

Growth Challenges of Homeland Towns in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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KEYWORDS Land Use. Land Access. Spatial Development Framework. Urban Planning

ABSTRACT This paper reports the results of a study conducted in several former homeland towns in South Africa aimed at assessing the nature of urban growth constraints. The methodology involved an analysis of the spatial development framework (SDF) of the main homeland towns, the use of recent statistics on population size and reference to annual reports of individual local municipalities in which these towns are located. The findings indicate that current land use allocations often depart from expectations of conventional development planning; that growth is constrained by problems of urban land access, location, investment, state policy, a non-conducive legislative environment, the collapse of the manufacturing sector, capital flight, a small working middle class, gross mismanagement and corruption in urban governance structures, failure to provide and maintain infrastructure, poor social services, large scale net out-migration of people from the rural countryside to the largest cities. What are imposed on this platform are shortcomings in political leadership and management capacity cumulatively paralysing the growth potential of most homeland towns.

INTRODUCTION

While a national review of spatial planning procedures and practice has since 1994 been commissioned and completed resulting in a plethora of policy documents (RSA 1996a, 2001a) there is little evidence to date of a 'shared vision' of what planning should be trying to achieve. According to Simon (2000) the Green Paper: Planning and Development by DLA (1999) acknowledges shortfalls in traditional planning practice and calls for a streamlining of procedures and processes so as to respond to the needs of spatial development planning. In the former homelands the system of orderly urban growth through incorporation of high density peri-urban districts in the urban fringe is undermined by the legislative environment which has entrenched communal ownership options that contradict formal interventions aimed at containing urban sprawl. While within urban boundaries proper, land allocation, ownership re-distribution and zoning practices operate, it is another story in the urban fringe where the greatest growth is taking place. Yet, the individual spatial development plans intended to guide development in land use patterns in towns and within entire municipalities face problems of implementation. The procedures for accessing land undermine the efficiency of normal land use allocation, ownership and redistribution mechanisms.

Pacione (2009) reveal that certain constraints are characteristic of developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and South America. The fastest rates of urbanisation are taking place in these areas such that since 1950 when North America, Europe, Japan and Russia had the largest cities, by 2015 only Tokyo and New York at 28.7 million and 17.6 million people respectively will appear in the list of the largest 15 urban concentrations. The UNO (1995) reports that the rest will be located in the developing world. These impressive figures however hide a set of constraints that increasingly make urban liveability in these countries a harsh reality. In the absence of an industrial revolution save for India, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and China, continuing rural-urban migration amounts to a transfer of rural poverty into the cities. The absence of industrial employment means that the working middle class that should support and sustain the urban economy remains weak. Uncontrolled rapid urbanisation has put strain on services and infrastructure whose development is hopelessly out of tune with current demand. The failure of long term planning interventions has led to slums accounting often to over 50% of the urban population in Addis Ababa, Kinshasa and Nairobi. Problems of urban transport, urban congestion and utter chaos- for example in cities in India, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Pakistan and Bangla Desh are widespread. Inadequate and poor housing is partly

fueled by the reluctance of the private sector to invest in low-cost housing and the absence of government priority for financing urban housing. With increasing urbanisation, homelessness, illegal squatting- as in Brazil, Argentina and South Africa has become a widespread occurrence. Services in the form of schools, public health centres, piped water, flush toilets, waste collection, public transport and electricity are made available depending on income class such that the masses of the urban poor suffer the most. In addition to problems of environmental degradation, public health risks due to problems of waste management

and poor sanitation lead to periodic disease outbreaks. Urban governance structures since the 1960's have remained of an administrative nature and are not designed for meeting the demands of modern urban management. The overall status of infrastructure provision remains inadequate given the size of these urban centres partly due to constrained financing of infrastructure- itself a product of poor planning and state policy. A breakdown in inland revenue collection is widespread because of inappropriate taxation systems and general corruption (Ruhiiga 2009).



