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*Part 1: Urban and urbanisation*

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## 2 *Urbanisation and the future urban agenda in South Africa*

Doreen Atkinson and Lochner Marais

### *Introduction*

This chapter explores whether there was a coherent national policy after 1994 to address broader urbanisation processes. We will argue that the government approach to urbanisation has been characterised by diverse and unreconciled policy principles; by the unintended consequences of sectoral policies; by contradictory spatial settlement policies; and by a void in thinking about crucial aspects of migration and urbanisation. Until now, government departments have pursued their own developmental priorities, with little concern about the ‘where’ of development, focusing instead on the ‘what’ of their sectoral programmes.

This chapter is a review of the most important government policies and strategies that address spatial questions. Briefly, the argument is as follows. Firstly, where policy instruments have, explicitly or implicitly, addressed issues of migration, there have been contradictory and confusing messages about the relationship between rural and urban development. This chapter will first explore the ‘Tower of Babel’ quality of the prevailing governmental thinking on migration issues.

Secondly, sectoral departments’ expenditure decisions have had unintended consequences for urbanisation and migration. We explore the way in which different departments’ thinking has remained limited to narrow sectoral concerns, with no appreciation for the impact of their policies and programmes on broader development dynamics. Because of the contradictions in policy, government has been unable to anticipate and prevent the many urban dysfunctions caused by urbanisation, or to exploit some of the potential advantages of rural–urban migration.

Thirdly, where spatial settlement policies have been addressed directly, they have sometimes been in tension with one another. The emerging spatial approaches of the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS), the Urban Renewal Programme (URP), and the National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) will be considered in this context. The NSDP was a major breakthrough; for the first time, there was a strong focus on the ‘where’ of development.

Fourthly, there are clear signs that these diverse approaches are now starting to converge. Increasingly, the NSDP is becoming the instrument through which the entire government system is starting to focus on ‘where’ questions.

Finally, in this process, the spatial concept of ‘developmental potential’ (the ‘where’ questions) may well serve as an impetus to rethink departments’ and municipalities’ substantive policy and programme design (the ‘what’ questions). The stage is now set for numerous hitherto neglected developmental options to come to the fore. The chapter will present some key developmental issues which should be examined by government, with a view to their being incorporated into a more coherent and meaningful policy on urbanisation, migration and spatial allocation of resources.

### *Official thinking on urban and rural development, 1994–2002*

There has been no clear government position on the desirability of urbanisation, nor have government policies been based on clear spatial assumptions or arguments. The overriding impression is that government seemed to assume that the abolition of influx control would result in the gradual but inevitable, permanent settlement of rural people in towns and cities. No new urbanisation policies would be required, other than to cater for the urban housing needs of rural migrants in the short term (Crankshaw & Parnell 1996). Nevertheless, urbanisation has continued apace. In 1996, South Africa’s rural population was 44.9 per cent, and by 2001 – only five years later – this had declined to 42.5 per cent of South Africa’s population (StatsSA 2001: 8).<sup>1</sup> The rural population had decreased by 830 000 people.

Several key governmental programmes and strategies make mention of rural or urban development, but an overarching focus on urbanisation or migration dynamics is lacking. At least four government institutions have explicitly raised the issue, albeit in very muted terms. These were the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) Office, which was located in the Presidency, the Department of Housing (DoH), the Department of Social Development, and the Department of Land Affairs (DLA).

The RDP was the first developmental policy document of the new African National Congress (ANC) government, and ten years hence, it exercises a fundamental influence on South Africa’s policy thinking. The RDP was concerned about poor spatial planning in the past, which moved the poor away from job opportunities and access to amenities (ANC 1994: Section 2.9.1). ‘Almost half the black population was compelled to live in so-called “homelands” where per capita incomes are less than a quarter of the national average...Enforced segregation and industrial decentralisation have located whole communities in areas where their economic viability is threatened’ (Section 4.1.2). This has burdened the workforce with enormous travel distances to their places of employment and commercial centres, and thus with excessive costs.

However, the RDP was vague on the issue of urbanisation. Its main concern was that housing and other services should be located ‘geologically, environmentally, and with respect to economic opportunities and social amenities’ (Section 2.5.11). Throughout the RDP, there is a focus on the needs of all citizens, *regardless of where they may live*:

In order to foster the growth of local economies, broadly representative institutions must be established to address local economic development needs. Their purpose would be to formulate strategies to address job creation and community development (for example, leveraging private sector funds for community development, investment strategies, training, small business and agricultural development, etc.). If necessary, the democratic government must provide some subsidies as a catalyst for job creation programmes controlled by communities and/or workers, and target appropriate job creation and development programmes in the most neglected and impoverished areas of our country. Ultimately, all such projects should sustain themselves. (Section 4.3.6)

Rural development was repeatedly emphasised in the RDP. For example, 'While recognising that rural incomes are far lower, the democratic government must consider rural housing needs in calculating backlogs, and make provision for gradually improving housing in rural areas' (Section 2.5.17). 'Rural areas require more frequent public transport and improved facilities, at an affordable cost' (Section 2.9.2). 'The RDP aims to improve the quality of rural life...It also entails access to affordable services, and the promotion of non-agricultural activities. In the "homelands", where most rural people live, social services and infrastructure remain poorly developed, and this must be remedied' (Section 4.3.8). The RDP framework asserted that substantial transfers of funds from the central government to the rural areas would be required, targeted to meet the needs of the rural poor. Rural communities need practical access to health, education, support for entrepreneurship (including agriculture), financial services, welfare, policing and the courts (Section 4.3.11).

The RDP warned of the 'excessive growth of the largest urban centres, the skewed distribution of population within rural areas, the role of small and medium-sized towns, and the future of declining towns and regions, and the apartheid dumping grounds' (Section 4.3.4). Clearly, the drafters of the RDP felt that something was very wrong with the spatial structure inherited from the apartheid government.

The RDP also paid attention to urban issues. 'The importance of urban development strategies within the RDP is based on a recognition that the urban areas account for over 80 per cent of the country's gross domestic product and accommodate approximately 60 per cent of South Africa's population. Continuing demographic shifts may increase urbanisation to over 70 per cent of the population by 2000' (Section 4.3.16). 'Even with a strong rural development effort, economic activities will remain concentrated in the cities. Ensuring the quality of life, sustainability and efficiency in the urban areas will thus prove critical for renewing growth and promoting equity. The design of a comprehensive national urban strategy will help serve the cities' rapidly growing populations and address the inequities and structural imbalances caused by the apartheid system. The urban development strategy must

also be aimed at fostering the long-term development and sustainability of urban areas while alleviating poverty and encouraging economic expansion' (Section 4.3.17). 'The urban programme...must create a functionally integrated, efficient and equitable urban economy, as well as effective and democratic structures of urban governance and management; enhance the position of women in the cities, and initiate a social environment which contributes to a better quality of life' (Section 4.3.18).

In effect, the RDP did not choose to favour either rural or urban development. It suggested that development initiatives in rural as well as urban areas are important. But it barely flagged, let alone addressed, the issue of urbanisation.

Subsequently, in 1995/96, the RDP Office coordinated two strategies: The Urban Development Strategy (UDS) and the Rural Development Framework (RDF).

