribute to a sustainable process of urbanisation. There are many arguments which detail the contribution that cities can make to sustainability. There are equally as many arguments which consider urban areas to be the antithesis of sustainability and part of the whole environmental problem. A discussion of these debates follows.

#### 3.3.1 All those in favour of the city say "good governance"

Cities have the potential to provide enormous benefits in terms of the environment's many facets: social, ecological, economic, cultural, political and so on (Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992). Successful cities are essentially about achieving a balance between anthropocentric needs, the physical environment and the biological environment. However it is in cities that the most intense environmental damage is being done (possibly because it is so visible and concentrated, in the form of untreated

sewage, accumulations of solid waste and polluted air) and as a result where improvements can be most effectively made (White, 1994).

From an anthropocentric point of view, the environment provides for the following needs which are basic to human survival (Gasson, 1995):

- *Extractive need* - People take from the environment, various resources such as clean air, water, food and minerals which are essential for survival.
- *Absorptive need* - The environment has a function as a "sink" for the return to and disposal in nature of urban wastes, including gaseous, liquid and solid. If the environment is inundated with wastes it loses its ability to "metabolise" and these wastes become an environmental health risk.
- *Expansive need* - The environment provides a place for housing and other land uses to be developed establishing the urban 'footprint'.
- *Existential need* - The environment provides a psychological and emotional security which is especially necessary in the urban area (Gasson, 1995). Urban designers refer to this function as the *genius loci* or natural spirit of a place (Lynch, 1981).

Economic and social issues are central to the discussion in Third World cities, with the main challenge arguably being the provision of basic services and infrastructure which would make a habitable environment for the urban poor (Atkinson, 1994). The fact that cities concentrate population, suggests that they have a number of immediate and obvious advantages over rural areas in efficiently meeting the abovementioned needs.

Lower costs per person or household for the provision of services and infrastructure mean that piped water, sewers and drains, treatment of water and waste, garbage collection and disposal, and most forms of health, education and emergency services can be provided more efficiently in urban areas than in their rural counterparts (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1994). In support of this point, cities have a particular advantage and potential for efficiency in countries where population growth is high, while the environmental resource base is limited due to inappropriate land management and population pressure (Frayne, 1997a). Cities also provide a greater range of, and possibility for, material reclamation, recycling and reuse. Thus cities have the potential to efficiently provide for *extractive* and *absorptive* needs.

Cities also offer the potential to reduce the demand for land relative to population through densification strategies, and thus reduce the visible and physical use of valuable farmland by *expanding* upwards, rather than outwards. As Ferguson (1996) points out, high densities alone, do not cause environmental problems, however it is imperative that the infrastructure and services in high density areas be of high quality, if environmental quality is also to remain high. Mitlin and Satterthwaite (1994) also maintain that cities offer the potential for reduced use of fossil fuels and the use of motor vehicles, however in the context of Third World and especially Sub-Saharan cities, this point is highly questionable.

Finally in terms of the *existential* needs that people have of the environment, Mitlin and Satterthwaite suggest that cities have enormous potential in providing "*enjoyable stimulating and valued places to live*" (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1994: 2) through the visual and decorative arts, music and dance and theatre and literature that develop there. In the context of Third World cities, this is not only contentious but almost ridiculous in the face of what little the poverty stricken majority of these cities, have. However, common to all of the above arguments is the recognition that potential of urban areas is subject to one prerequisite: *good governance* (Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992; Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1994; McCarney, 1995, Atkinson, 1994).

The policies and actions which are taken by urban governments have a profound impact on the urban environment, urban dwellers and in the long run, on the sustainability (ecological, social and biophysical) of the regional context (Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992). Thus it is necessary that governance has the institutional capacity, resources and willingness to regulate and maintain cities. In the absence of good governance, cities can be polluting and wasteful, resulting in unhealthy conditions and a degraded environment. However, it is this very prerequisite of financial and managerial resources that has often been identified as a major constraint faced by most Third World cities thus presenting itself as one of the major obstacles to effectively turning the concern for sustainability into a set of projects for Third World cities (Atkinson, 1994; White, 1994; Leitmann, 1994).

However it is not only poor governance that can lead to the uncoupling of a successful urban environment. As Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite point out, "*the very poor environmental conditions evident in most Third World cities are also an expression of the difficult circumstances in which most Third World countries find themselves*"

(Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992: 21). It seems logical to point out here that a large part of these 'difficult circumstances' relate to financial and managerial constraints as a result of policies, such as the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme, which were based on the 'urban bias' thesis which, as has been discussed, was arguably founded on largely unjustified premises. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Structural Adjustment has hit the urban poor hard, making them vulnerable to the stresses of urban life and particularly so to environmental health issues which are prevalent in cities, or more so than in rural areas (Drakakis-Smith, 1995 and 1996b). Other policies which refused to accept migrants as permanent members of the urban environment, have also contributed to urban environmental problems via the unwillingness to provide adequate services and infrastructure to the majority of the population.

### 3.3.2 Urban environmental health issues

As a result, the literature is full of descriptions of poverty and health related problems, commonly known as the 'brown agenda'<sup>4</sup>, which face urban dwellers daily, especially those in informal or squatter<sup>5</sup> dwellings. Problems tend to arise when, through necessity, squatter housing becomes a permanent solution to a housing crisis. Squatting helps individuals to resolve their individual shelter issues, but at a considerable environmental cost - which is also frequently borne by the urban poor (Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992). It is a particularly vicious circle: the informal nature of squatter settlements often makes it difficult to provide adequate, if any, services such as roads, sanitation, electricity and water, and solid waste disposal. However anti-urban policies and the refusal to provide for migrants that resulted in the informal nature of settlement in the first place. A brief description of the problems related to poor or a lack of service provision follows.

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<sup>4</sup> The brown agenda is defined as the most immediate and critical environmental problems which face dwellers of developing country urban areas, and include: lack of potable water supply, sanitation and drainage, inadequate disposal of solid and hazardous waste, air pollution and related health risks, occupation and degradation of environmentally sensitive land, and the relationships between all of these problems.

<sup>5</sup> While squatter housing is a short term solution to solving a housing problem, it is necessary that it be viewed as such, ie a short term solution and a transitory step towards a more permanent and better serviced answer to the housing backlog.

*Roads* - Informal and squatter settlements typically lack a road network, as communities try to maximise the area available to housing. Thus most houses lack direct road access. The roads that do exist are often unpaved and are prone to erosion, production of dust pollution or a muddy quagmire in rainy conditions and are often impenetrable by emergency vehicles and other service providers which are vital to health and safety. The installation of water and sewerage pipes, which often run beneath roads, becomes difficult and costly, if not impossible (Ferguson, 1996).

*High Densities* - While high densities alone do not cause environmental problems, a lack of adequate infrastructure or a high pressure on existing infrastructure can have a negative effect on the environment and health. Low cost sanitation such as pit latrines, can become an environmental hazard in high density situations<sup>6</sup> (Ferguson, 1996; Satterthwaite, 1993). High densities also reduce access to air and light and increase exposure to cooking smoke with resultant skin and respiratory problems (Songsore and McGranahan, 1993). Psychological stress, crime and tension has also been linked to high density areas (Ferguson, 1996).

*Energy* - While most urban households tend to have access to electricity, it is often not via legal connections and generally is insufficient for anything other than lighting (Ferguson, 1996; Songsore and McGranahan, 1993). This means that households have to make use of alternative energy sources such as wood, coal, paraffin and candles for cooking and space heating. All of these alternatives have environmental health hazards related to them, for example carbon monoxide poisoning, fires, smoke inhalation to name but a few, with coal and fuelwood presenting the hugest direct and indirect social and health costs (Eberhard and van Horen, 1995).

*Water Supply* - There are a number of facets to water supply: quality, quantity, ease of access to supply, and provision for its removal once used (Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992). It is often not water quality that is critical, but water volume in maintaining a reasonable standard of cleanliness. Poor provision of water is linked to diseases such as diarrhoea (waterborne), trachoma (waterwashed), bilharzia (water

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<sup>6</sup> Non sewer solutions such as pit latrines and long drops begin to pose a threat to health and the environment when densities exceed 100 - 150 people per hectare (Ferguson, 1996). Alexandra township near Sandton, South Africa has an average of 160 accommodation units (primarily shacks) per hectare which translates to over 790 people per hectare if the South African average of 4.97 persons per household is used (Schreiner, 1994).

based) and malaria (water related) (Satterthwaite, 1993). The converse side of water scarcity is the pollution of natural water bodies in urban areas through the dumping of waste, effluent and excrement from unserviced squatter settlements (Schreiner, 1994). In most accounts, it seems to be erratic supply and high costs which prevent most poor urban dwellers from accessing water (Songsore and McGranahan, 1993; Ferguson 1996; Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992).

*Sanitation* - Poor sanitation is one of the greatest threats to the environment and health of urban dwellers in Third World cities. Poorly or untreated sewage affects groundwater resources, and epidemics such as cholera, and other diarrhoeal diseases are related. The literature reveals that many Third World urban dwellers do not have the benefit of water borne sewerage, or otherwise the systems are overused resulting in overflow or discharge directly into rivers or open land (Songsore and McGranahan, 1993; Ferguson 1996; Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992). In South Africa for instance, many informal and squatter settlements have been poorly located on aquifers such as the Cape Flats Aquifer and in the case of Alexandria, within flood plains - and in conjunction with inadequate service provision severely contaminating these water sources.

*Solid waste collection* - Estimates suggest that up to 50 percent of solid waste generated within urban areas remains uncollected (Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992) However, most waste in the form of bottles and cans is reused within squatter settlements and there is minimal organic waste produced. The real hazard in terms of environmental health, are dump sites. Many informal settlements have been located close to waste disposal sites and waste picking is almost an occupation for most people. While waste picking should not be seen as the problem, the results are - often hazardous wastes are reused, such as pesticide containers, and rotting food and old medicines are harvested by the really poor, with potentially detrimental health consequences. Garbage also attracts pests, frequently contaminates water supplies and presents a fire hazard too.

The abovementioned problems have not just been identified by researchers and theorists, but have also been recognised and acknowledged by policy-makers. The World Bank has in the past decade, recognised what is now termed the 'brown agenda', by making a paradigm shift in its loan policies. Not only has the Bank renewed investment in urban areas, but it has also begun shifting emphasis towards

urban environmental issues through its Urban Management and Environment Programme. Furthermore a policy designed to guide urban lending during the 1990's was introduced with emphases on urban economic productivity, poverty alleviation, enhanced urban research and the protection of the urban environment (Leitmann, 1994).

### 3.3.3 Arguing against the city

Anti-city protagonists however, tend to take the list of problems experienced in cities and suggest that they are a function of the city, taking one of two approaches, either that cities and the environment are very much separate entities, which are not compatible, or that institutional requirements of developing countries urban areas are very much lacking. Furthermore, suggestions have been put forward that cities tend to have a parasitic role in the urban-environment relationship acting as a highly organised consumer of the natural ecosystem (McCarney, 1995). Those who tend to contest most loudly, the potential of cities, argue in terms of ecological concepts, such as 'carrying capacity' and 'ecosystem' to suggest that cities fulfill their needs from outside their 'ecosystem', similarly exporting their wastes outside of the system and thus creating what Rees refers to as an 'ecological footprint' which is many times the size of the city's physical boundaries (Rees, 1992).

The cities are thus regarded as 'importing' or appropriating the carrying capacity of rural areas and at the same time exporting ecological degradation to these rural areas, thus gradually encroaching on and taking over the 'environment'. However as McCarney (1995) points out, the problem with this argument is that it takes a very one sided view of cities and ignores their functions in terms of production and the ability to absorb expanding populations as well as the likelihood of reducing pressure on rural land. Rees' (1992) approach, in its calculations, also tends to obscure the disproportionate contribution that some land uses and the more affluent urban dwellers make to the 'footprint' of a city (Satterthwaite, 1997). Furthermore, the ecological footprint argument falls short in a number of other areas:

- appropriateness to the Third World context;
- definition of cities in terms of boundary and relationship to rural areas and;
- 'city' versus 'the environment'.

Most arguments against the city seem to be targeting the urban environmental problems associated with the 'First World', and do not seem to fit with the problems of Third World urban dwellers (McCarney, 1995; Satterthwaite, 1997). It is difficult to see how the majority of urban dwellers in Third World cities can be argued to be major contributors to the degradation of the environment when their resource use and generation of waste, per capita, is marginal. Per capita usage of non-renewable resources in Sub-Saharan cities is typically anywhere between ten and a thousand times less than in developed countries cities, depending on the resource. Renewable resource usage is also comparatively lower. Similarly, the impact of the urban poor in terms of generation of waste is minimal as most metal, glass, paper and other items are reclaimed for reuse or recycling, and organic wastes are minimal if not non-existent (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1994; Satterthwaite, 1997). The lack of appropriateness is arguably demonstrated by the idea that in developing countries, sustainability is primarily about *survival*, and the ecosystems approach seems to be unfairly biased against the immediate needs that people have for basic survival.

In defining urban areas by their political and administrative boundaries or by the built form, the ecological footprint approach is also limited by the refusal to view the city as part of its hinterland with a two way relationship, rather than merely taking from its surroundings. The biggest shortcoming that I can discern in much of the literature prior to the late 1990's, is the insistence of writers in distinguishing urban from rural as two distinct entities which have no interaction. However the two are inextricably linked in a variety of ways and it is very difficult and often counterproductive to attempt drawing a boundary between urban and rural areas (Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1992). The anti-city approaches also tend to ignore the relationship that many urban dwellers have with their rural counterparts in terms of circular migration and resource flows, and tend to mirror the 'urban bias' thesis in the inability to see the positive aspects of urban areas.

Admittedly there are problems which manifest themselves within urban areas, for instance uncontrolled physical expansion (ie urban sprawl), solid and liquid waste disposal and air pollution. However, I argue that these are problems of poor governance and planning rather than a reflection on the ability of cities *per se*. Many people would suggest that the local governments of Third World cities, and in particular those of SSA, are barely managing and are hampered by a lack of resources, authority, capacity in terms of training and staff and a dependency on

central government, and are thus unlikely to cope, let alone succeed in the face of enormous urban environmental crises (Satterthwaite, 1997; Brugmann, 1994; Atkinson, 1994; White, 1994; Leitmann, 1994). I would once again counter this point by suggesting that these problems are related directly to anti-urban policies, the legacy that most colonial governments left at independence, and the attempts at adapting generally inappropriate developed country models of urban governance to local situations, and not necessarily a fair reflection of cities.

Finally, a fundamental shortcoming of the ecological footprint approach is its view of humans, the city and all things man-made being *apart from* the environment, rather than as *a part of* the environment. It is not so much that cities per se are unsustainable but rather that the environmental impacts of humans are most evident in urban areas because of the concentrations of people (White, 1994).

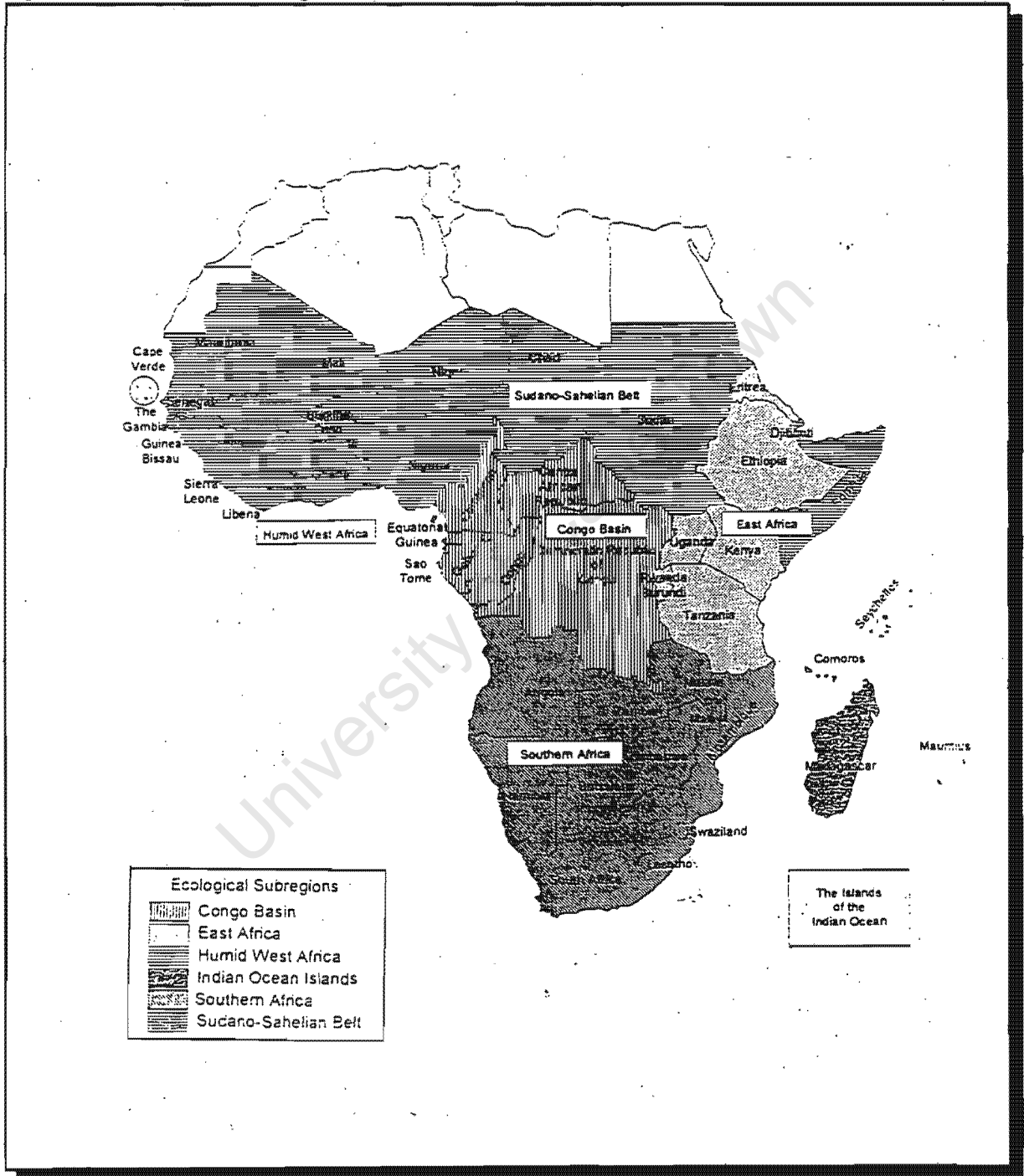
### 3.4 Rural environmental conditions stimulating urbanisation

Humans are a part of the environment and have a very dependent relationship on the environment. This is illustrated by the fact that in a number of SSA countries, the limitations of the natural environment and its degradation in combination with high population growth rates, are resulting in conditions which cannot support rural populations adequately. As a consequence, people are forced off the land into urban areas in a search of a means for their survival.

Erbach and Gaudet (1998) describe the environmental characteristics of SSA countries dividing the subcontinent into six ecological regions (Figure 3.1). Phrases such as "*overgrazing, cropland exhaustion and deforestation*", "*environmental degradation, poor farming conditions and chronic insecurity of the food supply*", "*widespread soil degradation and growing desertification*" and "*extremely difficult for local agriculture to meet the needs of the area's growing population*" (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998: 16-22) seem to characterise the state of the rural environment of many SSA countries. The Sudano-Sahelian Belt for instance is considered to have poor soils, extremely variable rainfall, short cropping periods and a high drought risk, making the region unfavourable for development (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998). In Senegal, which falls within this region, the crisis in agriculture is forcing rural households into a dependence on remittances from urban migrants, the significance of which is

illustrated in the comment by a rural head of household: "a family with no migrants cannot survive decently" (Fall, 1998: 135).

Figure 3.1: Ecological sub-regions of Sub-Saharan Africa (source: Erbach and Gaudet, 1998).



Even regions which are considered to have favourable climatic conditions, good rainfall and soils of a reasonable quality, for example Humid West Africa and East Africa, are still considered to present environmental pressure points and an inability to sustain a growing rural population (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998). The Southern Africa region which is considered to be rich in agricultural potential and biodiversity, although subject to highly variable climatic conditions and the risk of drought, also presents constraints to rural development. Past farming policies have failed to stimulate soil and water conservation with negative impacts on the environmental potential. Eurocentric practices, inappropriate crops, mismanagement and rigid policies on, for instance veld fires, have taken little account of the natural function of the vegetation and resulted in widespread environmental degradation (Brown, 1993; Erbach and Gaudet, 1998). Furthermore, environmental degradation is not only a concern from an anthropocentric point of view, but also from an ecocentric one, as deforestation, desertification, the pressure on wetlands and rivers and declining soil quality are all processes which are irreversible or very expensive to mend.

The major conclusion which can be drawn from this glum picture is that rural policies and environmental degradation have largely been responsible for shaping the rapid rate of migration in many SSA countries. This urbanisation rate is unlikely to be reduced without a policy which holistically targets the improvement of conditions in both rural and urban areas. Erbach and Gaudet (1998) argue that we will never achieve sustainable development unless we can attain environmentally friendly cities. While essentially this is true, I would also argue that the concept of sustainable development is limited unless a process of urbanisation can be achieved which is sustainable by the ability to manage it. This is unlikely to occur unless the agricultural and environmental conditions which are currently forcing people off their land at such a rapid rate, are targeted and improved in a well thought out manner

### 3.5 Conclusion

In returning to the original set of questions that were posed at the beginning of this chapter, it is necessary to consider in light of the environmental debate, whether urban areas have a positive role in the process of urbanisation. The current rates of urbanisation in SSA suggest that people continue to migrate to urban areas, and not because urban areas are particularly better off than rural areas. Reasons for continued rural-urban migration seem to range between risk diversification, economic

issues such as unemployment, poverty, land pressure, environmental degradation, land policies, and war.