Fig. 1. Homeland towns in South Africa

Source: Adapted from www.sa-venues.com 2009

In South Africa, several regional towns are located in the former homelands- areas that were put aside for predominantly Black people. Bhisho with a population of 137 282 in 2008 (GeoNames 2008) has not seen any further growth; Mthatha with an estimated population of 120 000 (JHI 2007) had by the end of 2010 grown to 200 000; Mafikeng which includes the former separate black town of Mmabatho that was reincorporated in 1994 with a population of 250 000 (Northwest 2008) is estimated to have had 300 000 as at the end of 2010; Thohoyandou registered an estimated population of 80 000 people while Phuthaditjhaba with a population of 84 258 people (GeoNames 2007) is estimated to have had about 200 000 people by end of 2010 - Figure in Figure 1. These were developed as administrative centres for the homelands of Ciskei, Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and QwaQwa respectively- reincorporated into South Africa in 1994. The growth and development of these towns, however, had by 1990 outstripped the provision of the necessary physical infrastructure and services because planning systems failed to keep up with these changes. The ending of the industrial incentive schemes that attracted often dubious investors to these peripheral locations was followed by a major exodus of significant sections of the middle class (JHI 2008) and investors in the early 1990's leading to factory closures and severe unemployment. Since 1995, evidence indicates stagnation and decline of these towns following their loss of most administrative functions- save Bhisho and Mafikeng- after reincorporation of homeland governments into South Africa.

Urbanisation in South Africa cannot be divorced from the country's history of colonialism, the apartheid era up to 1994 and to post-apartheid developments since then. Former homeland towns trace their origins to the apartheid planning which was a direct outcome of separate development, the urgent need to keep different races in separate areas and to apportion development resources accordingly. Rural-urban drift to these homeland towns is continuing so that increased urbanisation is sustained not by the expansion of an industrial sector but by participation in informal activities. Without exception, homeland towns since 1995 show evidence of decline in services, infrastructure and economic activity but the actual population has steadily been increasing giving rise to an increasing transfer of rural poverty into these towns and a parallel explosion in informal activities. Here, these towns display a poor state of physical

infrastructure, neglect, a distorted urban land market, confusion and overlaps in tenure systems and conflicts between local municipal councils and traditional authorities over issues of land access. It is necessary to investigate the root causes of this state of affairs because such an approach provides a basis for understanding constraints to urbanisation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of constraints to urban growth in the former homelands in the post-apartheid period, that is, after 1995. The study aimed at addressing three inter-linked objectives. The first was to comment on the status of urban land access in the context of urban planning interventions; the second was to identify critical growth constraints and the third was to comment on future growth directions in spite of inherent constraints.

SOUTH AFRICA'S URBAN CONTEXT

Urban planning in theory addresses the optimization of land uses in the context of meeting specific desired outcomes which are neither static nor similar for different cities at different times. The basic assumptions on which traditional planning models are based are increasingly coming under scrutiny for some of these assumptions are often not suitable for urban settlements in developing countries. Jarlov (2001) for example argues that the western concept of planning used today is specifically meant for a society of labour-based employment. Yet, in many towns and cities in developing countries, the majority of the economically active population is not formally employed as such. The meaning and function of work, recreation, housing, working place, consumer and producer differ between agricultural and industrial society. South African society falls in neither of these two classes and, must by necessity require different planning techniques. Planners, however, - in all SDF's in the study area (BCM 2008; KSD 2006; Thulamela 2006; MAP 2009a; Mafikeng Municipality 2009) seem not to be aware of this and are conditioned into planning approaches whose ultimate aim is to create industrial cities characterized by a functional separation of housing, work areas and shopping and a focus on the transport system. In failing to appreciate the socio-economic forces at play which shape individual decision-making processes, planning often appear to be out of touch with reality whenever unintended outcomes become a dominant feature of the urban landscape.