The UDS was positive about urban growth. 'Urbanisation should not be viewed as a threat. The opportunities it provides to remake our cities and towns as vehicles capable of moving many of our country's people out of poverty, squalor and environmental degradation must be seized...There is little reason to favour policies which may artificially induce or restrain growth in a particular centre, region or tier' (Office of the President 1995: Section 3). The UDS planning process was subsequently relocated to the Department of Housing, which then published the Strategy as the Urban Development Framework (UDF) in 1997. The UDF argued for more efficient and productive cities and towns, through the growth of local economies. It assumed, rather blithely, that such growth would take place, and did little to point the way to *how* it should be achieved. (The fact that the UDF was located in the DoH may explain its relative lack of focus on the productive or economic aspects of urbanisation.) With the benefit of hindsight, this assumption is extremely problematic, as urban formal sector employment has subsequently failed to create sufficient jobs for new migrants.

At the same time as the drafting of the UDF, the RDF was being compiled by the DLA during 1997. The issues of migration and urbanisation can also be glimpsed in the RDF. It acknowledged the fact that many rural people make a living by migrating to urban areas to find work. Like the UDF, the RDF encouraged synergies between rural and urban areas, to promote economic linkages. Small rural towns should be linked to agricultural activities, providing input and output markets, workshops, financial services, and social services such as schools and clinics which would be of benefit to people in the surrounding area.

Unlike the UDF, however, the RDF was worried about the impacts of migration (DLA 1997: 22):

Labour migration has long been a cause of family breakdown and disruption. It has led to a host of social problems both in the rural areas and the places of in-migration and employment. However, more

recently, there have been problems of increasing numbers of young people in rural areas, unable to find work anywhere. Without productive employment they face a lifetime of poverty, lack of fulfilment and exposure to increasing levels of crime and violence.

Instead, the RDF focused on promoting rural livelihoods, in part to discourage labour migration and urbanisation.

The publication of the UDF and RDF apparently did little to direct the perspectives of sectoral departmental policies. Various departments continued to introduce their own strategies, with their own views on urbanisation and migration. One department which showed some appreciation for the issues of urbanisation and migration, at least at the level of policy discussion, was the Department of Social Development. In April 1998, it produced a White Paper on Population Policy. The White Paper noted that urbanisation was proceeding apace in South Africa, overwhelmingly to the metropolitan areas. The White Paper predicted that Africans would urbanise rapidly during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which would mean that urban areas would have to provide infrastructure and services for a growing and younger African population. The White Paper was concerned about this: 'Because cities are already large, natural population increase affects the size of cities by the addition of large absolute numbers of people' (DWP 1998: 50). The document proposed two strategies: (1) Increasing alternative choices to migration from rural to urban areas through the provision of social services, infrastructure and better employment opportunities in the rural areas, and (2) reducing backlogs in urban infrastructure and social services. In general, the White Paper regarded urbanisation as normal but problematic, and felt it should preferably be diluted and delayed. (Curiously, when the Department of Social Development six years later published its proposed Strategy on Population and Development for 2004–2009, the topic of urbanisation was totally eclipsed by the HIV/AIDS issue and, to a lesser extent, by the focus on the rural and urban development nodes.)

Generally, not much attention was paid to the issue of urbanisation until the release of the DLA's Green Paper on Development and Planning during 1999. One of the recommendations of the Green Paper was that each province should develop its own spatial plan. The main reason for such a spatial or regional plan is to '...accomplish a greater convergence among sectors and spheres of government and decision-making about where public investment should take place' (DLA 1999: 48). According to the Green Paper, such a spatial development framework should at least consist of the identification of settlements with unique qualities which require special attention on a provincial scale; settlements with significant growth potential which may be realised through provincial investment; the spatial implication of provincial sectoral policies and the testing of the implications of these against other policies and imperatives. For the first time, the issues of spatial targeting of government resources, and possible settlement strategies, were mooted.

In the interim, some provincial governments showed some interest in the topic of urbanisation. For example, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Spatial Growth and Development Framework advocated the promotion of 'local strengths' and the building of linkages between towns and their hinterlands, and the creation of development corridors. It proposed the creation of a hierarchy of centres to coordinate the provision of public services.

At national level, however, these themes remained unexplored. A number of research reports noted the lack of a post-apartheid framework for regional development at the provincial and the national levels and within line departments. For example, Kitchin (1997) found that limited coordination existed with regard to regional and development planning and that some government departments had limited or no frameworks at all for regional planning. By 1999, the DLA's Green Paper noted that governmental thinking on urbanisation showed very little coherence: 'There is no evidence of a shared vision of what planning should be trying to achieve in the "new" South Africa...[There] is little evidence that these documents are actively informing the work of other departments or the national allocation of resources. Indeed, there are inconsistencies...Spatial planning requires a political champion... A lack of an integrative focus in South Africa is commonly held to be a major reason for the ineffectiveness of the Urban and Rural Development Frameworks' (DLA 1999: 24, 39).

The UDF and RDF hinted at the importance of a nuanced developmental approach to rural and urban areas and the linkages between them. But largely because the RDP Office was closed down in the mid-1990s, such insights no longer had an institutional champion, and consequently fell off the political map. In this void, the narrow sectoral priorities of government departments have reigned supreme. By default, government's unclear sentiments on urbanisation left the way clear for sectoral government departments to figure out their own spatial strategies, whether they were in concert with one another or not.

The strongest focus on spatial thinking was at the local level. The Development Facilitation Act (DFA) (No. 67 of 1995) was produced by the DLA. It provided several key principles for spatial planning at settlement level. For example, the social, economic, institutional and physical aspects of development should be integrated, and residential and employment opportunities should be promoted in close proximity to one another. Significantly, in Section 3 the DFA stated that land development in rural and urban areas should be undertaken in support of one another, although concrete suggestions on how this should be achieved were not provided.

At municipal level, there was an increasing focus on integrated planning. In terms of the DFA, Land Development Objectives had to be compiled by municipalities. This had the virtue of encouraging municipalities to consider spatial issues in their planning processes. However, the compilation of Land Development Objectives (promoted by the DLA) was gradually eclipsed by the need to compile Integrated

Development Plans (IDPs). The IDP philosophy was promoted strongly by the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), which devoted many more resources to this enterprise than the compilation of the Land Development Objectives ever received. Officially, Land Development Objectives were supposed to be included in IDPs, but many municipalities dispensed with spatial thinking altogether, and concentrated primarily on issues of infrastructure, poverty and job creation.

Because of their planning activities, municipalities are potentially very strategically placed to influence spatial trends, which may well promote or discourage urbanisation. This potential was not always achieved, at least partly because many municipalities had little experience of issues related to rural areas or rural–urban linkages. But even where municipalities managed to address these issues, they cannot deal with the macro issues of urbanisation and migration. The ‘where’ of development has to be guided by national level, but until 2002 the resounding silence from national level continued.