Whatever the reason, migrants seem to interpret cities as places where they can continue their quest for survival. And yet, can cities provide better environmental opportunities than rural areas? What chances do people being forced off land as "environmental refugees" as White (1994) terms them, have in urban areas that have various health and environmental problems? Descriptions of the urban environmental problems which face urban dwellers on a daily basis make one wonder how cities can be perceived as a better, even if only temporary, option than rural areas. It would clearly suggest to me that for the majority of the rural poor the ability to survive in rural areas, without at least some measure of risk diversification, is minimal.

However, clearly the conditions in urban areas as experienced by the majority of the population are far from ideal. Lack of potable water, poor sanitation and waste disposal, crowded conditions and unsafe land is certainly not a sustainable existence and pushes the limits of the definition of survival. As has been discussed, it seems that policies which deny the existence and thus refuse to serve and provide for urban dwellers are often at the root of the problem. Lack of capacity, minimal resources and limited knowledge further serve to entrench the problems. With this in mind the question increasingly seems to be not whether cities can contribute to a sustainable process of urbanisation, but rather how can urban governance and management be adapted and improved so as to recognise and refocus itself towards accepting that the majority of the world's population is urbanising?

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# 4

## Land and Urbanisation in Namibia

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*"This is not to suggest that meeting basic needs in the rural areas [of Namibia] should be ignored, but rather that rural development per se has little potential to raise the standard of living of the population, and should thus not be pursued as an alternate to urban growth, or as a means of halting urban growth. Without large scale urban growth, Namibia's population will not be able to continue to sustain its growth within the medium to long term. Urbanisation provides a means to overcome this." (Frayne, 1997a: 7).*

#### 4.1 Introduction

A legacy of colonialism, war and apartheid policies in Namibia, has resulted in a society which has unequal access to social services, infrastructure, employment opportunities and very importantly: *land*. Added to these problems, is the fact that Namibia has a predominantly youthful and fast growing population. The average annual population growth rate is estimated to be 3.1% which means that Namibia's population is likely to double within 21 years (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). While Namibia, relative to other developing countries, has a very small population (approximately 1.5 million), the country has an equally small economy, and the pressures placed on this economy are enormous (Frayne, 1997a; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). A very prominent consequence of this situation has been the manifestation of severe poverty for the majority of Namibians. In response to this poverty, many of the newly independent government's policy documents, centre their goals around the alleviation of poverty, with 'land' identified in most cases as being the means by which to achieve economic development (National Planning Commission, 1995; Republic of Namibia, 1996).

This chapter examines the state of urbanisation in Namibia in terms of policies for rural and urban development and the way in which the lack of a coherent or holistic policy on urbanisation is likely to lead to the reinforcement of an unsustainable urbanisation process in Namibia.

#### 4.2 Constraints to accessing land (rural) in Namibia

In a country with a land area of approximately 824 000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of about 1.5 million, one would expect that there would be sufficient land for everyone in Namibia. Access to land is of particular importance in Namibia as between 70% and 90% of the population is directly dependant on the land for their subsistence (Werner, 1993; Brown, 1993). However, a combination of biophysical constraints and, more significantly, a history of colonial domination, with resultant limits on the access of the majority of the population to land, has had the effect of widespread poverty and the political importance (as well as economic and social importance) of returning that land to the people was identified as a priority of the newly independent government of Namibia in 1990 (National Planning Commission, 1995).

#### 4.2.1 Biophysical constraints

Namibia is an arid country. Rainfall varies from less than 300mm in the south to over 500mm in the north-east. It is significant that only 8% of the country receives an annual rainfall of over 500mm, the amount which is necessary to sustain dryland cropping. Furthermore, the rainfall in Namibia has extreme seasonal variability and the rate of evaporation is generally higher than that of rainfall. The only perennial rivers in Namibia form the northern and southern borders of the country, consequently making water Namibia's most important and restrictive natural resource (Brown, 1993; MPhil, 1998), and thus limiting the extent of permanent settlement which can take place without the need for technological assistance (Figure 4.1).

The unreliability of rainfall in Namibia, makes drought a regular and expected occurrence, averaging once every three years. The 1992 drought was particularly severe (and well documented) and resulted in substantial crop failure and stock loss. Food aid was a necessity for at least 20 percent of the Namibian population. However a number of problems including irregular distribution and the definition of who was entitled to aid<sup>7</sup> resulted in relief not being experienced by all. The effect being that many households had to split and migration to urban areas or other rural areas that were less affected, became common (Devereux and Næraa, 1996).

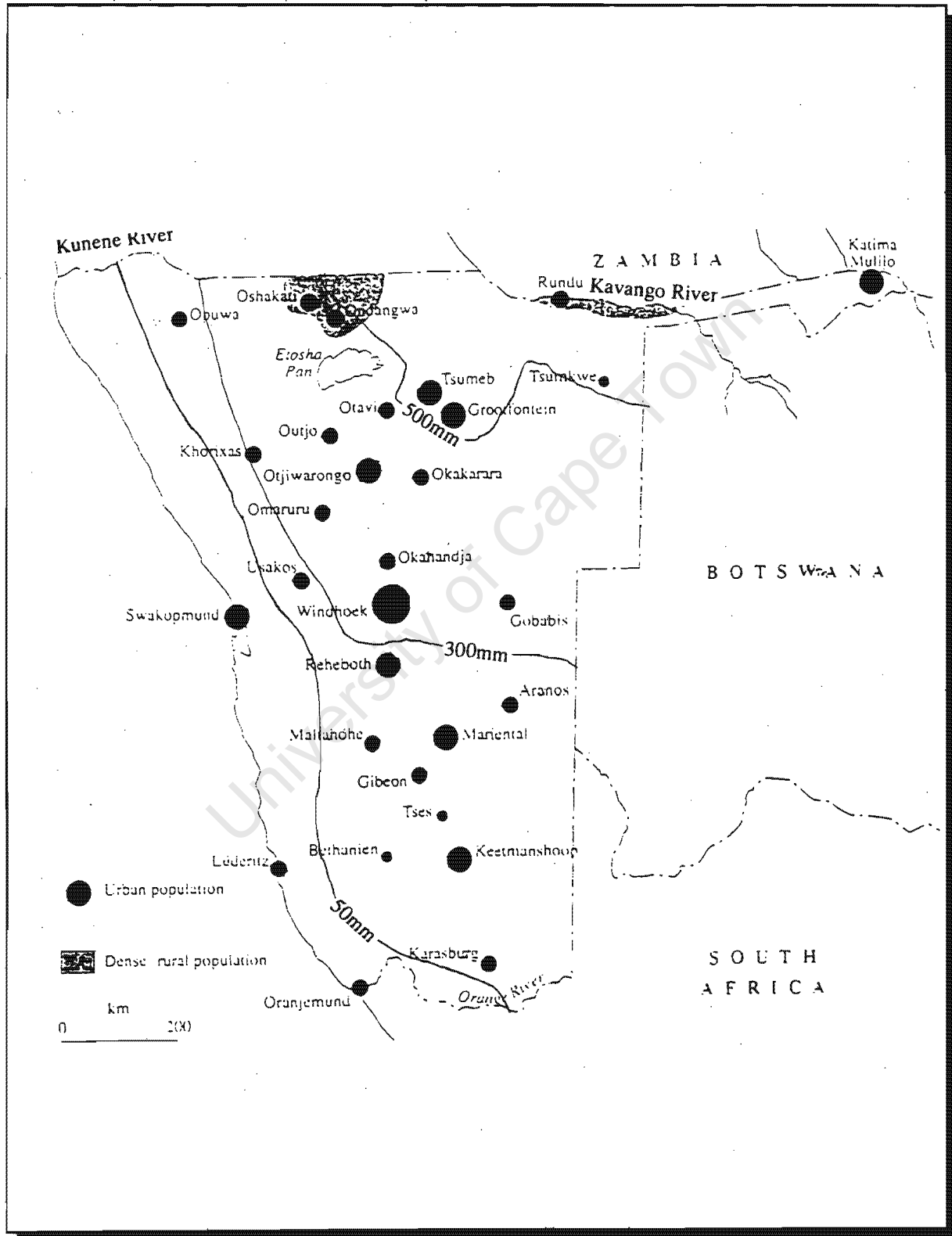
Soil quality also serves to constrain Namibia's agricultural potential, being characteristically sandy, stony and shallow, with a low content of clay and organic matter, and a limited water retention capacity. The soil quality in combination with fluctuating rainfall and high temperature variations serves to limit rain-fed crop production to the Grootfontein-Tsumeb-Otavi area commonly referred to as the "Maize triangle" (MPhil, 1998). In total about 8% of Namibia is regarded to be marginally suitable for dryland crop production (Brown, 1993).

As if Namibia's biophysical limitations were not enough to constrain access to suitable land for settlement and agricultural production, the country's history of land dispossession has further served to restrict the majority of Namibian's access to land.

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<sup>7</sup> For instance pensioners did not receive aid as their pension of N\$150/month was regarded as sufficient for buying food. However it is a well known fact that pension money is regarded as an important source of income and support for extended households and not just the intended beneficiary (Devereux et al, 1995; MPhil, 1998).

Figure 4.1: Relationship between rainfall, water bodies and urban settlements in Namibia  
(adapted from Moyo, et al, 1993)



#### 4.2.2 Land Dispossession in Namibia

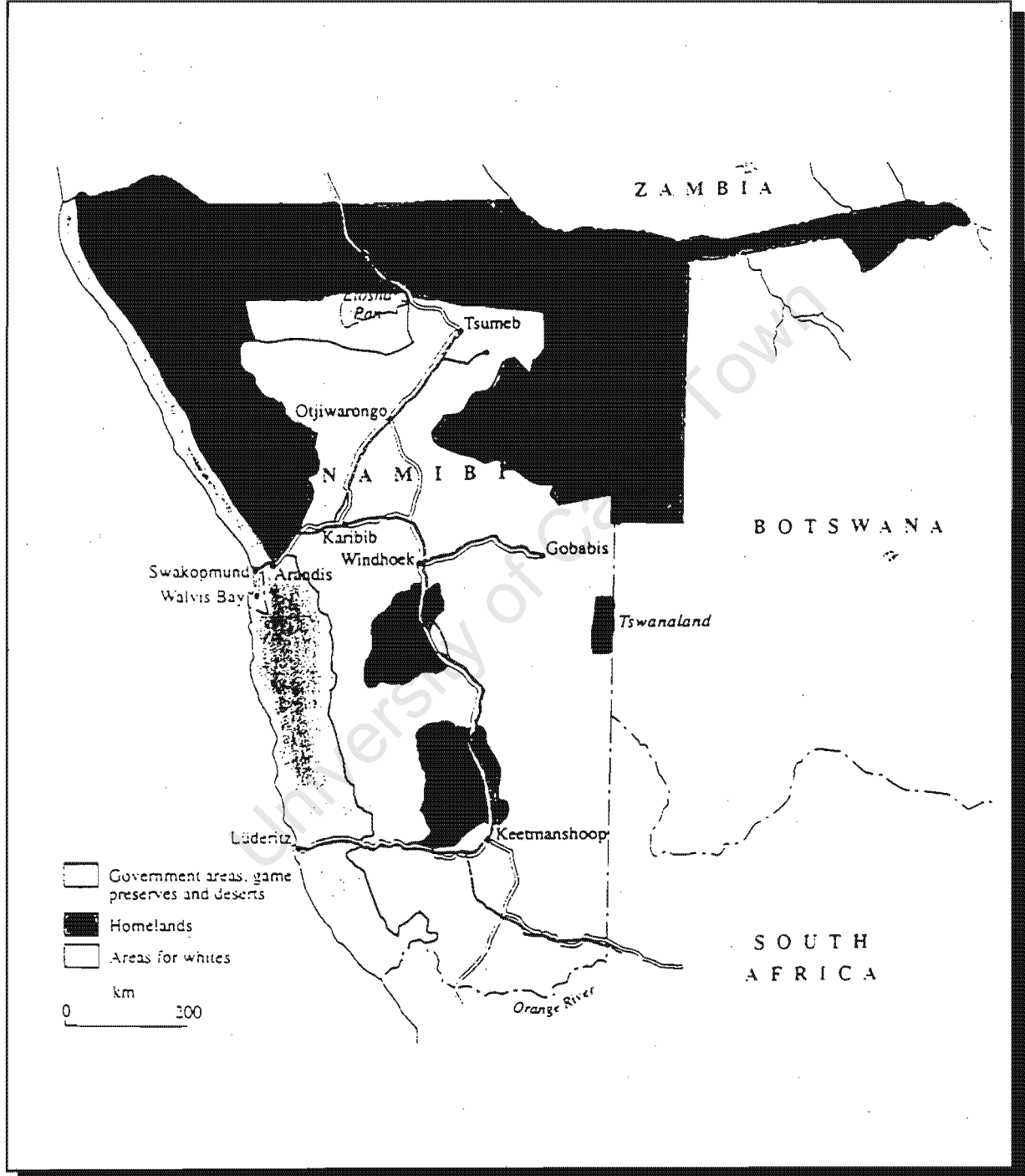
Namibia's land dispossession history has been similar to those of other Southern African countries, such as Zimbabwe and South Africa. With up to 90% of Namibians being dependent on the land for subsistence, access to land is of primary importance. As in other colonial countries, access to land has been a major determinant in the price and supply of African labour to industries and urban areas of colonial economies. With this in mind, the large scale dispossession of black Namibians had two intentions: to provide white settlers with land while concurrently denying black Namibians access to that same land thereby forcing them into a system of wage labour (Werner, 1993; National Planning Commission, 1995).

Land dispossession came into practice in Namibia in the late 1800's when local conflicts were exploited by the German colonialists by signing 'protection treaties' with indigenous leaders who in effect gave up their rights to alienate their land to anyone but the German colonialist powers. In conjunction with this, a series of natural disasters forced black Namibians into wage labour for the first time. However it was the establishment of 'native reserves' and later on the 'Bantustans' as created by the Odendaal Commission, that entrenched the provision of cheap labour. This was ensured in that every household had access to land within a communal system, at the same time being denied the opportunity to accumulate capital, thus being dependent on wage labour to augment their subsistence needs (Werner, 1993; Rohde, 1993).

While the Odendaal Commissions overt aim was the economic development of the Bantustans, reporting that "*virtually all existing reserves had been unable to achieve more than a subsistence economy*" (Odendaal Commission, 1964: 315, in MPhil, 1998), Rohde criticises this point by saying that the Bantustans had been located in "*the most marginal of agricultural land*" (Rohde, 1993: 18). However, as Behnke notes (cited in MPhil, 1998), a number of the Bantustans (Ovamboland, Okavango and Caprivi) were located in the northern regions of Namibia on land which is most suited to crop production, and perhaps what Rohde was suggesting by 'marginal', was that not only were some of the Bantustans located unfavourably for crop production, but that they were also peripheral in terms of access to markets, infrastructure, and services (Figure 4.2) For instance the colonial policies of restricting movement of people and livestock (for sale) from the reserves has resulted not only in increased land pressure and environmental decline. These policies have further served to restrict levels of

commercialisation, which in turn are further affected by long distances from and poor transport to markets (Pankhurst, 1996).

Figure 4.2: Tenure in Namibia following the Odendaal Commission (adapted from Moyo, et al, 1993)



While much of the literature interprets land dispossession in Namibia as a major cause of the migration of many black Namibians to urban areas in search of employment, it is argued here that migration and urbanisation should also be viewed in the context of land degradation, environmental constraints (which predate colonial policies), war, political turmoil and so on. Pankhurst (1996: 406) argues that there is a tendency to cast the causes of rural poverty and related land problems in the "*land dispossession - settler colonialism mould*". The implications in terms of policy are that decision makers have tended to view increased access to land as the answer, rather than improving the condition of the land and people's ability to sustain themselves (Pankhurst, 1996). This limitation is evident in the Namibian government's approach to addressing the land question.

The Namibian war of Independence was essentially about 'land' and as a result, access to land was identified by the government as a major priority to, and a means of, uplifting the Namibian people from abject poverty. The SWAPO-led government of the newly independent Namibia, in 1990, initiated a number of programmes to set about improving Namibian's access to land. The Namibian government identified the redistribution of land, and the resettlement of people onto this land, as the way in which to address the problems of unemployment, landlessness and poverty which were a legacy of the previous government.

It must be noted here that access to rural land, while important, is not the only form of land that is crucial to the Namibian people. In the following section the resettlement of people onto rural land will be briefly discussed, and then access to urban land will be the issue of discussion. Linking these two issues is the idea of urbanisation and how the *National Resettlement Policy* (as well as a lack of a urbanisation policy) is potentially serving to reinforce urbanisation patterns set up by previous government.

#### 4.3 Rural development policies contributing to urbanisation in Namibia

In many developing countries, such as Namibia, an increasing number of rural households are becoming progressively poorer. Reasons for this are suggested to include a combination of high population growth rates, the constraints of the biophysical environment, environmental degradation due to poor land use management, and current levels (and costs) of technology which make it impossible for the land to continue sustainably supporting a rapidly growing, rurally-based

population (Frayne, 1997; Namoya-Jacobs and Hokans, 1995; Brown, 1993).

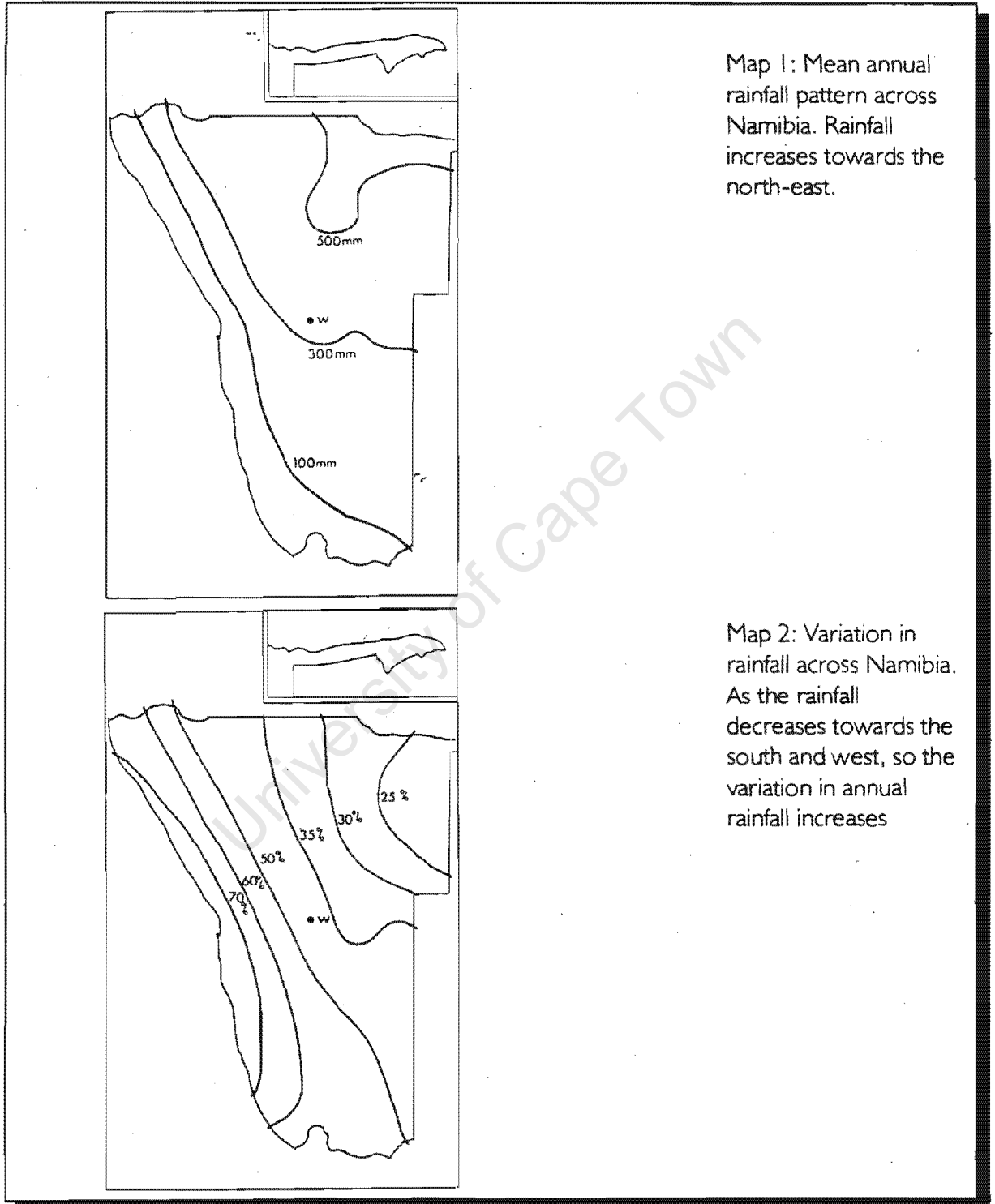
Despite the above constraints and the continued call from various Namibian specialists to consider carefully, firstly the merits of high levels of investment in rural areas, and secondly how to develop rural populations sustainably (Brown, 1993), the Namibian government has introduced a number of rurally-based investment projects which seem to disregard the advice. Most notably in this regard, is the Namibian Resettlement Programme.