Terblance (2006) believes that spatial planning should not only be inherently strategic and integrative. The practice should respond to the peculiar needs of individual localities. Urban planning assumes a certain level of control and regulation over the demands of often competing land uses but the reality of the urban scene in South Africa today is that there is a clear separation between the practice itself and implementation on the ground. This is even more pronounced in former homelands. Contemporary urban planning is increasingly moving away from the traditional bureaucratic practice of government technocrats entrusted to manage land-uses to a variation of integrated systems that encompass a wide range of stake-holders and super impose socio-economic conditions on to the final blue print. This calls for a comprehensive data base of information ranging from land use planning schemes, to rates, cadastral property registration, valuation system, provision of infrastructure, property ownership, land tenure and transport. The Land Use Management Bill (RSA 2008) is anchored to several critical principles of sustainability, efficiency in land use allocation, fairness, good governance and integration. While the overall urban planning climate in South Africa is not radically different from other countries, it must confront the apartheid mould of its cities and towns while simultaneously negotiating spaces for different land-uses. Forester (2006: 571) asserts that studying urban planning practice has to be in the face of complex relations of power, political loyalties, ethnic, religious and territorial identities. Writing about the post-modern city, Roy (2007: 624) argues that the informalisation of cities is a key feature of the current moment of global capitalism and a growing body of theory is being produced in the context of African urbanisation. This informalisation may be seen in the widespread occurrence of squatter settlements and to the high-end gated communities appearing at the edge of African, especially South African, cities (Bremner 2004). Clearly, the different forms of urbanisation and urbanism pose various questions for the planning practice: questions that must revolve around issues of how to improve urban life, the relationship between state and citizens, the public sphere within which planning usually acts or the link between planning and civil society.

Land is a critical component in all forms of land-use planning according to Parker et al. (2002). Ligmann-Zielinska et al. (2006) report that where urban land use allocation aims to achieve

sustainable land use patterns, there is need to introduce changes which promote compactness, infill development and politically defensible redevelopment. The apartheid past of South Africa has created distortions in land access and ownership between different population groups on a large scale. In an attempt to address the injustices of the past that saw significant communities dispossessed of their land rights and the creation of black homelands, parliament has since 1991 enacted several land Acts and Bills (RSA 1995a, 1996b, 1996c, 1998, 1999, 2001b, 2001c, 2004, 2005). Collectively the thrust of these was to address inequality in land access, streamline ownership rights, and clarify categories of public land, deal with evictions, illegal land occupation and the rights of traditional authorities over land. However, a systematic review of state legislation in respect of land since 2000 reveals a persistent and often contradictory thread running through all such legislation (Smith 2004: 35). The need to create an integrated legislative framework is meant to establish a balance between the public interest and exclusive private rights over land use (RSA 1995a, 1999). It is inevitable that contradictions between theory, reality and expectations arise in most urban settings. These contradictions often generate trends and patterns that become immune to desired outcomes of planning. In recognition of these limitations, for example, SDF's are designed to be indicative rather than prescriptive (BCM 2008: 23). The amount of land available in the urban space and the nature of access to such land bring to the fore issues of ownership, land tenure and individual property rights from country to country. In South Africa, several pieces of legislation have been passed to control, regulate, administer and allocate urban land (RSA 1998, 2004). In addition, individual municipalities have in place several municipal by-laws to supplement this legislation. The relevant policy instruments and corresponding laws are therefore already in place for orderly urban growth and development. This policy and legislative environment, however, has three inherent shortcomings. The first is that the multiplicity of laws and acts generate often overlapping responsibilities when it comes to implementation on the ground. Second, those with control rights often have no ownership rights but are able to use the former to usurp ownership rights thereby making it difficult to transfer land from state departments to the control of the municipality. Third, the legal procedures for declaring townships, a method that

is commonly used to incorporate peri-urban dense residential suburbs into cities and towns allowing greater access to urban land are cumbersome.