### *Unintended consequences: the spatial impacts of sectoral departments’ spending policies*

Despite the lack of clear urbanisation and spatial direction from government, numerous government programmes have indirect spatial consequences. This is a very common phenomenon: ‘Indeed, it is often those policies with goals other than migration and urbanisation that have a more powerful (albeit unintended) influence on population redistribution’ (Goldschneider 1980: 65). In the words of Peter Morrison, ‘Since the most powerful influences often arise from implicit or “hidden” policies (i.e. those without explicit demographic intent), policy makers must focus on the inadvertent demographic effects that result from such policies, and on how these policies might be orchestrated to promote population distribution goals’ (1980: 9). Very often, these policies may emanate from different departments, and the interactions between these policies have to be examined. Government policies are important, if indirect, determinants of population distribution. Among these are such diverse policies as incentives to industry, taxation of farm crops, import substitution, family planning, free higher education, and road building. All affect migration and urban growth, even if only contingently. Furthermore, different policies may well have contradictory (and unintended, unanticipated and unexamined) impacts on migration.

Policies and programmes to achieve other goals, including rapid industrial expansion and export promotion, often have a far stronger impact on the geographic allocation of public resources and private investment than do dispersal inducements (Nelson 1980). Furthermore, policies intended to promote rural development may often have precisely the effect of encouraging migration away from rural areas, because of stronger rural–urban economic and transport links (Whitney 1980).



In South Africa, there has also been weak spatial guidance to government departments. Harrison and Todes (2001: 67) refer to:

...the weak position of integrative spatial planning in relation to sectoral planning and interests; the lack of an effective institutional framework for intersectoral co-ordination; the role of power and factional politics in shaping the 'rationality' of planning frameworks; the ways in which spatial frameworks often expose the varying objectives, interests and sometimes contradictory policy aims of government; and the difficulties in producing meaningful spatial frameworks where spheres of government are overlapping, and roles and responsibilities are open to contestation.

This lack of forceful implementation of the UDF and the RDF has meant that spatial policies have been driven primarily by sectoral concerns. Crankshaw and Parnell (1996) and Bernstein and McCarthy (Centre for Development and Enterprise 1998) rightfully argued that government was already intervening regionally, purely by virtue of the fact that its allocations of bus subsidies, low-income housing subsidies and money for the development of infrastructure are made in favour of certain areas. The result has been a mix of departmental spatial priorities.

In fact, at least seven tendencies have informed different departments' spatial decisions.

First, some departments *allocate resources regardless of where people live*. Sectors such as housing, infrastructure and the allocation of social grants use an 'entitlement' approach towards the allocation of expenditure. People are entitled to these benefits if their income falls below a certain level. This approach runs counter to the assumption of inevitable urbanisation, since it offers incentives for rural people to stay where they are. This is also the case with regards to social grants and infrastructure grants, such as the Consolidated Municipal Infrastructure Programme and the Community-based Expanded Public Works Programme, which have been included in the Municipal Infrastructure Grant, and the Community Water and Sanitation Programme. Once again, these programmes have, implicitly, encouraged people to remain where they are because of 'sunk capital' in those areas. Many rural households receive monthly pensions or other social grants, which enable them to continue to live in areas characterised by widespread unemployment or underemployment.

Second, some departments *have adopted rules which affect spatial allocations, as an unintended consequence*. For example, land economics linked to housing standards have played a critical role in the regional allocation of housing subsidies in the Free State (Marais & Krige 2000; Marais 2003). The construction of housing units of 40 m<sup>2</sup> was dependent on a planned and in some instances a serviced stand. The result was that in areas of lower land prices, and with available planned stands, it was much easier to deliver housing. Land prices and the prices of serviced stands in cities are considerably higher than in the middle-order and small towns, which made it difficult to deliver housing in the cities.

In the same category is the DLA, whose Extension of Security of Tenure Act of 1997 has been blamed for the decline in farming employment, and the rapid urbanisation of unemployed farm workers. Tougher labour regulations (in terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997) may have been responsible for a decline in formal employment, and a movement of unemployed people to areas where the informal sector can offer an income, or where a rural base still offers some kind of agricultural livelihood.

Third, some departments *have attempted to streamline their expenditures according to specific spatial criteria*. Departments such as Health made tough choices about the location of services and created a 'step-up' system of health facilities. The consolidation of upper-level facilities (such as hospitals) in specific localities has been associated with the closure of some facilities in other areas. The selection of certain 'pilot sites' for the distribution of HIV/AIDS antiretroviral medication may also encourage people to move to these towns. This may well have had positive or negative economic spin-offs in those localities, possibly resulting in people moving towards or away from those areas. The DLA's decision to focus land reform subsidies on commercial agricultural farms, rather than on peri-urban areas, also has spin-off consequences (as well as potential lost opportunities). In the housing sector, the national department decentralised the allocation of housing subsidies down to the provincial level. The provincial governments can make their own allocations to rural or urban areas. In some provinces, such as the Free State, this has resulted in an urban bias in housing allocations, while other provinces, such as Limpopo, have a much more assertive rural focus.

Fourth, *some programmes are demand-driven, and depend on local project applications, either by municipalities or by communities themselves*. One example was the Local Economic Development Fund, administered by the DPLG. Similar programmes are the Municipal Infrastructure Grant, and the Department of Social Development's Poverty Programme. These programmes depend on local initiative, whether on the part of municipalities, community-based organisations, or individuals, and as such do not discriminate between rural and urban areas. Such programmes – particularly where they were successful – may have made some difference to some households' decisions to migrate or stay.

Fifth, there are *large spatial corridors and zones*. The large spatial programmes, such as the Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) or Export Processing Zones, have led to large fiscal allocations to selected regions. Significantly, some provinces, such as the Free State, do not have any SDIs or government-sponsored development corridors at all, which creates disincentives for young people with economic potential to stay in those provinces or areas. Not only are the SDI areas sometimes poorly selected, but the principle of SDIs tends to sit uneasily with the political commitment to prioritise rural development (Harrison & Todes 2001).

Sixth, the *location of administrative offices of government institutions* (with or without actual devolution of decision-making powers) creates major spatial impacts.

In South Africa, impressionistic evidence suggests that provincial departments' location of their regional offices, and municipalities' locational choices for their headquarters, after the amalgamation of municipalities in 2000, are already causing migration pressures towards some localities.

A final issue is the impact of *bureaucratic procedures*. For example, many departments are characterised by an underspending of their budgets. The result is that, as the end of the financial year approaches, money is spent rapidly on available projects, regardless of location. Another bureaucratic feature is that departments which employ non-governmental service providers (such as the Department of Water Affairs, which uses Mvula Trust as a service provider) have a much greater geographic reach than those departments which depend on in-house staff, and are likely to extend their programmes deeper into rural areas.

The result of this diversity of initiatives is that some of these programmes encourage urbanisation, at least to some urban localities. As such, they are not urbanisation policies in any strict sense, nor are they spatial settlement programmes, but they have unforeseen consequences for both urbanisation and settlement hierarchies. Conflicting governmental policies often exist side by side, influencing migration haphazardly (Morrison 1980). There are also cases where sectoral programmes are undermined by migration trends which are simply too powerful to resist. There is the sad tale of subsidised houses in the Free State Goldfields, which were built and the title deeds duly transferred into the names of the beneficiaries, only to discover that the beneficiaries had moved away and could not be traced. There is a great need for more research on the impacts of sectoral policies on local economic dynamics and urbanisation trends.

This is not to argue that contradictory impacts on migration are necessarily a bad thing, because it may well be helpful to balance different stimuli in the economy. But of course, it could lead to local distress, because some services are provided without complementary governmental functions being performed. Whatever the case, it is clear that, for the first ten years of democracy, South Africa has had no coherent approach to urbanisation, or even an exploration of the various spatial dimensions of poverty and livelihoods.

