



Township communities and urbanisation in South Africa

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Introduction

- This discussion traces the origins and development of urbanization of township communities in South Africa.
- The disorder and public health issues associated with urbanization in South Africa at the turn of the century led to an urban management approach based on curtailing urban growth by controlling city life.
- Planning controls on the townships were used as a means of enforcing apartheid laws: i.e. the division of races was used as a strategy for minimizing urbanization.

Urbanisation before the turn of the 20th century

- Shack building and informal settlement in South African townships dates back to the ex-slaves in the mid-1800s
- Periods of rapid urbanization in South Africa catalyzed informal development
- Majority of the 80,000 Blacks resident in Johannesburg at the turn of the 20th century stayed in overcrowded **compounds, backyard shacks** and **informal settlements**



Urbanisation in the 20th century

- The *Native Land Act of 1913* designated only 13% of the available land to Blacks.
- *Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923*, controlled the movement of black men between urban and rural areas.
- These were the first of many pieces of legislation whose aim was to keep Blacks out of the urban cities and to relegate them to rural “homelands”



“The eradication era of 1948-1966”

- A surge in urban population occurred during *World War II*, when the black population of Johannesburg increased from 244,000 in 1939 to 400,000 in 1946
- Very little formal housing development occurred during these years due to the war efforts. As a result there was a proliferation of predominately black, unregulated informal settlement.
- 2 severe, racial pieces of legislation were enacted: the *Group Areas Act of 1950* and the *Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951*.
- These laws produced, by the mid-1960s, cities where informal settlements had been replaced by sprawling townships on the urban peripheries.

Impact of forced removals on urbanisation

- Massive **forced removals** saw the **labour tenant system** replaced by a **contract labour system**.
- Between 1960 to 1982, 3,5 million people were **forcibly removed** by the state and dumped in homelands. About 700,000 more people were removed from urban areas declared 'white'.
- In 1967 the government stopped township development outside the homelands



Marais, 1998

Some 65 000 Sophiatown residents were removed from their homes
(Photo: Father Paul Singleton, archives of the Anglican Church of Christ the King) 6

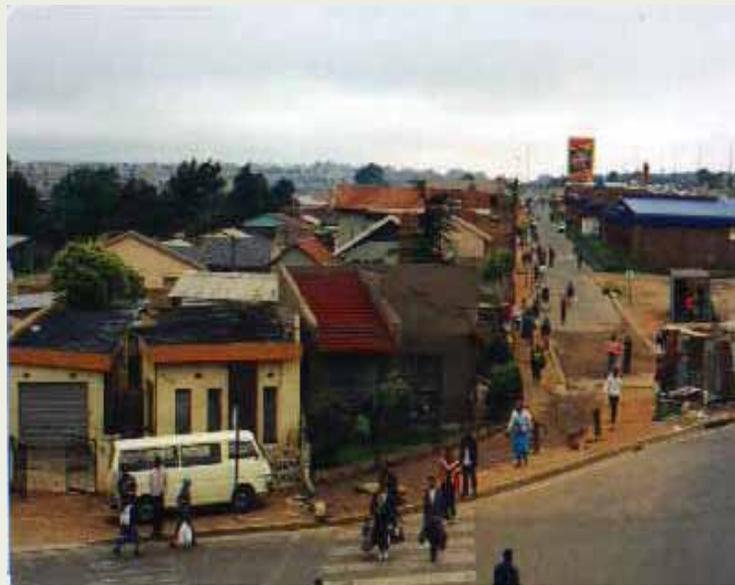
Development of informal housing

- Despite policy efforts to control movement, the 1970s witnessed another period of urban bound migration
- In 1980 with poor government support for low-income housing there was greater acceptance of informal settlement and a move toward self-help, site and service areas.
- The resulting informal development occurred largely adjacent to the peripheralized townships.



Legal attempts to control urbanisation in townships

- *Abolition of Influx Control Act No 68 of 1986* repealed the *Natives (Urban Areas) Act* of 1923, which had controlled the movement of black men between urban and rural areas for over 50 years. This triggered yet another intensive period of urbanization.



Legal attempts to control urbanisation in townships

- In 1991 the *White Paper on Land Reform* and the *Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act* addressing land reform were put into place. Its aim was to revise the policy of *Orderly Urbanization* in urban townships.



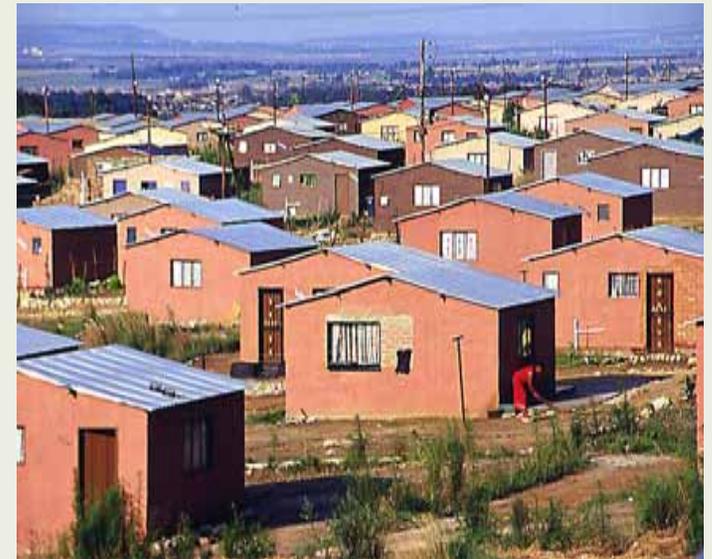
Saff, 1996

Urbanisation in the new SA

- When the ANC was elected in 1994, one of the stated objectives was to improve housing development.
- Section 1 of the Housing Act, No. 107 of 1997 defines housing development as '*the establishment and maintenance of habitable, stable and sustainable public and private residential environments to ensure viable households and communities...*' (DOH, 1997).
- The resulting Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) began building dwellings to house the urban poor, which by 2009 numbered **2.3 million**. Despite this, the program's inability to keep up with demand fuels the continuing need for informal development.

Current state of urbanisation in SA townships

- Stats SA (2009) Midyear population estimates say **more than 60% of the population now lives in urban centres.**
- 5 years from 1999-2003 alone had seen more than 3 million people migrate from rural to urban areas
- Nearly **1 in 6 of the SA population lived in shacks in 2003**, 25% in Gauteng (Stats SA 2002).



Typical “RDP” houses in S. African townships

Urbanisation: Cape Metro townships

- Approximately 80% of recent population growth in the Cape Metropolitan Area is occurring in townships
- 36% of the African population in the CMA lives below the poverty line. This translates into a 32% unemployment rate for blacks compared to a 7% unemployment rate for whites (CMC, 1999).
- While 82% of households have access to drinkable water in their dwelling, only 34% of these households are in black communities.
- Furthermore, only 24% of black households have a flush toilet compared to 95% of white households owning one (Central Statistical Services, 1996).

Discussion questions

- Why does SA still have such a big housing backlog despite building 2.3m houses in the last 16 years?
- Is rural development a solution to curbing urbanisation? If so, how can it be implemented effectively?
- How do you deal with corruption by political leaders who take bribes from house-seekers who are not on a waiting list and push them ahead of others?
- How do you maintain orderly urbanisation for foreigners where “camps” are not favoured?