

Spatial planning in urbanisation: Observations from an academic perspective

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Abstract

Sector and spatial development in rural and urban regions of Namibia following in the wake of e.g. urbanisation, migration or mining – in essence often irreversible land consumption – call for an instituted physical organisation of space with the assistance of intra-national and trans-frontier strategies. Spatial planning perceived as an administrative technique and a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach to balanced distribution of avenues to means of production-, the author exemplifies scientific foundations along with administrative conditions in practice and local situations of concern. In support of the ‘The Inaugural Namibian Conference on Strategic Spatial Planning for Urbanisation’ (2012), the paper ultimately promotes the joint and expanded furthering of ‘human capacity building’ through education and training at institutions of tertiary education in conjunction with departments of professional public sector and private sector planning agencies.

Setting the scene

Planning theory, often a component offered in post-graduate studies’ courses in spatial planning and analysis worldwide, generally defines ‘spatial planning’ as the constitutional task of the “state apparatus” (cf. Dear, 1994, pp. 593-594, 334-335), hierarchically administered from all levels of national and regional government as well as local administration. Over time spatial planning became a political claim and the work of spatial planners perceived to bundle informed competence through discrete academic disciplines allocated to central and decentralised public and private planning offices.

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In 1983, the European Conference of Ministers responsible for regional planning adopted the 'Torremolinos Charter' in Spain. Its concept emphasises that regional/spatial planning is conducive to the spatial organisation of state territories in support of finding solutions to problem-formations going perhaps beyond national borders. The process and experience of spatial planning should (i) be democratic and (ii) integrate sectoral policies comprehensively, (iii) be functional in taking into account regional/spatial differences pertaining to common values, cultures and interests inherent in cross-border public and private co-operation, as well as (iv) be long-term oriented implying close monitoring and evaluation of phenomena and interventions that may jeopardise politico-economic, socio-cultural, ecological and environmental progress of development objectives and goals. The Charta's characteristics and conceptual framework are enshrined in its opening statement, recommending that

"Regional / Spatial Planning gives geographical expression to the economic, social, cultural and ecological policies of society. It is at the same time a scientific discipline, an administrative technique and a policy developed as an interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach directed towards a balanced regional development and the physical organisation of space according to an overall strategy." (cf. Torremolinos Charter, 1983, p. 13-18)

In retrospect, it seems that essential ideas and principles of this Charter are universally accepted and evolve from definitions of spatial / regional planning coined in different territorial settings, political systems and their administrative (planning) cultures, worldwide. Periodically changing paradigms of development facing realities of regional human-made disasters and natural hazards demand spatial planners almost regularly to refocus their academic research agenda, data analysis and review of their instituted problem-solving systems, capacity and goals in response to e.g. regional disparities, local housing needs and poverty.

In practice, spatial planning comprises *inter alia* 'urban and rural, land-use, town and country planning', complemented by 'infrastructure' along with 'environmental planning'. Such variety of 'plan' and 'planning' represents the projection of governmental 'sector planning' on the intermediate and local levels of spatial development planning under national conditions. Perpetual concerns with 'out-come', 'implementation' or 'problem-resolution' accompany the organisational process of 'strategic planning', i.e. giving goal-oriented directions and making decisions with tool kits of methods and techniques in pursuance of, for instance, national visions, regional objectives or the distributive provision and allocation of resources to regions or local communities.

Against this introductory backdrop the paper elaborates on a set of problem formations observed in the complex task of building a structure of spatial organisation in the Republic of Namibia. The article outlines pivotal government actions taken in the process of deregulating spatial apartheid structures for the benefit of participatory and sustainable regional and local development in the country. In focussing on spatial effects triggered off by released agents of development such as human migration, peoples' mobility, urbanisation and additional, but not yet sufficient employment opportunities in expanding nodes of industry and service in Namibia, the author examines settlement and land use trends observed in the context of regional and local planning. The line of arguments exemplifies the linking of 'pure' research findings generated in fields of multidisciplinary social science research offering application-oriented knowledge transfer for sustainable regional and urban planning. In concluding, the opinion is aired to consider the widening

of professional (post-)graduate degree offerings in planning in Namibia's institutions of tertiary education.