Sectoral policy-makers urgently need an understanding of the multiplier effects (whether in strictly economic terms or more broadly social terms) of the various *types of expenditure*, which may well differ *in different kinds of localities*. Take, for example, the difference between spending on infrastructure or housing, on the one hand, and health, on the other. Whereas infrastructure and houses create lasting physical assets, and possibly create economically productive skills, health is largely a 'consumption' expenditure. It is likely that the relatively large expenditure on infrastructure and housing in small towns may have significant multiplier effects, and thereby encourage people to stay there. Expenditure on skills training (Department of Labour) may encourage people to migrate to areas of greater economic advantage.

In this regard it is hard to disagree with the statement of the Centre for Development and Enterprise (1998: 26) that: 'At the very least, what seems to be required is an open and informed debate about alternative approaches to the "where" of development.' This was an insightful comment, but as we shall show, understanding the 'where' is not a simple matter.

### *Towards new ways of delivering services*

In the past few years, government has made renewed attempts towards finding alternative ways of promoting government service delivery. The ISRDS and the URP find their origin in the Presidency, and the political impetus which President Mbeki gave to the issues of rural and urban poverty. There are some important similarities between them. Both are aimed at addressing the vexed question of intersectoral and interdepartmental coordination, as well as effective intergovernmental cooperation. Both strategies share a goal of encouraging local innovation and creativity, particularly in dealing with poverty. Both also aim at enabling bottom-up approaches to problem solving (although it is in practice not always clear whether the 'bottom' refers to local government, to communities, or to local individuals). And significantly, they are both underpinned by a 'nodal approach', and the conflation of economic and welfarist concerns – possibly to the detriment of both. Together they culminated, by 2004, in the creation of 13 rural nodes and 8 urban nodes.

The ISRDS was born from a deep concern within the ANC government about rural poverty. This problem received top-level attention, from 1999 onwards, when President Mbeki raised the issue with growing concern. From 1995, the issue of rural development had been central in the ANC's thinking. A small group of directors-general (including the departments of Agriculture, Land Affairs, and Minerals and Energy, and supported by Eskom) began working on an appropriate definition of rural development, which ultimately included the following elements: mining, agriculture, conservation (all three items focused on the natural resource base), as well as business, infrastructure and local government. As such, the ISRDS is the product of significant political support and investment by the government (Everatt n.d.).

The ISRDS did not have a clear standpoint on urbanisation. But an underlying assumption was that it would not stop urbanisation, but would delay the process so that it would be more manageable (Everatt n.d.). As such, the ISRDS assumed that people in rural localities would identify and voice their own needs, which would presumably enable government to target expenditures appropriately – thus making life in the rural areas more viable and attractive.

A significant assumption (which was apparently never questioned) was the nodal approach. This idea of 'nodes' can probably be traced back to the concept of 'pilots', which was introduced soon after 1994 in policies such as land reform, where 'pilots' referred to sites of experimentation for new approaches to service delivery. The ISRDS envisaged that the nodes would experiment with new ways of government

coordination and bottom-up delivery. Subsequently, these lessons would be rolled out to additional areas (Office of the President 1999).

In 2001, the ISRDS – now called the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP) – was implemented. Nine nodes in eight provinces were identified. It should be emphasised that the ISRDP was not intended to be a spatial approach to development; although it selected spatial localities, it was for the purposes of experimentation with new styles of service delivery, mainly focusing on intersectoral and inter-sphere coordination.

The criteria for selection of the ISRDP's nodes were never made explicit. Issues of economic potential and poverty were apparently equally important in the identification of localities as nodes. Since reliable economic data on the nodes were usually not available, the nodes tended to be selected on the basis of high poverty, low infrastructure and limited capacity (Everatt n.d.).

Despite the lack of economic potential in the nodes, a great deal of government resources has been directed to them. Such high levels of expenditure in the nodes raise important questions. In many nodes, the interminable difficulties of bureaucratic alignment of departmental delivery have not been overcome. Also, the high expenditure in the nodes makes it unlikely that the ISRDP can be replicated elsewhere in the country. It is not clear what lessons could usefully be learned from the nodes.

The unlikely prospects of the nodes being replicated elsewhere may mean that the nodes will remain as the 'select few'. In effect, the nodes may well begin to function – by default – as a new spatial dispersal policy, despite the official intention that the nodes are simply experimenting with new forms of service delivery.

This raises far-reaching questions of what impact the nodes are likely to have on their own hinterlands, as well as on migration to larger centres. The nodes are almost sure to increase migration out of the surrounding rural areas and small towns. Depending on the type of economic activity in the nodes, they may simultaneously trigger economic development of the rural hinterland, particularly if there are strong rural–urban linkages (such as the use of agricultural raw materials in local industry, or the creation of local markets for agricultural products). These are the unintended consequences of the nodal policy of the ISRDP. Whereas the 'nodes' were originally selected with the main purpose of testing new ways of delivering government services in a coordinated way (the 'how' of development), the nodal policy is increasingly functioning – by default – as a spatial dispersal programme.

In sum, by 2002 government had produced an urban strategy (the UDF), a rural strategy (the RDF), numerous departmental strategies, and then yet another urban strategy (the URP) and rural strategy (the ISRDP). None of these dealt explicitly with urbanisation issues, although all of them had implicit spatial consequences. In the meantime, sectoral departments hastened to spend their budgets according to

their own spatial criteria. In the midst of this Tower of Babel, the nodal approach of the ISRDP and the URP had become, by around 2003, the beacon of fiscal political correctness in departments' budgeting practices. Government departments are expected to spend a significant proportion of their budgets in the nodes, and most have been happy to oblige, although in some areas (such as the Free State) there is a growing concern amongst officials that the pre-eminence of the nodes is causing other, equally poor, areas to be neglected.

### *The 'where' of development: the importance and limitations of the national spatial development perspective*

Even before the promulgation of the URP and the ISRDP, the Presidency had become concerned about migration, urbanisation and the spatial aspects of development – in sum, about the 'where' of development. The NSDP was the first real spatial policy to emanate from the ANC government. Like the Green Paper on Planning in 1999, the NSDP noted that spatial allocation of resources in South Africa is currently taking place on an incoherent basis (Office of the President 2003). Current budget constraints mean that some form of rationing in the allocation of funds to infrastructure and development programmes does take place, and spatial choices are either explicitly or implicitly made by sectoral departments. There are no common spatial criteria in use for determining public spending patterns. Funding usually goes to those communities that attract the greatest amount of attention.

The NSDP's main argument is that areas with 'potential' or comparative advantage should be pinpointed, and thereafter receive priority in the allocation of resources – in particular, in the allocation of infrastructure funding ('hard investments'). Government spending on fixed investment, beyond the obligation to provide basic services to all citizens, should therefore be focused on localities of economic growth and/or economic potential in order to attract private sector investment, stimulate sustainable economic activities and/or create long-term employment opportunities.

According to the NSDP, 'development potential' is based on the following criteria (Office of the President 2003: 18):

- Natural resource potential: agricultural potential, environmental sensitivity and the availability of water;
- Human resource potential: levels of skills and human density;
- Infrastructure resource potential: existing and proposed road and rail infrastructure and the main electricity grid;
- Human need: spread of poverty and the size of the poverty gap;
- Existing economic activity.