Naude and Krugell (2003) project that 70% of the South African population will live and work in towns and cities by 2030 and that the management of urban growth calls for an effective system of land-use planning at the local level. While standard procedures and processes are already in place at the national, provincial and district municipality levels, at the local scale of individual towns and cities, such systems need to be adapted to their peculiar characteristics. The spatial development framework (SDF) becomes, then a constituent part of this plan indicating envisaged socio-economic changes in the landscape as a result of planning interventions. A close look at current SDF's of municipalities in the former homelands betrays a consistent similarity in design and future projections. The need for compliance and alignment to long term-provincial and national plans undermines the role of SDF's as effective vehicles for land use planning and management. Consistent across the literature cited, it has been shown that homeland towns and the urbanisation processes taking place have not attracted much research effort. The status of land and land access is either poorly understood or simply ignored or worse, assumed to be insignificant in the urban development equation. The tendency, instead especially in South African research scholarship is to highlight general changes in the cities (SACN 2004) often through case studies, focus on urban policy developments since 1994 by Boraine et al. (2006), or sectoral work covering housing policy by Khan and Thring (2003) and Harrison et al. (2003), land in general by Royston (2002), services and transport by McDonald and Binns (2003 and, Behrens and Wilkinson (2003) and to draw parallels in growth patterns, inner city decay and renewal with the western city. The work of Marais (2005) on homeland towns in the Free State focus on the dilemma of housing in these towns while Urban Landmark (2006, 2007) have consistently researched how open urban markets to the poor. In appreciating inadequacies in current literature on homeland towns, issues of land ownership, land-use allocation and distribution become filtered at various layers forcing a rethink on conventional assumptions where problems of urban growth and development are often simply reduced to issues of management capacity. This section has addressed the first objective of the study which was to comment on the status of urban land access in the

context of urban planning interventions. The remaining two objectives will follow in the next section.

SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR PHUTHADITJHABA

The approach was centred on the use of the Spatial Development Framework for the various towns. The SDF is an integrated urban planning and development blue-print that projects future directions of growth at ten, twenty, thirty and fifty year's intervals. The SDF for Phuthaditjhaba (MAP 2007, 2008) was used in order to gauge the nature of constraints to urban growth. In addition, a spot observation of urban land use was carried out to update information. An interview was conducted with 10 planning officials in Phuthaditjhaba to get responses on constraints to urban growth, the perception of the legislative environment, an evaluation of the political leadership climate and future growth prospects. For Mthatha, Bhisho, Mafikeng and Thohoyandou, spot observations were first carried and questionnaires distributed to planning officials in individual homeland towns. This was followed by an analysis of individual SDF's together with municipal annual reports dealing with the state of urban development for the period 2008-2010.

Status of Land

What appear in Table 1 are computed estimates of the size distribution of various land uses in Phuthaditjhaba. Officials were asked for information on the availability of land for development. The response was that there are still sufficient sites for industrial development but serious land shortage existed for other land uses. As of 2005, the various land uses covered a land area just short of 5850ha which had risen to almost 7000ha by June 2009. The distribution of land uses indicates that the residential function accounts for close to 35 percent followed by educational institutions at 22 percent while public open space scored 12 percent. For the rest of the towns, the residential function accounted for 30.5 percent to 48 percent indicating that these are basically residential settlements. Mafikeng reported serious shortage of land and that the city is surrounded by tribal land and the rest under the North West Parks Board (Mafikeng

Municipality 2009) with an urban fringe covering 29 883 hectares of land. In Thohoyandou, it was established that significant areas of land were under tribal authorities (Thulamela 2006). Bhisho is recognised essentially as an administrative node in the Buffalo City municipality (BCM 2008: 30). Mthatha reported that as far back as 2006, there was already urgent need to speedily transfer identified state owned land to the municipality (KSD 2006). Indeed in the mid 1990's large-scale organised land invasions took place over public land on the western outskirts of the town. This has since become an informal settlement housing thousands of people. Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo, Ulundi, Giyani and Lebowa kgomo indicated a total run down of services and infrastructure though these did not report land access as a critical constraint.