In 1996, the *National Resettlement Policy* was passed by Cabinet, and in conjunction with the *Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act, Act 6 of 1995*, directs the implementation of population resettlement in Namibia (Republic of Namibia, 1995 and 1996). This policy document expresses the Namibian government's aim of resettlement as being "to uplift the living standard of all Namibians" (Republic of Namibia, 1996:1). This aim is to be achieved via the resettlement of settlers on plots of rural land with the purpose of making a living from the land through full time farming (Republic of Namibia, 1996). In 1998, a study was conducted, by the Masters of Philosophy in Environmental Science (MPhil) class of the University of Cape Town (UCT), to produce a baseline report on the environmental implications of resettlement in Namibia in the case study regions of Oshikoto and Omaheke (MPhil, 1998). This study raised a number of concerns in relation to both the theory behind the *National Resettlement Policy* and the way in which implementation of the policy had taken place in practice.

The concerns which were identified in the baseline report include (MPhil, 1998):

- the biophysical and 'environmental' costs of resettlement;
- the economic costs of resettlement to both the government in terms of the opportunity cost of investment, and to the settlers in terms of their ability to sustain themselves in the long term;
- the inference that the policy only supports those who are willing to remain in rural areas and in the process ignoring the realities of urbanisation and the inability of rural Namibia to sustain an increasing population;
- the requirement of giving up the right to access land elsewhere, ie in communal, urban or other rural areas, which a concern in terms of household's survival strategies; and
- the sectoral nature of the resettlement programme in terms of its narrowly defined support of agriculture.

Figure 4.3: Rainfall as a limiting factor in the biophysically sustainable resettlement of people in Namibia (source: Brown, 1993).



#### 4.3.2 Economic concerns

The resettlement programme recognised the multifaceted nature of resettlement by committing itself to not just allocating land, but also providing infrastructure and services such as roads, education, health, housing, water and sanitation at each of the resettlement projects (MPhil, 1998). While it is a worthwhile and necessary commitment, the economies of scale of providing such facilities to rural communities was expected to be a constraining factor. This assumption was borne out by data collected in the field. The costs of settling people in some instances were estimated at N\$ 200 000 per household (in this case a donor funded project) and in the cases where costs were significantly lower, it was felt that the quality and long term success of the project were being compromised with consequences in terms of the sustainability of the resettlement programme (MPhil, 1998).

Furthermore, none of the case study farms showed any sign of being self sustaining (MPhil, 1998). Frayne (1997a) states that in order to maintain a level of food security, the average subsistence farmer requires a minimum of 3 ha of land in the northern regions (increasing further south as rainfall decreases) to produce sufficient grain for subsistence as well as to provide a sufficient surplus to carry over for the next season. Furthermore, Frayne argues that 50% of rural households have no livestock and this has an impact on the ability to adequately prepare the land for cultivation, thus making female headed households particularly vulnerable and increasingly marginalising the poorer and less powerful households (Frayne, 1997a).

Frayne's argument is supported by the findings of the baseline report (MPhil, 1998). In many cases settlers have an average of 0.5 ha of irrigable land and up to 7 ha of dryland and none of them demonstrated the attainment of self sufficiency. This was argued to be related to a lack of draught animals and thus the inability in many cases to clear fields for production, as well as the absence of male labour due to their search for cash employment (MPhil, 1998). In many cases members of households were employed either as farm labourers on commercial farms, or in towns in order to diversify their subsistence income. Evidence from the case studies made it clear that not only had the resettlement programme not been successful in uplifting living standards and reducing poverty, but in some cases it has reduced peoples choices and compelled them into a situation from which many are unlikely to be able to improve significantly. Furthermore, it was a key conclusion that not only were settlers

unable to sustain themselves, but "contrary to the policy's aim of creating self sufficiency among settlers within a 5 year period, continued dependency of the majority of registered people on government provisions such as food and clothing, was apparent" (MPhil, 1998: 141).

A significant further finding of the 1998 baseline study (MPhil, 1998) was the fact that most households complained of a lack of cash and thus an inability to function in terms of partaking in normal social activities, buying food, accessing transport and so on, and this was found to be a direct result of the requirement of the food for work scheme. Many households in turn had chosen to accept the penalisation of not working for food, in order to gain employment off their plots so as to earn cash incomes (MPhil, 1998). Ironically, while the *National Resettlement Policy* states its support for "subsidiary income generating activities", in reality there was very little evidence of this support (Republic of Namibia, 1996: 6). At a number of resettlement projects settlers had a variety of enterprises for earning money such as knitting projects, brick making, selling their vegetable produce, hair braiding and so on. However none of these schemes were being explicitly supported via any training in terms of marketing or selling, and a lack of transport to markets was perceived as a limitation to their viability (MPhil, 1998).

One can almost see parallels between this era of post independence resettlement in Namibia and that of the Apartheid inspired moves set in motion by the Odendaal Commission where people were resettled in such a manner that they were forced to look for wage labour to supplement their subsistence. As one neighbouring farmer commented, the conditions at Tsintsabis (one of the case study resettlement farms) are such that it creates a source of cheap labour to the surrounding commercial farmers who typically pay labourers about N\$150 per month (MPhil, 1998). A combination of land degradation and the inability of the natural environment to sustain settlers (and in turn the increased opportunistic use of the land leading to further degradation) as well as the evidence that settlers were seeking to diversify their risk by finding other forms of employment, reinforces the second major concern with the resettlement programme: a lack of recognition of the urbanisation process.

#### 4.3.3 Denying urbanisation

The *National Resettlement Policy* makes no provisions for resettling people in urban

areas and specifically states that the MLRR is "ready to help citizens who are willing to find a dwelling outside the urban and peri-urban areas" (Republic of Namibia, 1996: 4) thus suggesting that those seeking government help should move back to rural areas in order to qualify. In essence this contradicts the realities of urbanisation in Namibia and the ability of the country to sustain a predominantly rural population.

Urban growth in Namibia is as high as 5% (and more than 8% in Windhoek), and has dramatically increased since Independence and clearly exceeds the population growth rate of 3.1% by a wide margin (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). This suggests that there is a tendency for people to seek an 'easier' life in urban areas, or at least to diversify the income of households, as well as seek improved living standards in the form of access to infrastructure and services, and was confirmed by the baseline report (MPhil, 1998). The assumption that the rural areas of Namibia are currently unable to support the number of people there, and as such, urbanisation is likely to remain unabated in the near future was also confirmed (MPhil, 1998).

Thus the concern in relation to urbanisation is that the government seemingly seeks to reverse or at very least minimise rural-urban migration, and in so doing refuses to accept and provide for the fact that rural Namibia is unable to sustain the population adequately. As a key recommendation it was suggested in the baseline report that a range of resettlement options, including urban resettlement, be considered rather than limiting the policy to rural based resettlement (MPhil, 1998). At the very least, it was also recommended that a Strategic Assessment be carried out for poverty alleviation measures so as to consider the alternatives available in uplifting Namibian citizens and in turn recognising the problems and reasons prompting people to migrate to urban areas or between rural and urban areas in the form of circular migration (MPhil, 1998).

#### 4.3.4 Requirement of relinquishing rights to land in other areas

Applicants for resettlement need to fulfill a number of criteria in order to be considered. Two of these criteria are of particular concern in light of the survival strategies undertaken by numerous households. Criterion 2 states that settlers should be prepared to relinquish land rights elsewhere, while criterion 4 subjects settlers to a probationary period of two years (Republic of Namibia, 1996). Within this probationary period settlers are expected to achieve annual cultivation of their land

allocation, and be approaching a level of self sufficiency. However visits to the case study areas displayed a remarkable lack of self sufficiency especially at the Tsintsabis project which has been running for seven years (MPhil, 1998).

The concern in this regard is that the policy does not make it clear what the consequences would be of an unsuccessful completion of the probationary period. However section 50 of the *Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act* states that a settler's lease may be terminated if the conditions of the lease are not fulfilled (Republic of Namibia, 1995). Presumably this lack of flexibility means that widespread landlessness could result if settlers are unable to achieve self sufficiency within the required time. The period for achieving this self sufficiency disregards the international experience which promotes the phasing of resettlement within a long term approach (MPhil, 1998).

There are further implications with regards to the need for households to 'split' in order to survive, with members having to migrate in order to support rural counterparts. However the scenario is such that urban households run the risk of losing their access to rural land if they cannot sufficiently support their rural households, thus resulting in a vulnerable landless situation (MPhil, 1998).

#### 4.4 Accessing land in urban Namibia

Within the SSA context, Namibia is one of the least urbanised countries, with only 28% of its population classified as living in urban areas in 1992 (National Planning Commission, 1994). However in line with the experience of developing countries in SSA it is one of the fastest urbanising countries. Namibia currently has a high rate of urbanisation ranging between 4.5% and 6.5%<sup>8</sup>, with migration to Windhoek considered to be as high as 8% and the growth of Walvis Bay to have reached 21% within the first six months of reintegration into Namibia (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995; Namoya-Jacobs and Hokans, 1995; Frayne, 1992).

However, Namibia's largest urban centre, Windhoek, has a total population of approximately 150 000 people, which in relation to most of Sub-Saharan urban centres

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<sup>8</sup> Estimates of urbanisation, in the literature, range between 3.8% and 10%, however an assumed growth rate of between 4.5% and 6.5% has been taken as being realistic in most of the literature sources and is accepted by Namibia's Central Statistics Office (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995).

can be considered small. However, in relation to Namibia's total population of approximately 1.5 million, this is arguably of relative significance.

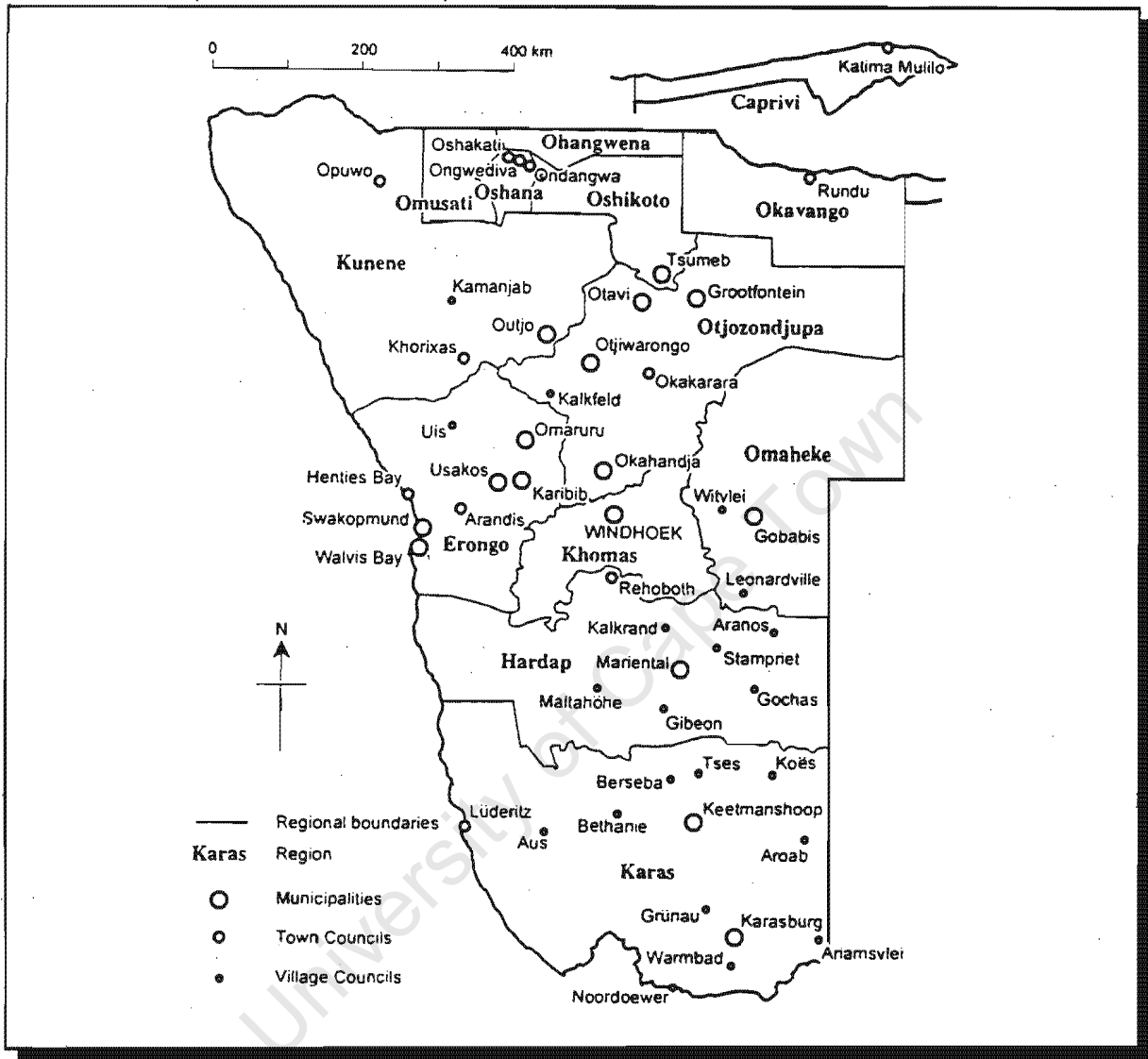
Windhoek is by far the most important urban centre in Namibia, functioning as a primate city culturally, economically, politically and in terms of population numbers. While the exact rate of migration into this city is unknown, it is assumed in most of the literature that the rate is as high as 8% (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). The majority of migrants seem to be Owambo-speaking people who have left the rural and urban areas of former Owambo in favour of the main towns in the southern areas (Windhoek and Walvis Bay). Namibia currently has 51 localities (Figure 4.4) each with a population greater than 2000, and these are divided into a hierarchy of 'municipalities', 'towns' and 'villages'.

Pre-colonial Namibia did not have a history of population concentration. This is mainly because of the small population size, as well as environmental conditions which do not favour large concentrations of people or encourage surplus production to maintain the specialised functions of urban areas (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). As such, urban settlements and migration patterns have largely been shaped by the colonial influence.

#### 4.4.1 Early urbanisation policies

Prior to 1977, government policy regarded migrants as temporary visitors to urban areas and sought to restrict any possibility of their permanence. The policy in Namibia was to maintain urban centres, especially those in the central and southern regions, as 'white areas'. Those black Namibians who migrated to urban areas, in search of wage labour, were subjected to a myriad of laws which prevented their permanent urbanisation (Simon, 1983 and 1988; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). The *Native Administration Proclamation 11 of 1922* as amended by *Proclamation 11 of 1927* sought to control movement out of northern reserves by means of pass laws, and the frequently amended *Natives (Urban Areas) Proclamation, No. 56 of 1951* included sections on the establishment of black urban locations, restrictions on the acquisition of land, compulsory segregation of blacks in locations, restrictions on the rights of blacks to remain in urban areas for more than 72 hours, and the powers of local authorities within proclaimed locations including registration of all occupants and the right to refuse registration of new arrivals (Simon, 1983).

Figure 4.4: Geographical distribution of urban local authorities in Namibia, 1995 (source: Simon, 1996).



As a result of rigid controls and urbanisation policies, urban settlements in Namibia are now entrenched in two forms:

- those in the central and southern part of Namibia developed as administrative and commercial centres first under German and then South African rule in which black Namibians were relegated to 'locations' on the periphery of the urban area and generally conforming to the 'Apartheid City model' (such as Swakopmund and Windhoek); and
- those in the northern communal areas established, in response to administrative and military needs, as centres for the Bantustans which were

created under the Odendaal Commission in 1964 (such as Khorixas, Oshakati and Katima Mulilo) (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995; Melber, 1996).

Laws controlling and preventing the permanent urbanisation of black Namibians were progressively tightened until 1977, when influx controls were abolished through the *General Law Amendment Proclamation, No AG.5 of 1977* and *Proclamation AG.12 of 1977* in the apparent preparation for independence (Simon, 1983 and 1988). This meant that black Namibians could no longer be controlled in terms of entry to urban areas or expelled for unemployment, and were now able to buy land in urban areas. In effect black Namibians could no longer be regarded as temporary urban dwellers and had the liberty to now migrate as a household on a permanent basis if they so wished.

Early urbanisation had been dominated by men who moved *en masse*, contracted via the migrant labour system to work for the railways, mines and industry. These labourers were limited to living in separate 'locations' and under the auspices of separate development were provided with housing and social services of a level inferior to those in white areas (Simon, 1988; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995; Melber, 1996). In many cases there was no reticulated water or sewerage and only a limited number of communal standpipes and toilets. Table 4.1 illustrates the pressure on resources in the Main Location in Windhoek as a result of limited provision in the 1950's (Simon, 1988).

Table 4.1: Physical conditions in Windhoek's Main Location in 1952 (adapted from Simon, 1988)

Number of persons per communal standpipe and tap	119
Number of persons per toilet	67
Number of persons per shower	505

The repeal of restrictive urbanisation laws was expected to significantly change the face of urbanisation in Namibia (Simon, 1983). As Simon notes, small number of black Namibians moved into formerly white suburbs in the 1980's (Simon, 1983), however for the majority of black urbanites conditions remained inferior. For instance, in the 1980's there was a severe reduction in the construction of public housing, as it could no

longer be used as a mechanism of constraining permanent urbanisation. The effect however was to increase densities in existing houses and thus pressure on services and infrastructure.

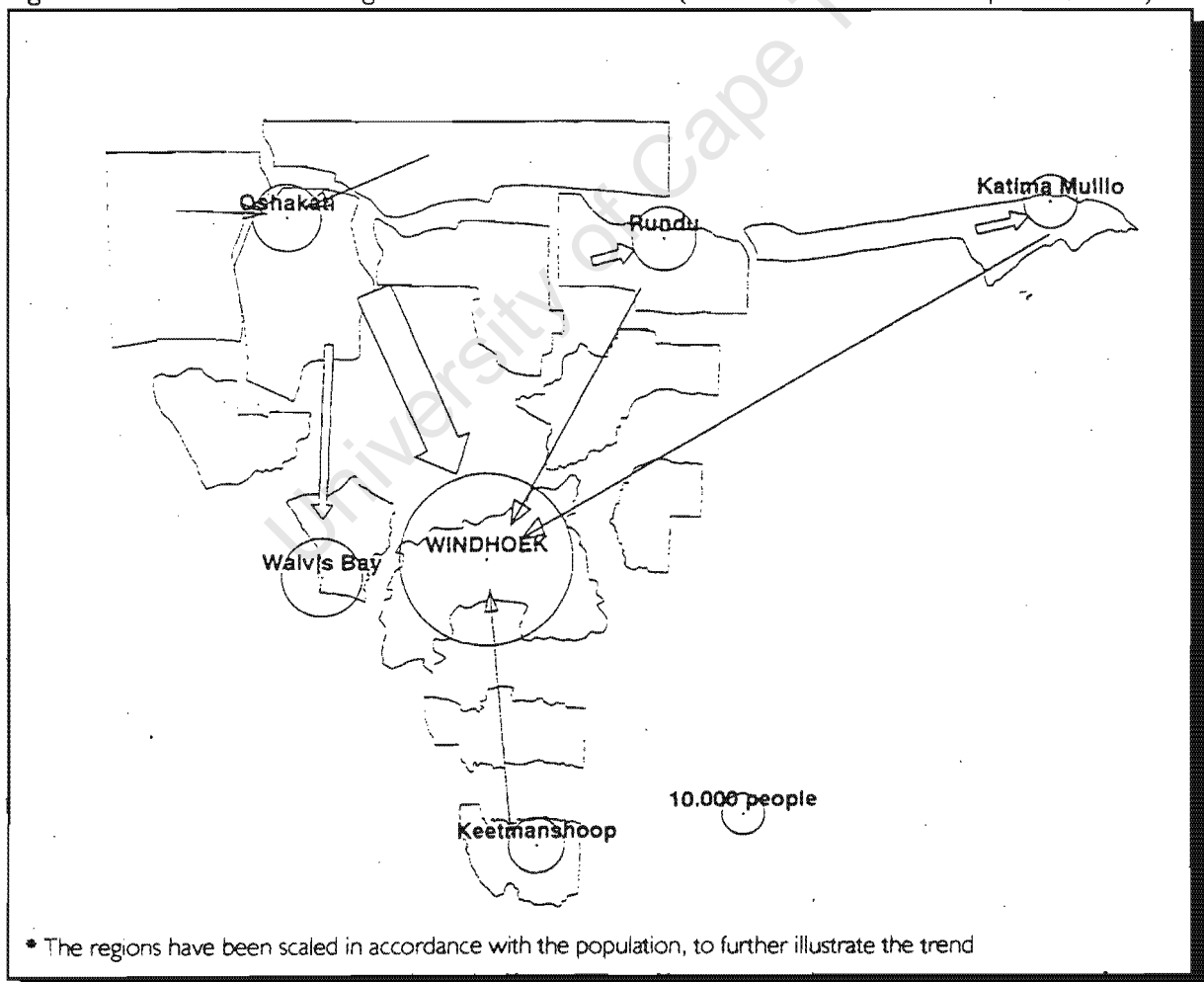
Much of the housing prior to the 1980's was built with the primary function of shelter and the assumption that urban Africans were temporary residents and thus single sex hostels predominated (Simon, 1988). This type of housing combined with the tight urbanisation laws served to entrench a pattern of circular migration in which migrants regularly travel between urban and rural areas, maintained two households. However as the international literature has shown and as Mabin (1990), Potts (1997) and Ferguson (1990) point out, patterns of circular migration are not necessarily a function of anti-urbanisation policies. But, I don't think it would be wrong to argue that anti-urban policies have certainly served to strengthen circulatory migration patterns. Indeed the poor quality of urban services and infrastructure provided for the majority of urban dwellers in SSA's urban areas would suggest that it would be sensible to maintain rural links. This point is certainly confirmed by the evidence which shows that most households in urban areas have maintained their social and economic links with rural areas long after 1977, when influx laws in Namibia were abolished (Frayne, 1992; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995; Simon, 1983). Even in Windhoek, where Tvedten and Mupotola (1995) argue that conditions are much more 'settled' than other urban areas and certainly of a higher standard, people still maintain strong links with rural areas.