The NSDP softens its spatial strategy somewhat by suggesting that investment in people ('soft investments') should continue to be made throughout the country, to

enable people to acquire the skills to migrate to areas with developmental potential. In localities with low development potential, government spending should focus on providing social transfers, human resource development and labour market intelligence. This will enable people to migrate, if they so choose, to localities that are more likely to provide sustainable employment or other economic opportunities.

Furthermore, in order to overcome the spatial distortions of apartheid, future settlement and economic development opportunities should be channelled into activity corridors and nodes that are adjacent to, or link, the main growth centres. Infrastructure investment and development spending should primarily support localities that will become major growth nodes in South Africa and the Southern African Development Community region so as to create regional gateways to the global economy.

The NSDP made two major contributions, although neither has been sufficiently appreciated. The first contribution was that it actually made an argument for a certain kind of developmental approach, in contrast to the largely rhetorical and vacuous policy statements which had gone before. It is an argument that can and probably should be challenged, and which would benefit from much more critical engagement, but its significance is that it actually begins to confront tough fiscal choices. The NSDP should be the starting point of vigorous public debate about how government can get the maximum 'bang for its buck'. The second contribution was that, between 2000 and 2002, it caused several important studies of migration, urbanisation and spatial developments to be conducted.

The danger is that the NSDP, as published in 2003, may be taken at face value, and that government departments may adopt it naively as their ordained spatial template. Spatial issues – the 'where' of development – are notoriously complex, because they often cannot be clearly separated out from social, economic, demographic, and political factors. The danger exists that the NSDP, if implemented in an unreflective way, may have several unintended consequences.

Firstly, unless the NSDP is implemented on the basis of very careful research, it opens the way to introducing officials' own unexamined biases into the policy. Determining 'development potential' is notoriously difficult, and requires detailed and sophisticated study. It may result in preference being given to urban areas, because economic activity, trade and marketing typically manifest themselves in urban areas, even when those activities are, directly or indirectly, based on rural production.

Secondly, it is generally areas with local professional skills that can lobby for investment in their areas and the identification of urban areas as 'areas with potential' may be promoted by local lobbying. Typically, rural areas have less skills and resources to lobby for their own interests. They may well have explicit or latent comparative advantages, but lack the political ability to articulate this. In such cases, external support would be needed to assist local residents to identify and develop their local economic potential. The current support provided to municipal



integrated planning processes has not been nearly sufficient to engage government at this level of lobbying.

Thirdly, it is important to distinguish between actual and latent potential. In some areas, residents have already identified certain local strengths, and have developed these strengths into actual economic activities. But there may be other areas which have latent potential, possibly based on unusual niche markets. In such areas, government could play a crucial role in facilitating or 'animating' the actualisation of this potential. As argued by Hardoy and Satterthwaite, government programmes '...should be based on the understanding that each centre will have its own unique mix of resources, development potential, skills, constraints, and links with its environs and with the wider regional and national economies' (1986: 399). This, in turn, suggests that planning should be as decentralised as possible, so that localities can identify their own needs and potentials.

Furthermore, the NSDP's argument begs the question: 'Potential for what?' The NSDP opens the way for much more debate and research about local potential. Some areas may have potential to become world-class tourist or industrial sites, whereas other areas may have the potential simply to provide a livelihood for local residents – and in a context of widespread unemployment and poverty, this may be good enough to alleviate poverty. Low-key but sustainable use of natural resources (such as smallholder agriculture or informal trade) may be the only possible economic opportunity for millions of people in South Africa. There is a danger that only the more conventional economic strengths are recognised, and unusual economic niches are left to wither. Furthermore, localities may have economic strengths which do not take the form of ostensible economic comparative advantages. Factors such as social cohesion, stable land tenure systems, leadership, and concentrated purchasing power may bestow advantages on unexpected localities. It is possible that areas without ostensible economic strengths may outperform localities that, on the face of it, are blessed with more resources. Given the unpredictability of economic fortunes, it may be safer to spread investment to a wide diversity of places, rather than to favour a smaller number of areas with apparently high potential.

The drafters of the NSDP also assumed that the areas of 'high potential', which will receive these migrants, will be able to withstand the additional strain on public resources, in the form of rapid expansion, poorly designed informal settlements, infrastructure requirements, pollution, and crime.

Interestingly, the NSDP currently functions in some tension with the URP and the ISRDP. In the latter two strategies, the nodes have been selected with primarily welfarist (poverty and need) criteria in mind. This clearly cuts across the NSDP's focus on 'development potential'. This difference in focus is not surprising, since the primary purpose of the URP and the ISRDP was not a spatial strategy, but a new way of organising government institutions to deliver services. In fact, areas with high levels of poverty were specifically targeted. But current realities suggest that the URP



and the ISRDP nodes currently have more actual impact *as spatial strategies*, than the NSDP. The sheer scale of expenditure in the nodes is likely to attract more migrants away from nearby areas.

But despite these weaknesses in the NSDP – as it is currently drafted – it makes a specific conceptual contribution which lays the groundwork for a next round of government thinking about development priorities, as the next section shows. Even though the NSDP is primarily about the ‘where’ of development, it also brushes up against the question of the ‘what’ of development. Its distinction between infrastructural (‘hard’) and human (‘soft’) expenditure deserves to be taken further in policy debates.

### *Beyond spatial questions: the alignment process*

As mentioned earlier, one of the key strengths of the NSDP is that it focused on the question of economic potential. This took the debate beyond the existing focus on poverty and needs (although these issues also figure in the NSDP). During 2004, the NSDP was given more impetus by a process of provincial and district-level consultations. During this process, key questions were asked: In what way does the NSDP frame the parameters of government actions? How should developmental potential be defined? On what is potential based, and what is required to unlock or sustain it? How should the imperatives of economic developmental potential be traded off against the need to meet poverty alleviation targets? What are the nature and causes of poverty in different localities? And most significantly, how should different agencies of government, at national, provincial and municipal level, interact to achieve agreement on the ‘what’ and the ‘where’ of development? (Office of the President 2004) For the first time, explicit ‘how’, ‘what’ and ‘where’ questions are being raised in conjunction with one another – this greatly improves the prospects of meaningful developmental initiatives in different localities throughout the country.

This involves a new use of spatial thinking. Spatial decisions will not be done according to formal and predetermined criteria; rather, the quest is to ‘utilise space as a common backdrop against which investment and spending decisions can be considered and made’ (Office of the President 2004: 8). National spatial guidelines are intended to facilitate dialogue and exchange of information, to promote understanding of the impacts of policies, to promote the compatibility of policies, and to make connections between various policies and actions more transparent. In this process, municipal IDPs and Provincial Growth and Development Strategies will take on a much more strategic role.

This creates enormous scope for local negotiations about the ‘what’ of expenditure, the actual economic and livelihoods impacts of specific government interventions, and the most effective balance between hard and soft programmes, *tailored to local circumstances*. Areas with apparent low potential may well – given well-selected hard infrastructure and supportive human development initiatives – perform much

better than they have done thus far. Posing questions about spatial location will encourage more creative and penetrating thinking at all levels, about appropriate developmental initiatives. To some extent, this may mean that the fascination with large infrastructural projects may give way to a more nuanced consideration of hitherto poorly designed human development programmes, including skills training, business mentoring, start-up credit, marketing, agricultural extension, transport systems, and rental accommodation for residences and businesses. It opens the way for more careful questions about the different *types* of infrastructure spending and human resources spending, and what their diverse developmental impacts and multipliers might be.