Table 1: Land Distribution in Phuthaditjhaba

<i>Land use</i>	<i>Size in sq.km</i>	<i>Size in Ha 2005</i>	<i>Adjusted size, Dec 2010</i>	<i>Relative Size in %</i>
Education	12.25	1225	1250	19.5
Government Buildings	4.5	450	550	8.6
Commercial	4.25	425	450	7.0
Industrial	2.5	250	250	3.9
Public Open space	7.5	750	750	11.7
Conservation Belt	3.25	325	450	7.0
Sport and Recreation	2.25	225	225	3.5
Residential ¹	8.25	1825	1950	30.4
Transport	1.25	125	1502.5	
Others-unspecified	2.8	280	380	5.9
		5880	6405	100.0

Source: Adapted from Phuthaditjhaba SDF, 2007-2010 (MAP, 2007)

The response from Phuthaditjhaba on the availability of public land for recreation, sport and public facilities was that such land hardly existed beyond tracts of land already developed for these land uses. For Mafikeng, Thohoyandou, Mthatha and Bhisho, it was indicated that space for sport and recreation has been catered for. Public land availability for housing development and for conservation purposes elicited a similar response. Phuthaditjhaba reported that the demand for commercial land for development is so high that on average 5-10 queries are received from property developers per month. A similar case was reported in Mafikeng where indiscriminate shopping mall developments in recent years are a threat to space

for housing and recreation. For Mthatha, such is the demand for housing space that the SDF of Mthatha does not show any space allocated for conservation.

Legislative Environment

A standard set of acts, bills and laws with regard to urban land, its management, its administration, tenure status, transfer and land-use zoning exist and apply to all urban areas in South Africa. One contentious issue revolves around the interface between tribal land on the margins of towns and the legal powers of municipal councils in proclaiming parts of such land for inclusion within the boundary of a town. For this calls for striking a compromise between tribal authorities that still control such land (Urban Land Mark 2006) in spite of the Communal Property Rights Act (RSA 2004) - which has since 2010 been repealed as unconstitutional, the role of the Department of Housing and Local Government which has to give the go ahead for such incorporation and the interest of the individual municipal council. A common complaint arising out of the existing laws was that often overlapping responsibilities are allocated by different laws resulting in confusion between the classification of municipal land, the control and ownership of public land, and the rights of the Department of Land Affairs over public land held by other state departments.

Leadership

A municipality is an administrative unit with inbuilt management capabilities. It is mandated to provide services and to run the affairs of the area under its jurisdiction. But the leadership of the municipality is subjected to political control by central government through the appointment of political office bearers; the mayor, municipal manager and ward councillors. Managing the municipality requires a compromise between the bureaucratic functions of local government (DPLG 2006, 2008) and the long term political direction of the central government. This often creates conflict and the clash of personal interests because the goals of professional bureaucrats and political office bearers are sometimes not complementing each other in the form of a common vision. Optimizing resource allocation in the context of land access becomes problematic and across the local municipalities responsible for the management

of these former homeland towns, several outcomes are noted. Conflicts exist between the political and the administrative arms of government. Executive mayors – in spite of a clear separation between powers and responsibilities – often overstep the constitutional powers of municipal managers making it impossible for the latter to make decisions. Not a single town had in its records an active programme for acquiring more land for the town's expansion and urban land markets remain distorted partly due to corruption. Finally, land development projects appearing in individual town integrated development plans (IDP's) were rolled over every year often for dubious reasons. For example, administration in Mthatha in the period 2005-2008 ground to a standstill due to fighting between different political parties. In Phuthaditjhaba, a total breakdown of the administration was reported in March 2010 – prompting the provincial government to intervene. Therefore, there are serious shortcomings in local government which in turn negatively impacts on developments within individual urban centres.

Location and Transport Networks

Homeland towns are disadvantaged by their location relative to South Africa's major road networks, international airports and harbours. They are found in marginal periphery locations that suffer problems associated with geographical remoteness, undeveloped markets, a poor surface road network and as a result, the growth of these towns and of the homelands in which they are located is seriously compromised. In addition, the general poverty of the rural countryside undermines their ability to attract commercial investments.