Despite the pressures on resources and the lack of housing provision, urban squatting, unlike in other Sub-Saharan urban areas, except Zimbabwe, was notable by its absence right into the 1980's. Squatting was rigidly suppressed by the government, reportedly for health reasons (presumably white health), but primarily because of fears of political reprisals. This was achieved however at the cost of social and health consequences in the townships as squatting became hidden within existing buildings rather than as visible shanty shacks (Simon, 1983 and 1988). Furthermore, the problem was merely displaced to the urban fringe and peri-urban areas, with impacts on wildlife and livestock and the physical environment as well as health impacts on the people themselves (Simon, 1988). The removal of urban restrictions in combination with the achievement of independence, have changed this situation and urban squatter settlements in Namibia are very evident today.

#### 4.4.2 Uneven urbanisation patterns

Despite the removal of restrictions on migration, urbanisation in Namibia has been fairly uneven (Figure 4.5). Initially urbanisation occurred mainly in the central and southern regions of Namibia with migrants coming from the northern communal 'reserves'. Table 4.2 indicates the uneven distribution of urban areas, with the effect that those areas with the highest population density strangely coincide with the regions of lowest urbanisation. This is possibly because economic investment in the northern communal areas has been extremely limited thus constraining the opportunities for urban employment and secondly as a result of definition - the villages which arguably represent the urban areas of the communal land are not defined as 'urban' in the Local Authorities Act.

Figure 4.5: Uneven urban migration trends in Namibia (source: Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995)



More recent urbanisation is no longer confined to the southern and central regions of Namibia, however it is interesting to note that reasons for migrating to urban areas differ according to region. In the 1980's urbanisation of the far northern areas increased dramatically arguably as a result of war and growing pressure in the communal areas from high population growth, inefficient agricultural methods and poor marketing infrastructure. Katima Mulilo for example grew almost 3000% between 1981 and 1990. However population numbers of these northern towns have reportedly declined in the post-independence era possibly as a result of the decline in army related employment (Frayne, 1992). Insufficient land and the inability to adequately prepare it for cultivation is another reason for urbanisation as the poorer and less powerful households are increasingly marginalised and forced into urban areas for economic reasons (Frayne, 1997a).

Table 4.2: Uneven urbanisation in Namibia (source: Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995)

Region/ Nation	Urban population	Percentage of Population urbanised	Population density (km <sup>2</sup> )	Localities with a population of 2000+
Namibia	382 680	0.28	1.7	51
Karas	22 732	0.37	0.4	4
Hardap	29 020	0.44	0.6	5
Khomas	147 056	0.88	4.4	*3
Erongo	35 062	0.63	0.9	6
Otjozondjupa	47 021	0.46	0.9	5
Omaheke	8 340	0.16	0.6	4
Oshikoto	16 211	0.13	4.8	2
Oshana	35 726	0.26	26	6
Omusati	0	0	15.1	2
Ohangwena	0	0	17.9	7
Okavango	19 366	0.17	2.7	3
Caprivi	13 377	0.15	4.9	1
Kunene	8 769	0.14	0.5	3

\* Windhoek, Katutura and Khomasdal were counted separately

Urbanisation to the central urban areas such as Windhoek and Walvis Bay seem to reflect more economic reasons for migration with unemployment, limited education opportunities and rising expectations of young adults being most commonly cited, with migrants generally coming from communal areas (Ovamboland) and other towns (Frayne, 1992). Frayne (1992) argues that Namibia's economic background is central to influencing urbanisation in Namibia, particularly to Windhoek, for a number of reasons:

- Namibia has a small manufacturing sector (approximately 5% of GDP) and depends heavily on South Africa for the importation of consumer goods. This dependence has negative effects on the diversification of the economy and does little to stimulate employment opportunities. Currently, almost half of all employment is concentrated in Windhoek which helps to explain the high urbanisation rates to this city. Subsistence farmers also experience difficulty in selling their surplus in the face of the South African competition which 'dumps' cheap vegetables in Namibia effectively undercutting the market (MPhil, 1998).
- Urban-rural wage differentials are also argued to be a factor encouraging movement to urban areas. In 1991, it was estimated that income from agricultural work averaged at N\$4.00 per day, while unskilled, off farm labour could return at least N\$10.00 per day. In 1998, settlers working on surrounding commercial farms reported earning N\$150/month which averages at about N\$5 per day (MPhil, 1998), suggesting a relative decline in the potential to earn money from farm labour. While the chances of getting work in urban areas is considered to be limited, the type of work and the potential to earn marginally higher wages was argued to be sufficient to continue migration patterns from rural to urban areas (Frayne, 1992). As Pendleton puts it: "*the perceived benefits of 'playing' the migration lottery game would seem to outweigh the disadvantages of not playing since so many migrants continue to come*" to urban areas (Pendleton, 1997:8).

In the southern regions, urbanisation has been primarily a result of climatic conditions which have prolonged the drought in the area, a declining regional economy and the rapid degradation of the soil as a result of increasing subsistence pressures on the land (Frayne, 1992). In addition, Namoya-Jacobs and Hokans (1995: 2) suggest that rapid growth of urban Namibia is further influenced by "*drought, poor land use management, mass evictions from farms, the illegal fencing of communal lands,*

*resettlement programmes, and inheritance laws that have forced women-headed households off their rural lands*". Urbanisation is also cited to be a natural consequence of independence as Namibians express their freedom to move by pursuing better jobs, housing and education opportunities (Namoya-Jacobs and Hokans, 1995). Thus it can be argued that there are a complex set of factors influencing urbanisation patterns in Namibia which can be summarised as economic factors, landlessness, ecological and environmental factors, social factors and political factors. The combination of these factors has produced a rate of urbanisation which urban areas are increasingly unable to cope with, partly because of policies which ignore and fail to understand the reasons for urbanisation, and partly due to a severe lack of capacity to create jobs, provide services and infrastructure and so on. The manifestations of this include unserviced, informal settlements, overcrowding of existing housing, informal employment activities and unemployment.

#### 4.4.3 Current urbanisation into Windhoek

As with other Sub-Saharan countries the primacy effect is experienced in Namibia. Windhoek, the capital city, has the majority of the country's urban population and seems to be the focus of migration. Windhoek has a population of roughly 150 000 people, which is eight times that of the next largest urban area, Walvis Bay. Since 1991, when a survey was undertaken of Windhoek's low income township, Katutura, and home to over half the population of Windhoek, a number of changes in urbanisation have become apparent (Frayne, 1992; Pendleton, 1997). The 1991 Katutura survey indicated the following characteristics as summarised in Table 4.3 (Frayne, 1992).

It is significant to note that in 1991 rural-urban contact was considered to be relatively minimal with only 31.1% owning rural land or livestock, just over 42% of respondents sending remittances to rural areas and visits to rural areas averaging one per year (Frayne, 1992). This is possibly because the majority of migrants had been settled in Katutura for at least 8.7 years. Just under 60% of migrants were also engaged in formal employment which may have resulted in a reduced dependence on rural areas and in turn minimised the relationship.

However incomes were reported to be highly variable ranging from less than N\$400 to over N\$2500 and possibly those at the lower end of the earning scale could simply not afford to send money back to rural areas or to pay transport costs to travel home

Table 4.3: Characteristics of urbanisation in Katutura in 1991  
(source: Frayne, 1992; Pendleton, 1997)

Characteristics	Percentage
Predominantly youthful population	
• under 16 years	33.9%
• between 16 and 64	64.5%
Employment	
• informal	16.1%
• formal	59.3%
• unemployed	35.5%
Rural-urban contact	
• owned rural land or livestock	31.1%
• sent money back to rural areas	42.1%
• visits to rural areas	1 per year
Point of entry into Windhoek	
• Katutura	68.0%
• stayed initially with friends and family from original community	80.2%

regularly<sup>9</sup>. It is also significant to note that in 1991 the majority of people stayed in rented rooms or houses and that the evidence of squatter shacks was minimal (Frayne, 1992).

Since 1991 however the face of migration into Windhoek has changed remarkably in terms of increased migration, the growth of informal and squatter housing and increased rural-urban contact (Pendleton, 1997). In 1991, Katutura had a population of 82 793 (Frayne, 1992), which had increased to over 110 000 by 1996 (Pendleton, 1997). Significantly over 74% of the adult population are migrants with over half of them having moved there in the last five years. Another point to note is that the composition of migrants has changed with an increasingly substantial portion of women migrants.

<sup>9</sup> The inability of poor urban households to maintain links with rural counterparts is an issue which has been noted in the South African case by Spiegel *et al* (1996); Spiegel and Mehlwana (1997) and Dewar *et al* (1991) in research that has concentrated on household 'fluidity', movement patterns and migration in the greater Cape Town area. The implications are such interactions rely on a form of reciprocity which the poor are unable to maintain. Thus the poor tend to remain particularly vulnerable in that they are unable to rely on support from rural areas in times of hardship nor are they able to provide the support to rural households, which was probably the reason for migrating to an urban area in the first instance.

The second notable change has been the increase in shanty dwellings. Pendleton (1996) reports that approximately 25% of the 1996 Katutura population now live in informal housing. The reasons for coming to Windhoek have remained predominantly the same: jobs and money. Unemployment is considered to have declined from 36% in 1991 to 26% in 1996 possibly as a result of assimilation into the informal economy as well as the government's affirmative action policies - however current plans to downsize the government work force will very likely have a negative impact on this (Pendleton, 1996).

Most notably however is the change in rural-urban contact with visits to rural areas and ownership of rural land and livestock having increased substantially since 1991. Approximately 43% of migrants in Katutura, in 1996, reported ownership of land, livestock or both and the number of visits to rural areas per year have increased to two (Pendleton, 1997). This suggests that (and confirms the assumptions and findings from the discussion on rural problems) that rural areas of Namibia are increasingly unable to support rural households with the result being that many people are choosing to diversify and move into urban areas for work which will in turn support their rural households. Another possibility is that urban conditions have declined within the period between 1991 and 1996, necessitating that urban households reestablish or strengthen linkages with rural households in order to survive. Either way, it is clear that urbanisation is occurring rapidly in Namibia, even if it takes a circular form. The problem is that policy gives no direction to urbanisation or indeed how to manage it at either end of the rural-urban continuum.

#### 4.5 Current management of urbanisation in Namibia

There is presently no coordinated policy on urbanisation in Namibia. Similarly there is no overarching plan to address poverty (Devereux, *et al*, 1995) which is a function of environmental degradation, social, political and economic factors and central to the urbanisation process in Namibia. The National Report on Population contains one paragraph on urbanisation stating the government will attempt to minimize urban migration by promoting rural development. Similarly the absence of any broad statements on the subject of urbanisation is notable in Namibia's First National Development Plan (NDP1). The NDP1 does however make statements which include the government's will to slow the rate of rural-urban migration, promote cost recovery for services, and expand and upgrade services in Towns, Villages and Settlements

(National Planning Commission, 1995). Furthermore, while there is a chapter in the NDP1 on 'Rural Development' there is no similar chapter dedicated to the development of urban areas (National Planning Commission, 1995).

In the absence of a clear urbanisation policy or statement it is difficult to interpret definitively the government's stance on urbanisation. However it seems fairly clear that the Namibian Governments approach to urbanisation is to limit it, or at the very least attempt to develop rural areas in the anticipation that this will minimise or even reverse rural-urban migration. According to Tvedten and Mupotola (1995) the lack of any significant statement on urbanisation seems to indicate by implication that management of urbanisation is a local authority issue and as municipalities are intended to be self financing, the central government need not concern itself with the matter. However, urbanisation clearly needs a coordinated response as 'towns' and 'villages' which according to the Local Authorities Act, are not self financing but rather are dependent on financial and administrative support from the MLRGH (Simon, 1996), also experience the effects of urbanisation and clearly need to benefit from a policy or guidelines on urbanisation.

Further serving to confuse the issue of the management of urbanisation, is the multiplicity of organisations with an interest in the urban landscape, including government, parastatals, private interests, aid organisations and community based organisations (CBO's). While policy formulation in the Namibian context of urbanisation arguably rests with the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MLRGH) in conjunction with the National Planning Commission, the initiative has yet to be taken by either of these institutions. Limited resources (the MLRGH was only allocated 4% of the national budget in 1995), limited capacity to implement, and an apparent lack of interest from central government are all likely to contribute to the inability to cope effectively with the current urbanisation patterns in Namibia (Namoya-Jacobs and Hokans, 1995; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). Furthermore, the Namibian government is heavily dependent on aid from donors. However international donor agencies often have priorities which do not closely coincide with those of government. Donors tend to seek the maximum impact from the money they spend and as Devereux *et al* (1995: 69) argue: "*this search for visible results can lead to regional disparities - some regions being neglected, even though people there could benefit dramatically from small inputs of support*".

Furthermore line ministries seem unable to work in a coordinated manner to minimise poverty, often working against each other or duplicating each others efforts, or worse, ignoring the problems of poverty altogether (Devereux, *et al*, 1995). Ministries with explicit directives to address poverty include:

- Ministry of Trade and Industry which targets poverty through job creation;
- Ministry of Lands Resettlement and Rehabilitation which targets the poor through resettlement schemes on rural land;
- Ministry of Health and Social Services targetting the aged through a state pension scheme; and
- Ministry of Regional and Local Governement and Housing which provides low cost housing and subsidised municipal services to poor communities (Devereux, *et al*, 1995).

The problem however is that these schemes are uncoordinated attempts to alleviate poverty and are not underpinned by any form of strategic policy. Furthermore each of these schemes has inherent shortcomings in terms of their ability to reach their target population in the way in which they desire.

#### 4.5.1 Constraints faced by urban local authorities

The limitations on urban management and governance in Namibia in the form of resources and capacity constraints, as well as the continuation of an inappropriate inherited system of urban governance, further serves to restrict the management of urbanisation (Swilling, 1996). The urban local authority system inherited by Namibia at independence comprised autonomous fully developed local authorities in the white areas and highly dependent local government bodies in the communal areas, as charactised by the following:

- dualistic 'South African style' municipalities in established towns and cities;
- small towns and villages in central and southern Namibia deemed too small to be autonomous and administered along centralised lines from Windhoek;
- quasi-urban areas in the communal lands which had no formal local authority and lacked even basic services (Simon, 1996).

The legislation which regulated these inherited bodies was abolished after independence and currently the legislative framework for local government is contained in the Local Authorities Act 1992 and the Regional Councils Act, 1992, both

under the responsibility of the MLRGH. The Local Authorities Act provides for three types of local authority: municipalities, town councils and village councils of which only municipalities have full autonomy. While all three local authority types are responsible for providing at least three basic services (electricity, water and sewerage services and refuse removal), town councils and village councils require ministerial approval to supply most other functions. Furthermore, town councils and village councils are not financially autonomous, thus the irony of the Local Authorities and Regional Councils Acts, is that while they aim to achieve decentralisation of powers, in effect centralisation and a *de facto* dependence on central government has been maintained (Simon, 1996) to the detriment of the ability to provide services or anticipate needs. In addition, virtually all local authorities lack qualified and skilled personnel, thus having a marked impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of local authorities (Simon, 1996; Namoya-Jacobs and Hokans, 1995; Swilling, 1996).

The main problem however seems to be the inappropriateness of much of the regulations which guide (or rather inhibit) urban development. Ordinances such as zoning and planning regulations, building standards, health regulations, licensing rules, land pricing criteria and tendering procedures remain as a legacy of the past government and serve to undermine local government effectiveness in economic development and urban development projects and programmes (Swilling, 1996; Namoya-Jacobs and Hokans, 1995). Furthermore the lack of clearly defined roles has resulted in many local authorities not taking responsibility for involving themselves in the management of informal settlements (except for Windhoek and Otjiwarongo). Additionally, the issues related to the environmental impacts of rapid and unmanaged urban growth have not been addressed by urban governments in Namibia.

The trends that are clearly emerging in Namibia are such:

- Newly established urban local governments lack capacity and resources, thus constraining their ability to address urbanisation.
- This is further reinforced by a lack of guidance and policies which neither address nor prioritise the needs of urban areas;
- In turn this has implications for the rural areas as migrants are forced into urban areas for survival strategies and can neither accumulate enough to support rural areas, nor break the cycle of circular migration, thus maintaining pressure on rural areas, reducing the labour resources of rural households, and maintaining a subsistence existence.

- And, the cycle is reinforced as local governments are hamstrung by legal constraints, an over centralised planning system and a lack of functional and financial decentralisation.

Despite these trends there is general consensus that local authorities provide the locus for dealing with urban issues. However as Swilling (1996) argues, if the recognition of local power in urban governance is to be worthwhile then local governments will need much greater influence and decision making powers in terms of macro-economic policies, urban infrastructure investment decisions, environmental regulatory frameworks, and development planning. This however presupposes that local authorities have capacity at both the political and administrative levels. As Swilling remarks *"this, however, will require resources that, in turn will only be committed to develop capacity if it is accepted that local governments should have a greater policy role than they have now. The result then is a vicious circle"* (Swilling, 1996: 27). It is a vicious circle that has to be overcome however otherwise local governments are going to be severely hamstrung in their ability to address, and provide for urbanisation in any proactive way or deal with the current issues facing urban areas and their inhabitants.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

The literature suggests that economic, environmental and political factors have combined to constrain Namibia's ability to succeed in rural areas thus necessitating the conscious decision to diversify risk by sending members of households to urban areas to access employment opportunities. Other reasons for migration to urban areas include the desire to access education and other social services.

It is where the needs of individual migrants at the micro scale and the ability of the government to cope with migrants at the macro scale, diverge, that the problems inherent in urbanisation in Namibia, arise. The lack of a coherent urbanisation policy, or any form of coping mechanisms in terms of resources, capacity or co-ordination, make it unlikely that urbanisation will be managed or addressed efficiently in the near future, in Namibia. Furthermore the insistence of increasing rural development in an environment that is unlikely to be able to sustain a large and increasing rural population, is lending itself to the reinforcement rather than the reduction of urbanisation. Additionally, as Pendleton (1997) and Frayne (1992) note, the process of urbanisation impacts directly on the urban poor, with increased pressure on services

and infrastructure, competition for employment and access to urban land, which makes it virtually impossible to break out of a cycle of migration or to support a split household in anything other but a subsistence existence. As Pendleton argues, an *"urbanisation policy would help the government, the Windhoek municipality, other towns and the migrants themselves to make better choices"* (Pendleton, 1997: 17).

An urbanisation policy would need to accept that urbanisation in Namibia is inevitable and subject to forces which the government cannot possibly hope to alter by taking a negative approach to this process. It is necessary to recognise that any approach to urbanisation needs to address both rural and urban areas in tandem by mobilising local resources and knowledge which will enable households to sustain themselves and move beyond a point of vulnerable subsistence. Importantly, much of the literature calls for a move away (almost a paradigmatic shift) from the inappropriate imported urban management systems and philosophies towards local knowledge and answers.

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## Policy Implications for Achieving Sustainable Urbanisation

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*"Populations and activities described as either "rural" or "urban" are more closely linked than is usually thought, and [...] categorizations are often misleading. Households may be multi-spatial, with some members residing in rural areas and others in towns, and engage in agriculture within urban areas or in non-farm activities in the countryside. At a different level, many urban enterprises rely on rural produce or rural demand for their profitability. One consequence of these strong interrelationships is that both rural and urban areas are affected by current transformations at the macro-level ... [however] ... government policies often neglect the significance of these links" (Tacoli, 1998a: 3).*

## 5.1 Introduction

Looking back on the previous three chapters, what seems to appear clearly is the existence of a range of linkages between rural and urban areas. These linkages are social, economic, political, and ecological in character and make it difficult, if not counterproductive to consider either 'rural' or 'urban' in isolation or indeed as complete entities on their own. However, the reality of these linkages, and a renewed interest in the rural-urban interactions in the literature, has had relatively minimal impact on policy formulation and practice. Regional development and sectoral strategies which give priority to agriculture development in the hope that rural poverty will be addressed, are largely unsuccessful because the benefits generally, are felt by large-scale farmers, rather than the intended beneficiaries, subsistence farmers. The result, is that most policies tend to maintain the *status quo* of rural poverty, rather than enhancing or disassembling the conditions of poverty and subsequent migration, which they are intended to change. Furthermore, policies which try to subtly deflect migration away from urban areas, result in increased problems in both rural and urban areas by maintaining pressure on rural land and refusing to provide even the minimum of services in towns and cities. In turn this generates and intensifies a profusion of problems which relate to both the 'green' and 'brown' environmental agendas.

In moving forward to the next section of this thesis it is necessary to have a brief interlude in which the conclusions from the previous three chapters are drawn together to define the direction of further research and policy foci. This chapter accordingly brings together the theoretical perspectives on urbanisation (chapter two), the environmental aspects related to urbanisation (chapter three), and the reality of urbanisation as experienced in Namibia, (chapter four). In other words, this chapter seeks to discover how the theory applies to reality, where the contradictions are prevalent, and thus what actions are necessary to achieve a process of sustainable urbanisation.

In chapter three, a number of pages were dedicated to the definition of sustainable urbanisation. It is reiterated here that 'sustainable urbanisation' is not about maintaining the process of urbanisation *per se*, but rather it is about improving conditions and the quality of life and the environment within which urbanisation takes place. Contrary to Wekwete's argument that sustainability is about *survival*

(McCarney, 1995), it is argued that sustainable urbanisation requires a move beyond mere subsistence and opportunistic behaviour. This begs the question of whether circular migration can in fact be sustainable when the very conditions that precede it, and indeed reinforce it, suggest that participants in this process, are in fact forced into this pattern because they are *not* surviving.