### *Urbanisation trends: glimpses and questions*

There has been insufficient research regarding urbanisation patterns in the ten years after 1994 and there are currently more questions than answers. A few key texts have opened up key arenas for further enquiry.

Some important findings are that there is a great deal of in-migration into dense settlements, but that these settlements may be rural, peri-urban, or urban (Cross, Harwin, Schwabe, Morris & Kekana n.d.; Cox, Hemson & Todes 2004); that migrant labour is continuing, and that female migrant labour appears to be increasing (Posel & Casale 2002); that many rural families attempt to get urban cash-based livelihoods while many urban families attempt to keep their rural assets; that joblessness is so prevalent that employment prospects are ceasing to become a factor in the motivation of migrants (Schlemmer & Lovell 2000).

Once we have a better idea of how migrants can most effectively be accommodated at their destinations, so that they can achieve their maximum economic potential as soon as possible, a new set of questions should be posed. Given these insights, the paucity of government information about different types of migration becomes a real constraint in the design of policy. We simply do not know enough about the push and pull factors which characterise urbanisation. We also do not know how many people are moving to different kinds of destinations, from where, for what reasons, and what skills they have.

The conceptual apparatus of the NSDP, and the process of intragovernmental debate and alignment, offer the scope to find much more closely tailored developmental solutions for different localities. Various social, economic and demographic dynamics have recently come to light, which will be the basis on which such debates can be conducted. For example, it appears that government expenditure may also create incentives to stay in rural areas, due to the better infrastructure, services and facilities in homeland areas, even where economies are weak or limited (Todes 1999). This also applies to recent government policies, such as the allocation of housing subsidies (Crankshaw & Parnell 1996). The availability of social grants may have major impacts on where people choose to live – especially near pension payout points!

A second dynamic which should influence NSDP debates is that the nature of settlements is changing. Most in-migration is now taking place in rural, peri-urban and metropolitan fringe dense settlements, despite the paucity of formal jobs. These settlements are often poorly integrated in the mainstream of urban life. Such in-migrants are drawn from nearby tribal areas, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal and the Ciskei and Transkei (Todes 1999). This is not surprising. For many migrants – particularly the poor – kin and friends are the main source of information, and the majority of migrants choose to move to places where they already have relatives or friends (Nelson 1980). In the context of South Africa, where so many migrants are poor, this suggests that traditional cultural ties between rural and urban areas continue to exist. It may therefore be the case that kinship ties are a more important determinant of migration than the likelihood of getting a job. This pattern suggests that towns and cities with peri-urban settlement opportunities may be more attractive than cities which do not offer such options. Even within metropolitan areas, the fringes of large metro areas now experience much higher levels of in-migration than the metropolitan core areas (Cross et al. n.d.). This may mean that rural migrants may now be *less* able to access formal urban facilities and livelihoods than previous generations. Is South Africa becoming a society of dense quasi-urban, quasi-rural settlements, with the advantages of neither rural nor urban life?

A third factor is that urbanising farm workers are becoming a prominent category of migrants. Farm workers tend to move to the nearest town, rather than further afield, and have emerged as an important part of housing demand in small towns (Todes 1999; Cox, Hemson & Todes 2004). Compared to migrants from tribal areas, farm workers have very different profiles of skills, experiences, family networks and assets, with quite different prospects for assimilation into urban or peri-urban areas.

Fourthly, many towns have experienced economic decline, but simultaneously continue to experience population growth (Todes 1999). This appears to be a widespread phenomenon in underdeveloped societies. Unemployment does not appear to lead to out-migration (Fay & Opal 2000). Households which lost their employment often do not move out, but by relying on multiple income sources, have preferred to keep their investments in housing in those areas. However, easy generalisations should be avoided. People's responses to unemployment may differ dramatically: in declining mining towns, for example, unemployed miners (who have a more narrow suite of skills) are more likely to leave the towns, whereas other unemployed people are more likely to stay and try different survival skills. This may be due to the characteristics of the towns themselves, or it may be due to the characteristics of the particular individuals, since mineworkers may have closer residual links with rural areas, and therefore a greater likelihood of moving away, than do other types of residents. Such observations need much more empirical investigation.

A fifth consideration is that there is a growing trend towards reverse urbanisation, i.e. people leaving large cities and moving to small towns and rural areas. Factors

such as the contraction of employment in the cities, the prevalence of urban crime and violence, the high infrastructure costs, and the value of land and housing in other localities, and the continuation of social relationships with rural communities, may function either as disincentives to migrate to the cities, or as incentives to return to more rural areas (Todes 1999). 'The tendency to characterise migration flows as only rural to urban obscures the reality; indeed, migration flows are as variable as the changing form and spatial distribution, over time, of economic opportunities' (Hardoy & Satterthwaite 1986: 406). For some people, rural areas retain their attraction, possibly due to relatively high levels of communal land access and government expenditure in the deep rural areas. Certain special population categories, such as unemployed mineworkers and HIV/AIDS sufferers, appear to be turning to rural networks for their survival and care.

A new range of secondary cities, large towns and small towns are becoming attractive destinations for migrants. For example, between 1996 and 1998, Johannesburg attracted 22.6 per cent of migrants, but Cape Town only 4.3 per cent; Rustenburg attracted 4.1 per cent of migrants, but Nelspruit only 0.7 per cent (Cox, Hemson & Todes 2004: 9). This may be explained by the fact that metropolitan areas have reached some kind of saturation point, where negative factors (such as unemployment and high costs of living) now outweigh positive opportunities. But different cities and towns appear to have different kinds of attractions. This needs to be investigated empirically in each case, before appropriate plans can be drafted.

### *Beyond 'rural' and 'urban': bringing rural–urban linkages into urbanisation policy*

A key consideration is the need to transcend the misleading dichotomy of 'rural' and 'urban' areas, and to focus on rural–urban linkages. Many rural households (however 'rural' is defined) have strong links with urban family members. These links include multiple homesteads, commuting, circular migrancy, remittances, shared family responsibilities for rearing children in both rural and urban contexts, the sale of agricultural products in towns and the purchase of urban commodities for consumption in the rural areas. In the South African context, the question of rural–urban linkages is complicated by the particularly South African distinction between commercial farming areas and tribal or traditional areas (the erstwhile 'homelands'). Both these are officially defined as 'rural', even though their spatial, demographic and economic characteristics differ fundamentally. Commercial farming areas typically have far fewer linkages with nearby towns than the much more densely populated smallholder agriculture which characterises the homeland areas.

The international literature has, increasingly, emphasised the linkages between rural and urban areas. For example, Fay & Opal (2000: 26) make the suggestive point that 'the distinctions between urban/rural...may be misplaced in developing countries, especially in Africa'. In South Africa, labour migrancy has continued, despite

expectations that the abolition of influx control would gradually cause migrant labour to be phased out (see Posel & Casale 2002). Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1986) argued for more support for small and intermediate urban centres, at least partly because of their important role in providing rural services and promoting rural agro-industries.