The Urban Economy

It was noted that these homeland towns continue to attract immigrants from the rural countryside in spite of the general collapse of the manufacturing sector. All former homeland towns which were linked to border industrialisation reported a drastic erosion of their economic base following the end in 1995 of the industrial incentives scheme for homeland industries. Industrial towns like Dimbaza in the former Ciskei, Ezibeleni close to Queenstown in the former Transkei, Tsiambe in QwaQwa close to Harrismith and Botshabelo along the Bloemfontein-Ladybrand route have suffered due to factory

closures, a total collapse of industrial employment, capital flight and the out-migration of the middle class. Attempts at attracting industrial investments have not been successful, in spite of some local municipalities offering attractive subsidy benefits. For Mthatha, Thohoyandou, Giyani, Lebowa-komo which were important administrative centres before 1995 suffered an added shock when none of them was chosen as the provincial capital after 2000. This has increased uncertainty about the future, migration of the working class to better urban centres and a general decline in the state of urban services. Commercial and capital investments have tended to follow these developments such that apart from Mafikeng which has in recent years witnessed major shopping centre developments, the downward trend for the rest of these towns continues unabated. The erosion of the administrative centre status following re-incorporation has led to both massive capital flight leading to high levels of unemployment. This is made worse by the relocation of significant segments of the middle class to better places. Several challenges may be noted. There are high unemployment levels in the urban population, a massive re-location of the major business chains and an out-migration of the middle class. There has been a gradual run down in service provision, the failure of urban governance to create a semblance of progress and increasing informalisation of the economy. Evidence indicates the onset of petty street trading and the reluctance of the provincial government to support capital investments. The reluctance of the banking sector to support low-cost housing provision is reinforced by an openly hostile national state policy towards these towns that cumulatively affect their growth prospects.

Growth Prospects

Apart from Mafikeng which appear to have recovered from a recession in the early 1990's into a booming town today and perhaps Phuthaditjhaba that continues to attract significant commercial investments, the rest of the towns are in a state of decline. KSD local municipality in which Mthatha is located, for example recorded a growth rate of population of 1.02% per year in 2006 (KSD 2007). The decline is clearly related to the fact that these were not meant originally to be economically viable towns. With few exceptions, these towns do not offer any comparative advantages in spite of having

access to significant hinterlands. They were designed as administrative centres with hardly any other sustainable functions.

The first objective was to comment on the status of urban land use in the context of planning interventions. Responses indicate that within the boundaries of Phuthaditjhaba town, the remaining open space is zoned for industrial development. This state of affairs can partly be traced to town planning practices before 1994 and to the history of QwaQwa as a former black homeland. Although the area of the homeland was trebled during the mid 1980's, the majority of the people were not given access to this land (Sharp 1994: 71). Instead, this extra land was reserved for the so-called 'black emergent farmers'. In the rest of the four towns, municipal land availability is not a constraint except in Mafikeng; rather it is the constrained access that creates problems for orderly urban development. In all the towns in the study area, urban land is owned by private individuals, public institutions, municipalities, provincial departments, state departments, private and public companies. In the absence of recent urban land audits, it was not possible to specify actual quantities held by each of these categories per town. The bulk of public land that could potentially be developed by the local municipality is in the hands of three government departments: Public Works, Local Government and Land Affairs. As an interim measure, these departments were entrusted with huge chunks of land in various parts of the country following the re-incorporation of the former homelands into South Africa. Unfortunately, the legal and administrative huddles that local municipalities face are such that little transfers are actually occurring. Such a state of affairs has not changed much in the last fourteen years. Since 1995, ownership as such has not witnessed any radical transformation and there is no evidence as of now to suggest that there will be notable changes in the near future.