As will be further discussed in this chapter, fundamental to sustainable urbanisation, is the integration of urban, rural and environmental policies, which in turn requires the following:

- *multi-sectoral rural policies* which go beyond giving people access to land and instead aim to improve the ability of people to sustain themselves and move beyond the need for opportunism, subsistence and mere survival;
- *stronger urban local governance* which in turn has the autonomy to address urban sprawl and fragmentation of cities, supply and maintain sufficient services and infrastructure, facilitate and encourage job creation and local economic development;
- *environmental policies* which integrate the needs of urban and local areas and households and address the location of settlements in terms of environmental functions and resources such as water, fuel, and assimilation of wastes, so as to minimise the need for an extensive 'urban footprint'.

## 5.2 What are the precursors to urbanisation in Namibia?

The process of urbanisation begins in rural areas, so it seems logical to begin this discussion by considering why people leave their rural homes (permanently and temporarily) in search of a 'better life' in urban areas. In Namibia, a combination of 'push' factors appear to drive the process of urbanisation. Initially large-scale migration was probably a function of skewed land tenure underpinned by colonial policies. However, environmental degradation, biophysical constraints such as low and variable rainfall and predominantly poor soils, increasing population pressures on rural areas resulting in conflict and opportunistic land practices, war and more recently inappropriately implemented policies such as the Namibian *National Resettlement Policy* serve to continue and reinforce this process. The result being that rural households have increasingly been unable to survive directly from the land, and

migrate to urban areas in a quest for employment opportunities which will diversify their risk. The indications of such migratory actions were highly prevalent in interviews conducted with settlers from the Resettlement Programme (MPhil, 1998), as well as in the secondary literature sources (Frayne, 1992 and 1997a; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995; Pendleton, 1997).

Lipton's (1977) urban bias argument does not seem to be applicable to the Namibian context as a reason for urbanisation. While there has clearly been a bias in the development of Namibia, it is a function of colonial domination over black Namibians rather than a case of where people actually reside. Urban areas were intended, implicitly in policy and explicitly in action, to be 'white' areas in Namibia (Simon, 1983). However, development and investment were not limited to urban areas. The white commercial farmers of Namibia were favoured by immense investment but, black Namibians were denied similar investment levels. This reinforces Gilbert and Gugler's (1987) argument that policies tend not to be geographical but rather sectoral in their benefits. The favouring of white commercial farmers at the expense of black subsistence agriculturalists is a prime example in Namibia. The bias in Namibia's development has been racially based, not geographically, even though the results have manifested themselves in a spatial form.

Sustainable urbanisation in Namibia requires a full understanding of the precursors to urbanisation. The contradiction that is evident in Namibia is between what the government intends to do, and what it is actually doing in reality. The common mistake made by policy makers seems to be the classification of households as either 'rural' or 'urban' when in essence households generally have characteristics of both as they tend to be 'split' spatially. However, the Namibian government seems to fall into the trap of equating where people live, with who they are and what they do to survive. In this scenario people who live in rural Namibia are assumed to be black, poor Namibians with an agricultural livelihood. While in some ways this is largely true, in terms of the majority of rural Namibians being 'black' and 'poor', the assumption on how people support themselves, is not. Rural Namibian households have a diversity of ways of supporting themselves which include subsistence agriculture, harvesting *veldkos*, poaching wild animals such as buck, selling crafts and wild mushrooms on the roadside, and support from the pensions of aged members of the household.

However, this assumption of 'rural' being synonymous with agricultural and 'urban' with

industry, manufacturing and services is misleading, and simplistic, and results in government policies which neglect the significance of the linkages experienced in practice (Tacoli, 1998b; Smit, 1998). Sectoral policies tend to ignore the diversity of rural occupations, and indeed the fundamental reasons behind such diversity, with the result being the maintenance of harsh conditions for the poor, and the continued need to split households over the spatial continuum as a way of surviving. For instance, the resettlement policy aims to uplift people from their poverty, however in essence it is setting up conditions in which settlers are remaining poor and unable to improve past the subsistence level, thus migrating in search for work, and seemingly going against what the government considers desirable (MPhil, 1998).

### 5.3 Where do migrants go to?

The majority of migrants in pursuit of employment tend to go to Windhoek, the capital city, as employment is perceived to be easier to access there, rather than the smaller towns of Namibia. This is probably because of a combination of two factors: capital cities tend to be favoured at the expense of other urban areas (Hardoy and Satterthwaite, 1989), and there is a relative absence of other urban settlements in Namibia. However the fact that Windhoek tends to benefit from a disproportionate investment level, does not mean that it is spread evenly within the city, but rather accrues to the better off urbanites. Until the 1990's, while urban squatter settlements were few, densities and the pressure on infrastructure and services for the majority of the population, were high. Since Independence, squatter settlements in Windhoek, and other towns, have become more visible, and so too have the poor conditions in which the majority of urban dwellers and migrants, live. These poor conditions are juxtaposed with the better off suburbs that benefit from infrastructure of a high standard. Clearly the blanket argument of 'urban bias' is not experienced by the majority of urban dwellers in Namibia.

In 1996, it was reported that over 35% of migrants failed to find employment either informal or formal, in Windhoek, with the likelihood of employment being reduced with the proposed government service cutbacks (Pendleton, 1997). So why do people continue to migrate to Windhoek instead of other towns? The other towns with noticeable rural-urban migration (Oshakati, Rundu and Katima Mulilo) have not benefitted historically from much investment and thus the conditions are poor, the employment opportunities limited and the chances offered to migrants to improve their

lot, restricted. This lack of investment is related to the fact that they are located in the communal areas and were established primarily as administrative and military centres (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995).

The irony is that the settlements such as Oshakati, Rundu and Katima Mulilo are favourably located geographically in terms of access to water resources and fuel, such as firewood, and further are within close proximity to the source areas of migrants thus minimising travel distances and the spatial 'split' of households. Windhoek, on the otherhand, is increasingly being constrained by practical limitations in its ability to cater for the needs of its present population, let alone the constant influx of migrants. One of the major constraining factors is that of water. Windhoek is located in the centre of the country and is near no major water sources. As a result, Namibia has a controversial proposal to import water for Windhoek from the Okavango Basin (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998). Besides the ecological impacts of taking water from the Okavango, the time that will be taken in putting such a project into the final stages, and the politics involved in such a manoeuvre will be beyond the city's ability to provide for the present needs of its inhabitants and the constant influx of migrants, not to mention future generations.

The point is that the location of settlements in Namibia has a fundamental role to play in the sustainability of urbanisation in relation to biophysical constraints and ecological impacts. There is however a fundamental contradiction between resource allocations and autonomy of smaller settlements and their favourable geographic location in the urbanisation process. While smaller settlements in the northern region of Namibia have the locational potential to play a favourable role in urbanisation, they are constrained in their ability to do so by lack of resources, investment and financial autonomy.

Unfortunately the current literature tends to take a very negative view of the ability of secondary cities and towns to play a significant role in the process of urbanisation and reducing pressure from primate and capital cities. While this view has the empirical evidence of unsuccessful government interventions in the name of regional development to substantiate this claim, there is arguably merit in the Namibian context for the development of secondary towns. As Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1988) suggest, what is needed is real decentralisation of powers and decision making, including financial autonomy, to local authorities, allowing for the articulation of local needs and

priorities. If the pressure of migration on primate cities decreased, then this would be an additional benefit.

In Namibia, the centralisation of control and a total lack of investment in the northern regions of the country at the hands of the colonial government have denied secondary cities in the north, the opportunity to play a substantial role in development. While the independent government of Namibia has begun to implement a process of decentralisation, it is far from complete and already seems limited by its unwillingness to allow full devolvement of powers to towns and villages, on even ordinary functions such as provision and maintenance of infrastructure (Simon, 1996). It seems to me that there are a number of opportunities for investment in towns of the northern region of Namibia. For instance there is a large emerging market for agricultural produce, manufactured goods and services, in the form of Angola and the northern communal areas. There are a variety of opportunities for investment (from local and national sources) in these towns which would increase the opportunities for migrants to migrate there and take the pressure off Windhoek. A coordinated urbanisation policy would be very useful in providing this sort of direction.

#### 5.4 Rural-urban linkages

The lack of an integrated policy on urbanisation and the sectoral policies which guide rural development in Namibia, certainly limits the appreciation of the complexity of rural-urban interactions. These interactions are spatial as well as sectoral in magnitude, and include flows of people, money, goods such as food and clothing, services, and information. The rural-urban relationship also includes ecological flows such as water, fuels such as wood and charcoal from rural areas and waste products to rural areas.

The arguments of urban bias and linear migration patterns certainly do not hold true when one considers the complexity of rural-urban linkages that are in evidence in Namibia. These linkages are clearly important for the households that remain in the rural areas, including settlers on resettlement projects in Namibia, in terms of accessing cash so as to supplement food and make simple choices in terms of transport, clothing, school uniforms, payment for health services and education and so on (MPhil, 1998). The linkages with a rural base are equally as important for migrants in urban areas, as rural households can provide a temporary respite in times

of urban unemployment and hardship.

The fact that rural-urban contact in terms of rural visits has increased, between 1991 and 1996 (Pendleton, 1997), suggests two things: possibly that urban conditions have deteriorated thus necessitating support from rural areas in terms of food provisions. However, more likely is the idea that rural households are increasingly diversifying their income by sending males to urban centres for work but still needing their labour on plots, hence the increase in trips back to rural areas. This illustrates two concerns. Firstly, sectoral policies are not succeeding in their aims of poverty alleviation and rural development. Secondly, the *status quo* in terms of the hardships experienced by migrating households are being maintained as the conditions are neither there to concentrate on fully urbanising, or remaining in rural areas. Instead, energies are being expended on the interactions that are necessary to maintain a spatially divided household.

The expectation that linear migration theorists would typically have about rural-urban linkages declining after the removal of influx controls, has also been discredited by the experience of Namibia. Influx controls were abolished in the late 1970's, however similar to the experience of other countries (Smit, 1998; Krüger, 1998; Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990; Ferguson, 1990) circular migration patterns have been maintained, and as Pendleton (1997) shows, have actually been reinforced since Independence in 1990. As has already been discussed, this is likely to be because of the biophysical degradation of the rural environment, the legacy of past colonial policies, customary tenure in communal areas, and increasing population pressure on rural areas. Furthermore, the poor urban environmental conditions, an urban housing shortage, poverty and a paucity of employment opportunities do not set up the preconditions for permanent urbanisation and instead necessitate the maintenance of rural linkages, which in the long term is not likely to lead to a situation which can be sustainable for future generations.

Ironically, the process of urbanisation into cities is usually claimed for the potential it offers for reducing pressures on the rural areas, however the conditions of both rural and urban Namibia seem to be entrenching a circular migration pattern in which migrant households need a foothold in both rural and urban areas in order to survive. As Potts and Mutambirwa (1990) argue, the maintenance of rural links is essential as an economic security for the eventualities of old age. Thus, households are neither fully

urbanising and taking the pressure off rural lands, nor are they capable of fully exploiting their rural plots and overcoming rural poverty. Thus not only are present generations stuck in a cycle of poverty, but the inherent instability of circular migration on households also has implications on the ability of future generations to move beyond mere survival and subsistence. The work done in the case of domestic fluidity, migrancy and movement patterns of the African population in Cape Town illustrates for instance, the difficulties facing children in terms of finding a stable environment in which to get an education (Spiegel and Mehlwana, 1997; Dewar *et al*, 1991). As Devereux *et al* (1995) note the constant withdrawal of poor children from school creates a cycle of poverty from generation to generation. Unfortunately there is a clear link between poverty and environmental degradation which suggests that the continuation of conditions of poverty is likely to further entrench environmental degradation and in turn, poverty (Brown, 1993; Ferguson, 1996; Hardoy *et al*, 1992; Stren and White, 1989)

The contradiction in Namibia is between what is happening in practice - circular migration - and the theories that guide policy making - essentially linear migration. The Namibian government seems to indicate that urbanisation is undesirable and has policies which attempt to develop rural populations with the idea of keeping them rural, and thus intervening in the apparently inevitable process of urbanisation. However, a number of limitations within these policies, including the blindness to the complexity of rural-urban relationships and the fundamental inability of the rural environment of Namibia to sustain a growing population, are resulting in a further reinforced urbanisation pattern. Also, by denying the realities of urbanisation, the urban end of the process is experiencing rapid in-migration without the necessary infrastructure, services, management or planning to support this process. The ability of urban local governance to provide the conditions which support urbanisation is key to a sustainable process of urbanisation.

### 5.5 Ability of urban governance to cope with urbanisation

A major theme in the previous three chapters is that of the importance of urban governance in the achievement of a sustainable urbanisation process. Much of the literature on Sub-Saharan African urbanisation suggests that the inability of local governments to manage urban areas has resulted in the poor conditions in which the urban poor live (Halfani, 1997; Wekwete, 1997; Swilling, 1996). This seems to be

repeated in Namibia, however the difference here is that it is not so much a function of restricted budgets due to Structural Adjustment Policies as it is elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rather a legacy of the previous local government structures, the restructuring of local government under the new government, and the planning system which currently requires high standards of provision of infrastructure which are largely inappropriate, in terms of cost and technical requirements, in the Namibian context are responsible for the inability of urban Namibia to cope with rapid urbanisation (Frayne, 1997a; Simon, 1996; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995; Swilling, 1996).

Evidence of the inability of local urban governments to cope with urbanisation, includes the highly visible squatter settlements and pressures on services and infrastructure, the manifestation of 'brown' environmental problems such as litter and uncontrolled dumping of solid waste, the proliferation of the informal sector, and so on. Furthermore, it is the urban poor and migrants themselves who take the brunt of the local government's inability to cope, and instead of improving their conditions, further necessitate the maintenance of rural-urban linkages.

The (in)ability of urban governance to cope with urbanisation clearly has wider spatial implications than the artificial boundaries of urban areas. The failure of urban governance to cope with urbanisation has the potential to perpetuate and entrench circular migration and the enforced maintenance of rural linkages for survival.

## 5.6 Requirements for sustainable urbanisation in Namibia

What then are the policy implications of all this in terms of sustainable urbanisation? Is urbanisation even desirable in the Namibian context? The reality of the situation is that urbanisation is inevitable in Namibia and is manifested in a pattern of circular migration. Similar to other countries experiencing rapid urbanisation, the Namibian government seems to have a fear of uncontrolled urbanisation with the result that policies are designed with the implicit motive of reducing rural-urban migration on the grounds of increased pressure on already insufficient urban housing and infrastructure (Tacoli, 1998b). This fear has been expressed by representatives of NGO's and government alike in Namibia (Karuumbe, pers comm, 1998; Shumba, pers comm, 1998). However, time and again, policies which attempt to deflect migration away from urban areas have shown little impact apart from decreasing the welfare of the poor.

The main conclusion which can be drawn from the Namibian experience of urbanisation is that it is currently in the best interests of migrating households to maintain a foothold in both rural and urban areas - in the event of an inability to survive in the urban area, the rural household provides a place of retreat. Likewise, the urban household provides a supplement to the subsistence income gained in rural areas. The discussion highlights the necessity of an urbanisation policy which if it is to be sustainable, is sensitive to the complexities of rural-urban linkages. The achievement of socially and environmentally sustainable urbanisation in Namibia thus requires an holistic approach that integrates the development of both rural and urban areas rather than dealing with each as an independent unit.

Similar to other urbanising Sub-Saharan Africa countries, Namibia's urban governance has displayed an inability to cope with rapid urbanisation. However, urbanisation is largely a function of poor conditions experienced in rural areas and the solutions lie as much in the rural areas as they do in the urban areas. Thus, an urbanisation policy would necessarily look at rural and urban areas in tandem, to stem the flow of migrants and at the same time improve the ability of urban areas to cope with future and current urbanisation rates.

As Crankshaw and Parnell (1996) argue in the case of South Africa, Namibia requires an urbanisation policy which will address either dismantling or pursuing the state of urbanisation, but not perpetuating the *status quo* of oscillating migration. A preliminary glance at the *status quo* suggests that circular migration does not present a picture of sustainable urbanisation. While it is currently a mechanism for the survival of the present generation, in terms of intergenerational aspects of sustainability, circular migration is lacking.

Circular migration in its present form in Namibia is clearly unsustainable when one considers the following:

- Circular migration has impacts on the future generation in terms of household stability and children's ability to obtain a decent education;
- It is particularly inefficient in the amount of energy and resources that are expended in maintaining rural-urban linkages in terms of travelling requirements and the flow of people, resources, goods and wastes;

- Circular migration does not seem to encourage a move beyond subsistence and mere survival and the linkages between this maintenance of a poverty existence and the degradation of the biophysical and ecological environment has been well documented. In light of the particularly fragile nature of Namibia's environment this is a particular concern, in terms of both the existence of the environment and its future ability to support an ever increasing population.
- In the context of inappropriate rural development policies and urban policies which ignore the increasing pressure on resources, circular migration is maintained within a spiral of ever increasing degradation of the social, economic and ecological environments.
- The constraints facing urban local governments in terms of resources and capacity, the lack of financial autonomy of towns and villages and the application of inappropriate planning philosophies and standards serve to restrict the ability of urban areas to meet the needs of migrants and current urbanites. The result being that the poor tend to be the hardest hit and the least likely to be able to improve their conditions, thus maintaining a cycle of poverty.
- However on the positive side, if rural households can possibly subsist on the remittances of urban households, this presents the opportunity for land to lie fallow for at least a season. This is admittedly entirely dependent on urban migrant's ability to find and maintain a job which will be sufficient to support an often extended household.

If the Namibian government is to attempt to approach a level of sustainable urbanisation this will require identifying and addressing the circumstances which are responsible for perpetuating the pattern of circular migration. Included in a long list of issues to be addressed would be urban housing shortages, high urban unemployment and poverty, customary tenure practices in rural areas, environmental degradation, sectoral policies which disregard rural-urban linkages, rural poverty and so on.

In terms of urban areas there are a number of spheres of interest which would necessarily be considered in improving the ability of urban areas to cope with the

influx of people as well as improve the current urban experience of migrants and non-migrants alike. In the rural context it is necessary to stress the importance of support mechanisms which will enable rural dwellers to be self supporting. It is not sufficient to give people better access to land and expect them to be agriculturalists as a result. Living in rural areas does not necessarily mean that households survive by subsistence farming alone. Many rural dwellers have a range of occupations which require markets and infrastructure and a diversity of skills if they are to be self sustaining. In this regard there are a number of concerns which an integrated urbanisation policy would necessarily consider in the urban and rural contexts (summarised in Table 5.1):

Table 5.1: Summary of issues to be addressed in the urban and rural contexts of an urbanisation policy

'Urban' Issues	'Rural' Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Urban management and governance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Urban planning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local government finance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Point of entry into urban areas</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Land tenure options</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Migrants access into the cash economy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support mechanisms for informal employment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Delivery and maintenance of infrastructure and services</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Public-private partnerships in terms of funding and delivery of initiatives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employment creation strategies - informal and formal</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ease of mobility between economic sectors</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Public participation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gender and household issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Development of markets</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support infrastructure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and sales skills</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cropping techniques</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dryland management and crop suitability</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance of resources in terms of cost and ability</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sources of cash income</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate technology</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Training programmes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Land tenure options and customary land tenure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gender and household issues</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Causes of rural poverty</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable agriculture practices</li> </ul>

5.6.1 'Urban' issues to be addressed in an urbanisation policy

- *Urban management and governance* - the lack of appropriate and adequate urban local management and financial autonomy and policy decision making powers are critical issues which need to be addressed (Swilling, 1994).
- *Urban planning* - conventional planning philosophies and standards tend to be

inappropriate to the challenges of rapid urbanisation, and the scope of planning needs to be reconsidered (Dewar, 1995).

- *Local government finance* - the establishment of democratic local governments has to be linked to the decentralisation of fiscal powers and resources, otherwise the contradiction between *de jure* and *de facto* powers will likely undermine the ability of urban areas to absorb rapid urbanisation (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995).
- *Point of entry into urban areas* - migrants initially tend to stay with relatives or friends upon entry into the city. These relationships need to be researched in order to understand and support migrants initial efforts at urbanisation.
- *Land tenure options* - a variety of tenure options need to be established. Few poor urban households can afford to own their homes, but at the same time require the security of knowing that the money and time invested in informal housing is not going to be wasted via forced removals associated with insecure tenure arrangements. Without adequate land being made available to new urban residents, the likelihood of ghetto conditions is increased with a stream of negative social and environmental consequences (Christensen and Højgaard, 1997).
- *The urban environment* - the implications on the urban environment need to be considered in light of rapid urbanisation in a period of economic decline and the contradiction between the resources available to local authorities and their responsibilities (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995).
- *Support mechanisms for informal employment* - the informal sector tends to employ the majority of the urban population, and yet enjoys little support or encouragement from the formal sector and government. Research needs to address the ways in which support mechanisms can enable the growth of the informal sector.
- *Delivery and maintenance of infrastructure and services* - is heavily dependent on capacity and financial resources, and in turn are crucial to the maintenance of the health and welfare of urban dwellers and the urban environment.