The question of rural–urban linkages has repeatedly surfaced in government policy documents, such as the RDF, the UDS and the UDF. The RDF observed that, ‘Small rural towns should be a focus for development, providing input and output markets, mechanical and other workshops, financial services, and social services such as schools and clinics which will be of benefit to people in the surrounding area. For historical reasons, these functions and links to the rural hinterland often do not exist or are poorly developed’ (DLA 1997: 22). The UDS also questioned the traditional dichotomy between urban and rural areas. It noted that many denser settlements are simultaneously urban and rural. Commuter townships are often on the outer edges of traditional cities, and circulatory migration blurs the distinction between urban and rural dwellers. Urban development should be based on integrated urban and rural development strategies. ‘Healthy cities demand healthy country-sides, and vice versa’ (Office of the President 1995: 15). The UDF also hinted in this direction: ‘There is also a real sense in our cities and towns that everyone’s lives are interconnected... There is also recognition that the various urban and rural interest groups can and must work together to remake the cities and towns’ (DoH 1997: Section 1.3.4). This perspective was eventually carried through, in 2004, to the NSDP, which asserted that the categories ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ as used in South Africa have little meaning, due to high levels of transfers, social interactions, and definitional problems (Office of the President 2004).

There are strong arguments for promoting rural–urban linkages as a way of fostering both urban and rural development (Whitney 1980), and to help migrants secure a foothold in the informal sector. The complex relationships between rural and urban areas are very important, and require explicit recognition in formulating development policy. In this regard, KwaZulu-Natal’s provincial White Paper on Integrated Rural Development, published in June 1998, provided a much more nuanced vision of the relationship between rural and urban areas than that of national government. There is a risk of very poor peri-urban communities remaining marginalised on the fringes of cities. In such contexts, essentially ‘rural’ development programmes should be implemented, by means of measures such as protected communal water sources, alternative sources of fuel, and subsistence and semi-commercial agricultural production. These should be linked, where possible, to urban development strategies, such as tourism, which could create a demand for crafts and fresh produce.

Taking the same logic a step further, the Western Cape government has drafted a policy for the establishment of agricultural holdings on the urban fringes (Western Cape Provincial Government 2000). The policy argues that agricultural holdings

should be spatially integrated with other urban fringe land uses. Clearly, this policy envisages strong rural–urban linkages, in contrast with the rather artificial separation of rural and urban policies emanating from national government.

Government departments have not yet taken on board some key international thinking about rural–urban linkages, the important role of agriculture in promoting urban economic development, the advantages of small towns and dispersed urbanisation, and the agricultural potential of cities and peri-urban areas, particularly in the promotion of sustainable livelihoods for the poor. In the same vein, there is a growing interest amongst policy-makers worldwide about the prospects of urban agriculture. In South Africa, only a few municipalities have made any provision for urban agriculture (Tshwane and Cape Town, for example). Some of the possibilities would be to identify local resources and assets, such as land holdings, agricultural skills, community networks, and municipal commonage, which can yield better developmental returns. New spatial localities should be identified, where such assets can be utilised more fully (for example, on peri-urban smallholdings). There are huge unexplored possibilities. In this vein, Chris Rogerson (2001) argues for a framework for rural small, medium and microenterprise promotion; Austin and Visser (2002) advocate urban agriculture; and Stilwell (1997) propounds a much more robust Farmer Support Programme, linked to urban development. As Francie Lund and Andre du Toit (2004) suggested, there are many ‘rich connections’ between the formal and informal economies in promoting mutually beneficial relationships between poverty and wealth. What is missing, at this stage, is the spatial dimension.

There is a real need to return to the original insights in the UDF and RDF, that urban and rural development should be seen as linked and integrated. As yet, the promotion of rural–urban linkages has not been foregrounded in government policies. This is, arguably, because functions have been allocated to different departments. Whereas the policies of the DoH and the Department of Trade and Industry have focused primarily on urban areas and small towns, the land reform and agricultural policies of the departments of Land Affairs and Agriculture have been directed mainly at rural areas. There has been no political champion for integrated rural–urban development.

### *Future research and policy choices*

If one were to take the government’s own overriding goals – development and poverty alleviation – as the lodestar, what spatial issues should come onto the agenda? Should migration be regarded as a positive or a negative factor? Internationally, there is no consensus on this issue. One view emphasises the positive aspects: ‘It is essential to the health of the entire national economy that migration continue and even increase, in the interests of efficient allocation of human and other natural resources’ (McNamara 1961: 154). Another view regards urbanisation as a loss of rural community values and agricultural livelihoods, and therefore something to be resisted. Both these views



are underpinned by normative and emotive thinking (which is not unusual in social science or policy), but without exploring the real potentials and problems from a spatial point of view, no sensible resolution will be possible.

In the context of South Africa, we need to ask: Has urban migration been good for migrants in South Africa? Does it improve people's livelihoods and life chances? Has urbanisation been good for South African cities? Has it created more multipliers? Or has it compounded urban social problems? Do the new migrants add to economic vibrancy, or are they primarily a drain on social resources?

Changing migration flows and patterns of population settlement have become matters of interest to most of the nations in the world. This concern translates into a series of broad empirical as well as policy questions that must be addressed at least partly through research, but significantly also as part of policy debates (Morrison 1980).

At the empirical level, we need to know, firstly, how many of what types of people are migrating to what destinations, and what form is this movement taking? Secondly, where would current patterns and types of movement lead if they were to continue? Are they likely to continue, intensify, or change in the future? Thirdly, are the effects of these patterns beneficial or adverse, and for whom? Fourthly, should the observed patterns of urbanisation be encouraged, discouraged, or simply allowed to run their course, and to what ends? Finally, how can a national government channel migration within its borders to advance conscious developmental purposes?

In the case of the South African government's policies, it is remarkable how little attention has been paid to these empirical questions. There has been almost no sponsored research in this regard. (Several of these issues have been raised in studies conducted on behalf of departments – notably for the Premier's Office during the compilation of the NSDP – but deserve to be given much more prominence in policy debates.)

We need to ask how South African urbanisation trends compare with those of other developed and less developed countries. There are fundamental differences between urbanisation patterns in industrialised countries and in the less developed countries. In advanced countries (or advanced parts of less developed countries), cities are associated with a culture of 'urbanism', which includes phenomena such as institutional differentiation, specialisation, economic growth, expansion of socio-economic opportunities, and changing family patterns and values (Goldschneider 1980). In contrast, cities in less developed countries experience widespread problems, such as high unemployment, extensive poverty, and the continuation of rural or traditional social networks (a type of 'urbanism without urbanity'). To what extent does South Africa reflect this experience? To what extent do recent migrants in the cities become absorbed effectively into the mainstream of urban economies?

In this context, it should be noted that the nature of poverty, marginalisation and underdevelopment in South African cities is strongly influenced by the pre-1994 legacy. For example, looking back to the pre-1990 influx control policy, the

distinction between Section (10)(1)(a) black residents (those who had permanent residential rights in the cities before 1990) and other black residents (whose residential rights were very limited, or who moved illegally) has probably reinforced the class nature of South African cities today (Parnell 2004). The legacy of 'insiders', who could build an asset base, and 'outsiders', who had to fight their way into the city from the informal (and often illegal) shack settlements on the fringes, still remains today. How, then, should this class cleavage be mitigated in the cities? What measures can be put into place to bring the new arrivals more effectively into the mainstream urban economy? And if this is too daunting in practice, what measures can be taken to ensure people's survival in the cities?