The second objective was to identify critical growth constraints. It has consistently been shown that with regard to land access, current legislation has not created an enabling environment. Instead, the multiplicity of applicable laws has created red tape for those interested in accessing land for development. Within the boundaries of established towns, applicable ordinances that control land zoning are often ignored because of a poor record of implementation. It is not the absence of legislation that leads to a lack of orderly

development, but rather the failure to enforce applicable controls. With reference to the urban fringe-where urban sprawl is occurring in areas outside of the boundaries of established towns (BCM 2008) -conflicts arise with tribal authorities and the way communities understand and interpret their mandates within the Communal Rand Rights Act (RSA 2004). As earlier noted in the section on literature, government has since 1994 passed legislation that effectively entrenches tribal authorities in African rural areas creating a stumbling block in attempts at land transfers, the development of a land market and township creation within the urban fringe. There is a limit, therefore to which local municipal councils can be held accountable for the failure to incorporate more urban fringe areas and to release additional land for orderly development. The most serious culprit remains the legislative environment. Local municipalities, with a management structure that allocates semi-autonomous responsibilities down to municipal officials and political appointees is responsible for providing services, infrastructure and managing the development process within individual towns and the entire municipal area. They control land access, transfer, allocation and land use planning. The mayors do have extensive executive powers over budgets, resource allocation and in collaboration with municipal managers, are essentially in control of all and everything. This has opened the gates to widespread power struggles, increasing political patronage (Ruhiiga 2009), a culture of personal cult building, management paralysis, abuse of position and open corruption. Evidence of these is manifested in the tendency to allow capital developments in towns without adhering to individual SDF's, lack of accountability, budget constraints arising from miss-use of public funds, backlogs in service delivery and the disposal of public land to private developers without following official guidelines. The second most serious constraint facing these homeland towns therefore is the absence of a decisive leadership which in turn has created problems in decision-making.

The third objective was to identify possible growth prospects for these towns in spite of identified constraints. Respondents were required to indicate whether the current urban planning practice is sensitive to restructuring tendencies that have been unleashed by the 1998 White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998). The Spatial Development Framework (MAP 2008) of

Phuthaditjhaba shows that the focus has shifted from encouraging urban sprawl to curbing it, and spatial planning is geared towards rectifying the artificial placement of human settlement brought about by apartheid planning. In the case of Bhisho, the SDF of Buffalo City Municipality (BCM 2008) envisages a beads and string design ultimately creating a continuous urban corridor from East London to Dimbaza. In Thohoyandou, the fragmented lay-out of the town allows for possibilities of housing densification and infill developments. In Mafikeng, the urban fringe (Mafikeng Municipality 2009), though under tribal authorities is rapidly being colonised by urban style residential structures and eventually the town will be forced to extend its boundaries to incorporate these urbanised districts. The same is happening in Phuthaditjhaba. These towns have not been successful in incorporating semi-urban fringe areas and in planning for these by providing serviced sites for residential development. Yet, these are the areas where physical growth is most pronounced (LPI 2007: 3) thereby reinforcing problems of urban sprawl according to Ligmann-Zielinska et al. (2005) - a contradiction to current state planning.

Apart from Bhisho which is slowly merging with King Williams Town, and Mafikeng which has retained its provincial capital status, growth prospects for the remaining homeland towns remain bleak. This is made worse by doubts about the viability of investments in these areas given that the former homelands today do not offer any basis for comparative advantages. Beyond issues of land access, these towns are disadvantaged by non-viable locations relative to centres of high economic growth potential; geographical remoteness relative to major growth corridors in South Africa; a thinly veiled but generally hostile national development policy; a drain on critical human resources; the failure to develop a significant industrial base that would unleash agglomeration tendencies; low-buying power of immediate hinterlands and an over-dependence on the public sector as the main employer.

CONCLUSION

The planning options for restructuring the urban space in these homeland towns cannot ignore the historical past and current contradictions in the state of land access. The findings indicate that these homeland towns face a multiplicity of

growth challenges centred around geographical location, negative state policy, problems of attracting investments, inadequate funding for infrastructure and services and a net-outmigration of the middle class. What are imposed on this platform are shortcomings in political leadership and management capacity cumulatively paralysing the growth potential of most homeland towns. These interlinked issues have brought to the fore new insights on current empirical literature on homeland towns. It is important to appreciate that any innovative intervention aimed at addressing the peculiar growth problems of former homeland towns need to be sensitive to these forces.

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