- *Public-private partnerships in terms of funding and delivery of initiatives* - it is clear across the Sub-Saharan African region that local governments do not have the capacity to be the sole institution responsible for the delivery of urban services and infrastructure. It is imperative that partnerships between the multiple formal and informal urban roleplayers, be researched and established.
- *Employment creation strategies - informal and formal* - Consumption based strategies aimed at the delivery of services and infrastructure are unlikely to be sustainable without the parallel establishment of an economic base for urban areas. Local economic development is increasingly being recognised as a strategy for improving urban economic partnerships so as to encourage large scale job creation and income generation (Tomlinson, 1994; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995).
- *Public participation* - needs to be encouraged and facilitated in such a way that the information is generated in a two way process, and furthermore is useful in planning and delivering the infrastructure and services to meet the real needs of urban communities.
- *Gender and household issues* - circular migration puts a variety of pressures on households which affect inter- and intra- household relations. Furthermore, household survival strategies provide micro-level understanding of macro-level processes of migration and urbanisation (Swilling, 1994).

#### 5.6.2 'Rural' Issues to be addressed in an urbanisation policy

- *Development of markets* - markets are crucial to the success of entering the cash economy and the ability to sell one's produce. Opportunities for the development of markets in the northern regions of Namibia need to be investigated (MPhil, 1998).
- *Support infrastructure* - the supply of infrastructure and services such as roads, boreholes, clinics and education are fundamental to the development of rural communities and the ability to move beyond poverty. Affordable transport is a particular issue of importance to many rural Namibian households and is fundamental to the ability to sell produce and attain a cash return (MPhil, 1998).

- *Marketing and sales skills* - households need to be empowered to take control of their financial situation and reduce dependency on government administration (in the case of resettlement projects) - appropriate training programmes need to be identified so as to increase empowerment.
- *Dryland management and crop suitability* - many of the traditional crops are not suited to the arid climate of Namibia (except in the far north regions). Numerous crop strains have been developed which are better suited to the short cropping periods of Namibia, require less energy and maintenance, and in many cases encourage a more balanced diet (Steel, pers comm; MPhil, 1998).
- *Sources of cash income* - it is necessary to identify how households access cash so as to support these mechanisms and create alternatives. For instance many households are heavily dependent on pensions, leaving them vulnerable if the recipient dies (Devereux *et al*, 1995).
- *Appropriate technology* - and alternatives in terms of housing, water pumps for boreholes, agricultural equipment and crops, and waste management alternatives need to be researched in collaboration with rural communities to determine the options which best suit them (MPhil, 1998).
- *Training programmes* - considerable focus needs to be placed on the development of management, financial and marketing skills of rural communities so as to empower people to enter the cash economy independently (MPhil, 1998).
- *Gender and household issues* - circular migration puts a variety of pressures on households which affect inter- and intra- household relations. Furthermore, household survival strategies provide micro-level understanding of macro-level processes of migration and urbanisation (Swilling, 1994).
- *Causes of rural poverty* - such as environmental constraints, land degradation, insufficient support mechanisms and so on need to be identified so as to form the basis of a well thought out and clearly conceived policy for rural development.

- *Sustainable agriculture practices* - if the rural environment is to continue providing direct support to a large rural population, it is important that sustainable practices of agriculture be investigated and supported.

## 5.7 Recommendations

The policy implication in terms of circular migration, multiple households and rural-urban interactions, is that an urbanisation policy needs to be flexible if it is to be successful in benefiting its target population. Flexibility is required in at least three aspects:

- *Spatially* - Policies should avoid prescribing where people live. From the discussion it is clear that households span both rural and urban space and policies such as the resettlement programme in Namibia which force settlers to live in rural areas, are clearly counterproductive.
- *Sectorally* - Policies which make a sharp distinction between 'urban' and 'rural' and furthermore assumptions on the sectors which are associated with these areas, tend to ignore the interactions between sectors which can also have a spatial dimension (Tacoli, 1998b). It is recommended that policies avoid supporting sectors, such as agriculture, on an individual basis as this denies the fact that many rural households have a multiplicity of occupations which go beyond agriculture and could benefit from more varied support mechanisms.
- *Definition of household* - The definition of 'household' in terms of the western concept of nuclear families is a limitation which should be avoided. The reality in Namibia is that households are extended. Policies such as the resettlement policy which do not take account of household size, but rather allocate benefits to a household head, tend to have the effect of households splitting so as to gain the maximum benefit (Smit, 1998). This in turn has the effect of numerous small parcels of land which are inefficiently exploited and the cycle of migration is supported rather than the move away from subsistence. The contradiction is that development policies aim to foster nuclear families but merely create or reinforce the very conditions they are attempting to dismantle ie the breakup of families into extended households (Chant, 1998).

Policies in terms of the development of rural and urban areas and more holistically, in terms of urbanisation, need to take into account that most households are spatially split and for purposes of survival, need to maintain a foothold in both rural and urban areas. Accordingly, policies should be flexible enough to allow for choices in the spatial and sectoral contexts, and make allowances for household variations.

Recommendations have already been made in terms of a number of aspects of the rural households ability to rise above subsistence and to become self sufficient (MPhil, 1998). However there is scope for further research and recommendations to be made in terms of rural development. The focus of this thesis thus far however, has been the potential for urban areas to contribute to a sustainable process of urbanisation, and this will be continued into the next section of the thesis. As has been discussed up to now, fundamental to the ability of urban areas to cope with urbanisation are two main issues:

- *urban planning; and*
- *urban governance and management.*

These two issues will form the focus for consideration and discussion in the following chapter. The intention here is not to lose sight of the significance of rural-urban interactions, but rather to consider these aspects in the full awareness and understanding of these interactions and to make suggestions and recommendations which could be incorporated into an integrated urbanisation policy.

## 5.8 Conclusion

Underpinning the process of urbanisation in Namibia is a combination of political, social, economic and ecological factors including land degradation, war, rural poverty and biophysical constraints. However, it seems that the way in which urbanisation has manifested itself in Namibia is a function of poorly conceived, inappropriately implemented and completely unintegrated policies. The tendency to base policy decisions on faulty assumptions, has resulted in the further marginalisation of the poor who have resorted to survival strategies which include splitting households over a spatial continuum in order to diversify risk.

The hardships endured by such decisions and the need to maintain a pattern of circular migration are clear. The social impacts of splitting up families include

instability for both present and future generation which preclude the likelihood of breaking out of a cycle of poverty. Poverty has been explicitly linked to environmental degradation with the implications being that the longer households are forced into situations in which bare subsistence is maintained, the less the likelihood of the environment being able to sustain future generations. However it is clear that at least for the near future, urbanisation and circular migration is going to remain an inevitable and necessary situation in Namibia. In this light, it is concluded that steps need to be taken to ensure that urbanisation is sustainable.

Fundamental to sustainable urbanisation is the integration of urban, rural and environmental policies. This in turn requires the following:

- *multi-sectoral and multi-spatial policies* which go beyond giving people access to land and instead aim to *improve* the ability of people to sustain themselves and move beyond the need for opportunism, subsistence and mere survival;
- *strong urban local governance, planning and management* which in turn has the autonomy to address urban sprawl and fragmentation of cities, supply and maintain sufficient services and infrastructure, facilitate and encourage job creation and local economic development;
- *policies based on well conceived assumptions and a thorough understanding of the forces underpinning and entrenching circular migration.*

# 6

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## Facing the Challenge: Urban Governance, Management and Planning

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*"It is generally acknowledged that African towns are characterised by a common set of problems related to poor housing and infrastructure facilities, a lack of formal employment opportunities, a rapid degradation of urban environment conditions, a growing incapacity of administrative structures to manage urban centres, and an apparent ungovernability and insecurity of life. [...] These conditions are also relevant for Namibia [which] should be in a position to learn from the experiences of others and apply these experiences in the development of coherent and sound urban policies and management practices" (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995: 2-3).*

## 6.1 Introduction

Urbanisation in the African context is inevitable (Erbach and Gaudet, 1998) and yet in spite of the recognition of this fact, few SSA countries have a dedicated urbanisation policy. In this regard, Namibia is similar to the rest of the SSA region. The problems related to the lack of an holistic urbanisation policy in Namibia, are evident in at least three realms:

- *rural areas;*
- *urban areas; and*
- *social, economic and biophysical sustainability.*

Across SSA, and in Namibia, the inevitability of urbanisation has been shown to be the case as rural areas are increasingly unable to support rapidly growing populations, thus forcing households to split in a search for means of survival (MPhil, 1998; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). The urban areas are on the receiving end of this migration process, be it temporary or permanent, and yet these centres are clearly unable to adequately accommodate rapidly urbanising populations, as is evidenced by the negative urban environmental conditions in which the majority of the urban population live. The inability of urban areas to provide the conditions which address the needs of rapidly urbanising populations, manifests itself in the continuation of circular migration as migrants maintain rural linkages, often purely out of the necessity to survive (Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990; Smit, 1998; Frayne, 1992; Pendleton, 1997).

At the individual and household level, circular migration tends to be a means of survival and results in an arduous and difficult life, splitting up family members for much of their life, changing social patterns and relationships and affecting the way in which children grow up. Of concern in relation to social sustainability is the idea that whole generations of children are growing up without the benefit of a steady and stable home. At a national level this has implications in terms of the education of children and in turn their ability to find employment and move beyond poverty. This in turn has negative implications for biophysical sustainability, as the continuation of conditions of poverty suggest the need to maintain opportunistic practices which are beyond the carrying capacity of the biophysical environment. Furthermore the inability of urban authorities to maintain infrastructure or provide a decent level of basic services has negative implications in terms of the pollution created by poorly managed solid and liquid waste.

Fundamental to sustainable urbanisation is the ability of urban authorities to manage and provide for rapidly growing urban populations. In this regard it is necessary to address weak urban local governance, inappropriate management structures and rigid planning approaches which combine to maintain the *status quo*, neither serving to dismantle circular migration, nor taking measures to support it. Namibia is not alone in its almost timid approach to urbanisation. Other SSA countries have had similar difficulties in addressing urbanisation from within the urban context. There seems to be a fundamental reluctance to adopt a paradigmatic change (Wekwete, 1997). The preference has generally been to fiddle with approaches which have been inherited but not designed to meet the needs of rapid urbanisation, nor the numbers of people involved in this process. The result is that approaches to governance, management and planning of urban areas, despite minor changes, have largely been carried over from the colonial period of many SSA countries, and the reality of unguided urbanisation calls out for change.

This chapter focuses on urban centres, and specifically the way in which inappropriate urban local governance, management and planning approaches across the SSA region are unable to adequately address the challenges of rapid urbanisation. Specific reference is made to the cases of South Africa and Zimbabwe, in terms of learning points for Namibia. The reasons for choosing these two countries as case studies are simple, as their urban areas have been shaped by similar processes to Namibia in terms of a political history of colonial domination and racial segregation. In the case of Zimbabwe, a further similarity to Namibia is the fact that both countries have a largely rural, but rapidly urbanising population, with implications in terms of provision of urban environmental services.

## 6.2 General issues facing urban Sub-Saharan Africa and Namibia

The urban areas of SSA share numerous complex problems, and although they differ in scale and nature, it is possible to draw out issues, patterns, and policy directions which can be applied to the Namibian context. Much of the urban management literature concentrates on the issues and problems facing mega-cities (El-Shakhs, 1997) and primate cities, thus arguably being limited in its application to the Namibian context (the largest city, Windhoek having only about 150 000 people. Despite its small size however, Windhoek does have its share of problems related to rapid urbanisation, as do the even smaller urban centres such as Katima Mulilo and Rundu. These

problems, in common with other SSA urban centres, relate to the mismatch between government's often self appointed role as sole provider of services and infrastructure, urban management and planning, and the lack of local government capacity to deliver adequately in light of the conflicts between urban fiscal restraints and the needs of a rapidly increasing urban population.

One of the main issues facing SSA urban areas, is the fact that very few countries have a formal urbanisation policy to articulate their stance on urbanisation and how to address the way in which it manifests itself in relation to the resources that governments and other roleplayers have available for urban development. Thus most attempts at addressing rapid urbanisation are *ad hoc* and uncoordinated at best, but more often tend to adopt a blanket prescription of how cities should react to the influx of people, taking no account of the needs of individuals or the special responses required by specific urban areas. Alternatively government policies artificially redirect migration away from large cities towards the smaller and secondary cities in a bid to reduce primacy (Wekwete, 1994a). The result is a response which is forced and often inappropriate for individuals, leaving little room for flexibility and compounding the problem at the national scale.

Typically the large cities of SSA have developed major industrial and commercial sectors and a large and burgeoning informal sector. However, the combination of rapid urbanisation and the economic decline of the 1980's has put pressure on urban areas. Halfani (1997) suggests that urban systems are reaching a sustainability crisis with the inability to respond to the pressures of rapid urbanisation being highly visible in the deterioration of the urban environment. Uncollected solid waste, overcrowded schools, potholed roads, and hopelessly overcrowded and unserviced informal settlements are common to most SSA cities (Stren, 1991). And yet, the real or perceived employment opportunities of these cities continue to enhance their attractiveness for migrants from rural areas, which are equally as degraded as the cities, and unable to support the increasing populations migrating from rural areas (Rakodi, 1997).

Windhoek and the other urban centres of Namibia, are no exception to this pattern of urban decline. Windhoek continues to grow at a rate of about 8% per annum (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). And like other large urban centres in SSA, Windhoek supports a large informal sector particularly in the trade and commercial sectors. Furthermore,

Windhoek's informal housing sector is becoming more prolific, in line with other SSA countries, as controls in terms of informal shack dwellings have been broken down (Pendleton, 1997; El-Shakhs, 1997). However, with the increased concentration and dominance of these large cities, come problems and disparities which are a function of the inability of traditional urban management, governance and planning approaches to cope. This is of particular concern as it is usually the urban poor who suffer as they are the least able to buy their way out of the system (Stren, 1991) as a result further decreasing the likelihood of the poverty stricken from overcoming their circumstances. This in turn is of concern not only from the philanthropic perspective, but also because poverty and environmental degradation are closely linked in a two way relationship in which each entrenches the other.

### 6.3 Facing the challenge at the local scale

The local demands on urban areas, tend to be compounded by the demands brought about by the role of cities in the national and international urban network. Concurrent with these 'global' demands, are severe constraints on urban local authorities in terms of financial authority, power and resources (El-Shakhs, 1997; CDE, 1998) resulting in an ever widening gap between the supply of, and demand for, jobs, services, infrastructure, housing, urban land and so on. The impact tends to be felt most by the urban poor. Increasingly, there has been a recognition that rapid urbanisation is a force that needs to be addressed where it physically manifests itself, ie at the level of cities and towns (Swilling, 1997a). In other words it is at the level of local roleplayers (communities, NGO's, CBOs, private sector, informal sector, all in relation to local government) that a response needs to be formulated. This is not to say that there is no role for central government to be formulating an urbanisation policy but rather that the local level should be the focus for addressing the immediate needs of urban dwellers and migrants. In other words the general thinking, recently, has been that the locus of power needs to be shifted closer to the people (McCarney, 1996; Swilling, 1997a).

Two major responses to the need to address rapid urbanisation at the local level, have been documented in the literature:

- *Redefining the roles and roleplayers at the local level* - The 'informal' or non-governmental sector has increasingly stepped in to fill the gap left by the inability of national government to fulfill its self-defined centralist role, as well

as in response to the incessant incapacities of local government to meet the demand for basic services and infrastructure (McCarney, 1996). Thus the extent of roleplayers involved in the management, governance and planning at the local level has increased (Halfani, 1997) albeit in an unofficial form. Furthermore, the roles of urban local roleplayers are increasingly being redefined. While there has been a heightened awareness of the importance of strengthening the level of local governance, there has been a parallel adoption of the idea that local government should ideally be *facilitators* and *enablers* of development, removing the responsibility of *delivery* to the private sector and community organisations (McCarney, 1996).

- *Decentralisation of government power* - The debate around the allocation of powers<sup>9</sup> along the vertical axis from central government to local government level, has emerged in favour of decentralisation (McCarney, 1996; El-Shakhs, 1997). This change in the allocation of powers has been in response to the increasing anticipation of expanding the ability for small and medium sized cities to play a more substantial role in receiving and providing for urban growth and urbanisation (El-Shakhs, 1997; Swilling, 1997a). The problem that has been encountered however, in the SSA context of decentralisation, is that instead of increasing the powers of local governments, the opposite effect is usually the case (Rakodi, 1997). Local authorities tend to be allocated more functions, but not more money, with the result being that local governments are hamstrung by financial constraints, lack of real power and capacity in their ability to provide services and infrastructure or maintain existing infrastructure (McCarney, 1996; Sabela and Reddy, 1996). The lack of adaption of inherited institutions and approaches to the local conditions, has also had a compounding effect on the lack of successful decentralisation (Rakodi, 1997).

The paradox is that while large cities suffer at the hands of rapid influx and too many people, small cities are constrained by the opposite scenario. Towns and cities that are small in terms of population are constrained by a similarly small resource base

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<sup>9</sup> This debate runs along the continuum from *deconcentration* to *full devolution* where deconcentration refers to the assumption that local governments should merely be an administrative extension of central government, while full devolution understands local governments to be (semi-)autonomous political systems with the necessary powers and functions to formulate locally specific policies and mobilise the resources to implement them (Swilling, 1997a; Sabela and Reddy, 1996).

which results in the inability to provide even basic services. Ironically, large cities tend to have the resources but are hampered by the combination of slow planning systems and inability to mobilise resources because of a lack of authority, thus being inefficient in meeting the needs of rapid influx (Halfani, 1997). This paradox suggests the need for flexibility in approaches which address the local nature of problems, rather than a uniform approach to urban local governance, management and planning of all urban areas regardless of size and function.

In most of the SSA urban literature, these problems of poor management boil down to three main causes: weak governance, inappropriate planning and inflexible standards and poor management systems which require refocus on not only the roleplayers involved, but also of the objects to be managed. The resolution of these issues at the urban scale is imperative in terms of both an urban development policy and an urbanisation policy for Namibia.

#### 6.4 Addressing the weaknesses of urban local governance

As many SSA countries undertake to reform their urban local governments and civil services in response to the process of decentralisation, questions have been raised in relation to urban *governance*, and particularly the nature of local *government* as an element of the governing relationship (McCarney, 1996). Swilling (1997a) and McCarney (1996) define urban local governance as the horizontal and vertical relationships within and between organisations at the local level, ranging from private institutions to NGOs and CBOs with local government playing a facilitative and managerial role in the urban development process. However, it is only recently that the literature has begun to include other role players in the governance of urban areas. More traditionally, urban governance in SSA has tended to be approached from a state-centric point of view which ignores the role that non-state modes of governance have to play in the distribution of resources and the development of urban areas (Swilling, 1997a; Halfani, 1997). This still appears to be the case in Namibia as there is a lack of NGO's dedicated to the issue of land and urban issues (Karuumbe, pers comm.). Furthermore the lack of coordination between urban Namibian roleplayers tends to reduce the effectiveness of projects on a city-wide scale, as some efforts are duplicated, but more common are the voids in the attention given to urbanisation issues (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995).

As McCarney (1996) notes, it is important not to fall into the two traps of equating *government* with *governance*, and focusing on the state's accountability, transparency and management, while ignoring the role of groups of civil society in the governing relationship. The importance of viewing governance in terms of the relationships between the roleplayers at the urban local level is in its ability to "*broaden the space to include the critical role played by organisations in civil society where formal state structures are weak and unable to provide basic services*" (McCarney, 1996: 4). As the large cities of SSA have continued to grow (and rapidly so), the dysfunctions and inequalities between constituent communities have become more obvious, and the imported administrative systems, which have proven their inappropriateness in terms of governing the post-colonial phenomena of rapid, unregulated (and inevitable) urbanisation, have failed.

Increasingly the four essential properties of governance which Hyden defines as: trust, reciprocity, accountability and the nature (or capacity) of authority, have disintegrated (cited in Swilling, 1997a). While admittedly state-centric, Hyden's definition of governance offers the potential to question the relations between trust and reciprocity, and accountability and authority (Swilling, 1997a). However, as Halfani (1997) argues the strain and tensions between these relationships is demonstrated in the poor performance of urban local government. In most urban areas of SSA despite attempts at reform, urban local government is arguably characterised by weak institutional capacity, a lack of trust, lack of accountability, a poor delivery record, poor co-ordination between line functions, fiscal dependency on central government and the limited involvement or encouragement from government for the participation from private sector NGOs and CBOs (Halfani, 1997).

With this in mind there is increasingly a recognition of the role of CBOs and NGOs as critical not only for the survival of, and potential for upliftment of vulnerable and poor communities, but also to complement and indeed strengthen good governance (Parnell and Pieterse, 1998). Urban local government is increasingly moving into the arena of facilitating and enabling development with an emphasis on partnerships, financial and environmental sustainability and the need for explicit strategies to target poverty (Reddy, 1996a). The emphasis on delivery of services and infrastructure is as a result being shifted onto the shoulders of community and non-governmental structures.

The question can be asked whether these structures are being unfairly burdened by the increased roles which are often adopted by necessity (McCarney, 1996). The point however, is that local urban governments are simply unable to fulfill these roles, either by default or intention. If urban governance is to be adapted to meeting the needs of rapid urbanisation and urban growth, then it is imperative that stable relationships be achieved between the roleplayers in urban governance. Central to this issue is the need to improve accountability and trust between governance roleplayers and the public in order to develop the willingness for reciprocity which is vital if formal and informal, private and public, CBOs and NGOs are all to work together in governance and development of local urban areas and communities. With this in mind, the next section addresses specific aspects of urban local governance in Zimbabwe and South Africa, with a view to deriving lessons which are applicable to the context of Namibian urban governance.