Secondly, we need to understand the types of migration that are prevalent. These include commuters, seasonal migrants, sporadic short-term migrants, target migrants (who aim to achieve a specific goal before returning to their place of origin), cyclic migrants, working life migrants, and permanent migrants (Nelson 1980). Different types of migration have very different impacts on people's commitment to rural or urban areas, on their pattern of asset accumulation and livelihoods, and on their social networks. Short-term migrants are not concerned with the long-term opportunities offered by large centres. They tend to be concerned with getting a job quickly; they have less concern with urban amenities; and they tend to be more concerned about travel costs.

This has significant policy implications. If a government wishes to redirect migration (for example, in terms of a spatial dispersal policy), short-term migrants may respond more readily than long-term or permanent movers to incentives offered by employment decentralisation programmes (Nelson 1980).

Thirdly, we need to ask what triggers promote migration to urban areas, and how individuals and households evaluate their options. Who will migrate, to where? It is well known that migrants tend to be opportunity seekers, often younger and with better levels of education than non-migrants (Whitney 1980). A great deal of evidence suggests that migrants' preferences are varied and changing, and they produce complex and often unanticipated responses to altered employment opportunities (Nelson 1980). How do we understand people's propensity to migrate? What push and pull factors encourage people to leave rural areas? What determines their choice of destination? Do people leave because of overcrowding of rural areas, and the lack of access to land and resources? Or do they leave because of their inability to utilise the assets that they do have? Or because they have lost the assets they used to own? Or because they have skills which could be more profitably utilised in urban areas? It is often assumed that most rural out-migration is driven by poverty, that people leave because they are desperate, and that improved rural opportunities and living standards would reduce the exodus. Yet it has been shown that out-migration is often higher from more affluent rural areas than from poor and remote areas. In fact, improved rural economic circumstances often seem to trigger greater out-migration (Nelson 1980).



The complexity of push and pull factors is evident in the migration rates of farm workers away from commercial agriculture towards the towns and cities. Is this rapid out-migration from commercial agriculture due to pull factors (the attractions of the towns and cities) or push factors (mechanisation of agriculture, or pre-emptive evictions to avoid land tenure claims)? Do people leave to seek a better life, or because they are evicted from the farms? Will the migration of farm workers to the towns and cities continue? At what point will the agricultural sector adapt its wage strategies and training policies to entice workers to remain?

These questions will require a great deal of nuanced and focused research in a diversity of communities, but some suggestions can be offered at this stage. Migrants' choices and experiences may be much more complex and varied than we might expect. For example, a survey conducted in the Free State and Northern Cape (Atkinson 2003) found that the reasons for some farm workers preferring to live on farms are factors such as free food, including meat, fruit, and vegetables; free water, electricity and housing; agreeable working hours; less overcrowding than in towns; lower living costs; they like living close to work; they like living with their families in a rural environment; their children are safe when parents are at work; and some farm workers can keep livestock. In contrast, the reasons that other farm workers choose to live in town are that farms are too far from town, and it is difficult to access services such as clinics; they cannot own a house on the farm; workers have no security when they get old and have to retire; on the farm, they are separated from their families; on some farms, workers have to pay for water, housing and/or electricity; the roads are bad and getting to town is difficult; it is difficult to get accommodation for schoolchildren in town; there is a 'better atmosphere' in town; on the farm, 'one has to be too careful not to alienate the farmer' (Atkinson 2003); and there are better services and facilities (eg. housing, sanitation) in town.

This wide variety of responses suggests that social groups cannot be treated as homogenous categories. Different options will appeal to different people, and different categories of people have different propensities to migrate. This will require more detailed locality studies. As Pieter Kok noted, 'A persistent gap in theories to explain migration is the relative lack of behavioural studies which provide a dynamic vs. a static comparison of migration move–stay decision alternatives' (2003: 19).

Furthermore, different types of migration (such as permanent migration and circular migration) depend on different calculations of benefit, and in turn create different developmental spin-offs.

Ideally, government policy should enable and facilitate choices which suit people's life circumstances. This, in turn, would require effective options for rural and urban transport, health, education, income-generating activities, and land ownership.

Even more importantly, a great deal more needs to be known about people's *post hoc* experiences of migration. What are the expectations of potential and actual migrants? Are these expectations fulfilled, or do many fail, and with what consequences? Does

migration improve the quality of life, either in the areas of origin or in the point of destination?

Once we understand migrants' experiences, we can begin to propose ways of assisting them to deal with the stress of uprooting from places they know well, to move to difficult and challenging new environments. Such measures would enable migration and urbanisation to be used as a force for progress and development, instead of simply being regarded as a symptom of economic and social distress and policy failure. There is an urgent need for national and provincial governments to assist municipalities to analyse and predict urbanisation trends in their areas, and to work out appropriate responses. The recent round of NSDP-oriented consultations provides a starting point for assisting municipalities to explore these questions, and a 'common platform' to ensure that the various players have sufficient understanding of developmental questions (Office of the President 2004).

Only once we have a much better idea of real developmental and demographic dynamics, will we be able to determine the most effective type of urban hierarchy, creating mutually beneficial linkages between metropolises, smaller cities, small towns, peri-urban areas, and agricultural areas.

### *Conclusion*

Since 1994, the issue of urbanisation and migration has not been foregrounded as a policy debate in its own right. This is perhaps due to the RDP's basic orientation of avoiding tough choices. This chapter showed how different government strategies have been based on different assumptions about rural and urban development; how sectoral programmes have had unintended spatial consequences; how programmes aimed at improving service delivery have become implicit spatial programmes; and how a spatial policy aimed at promoting areas with developmental potential may, in fact, do the opposite.

The all-pervasive confusion regarding spatial strategies, urbanisation and migration in South Africa is primarily due to the fact that the government's primary goal is to promote development and, more especially, to mitigate poverty. Spatial considerations – and especially tough spatial choices – have always been, at best, secondary, and at worst, simply avoided.

Since 1994, the government's policy principles have not done justice to the full complexity of spatial choices and population movements. There are distinct advantages and disadvantages to living in both rural areas and urban areas. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the main problem confronting South Africa is poverty and the creation of livelihoods, and this raises important spatial questions. Until now, the sectoral approach to poverty and livelihoods has had little success in exploring the interactions between these phenomena, either in an urban or a rural context, or between rural and urban contexts.

There is an overriding impression of a void in policy thinking on urbanisation. Spatial questions have only recently been posed, with the result that government activities have, thus far, remained locked into narrow sectoral concerns. There are good grounds to suggest that government's developmental focus could be immeasurably strengthened by carefully examining spatial trends, and searching for developmental options that build creatively on current and future migration patterns. There is room for some intersectoral and interdepartmental enquiry regarding the type of development emerging in urban, rural and peri-urban areas, including the potential resources, multipliers, livelihoods and assets that these represent.

### Note

- 1 The figures for 1996 reflect the amended definition of 'rural'. Until 1996, 'urban' areas were defined as 'areas with local authorities', regardless of their spatial features. Since 2001, the definition has been based on spatial form and land use. Consequently, smallholdings, mining towns and residential peri-urban areas were henceforth classified as 'urban'. In traditional areas, villages were still regarded as rural, but the bigger towns were reclassified as 'urban'.

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