#### 6.4.1 Aspects of Urban Local Governance in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwean urban local governance tends to be approached from a state-centric point of view, with the improvement of accountability and trust at the core of the intention to strengthen local government. However the role of non-governmental structures in urban governance seems to have been neglected. At Independence in 1980 it was the Zimbabwean governments intention to democratise all municipalities and replace the different local governments with a unified system for Black and White urban dwellers (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1994). Prior to Independence, Blacks were explicitly seen as rural dwellers and were denied permanent access to urban areas, as is reflected in the forms of local government. The different local governments prior to 1980 refer to *urban councils* for White urban areas with urban Blacks being entitled only to advisory *area boards*, *rural councils* for White rural areas and *district councils* for Black rural areas (Swilling, 1997b). However, until the mid-1980's, in accordance with the *Urban Councils Act*, urban local government continued along the lines of the inherited British Colonial mode of governance, the only difference being that it was renamed and deracialised. The urban councils were extended to include the former black townships while retaining previous functions and institutional structures (Swilling, 1996 and 1997b; Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1994).

Local urban governments in Zimbabwe retained the right to raise their own revenue, deliver services, make by-laws with respect to a vast number of issues, employ their

own personnel, and remain fairly autonomous (Wekwete, 1994b). Local urban governments in Zimbabwe are also entirely elected with no political appointments from central government which in theory would suggest that local government is accountable to the local public and autonomous in decision making. However, in reality this does not seem to be the case.

Local governments in Zimbabwe have no decision making powers in terms of passing plans. Instead, decisions are made at the central government level by people who have little knowledge of the people or area involved and the process is time-consuming and inefficient as proposals have to pass through at least three levels of government for approval (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1994). The retention of the *committee system* has limited the ability of the members of the elected political leadership to make decisions. The committee system was designed to ensure that elected councillors kept a watch on administrators rather than actively participate in policy making. Furthermore, the retention of national legislation which gives powers to the administrative heads of departments rather than the elected political structures means that in effect the Town Clerk and Department Heads are responsible for decision making rather than the newly elected political leadership, with resultant limits to accountability and trust (Swilling, 1996). The committee system was consistent with the definition of the role of local government as mere service provider and enforcement body. The limitations of the system have been recognised by the Zimbabwean government and moves have been made to adopt a system of directly elected mayors which Swilling (1996) argues is in line with the current rethink of the role of local government in resolving urban problems.

In terms of revenue, the local government has the power to derive sufficient funds independently for the maintenance of existing services and infrastructure. However the pressure for change on urban local government comes, in part, from fiscal constraints which tend to limit local autonomy as local urban governments are generally dependent on central government grants and loans for new developments including housing and infrastructure (Swilling, 1996; Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1994). In addition, while the main urban centres have acquired significant autonomy in their ability to perform functions, the smaller authorities are dependent on central government and have less capacity to perform because of a smaller resource base from which to generate revenue (Wekwete, 1994b). While local authorities in theory are allowed to borrow money, they have to be granted permission to do so by central government, and are

usually denied (Wekwete, 1994b; Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1994). Even Harare, the capital city, has been constrained in its ability to perform as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) which was adopted in the 1980's has imposed fiscal restraints (Rakodi, 1995).

The net effect of the constraints on urban local governments in Zimbabwe is that basic services, and much needed housing and infrastructure are not being provided through the traditional channels. Moreover, there is no documentation of the informal sector or non-governmental structures being supported or enabled by local government in a bid to fill the void. The relationships which need to be developed between the roleplayers of urban governance, seem to be absent. South Africa on the otherhand seems to have developed a stronger relationship between the urban roleplayers, possibly because of historically strong non-governmental structures.

#### 6.4.2 Aspects of Urban Local Governance in South Africa

Similarly to Namibia and Zimbabwe, the former South African government regarded urban blacks as temporary sojourners who belonged in the rural homelands (Reddy, 1996b). At the beginning of South Africa's transition to democracy in the early 1990's, cities were structured along racial divisions between White Local Authorities and Black Local Authorities (African, Indian and Coloured) each of which had their own body of planning, governance and administrative law (Reddy, 1996b; Swilling, 1997b). While the Black Local Authorities (BLAs) had a limited form of autonomy they remained heavily dependent on, and answerable to central government. Their dependence was as a result of Apartheid zoning which located all forms of commerce and industry in White Local Authorities, thus limiting the rates base of the BLA's, forcing blacks to commute between dormitory townships and White commercial centres in search of work and furthermore served to increase the rates base of White areas (Swilling, 1997b).

Throughout the 1970's and 1980's mass action, rent boycotts, and consumer boycotts were sustained in reaction to the fiscal inadequacies and political illegitimacy which plagued the controversial BLAs (Reddy, 1996b). A series of legislation and government led-negotiations which were rejected by the opposing political parties and civil society, eventually led to the beginning of local level negotiations in the early 1990's. In 1992, it was recognised as a national concern that a national framework guiding the

transition of local governments, via local forums, was needed and in 1993 the National Local Government Negotiating Forum (NLGNF) was established. The main parties in this forum were the national government, political parties, trade unions, the South African National Civic Organisation and organised associations of local governments (Swilling, 1996; Reddy, 1996b).

This process was embodied in the Local Government Transition Act of 1993 which made provision for democratic municipal elections to take place and also provided for single integrated local governments called Transitional Local Councils (TLCs) and at the metropolitan level a two-level system of Transitional Metropolitan Councils (TMCs) underpinned by Metropolitan Sub-Structures (MSSs). The significance of this process is that the transition to democratic local governance was negotiated between political and civil society stakeholder, as compelled by law and has profoundly increased the likelihood of *trust* being achieved between governance and the public. It is the achievement of trust, a psychological requirement, which is one of the basic requirements, in light of the apartheid experiences of the past that is vital to bringing about a post-apartheid society (Parnell and Pieterse, 1998).

Given the past disenfranchisement of the majority of South Africans, creating accountable urban local government is also a key aspect of democratisation (Parnell and Pieterse, 1998). With this in mind the significance of the formal mechanisms of *accountability* which have been set in place, is clear. These mechanisms include: regularly elected executives and legislatures, structures based on the separation of powers, constitutional protection of local government and control of local government over their own personnel and local budgets. Swilling (1997b) argues that these mechanisms represent the final break from the inherited British model and the classic committee system, the weaknesses of which were discussed with respect to Zimbabwean local government.

Currently the Government of National Unity is formulating policy on local government which will move this level of governance away from the transitional phase which comes to an end in 1999. At present this policy process is embodied in the White Paper on Local Government (South African Government, 1998). One of the primary themes of this document is that of Developmental Local Government (DLG) which is expressed in the White Paper to mean local government working with the public to help them find ways of sustainably meeting their needs so as to improve their quality of life (South

African Government, 1998). In other words, there has been a fundamental recognition of local governments role as a facilitator of development and a move away from the primary responsibility for and provider of infrastructure and basic services. Thus the emphasis has potentially moved away from functions of government to relationships between governance roleplayers.

Although accountable to both national and provincial tiers of government, the local authority has a vastly increased array of responsibilities as defined in the White Paper on Local Government and include among a long list of others: meeting basic needs, improving the quality of life of communities, empowering marginalised and disadvantaged communities, promoting social development, promoting awareness of environmental issues, providing special economic services to SMMEs, undertaking integrated development planning, attract investment, and promote comparative advantage (South African Government, 1998). Parnell and Pieterse (1998) view the increased roles of local governments in a positive light as expressed by the sentiment that *"the municipality becomes the primary development champion, the major conduit for poverty alleviation, the guarantor of social and economic rights, the enabler of economic growth, the principle agent of spatial or physical planning and the watchdog of environmental justice"* (Parnell and Pieterse, 1998: 13).

In contrast, the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) considers the White Paper to have vastly overestimated the capacity of local authorities, especially that of the small and medium sized cities of South Africa (CDE, 1998). In Namibia, the other extreme seems to have been adopted in terms of allocation of functions to local urban authorities. The local authorities of towns and villages are limited to the provision of three basic services, while clearly being capable in some cases of needing more responsibility in terms of their ability to better address the demands of rapid urbanisation (Simon, 1996). The point here is that it is necessary to create a balance between the functions allocated to local authorities, their human resource capacity to deliver on these functions, and the financial resources available to ensure that decisions can be made locally, and with speed.

In light of the fiscal and resource constraints facing South African cities (Moodley and Sing, 1996), the CDE's concern with an over allocation of functions to local authorities, is likely to be well placed. Moodley and Sing (1996) argue that the current sources of local government revenue, (which include property taxes, service charges, loans,

Regional Services and Joint Services Boards levies, subsidies, and grants) are insufficient to meet extensive commitments to service provision set out in the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme, let alone the extensive list expressed in the White Paper on Local Government. This reiterates the notion that local government is not ideally placed to be the sole roleplayer in good governance, in light of the rapid urbanisation facing urban areas in South Africa and Namibia alike, and thus should not attempt to identify itself as such.

A particular criticism that CDE has of the White Paper on Local Government, and which is an important lesson for Namibian local government, is that there is a failure to make *choices* in light of the reality of the crisis which local governments are facing (CDE, 1998). Instead the White Paper draws up a long wish list of responsibilities, which it is difficult to see local governments, hamstrung as they are fiscally and in terms of human resources, implementing efficiently or successfully. Many of the tasks listed would be much better dealt with by NGO's and CBO's, the informal sector and the private sector, in partnership with local government or at least with local government playing a strong coordinating and facilitative role.

#### 6.4.3 Lessons for Namibian Urban Local Governance

The urban areas of Namibia face similar issues to those of the Zimbabwean and South African cities. Namibian cities have inherited local authorities modelled on colonial-style state-centric governance, which are now hampered by a lack of financial autonomy and decision making power, limited resources and poor relationships with the other roleplayers in urban governance (Swilling, 1996). With these issues in mind, the following lessons are pertinent to the Namibian context of urban local governance.

- ❶ *Flexibility and a move away from rigid approaches* - Local urban governments tend to lack the capacity to adequately address rapid urbanisation as they tend to be based on imported, rigid, state-centric models which are not geared to addressing issues and problems which require attention in the short term via a flexible and incremental approach. The informal and non-governmental sectors seem better placed to fill the void left by local government's inability to cater to the needs of rapidly urbanising populations. It is important that relationships are fostered between these structures and local government so as to support and enable good governance.

- ② *Increase in roleplayers to reduce the burden of local government* - There is an increasing recognition of the role that CBOs, NGOs, the informal sector and private sector can play in the upliftment of vulnerable urban communities as well as playing a complementary and strengthening role in good governance. In order to use this potential to its full extent local government needs to take on the role of strong facilitator and enabler, which in turn encourages partnerships between role players.
- ③ *Building accountability and trust* - Accountability and trust between local government and urban communities are of paramount importance in light of the past policies which denied the majority of Namibians access to urban areas or any vocalisation of their needs. South Africa has partially addressed this via strong negotiating forums and a complete move away from the inherited system of local governance. The Zimbabwean case, in terms of the inadequacies of the committee system, demonstrates the importance of maintaining *locally* elected officials who are directly accountable to local people.
- ④ *Autonomy and efficiency go hand in hand with fiscal independence* - Zimbabwean urban local governments currently have little decision making power or fiscal autonomy and are dependent on central government for instance to pass plans, making the development process slow and reactive. This is an important lesson in the context of Namibia where local authorities also tend to have the ability or knowledge to carry out tasks, but are dependent on central government for the go ahead.

The lessons for Namibia indicate the importance of appropriate urban governance structures in the ability of urban centres to absorb the demands to rapid urbanisation, The reality in Namibia is however that urban centres are strained in their ability to provide for the influx of migrants who seek housing, employment, infrastructure and services. As a result informal settlements are flourishing in the urban areas of Namibia. With this in mind, planning approaches which are flexible enough to address the incremental development of the informal sector, become increasingly important.

## 6.5 Ineffective and inappropriate planning philosophies and approaches

Existing urban planning philosophies and approaches across the SSA region tend to be based on imported ideas which are generally inadequate to deal with the scale of urbanisation confronting urban areas, large or small (Balbo, 1993, Dewar, 1995). Urban areas of SSA are generally characterised by free-standing units sprawled and fragmented across the urban landscape and the pattern of urban growth tends to be driven by the processes of profit driven speculation, state driven low income housing schemes and squatting (Dewar, 1995). But, by far the most important factor underpinning the form of urban areas relates to the fact that planning philosophies tend to have been imported and are entrenched by planners and specialists who have been trained overseas (Dewar, 1995), resulting in *"planned districts and illegal settlements and slums drawn together in a sort of continuously discontinuous pattern, impossible to handle with the conceptual and operational tools of traditional city planning"* (Balbo, 1993: 23).

There are many reasons for the failure of traditional urban planning to meet the needs of developing urban areas in SSA which require rapid, incremental forms of response.

- Traditionally, urban planning has been closely associated with physical planning which entails the preparation of master plans, showing zoning characteristics and giving specific powers to local authorities to determine what can be developed (Wekwete, 1994a; Wallis, 1996). The slow pace of master planning has however shown an inability to match the rapid population growth rates of most Third World cities. This is possibly because master planning reflects the ideals of among others, an 'imported' local government system, new investment and the resources to develop new infrastructure of a high standard. These ideals however contrast greatly with the reality of many African cities (Wekwete, 1994a).
- The preoccupation with physical planning tends to be at the cost of aspects of developmental and economic planning, which are particularly weak in many SSA countries (Wallis, 1996; Tomlinson, 1994).
- The inherited approach to planning tends to be based on complex processes driven from the top and requires administrative and technical skills which are seldom available in SSA cities. Traditional planning also tends to be oblivious

to the fiscal restraints of Third World cities and plans frequently fail to reflect where resources will come from. Furthermore, this system of planning is not conducive to public participation and instead is oriented towards rigid land-use management at the expense of development, poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability (Halfani, 1997; Balbo, 1993).

- In addition, implementation tends to be beyond the capacity and resources of local structures (McCarney, 1996). The regulations and standards that planning philosophies offer are not only unrealistic in the context of rapid urbanisation and poverty, but they are mostly impossible to enforce and make it difficult for the informal sector to fill the gap where government fails to provide (El-Shakhs, 1997).

The result of inappropriate planning, is the physical, social and economic fragmentation of the city manifested in the juxtaposition of highly planned and well serviced 'older' areas with lavish gardens and parks, and dense, informal and unserved 'new' areas where a bit of privacy and space is indeed a luxury. Urban fragmentation generates great patterns of movement with cities, at temporal and financial cost to individuals and society as well as costs to the environment in terms of the massive amounts of land over which road networks and built infrastructure, sprawl. Public transport is virtually impossible to make efficient due to the extensive sprawl, and the dispersed nature of settlements makes economic opportunities difficult to take advantage of. And finally sprawl wastes resources such as land, energy, and finance, making urban settlements largely financially unsustainable and in turn resulting in environmental degradation in terms of land, vegetation, water, air and noise (Dewar, 1995; Stren and White, 1989).

Namibia has its roots in the system of planning used in South Africa which similarly to Zimbabwe is based on an imported model of British planning (Frayne, 1997b). The preoccupation of this model with physical planning, and its use to design urban areas along the ideologies of Apartheid, have resulted in dualistic, inefficient and unequitable urban areas in all three countries. Despite Namibia gaining Independence in 1990, the ideologies of the previous planning structures have prevailed (Frayne, 1997b). While in practice this situation is not entirely dissimilar to the cases of South Africa or Zimbabwe, these two countries have important lessons which could be incorporated into an urbanisation policy for Namibia.

### 6.5.1 Aspects of planning in Zimbabwe

The maintenance of inherited planning systems in both Zimbabwe and South Africa have resulted in plans which continue to encourage urban sprawl, rather than integration, and further entrench segregation of people by replacing racial segregation with class segregation. One of the culprits in increasing the poverty-stricken conditions in which urban Zimbabweans, live has been the insistence of maintaining high building standards. It is often claimed by academics that standards in Zimbabwe, similarly to Namibia are too high and inhibit the development of the poor (Mafico, 1989; Frayne, 1997b). Mafico argues that in Zimbabwe the building standards are an extension and reflection of colonial policies rather than being useful or arising from people's needs: *"there is no close relationship between the standards set and the target income groups and hence severe overcrowding due to housing shortages and other problems exist in the main urban centres"* (Mafico, 1989: 17-18).

However, a problem has arisen in Zimbabwe as newly independent communities typically expect vastly higher standards than those in which they have been living, and the point has been reached where it is difficult to convince policy makers and the public alike that there is substantial room for lowering the standards (Frayne, 1997b). This point was clearly illustrated in a low income housing development project in which standards<sup>10</sup> were lowered to reduce the costs to poor households (Mafico, 1989). Infrastructure provision and the style of housing (single detached units) have also made housing expensive as has the perception that housing should be provided by the government. These standards were consequently lowered in a policy to provide ultra-low cost housing. However, this policy failed as the lower standards conflicted with the perceptions, aspirations and expectations of the target population, and standards have since been increased again (Wekwete, 1994b).

The lesson for Namibia, where there is a similar high expectation of the governments responsibility to provide (Pendleton, 1997) and the preference in many cases for 'European style' houses, is that standards should meet a number of criteria including: ability of standards to be met by majority of population, cultural compatibility, economic feasibility, and flexibility in terms of being able to satisfy the needs of

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, urban stands were previously considered to be acceptable at 300m<sup>2</sup> subsequently reduced to 200m<sup>2</sup>. Houses at 50m<sup>2</sup> were considered large according to other SSA standards, and built according to first world standards making them very expensive (Mafico, 1989).

different sizes and types of families. At a practical level, Wekwete (1994b) suggests that the most effective way of addressing the issue would be via targeting the construction sector and in particular the suppliers of building materials because as long as costs increase, attempts to reduce the size of buildings will have minimal effects on cost, but greatly negative impacts on function, comfort and social aspects of households.

Planning at the local level in Zimbabwe is a combination of *participatory development planning* and *conventional spatially based planning*. In relation to participatory development planning, every local authority was intended to establish a Village Development Committee (VIDCO) and a Ward Development Committee (WADCO) to facilitate community participation at grassroots level, to produce plans which would then be fed up to provincial level. However the VIDCOs and WADCOs failed to instill genuine participation due to a limited capacity to effectively organise development planning, and instead produced unrealistic lists of demands from the people, with limited potential for integration into a plan (Swilling, 1997b).

The limitations of conventional spatially based planning in Zimbabwe have also been recognised for reinforcing the view that local government's role is merely limited to providing a land use plan. Recently urban councils have begun to question how they can become involved in poverty alleviation, urban economic development and the control of environmental degradation (Swilling, 1997b, Wekwete, 1994b). While Wekwete argues that "*planning has to be seen as an entrepreneurial activity linked to creating opportunity rather than simply creating a regulatory framework*" (Wekwete, 1994b: 51), the problem remains that there is a lack of encouragement of the informal sector to harness its entrepreneurial spirit in favour of the urban local areas.

While the physical plans tend to accommodate formal activities, the informal sector has its own logic and requirements for space utilisation which defy physical plans with a resultant negative response from government. Wekwete (1994b) identifies the need to address the economic issues of the informal sector in Zimbabwe so as to identify how they function and how best to improve and encourage them. There is a similar need to encourage, in the participation in planning, the informal sector and non-governmental structures in Namibia.

### 6.5.2 Aspects of planning in South Africa

Rapid urbanisation requires a flexible and dynamic planning response to the need for land, infrastructure and services. The inherited methods of planning used in South Africa and Namibia have been too slow to react efficiently or effectively. South Africa has however made inroads into reducing the time taken to react to the massive need for urban land.

South Africa's response to the need for a more flexible and 'fast track' approach to physical planning has been the *Development Facilitation Act 67 of 1995 (DFA)* which shortens the procedures required to release and develop land and in so doing is intended to facilitate rapid land development for the historically disadvantaged (Government of South Africa, 1995). Significantly the DFA also has provisions which integrate environmental concerns into the planning procedures including:

- the promotion of *mixed land use* which minimises commuting distances thus reducing the need for extensive roads systems, minimising vehicular pollution and fuel consumption needs as well as the time spent commuting;
- *discourages urban sprawl* in favour of the compact city concept which promotes building vertically rather than horizontally;
- and a general principle which *promotes sustainable land development* practices and processes - although the articulation of this point is arguably vague and open to interpretation (Republic of South Africa, 1995).

Of further importance in the DFA, is the clause which stipulates the responsibility of local authorities for defining Land Development Objectives (LDOs) which will form the policy for development of that local area. Certain local authorities have gone further than the requirement and set up Local Development Forums which allow for the collaboration with civic society in the development of LDOs, thus encouraging the potential for trust and reciprocity in decision making (Swilling, 1997b). The mechanism of LDOs gives local authorities more autonomy in planning. The subject matter of the LDOs relate to: access to and standard of services, integration of low income areas into the city fabric, sustained utilisation of the environment, planning and provision of bulk infrastructure, optimum utilisation of natural resources, and the number and rate of delivery of sites and houses.

The importance of the DFA, in South Africa, and the lesson for Namibia, is that it offers simpler planning procedures, encourages public participation, fast tracks development and delivery, all of which are significant moves away from the inherited form of master planning. Furthermore, the DFA offers the potential to reduce standards so as to allow for the incremental build up of housing, and has the power to override all previous Apartheid-planning legislation. The DFA is however still quite closely associated with physical and spatial planning rather than that of economic development planning and poverty alleviation. The Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy initiated in 1996 aims at job creation and economic growth through fiscal control and deficit reduction. There are obvious tensions between GEAR and development programmes not least of which is the high priority that is placed on debt reduction rather than social spending (Parnell and Pieterse, 1998). In 1998 there have already been calls to scrap GEAR, the effects of which have been likened to Structural Adjustment Policies of the 1980's.

The continued call for an integrated urban development strategy for South Africa led to the government's *Draft Urban Development Strategy* (UDS) in 1995. The UDS has however, been criticised for the lack of an economic emphasis and attention to unemployment. Nor is there an articulation of *how* the public/private partnerships, referred to in the UDS, would work in practice even though in theory they are admittedly essential to successful urban development (CDE, 1996).

The general learning point for Namibia is that in terms of a document which sets out urban development policy it is necessary that the *who? what? how? and why?* are clearly set out not only for transparency purposes, but also so that roleplayers have a clear understanding of what they are meant to be achieving. The lack of explicit guidance has been a constant downfall of many policy documents in South Africa and Namibia, with the tendency to create wish lists rather than useful documents.

### 6.5.3 Lessons for Namibian Urban Planning

The reality of the social and economic situation of the majority of urban Namibians is that they are poor, and live in desperate conditions without even the most basic of services and infrastructure. This is arguably as a result of planning methods which have been rooted in a history of Apartheid-style physical planning. In order to make

the necessary changes to a planning ideology which is applicable to the current conditions facing urban Namibia, there are a number of lessons which can be learnt from Zimbabwe and South Africa as these two countries have had similar experiences to Namibia.

- ① In order to meet the needs of rapid urbanisation and urban landlessness in Namibia, planning needs to move away from rigid physical planning to a more flexible and incremental form. For instance, planning procedures need to be shortened and simplified so as to speed up delivery of land, at the same time bearing environmental issues in mind. The South African *Development Facilitation Act* offers the potential for this to occur in South Africa, and lessons could be adapted to the Namibian context. For instances, the concept of setting LDOs offers the potential to move away from reactive planning and move towards proactive independent planning based on local information and adapted to local conditions.
- ② The urban centres of Namibia lack the fiscal resources to provide much of the necessary infrastructure and services demanded by rapid urbanisation. Combined with the poverty of the majority of urban dwellers and their inability to 'buy' their way out of the situation, urban Namibians are faced with an increasingly deteriorating urban environment. A lesson which can be applied to the Namibian context is the trend of moving away from physical planning towards the embracement of the principles of development planning. Issues of economic development and poverty upliftment are the concern of development planning, rather than the mere allocation of land uses and the spatial location of infrastructure.
- ③ Regulations and standards tend to push implementation beyond the capacity of government, and beyond the affordability of most urban dwellers, resulting in small box-like rows of houses, or the maintenance of informal shacks. As Pendleton (1997) reports, many urban dwellers have expectations that the government will improve their situations, arising in the situation of tension between the government's *ability* to provide and the *expectations* of the public in terms of what is acceptable. The experience of Zimbabwe suggests that standards should be set according to the ability to be met by the majority of people; cultural compatibility; economic feasibility; and flexibility. The emphasis

however, needs to move beyond 'standards', so as to embrace the concern of *function*, which tends to suffer as a result of the preoccupation with cost and the reduction in the size of houses.

- ④ The realisation that public participation is a useful and necessary step in not only democratising the planning process, but is also important in determining the needs of the public rather than only catering only to those who can pay. If Namibia is to maximise the potential of public participation, it is necessary to learn from the case of Zimbabwe which illustrated that participation should necessarily go beyond the production of a wish list. This requires capacity on the part of local authorities to organise and utilise the information gained from the public, efficiently and effectively so as to use it effectively. This also requires that the subsequent plans and policies are clearly articulated in terms of who? why? what? and how? so as to provide guidance and clarification to roleplayers in terms of their responsibilities.

The lessons from the SSA literature suggest that urban planning needs to move away from its preoccupation with physical land use maps, and move towards embracing the economic development of urban centres. This has been recognised in both Zimbabwe and South Africa and it is imperative that if Namibia is to achieve a process of sustainable urbanisation, then planning must address the economic interests of migrants. The recognition of the importance of urban areas in terms of economic development has been recognised not only in the planning literature, but also increasingly in the urban literature which advocates the notion of urban management.

## 6.6 Adopting an urban management approach

Key to the sustainability of urbanisation in Namibia, is the provision of basic urban services and infrastructure and the ability for migrants to find employment, either formal or informal, within a relatively short period. However, across the SSA region, a rigid and sluggish responses of urban centres to the issues of rapid urbanisation, have visibly resulted in social, economic and biophysical degradation. The shortage of urban services and infrastructure, a lack of urban employment opportunities and the degradation of the urban environment has gradually led to the increasing popularity in the literature of the notion of *urban management* (Stren, 1991; Wekwete, 1997).

Increasingly, there has been the recognition that cities need to become more proactive, competitive and entrepreneurial in attracting investment, creating employment opportunities and facilitating communities to help themselves (Khan, 1996; Tomlinson, 1994). It seems as if there is a tendency to move towards a more business-like approach to managing urban centres, which includes increasing their national and global competitiveness, and entrepreneurialism (Stren, 1991; Harris, 1998). Some of the literature counters this idea arguing that global competitiveness of the larger cities is achieved by placing further burdens on the poor and smaller cities and a resultant inability to address the demands of urbanisation (Khan, 1996). However, Harris' (1998) paper recounts how cities across the globe, including cities of developing countries, are increasingly harnessing local initiative to facilitate new areas and sectors of economic growth and employment. At the same time, Harris (1998) admits however that this form of entrepreneurialism requires a relatively high quality of life and a decent and safe environment. The point however is clear: if cities are to attain economic sustainability and support the massive influx of migrants, who seemingly have very little choice but to seek refuge in urban areas, then urban centres need to be more entrepreneurial in their approach to accessing financial resources and increasing employment opportunities, both formal and informal.

In parallel to urban economic constraints, there has also been the recognition of the environmental stresses facing urban areas and their occupants, and retarding the opportunities for urban dwellers to move beyond poverty, or for urban areas to attract investment (Harris, 1998). As a result, there has been an increased emphasis on the need to manage urban resources in a bid to reduce environmental degradation and maximise social, economic and biophysical sustainability (Roberts, 1996). Urban management, in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to take on an even greater emphasis of environmental concerns and sustainability as donor agencies continue to recognise the seriousness of the degradation to the urban environment. For instance the World Bank/UNCHS/UNDP 'Urban Management Programme' (UMP), has acknowledged the potential of addressing the issues of the 'brown agenda' and better management and supply of urban environmental resources, to improve the quality of life of all urban dwellers and particularly the poorest sectors of society (Bartone, et al, 1994).

However, the thrust of 'sustainability' seems to have lost some of its impetus in developing countries. This is possibly because of the often interpreted emphasis on

ecological sustainability, which is at odds with the immediate and basic needs of the urban poor, including water, food, shelter and waste removal. Another reason is possibly the fact that a veritable plethora of definitions of sustainability abound. However as Roberts points out, "*the essence of sustainable development is the need to develop a planning and management approach in our urban areas by which economic expansion can continue without destroying the natural resource base on which it depends, or negatively affecting the human communities that it is intended to serve*" (Roberts, 1996: 274).

Roberts (1996) argues that sustainable development cannot be achieved as a by-product of other planning or policy goals, but requires active planning and management by local government. Furthermore, Roberts argues that sustainability needs to become a focal point on the political agenda. While essentially this argument is reasonable, it does not necessarily mean that local authorities need to increase human resources or financial capacity, which would understandably be of concern in light of the constraints facing urban authorities. Rather, the importance of sustainability and the environmental agenda, is that 'environment' in its broadest sense has the potential to *integrate, coordinate and unify* diverse projects and priorities which are already underway, bringing together the various roleplayers in the urban area. However, what is required of urban local authorities, is a refocus of energies and attention to the city-wide scale, rather than the scale of individual projects. In other words planning and management needs to become more strategic and long term in its focus. While I am not naïve enough to suggest that this refocus and shift of energies will be easy or straightforward, I am positive enough to suggest that it is possible, particularly if the environment in its broadest sense is placed prominently on the political agenda. This in turn requires the recognition that fundamental to 'environment', are social, economic, political, cultural, and technical issues and not just ecological issues, even though they are all intrinsically interlinked.

Environmental problems are experienced by all urban dwellers, and as such, a fundamental requirement of urban management should be the participation of the public in decision making, planning and prioritising the use of urban environmental resources (Roberts, 1996). However, traditionally, notions of urban management have allocated sole responsibility for provision of environmental services and infrastructure, and maintenance, to the municipal and central government following a largely *supply-driven* model. In line with the thinking to engage all urban roleplayers in the

management and decision making of urban concerns Wekwete (1994a) calls for a paradigmatic shift away from centralised land use management and control and towards an approach which is more responsive to needs of community. Wekwete argues that a new approach should enable, rather than determine solutions, emphasise negotiation and discussion, be more opportunistic in terms of attracting investment to the urban areas, promote public-private partnerships and foster attention to environmental concerns. Recent views of urban management across SSA have articulated a broader opinion of who the role players should be, bringing into the picture the private sector, CBO's, NGO's and other interest groups into a more participatory, transparent and less bureaucratic urban management approach (Wekwete, 1997).

#### 6.6.1 Lessons for Namibia

The urban centres of Namibia are particularly challenged by the rapid influx of poverty stricken people from rural areas in search of employment, and associated services and infrastructure such as housing, water, education, and so on. Namibia's response seems to have been particularly uncoordinated in the absence of an urbanisation policy, and in some cases the attempts of line functions to address these challenges, often either contradict or duplicate each others attempts, or worse, leave areas which are completely neglected (Devereux, et al, 1995; Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). The result is that urban resources are inefficiently utilised, urban poverty is maintained and circular migration is entrenched as migrants can not make a successful living in rural or urban areas, thus having to span the spatial continuum. In this regard, there are lessons from the regional literature which are pertinent to Namibia in terms of adopting an 'urban management' approach.

- ① The approach to rapid urbanisation into Namibia's urban centres needs to adopt a flexible and cooperative method of management. By this it is meant that Namibian local authorities need to recognise that there are numerous resources, with respect to other urban roleplayers, alternative sources of financing of projects, and indeed the energies of the community and migrants themselves, which as yet have been inefficiently utilised. This requires that local authorities take the role of manager, facilitator and enabler of the development of urban centres.

- ② In Namibia there is a visible gap between the demand for and supply of urban environmental services which has resulted in economic, social and ecological degradation and the maintenance of rural linkages. The urban management literature suggests that local authorities relinquish sole responsibility for the supply of services and infrastructure and move towards an approach which embraces the energies of other urban roleplayers, including the informal sector.
- ③ It is necessary to recognise, that fundamental to the ability of Namibian urban local authorities to adopt a management approach, is the notion of the power to make that type of decision in the first place. This requires that central government devolve full decision making powers including financial autonomy to local urban authorities, in order to encourage their entrepreneurialism, and allow them to make local decisions at the local scale.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Fundamental to a sustainable process of urbanisation is the ability of urban centres to absorb migrants via employment opportunities and the delivery of urban infrastructure and services. However, across the SSA region, and in Namibia, the reality is that urban centres are unable to generate sufficient employment, have a shortage of infrastructure and services and thus the pressure on existing facilities, is immense and has led to the social, economic and biophysical degradation of many urban areas.

At the crux of the problems facing urban centres in terms of the challenges of rapid urbanisation, is the inability of local authorities to deliver. In turn, this is a function of outdated urban management approaches which embody rigid, inherited, state-centric structures of urban governance and planning which are incapable of reacting with sufficient speed to the incremental manifestations of rapid urbanisation. Currently there are trends within the SSA region to adapt, and in some cases adopt a paradigmatic shift, in an attempt to better address the decline of urban centres and their related inability to confront rapid urbanisation. In terms of local urban governance, the move is towards an increase in the responsibilities of the multiple urban roleplayers with a parallel shift in the function of local government to *facilitator* and *enabler*. Similarly planning approaches are adapting, with the recognition that

flexibility, speed of response and the encouragement of economic development are central to successfully addressing the needs of rapidly increasing urban populations. Overarching current trends in urban local governance and planning, is the approach of urban management which increasingly identifies the degradation of the urban environment as a central concern which requires attention at a city-wide scale.

The issues of appropriate local urban governance, planning and management have been discussed in this chapter with reference to the SSA region and specifically South Africa and Zimbabwe. Lessons from these countries have been adapted to the context of Namibia. The fundamental lesson in this regard is that if Namibian urban centres are to adapt and address the ever increasing needs of rapid urbanisation, then a paradigmatic shift is required away from the inherited and towards the local.

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*"Currently the lack of clear policies and priorities by Central Government [of Namibia] on crucial issues such as urbanisation, industrial growth, employment, shelter and the environment makes it very difficult for local authorities to plan and implement for their own areas of responsibility" (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995: 34).*

## 7.1 Introduction

One of the most pressing issues currently facing Namibia, is the rapid urbanisation of its population which, to cities such as Windhoek, is considered to be as high as 8% per annum (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995). While Namibia has a small population relative to other Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) nations, in the context of the limited Namibian economy, harsh biophysical constraints and a rapidly degrading rural environment, the influx of people into urban areas, which can neither support them, nor offer them better conditions than the rural areas, is of concern.

A number of themes and concerns with respect to urbanisation in Namibia, have been highlighted throughout this thesis. It is the aim of this concluding chapter to synthesise these themes with a view to reiterating the need for an urbanisation policy in Namibia. Part of the problem is that the question of urbanisation has been vastly under-researched in Namibia, with a resultant shortage of reliable statistical data (Tvedten and Mupotola, 1995; Frayne, 1992; Swilling, 1994). Nonetheless, it is possible to apply the empirical and theoretical evidence from the urbanisation experiences of other SSA countries, to the context of Namibia, and in the process, identify themes of importance to an urbanisation policy.

## 7.2 The hazards of defining 'rural' and 'urban' as separate entities

The reality of urbanisation in Namibia, is that it takes the form of circular migration, which means that migrants tend not to urbanise fully, but instead, maintain a complexity of relationships between rural and urban areas. The maintenance of rural-urban linkages is not entirely a matter of choice but rather represents a rational response to the difficult conditions which confront households in both rural and urban areas of Namibia.

The shortcoming then, in distinguishing urban from rural as two mutually exclusive and distinct entities, is that the nature of the relationship between rural and urban, and the way in which migrants and households manage to survive, is fundamentally misunderstood or ignored, and thus excluded from policy decisions. Policies such as the *Namibian National Resettlement Policy*, which target households spatially and sectorally, belie the fact that few poor Namibian households actually derive their livelihood solely from rural agriculture. Furthermore the insistence of increasing rural

development programmes, in an environment which is rapidly reaching the limits of its carrying capacity, and is unlikely to sustain a large and increasing rural population, lends itself to the reinforcement of urbanisation patterns in Namibia.

At the base of many misunderstandings in Sub-Saharan African policy making, is a combination of the reliance on linear development theories into which category *urban bias* can be placed (Lipton, 1977); and the tendency to cast the woes of rural areas in the *land dispossession - settler colonialism* mould (Pankhurst, 1996). The results are twofold:

- The urban bias theory masks the reality of urban poverty, by arguing that the urban class, as an homogenous entity, has numerous advantages over the rural class. In so doing, the urban poor get short shrift, as urban spending is reduced in order to minimise the gap between rural and urban sectors with the aim of reducing urbanisation, and perhaps even resulting in eventual out-migration. In short, poor urban households tend to maintain their rural linkages as a means of survival. However the sustainability of this practice in the long term is questionable from social, economic and ecological points of view.
- Secondly, in light of colonial policies which denied the majority of black Namibians the right to own land, increased access to land is often regarded as the principal solution to rural poverty. However, this masks important factors in determining rural poverty and related land problems. These problems should preferably be considered within the context of land degradation, environmental constraints (which predate colonial policies), war, political turmoil and so on. Perhaps then the approach to addressing poverty would not be limited to access to land, but rather extend itself to improving the condition of the land as well as the ability of people to sustain themselves independently.

In the meantime, policies of the Namibian government seem to ignore the reality of circular migration, and indeed, tend in some cases to penalise households which choose to split spatially in a bid to reduce their risks. At the same time however, policies of the Namibian government are creating conditions which neither support nor dismantle circular migration, but instead serve to maintain the *status quo*.

### 7.3 Can circular migration be sustainable? Probably not

The main conclusion which can be drawn from the Namibian experience of urbanisation, is that it is currently in the best interests of migrating households to maintain a foothold in both rural and urban areas. However, what currently forms a survival mechanism for the present generation, has many shortcomings in terms of intergenerational sustainability. The instability of households across the spatial continuum has implications for the education of generations of children. Poverty, poor education, unemployment and the degradation of the biophysical environment are all interlinked in a vicious cycle. Furthermore, the basic survival of present generations of migrants, relies on the opportunistic use of resources. In light of the fragility of the Namibian environment, this a particular concern in terms of both the existence of the environment and its future ability to support an ever increasing rural population. The question can be asked: what then is the possibility of achieving sustainable urbanisation?

If Namibia is to attempt to approach a level of sustainable urbanisation, it will require identifying and addressing the circumstances which are responsible for perpetuating the pattern of circular migration. These circumstances relate to inappropriate spatially and sectorally based policies, environmental degradation, and biophysical constraints. In the urban context a central theme in much of the regional literature, is the identification of weak urban governance and management, and imported planning approaches which are too rigid and slow to fully address the demands of urbanisation. This theme was considered to be of particular relevance to the Namibian context in light of the local urban structures of government and rigid and complex planning processes which have essentially been retained in the post-independence era.

Fundamental to the achievement of sustainable urbanisation, is a two pronged approach which identifies the need to reduce the rate at which migrants stream into the city, and at the same time improving the capacity of cities to absorb the influx of people. The focus of this thesis has been on improving the capacity of urban areas to adapt to the needs of urbanisation in Namibia. As such, prerequisites in achieving sustainable urbanisation in the context of urban areas, includes among others: sufficient supply of and access to basic services and infrastructure, equity in terms of access and use, quality of life, and environmental integrity. These prerequisites in turn

require that urban management and governance, and planning have the resources, institutional capacity and willingness to address these needs.

#### 7.4 Inability of urban areas to cope with rapid urbanisation

At the crux of sustainable urbanisation is the ability of urban areas to absorb the rapid influx of people in the cities and towns of Namibia. In common with many urban areas across Sub-Saharan Africa, Namibia's cities and towns are lumbered with bureaucracies which are rigid, inefficient and ill-equipped to deal with the demands for urban services and infrastructure. Furthermore, most attempts at addressing urbanisation are *ad hoc* and uncoordinated in light of the absence of an urbanisation policy. The result is a very visible gap between the demand for, and supply of, urban infrastructure and services, housing, and employment. The evidence includes the manifestation of overcrowded and unserviced squatter and informal settlements, pressures on services and infrastructure, and 'brown' environmental problems such as uncollected waste, and untreated water.

Furthermore, it is the urban poor and migrants themselves who take the brunt of the local government's inability to cope, and instead of improving their conditions, are further necessitated to maintain a difficult life or circular migration. However cities still seem to offer a chance for many households to improve their circumstances or at least spread their risk over a variety of sectors and spaces. Thus as urbanisation rates remain high, the pressures on urban services and infrastructure are maintained, further stressing the inability of the inherited, rigid approaches adopted by urban local governments to cope.

Increasingly, there has been a recognition in the SSA regional literature of the necessity to adapt structures of urban local governance, management and planning to the prevalent conditions of rapid urbanisation. This has called for a move away from formal structures and formal, rigid procedures, in favour of the keywords of *flexibility*, *adaptability*, *co-operation* and *speed of response*. Increasingly the role of urban local government seems to be moving towards that of *enabler* and *facilitator*. The trend in turn, has been to harness the potential of the informal sector, the community and non-governmental institutions to fill the void where local government clearly lacks the capacity.

## 7.5 Conclusion: Towards an urbanisation policy for Namibia

Fundamental to the achievement of sustainable urbanisation is the development of an urbanisation policy which coordinates the objectives and programmes of the Namibian government. The current state of urbanisation, in the absence of a coherent policy, is resulting in *ad hoc* attempts at alleviating poverty. This lack of comprehensiveness however, masks the ability to understand the factors at the root of poverty, which essentially is the symptom of a complexity of factors underpinning the process of circular migration.

These factors include a combination of political, social, economic and ecological issues which relate to land degradation, war, rural poverty, and biophysical constraints. Similarly poorly conceived policies, based on faulty assumptions and a misunderstanding of the complexities of rural-urban linkages, further serve to marginalise the poor, in turn entrenching the need to maintain a pattern of circular migration. The hardships endured by households, split across the spatial continuum in a bid for mere survival, are clear. In addition, the necessity to survive implies the need to be opportunistic in the use of resources, in turn tending towards the degradation of the biophysical environment on which people are directly dependent. The likelihood of either present or future generations moving beyond a state of subsistence survival, seems bleak.

The concern in this regard is that in terms of the explicit link between poverty and environmental degradation, is that the longer bare subsistence conditions are the norm, the less likely the ability of environment to directly sustain future generations. In turn this suggests two scenarios. In the first scenario migrants are eventually forced to permanently urbanise as rural areas can no longer even support households in times of urban hardship. In light of the present inability of urban Namibia to absorb the current urbanisation rate, the likelihood of this scenario being sustainable, is minimal. The second scenario, which is the more likely, is simply that patterns of circular migration are inevitably going to endure far into the future, with probable negative impacts on the environment.

With this in mind, it is imperative that the Namibian government recognise urbanisation as an inevitability in Namibia. In order to ensure the economic, social, and biophysical sustainability of the process, it is necessary that the government take

steps to either support or dismantle circular migration. The status quo however, does not present a picture of sustainability. In this regard, there is a fundamental need to develop an *urbanisation policy* for Namibia, which integrates the concerns of urban, rural and environmental policies, and furthermore is based on thorough research and an understanding of the forces underpinning and entrenching circular migration.

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