Observations from within Namibia

From Independence (1990), the Republic of Namibia launched – and since then – pursues the systematic institutionalisation of spatial planning in the geographically extensive and socially heterogeneous thirteen Regions, which are furnished with economically differing development qualities of natural resources, unevenly spread over the country.

In this context, the delimitation of the then juvenile State's sub-territories together with the marking of partially disputed borderlines could be classified as early contributions towards structured spatial organisation for later spatial planning. Fundamental steps towards the establishment of instituted regional and urban planning processes may be connected e.g. to the proclamation of the first National Housing Policy (1991), the Regional Council Act (1992) together with the Local Authority Act (1992), the Minerals (Prospecting and Mining) Act (1992), the National Planning Commission Act (1994) and the proclamation of the Town and Regional Planners Act (1996).

Evolving from the Government's deregulating ministerial reform in operation, the Government Gazette of the Republic of Namibia represents the continuing complementation of the substantive body of legislation today, which is essential for the governance of people's constitutional rights to environmental justice and redistribution of access to means of production for individual and collective progress. In terms of spatial planning, the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act (1995), the Decentralisation Act (2000), the Agricultural (Communal) Land Act (2002) and the Environmental Management Act (2007) not only confirm Government's determination to support reformed and regulated public regional development and safeguarding of natural resources, for example. Simultaneously the employ of the proclaimed legislation indeed exercises law and takes responsibility for the transformation of land use, consumption and ownership, creates local and regional structures as well as constructs spatial organisation. Additionally, the spatial classification conducted by the of Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) offers an interesting proof of regional and trans-national spatial planning in action, when demarcating nature parks or approving conservancies. Instituted commitments of this nature translate into the many processes pertaining to local and regional planning of space. They regulate the national territory and ultimately the 'production of social spaces' (cf. Becker, 2006a, p. 19; 2006b; 2009, p. 96).

This observation manifests the will of the post-apartheid regime to sustain economic growth and facilitate social development with the assistance of spatial planning. It is widely accepted that sustainable spatial planning is a crucial prerequisite to the development of any society's quality of material and emotional life. The endeavour to support the achievement of such objectives implies multiple data generation and reflective analysis of politico-economic and socio-cultural structures that are woven into reiterative processes such as urbanisation, labour markets, migration, mobility and economic gain. These few determinants are amongst the many, which are often assumed to propel the private-public creation of space, transform people's life styles and drive the spatiality of people and social classes.

It might be inspiring (not only) for the purpose of spatial planning to discuss and redefine the meaning of 'the rural' (cf. Mufune, 2011) in (perhaps) juxtaposition to 'the urban' (Mlambo, 2012, pp. 129-138) in times of pressing migration (rural flight) and accelerating

mobility, e.g. facilitated with the assistance of information technology, communication and transport infrastructure in the country.

The Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census enumerated a fifteen percent population increase (2011:2,1 million people), confirmed the continuation of urban population growth (2011:42 % urban, 58 % rural areas), counted thirty-two percent households in excess to 2001 (2011:465,400 households) and noted a decrease of members per household from 5.1 (2001) to 4.4 persons (2011) nationally. Although not final, the 2011 Census' executive summary suggests that the preliminary statistic result on population size and growth "has immediate policy implications for education, health, social amenities and shelter, among other basic necessities" (p. 2). This rapid assessment may carry concern about and announce re-assessment of e.g. strategic planning objectives, goals and targets. Perhaps surprising but equally important is the indication that the Namibian society has seemingly embarked upon processes of change, which statistically demonstrate different ideas about family, mobility or social transition in ever sprawling peri-urban settings. In conjunction, such developments invite rethinking about (i) accepted characteristics of the rural-urban continuum construct, (ii) rising and extending land claims, (iii) emerging rural-urban settlement systems and types, (iv) the demography of a locally aging population in rural areas and (v) about prospects of the youth irrespective whether living in communal areas or under conditions of pseudo-urbanisation, if not brought up on serviced housing land of newly proclaimed suburbs.

The full presentation of the Census' report demands swift processing of the quantitative data in order to apply findings focussing on *inter alia* (i) poverty alleviation, (ii) youth education and training for mobile and competing labour markets, (iii) attempting to create equivalency among the thirteen territorial regions through a more symmetric access to public and private means of re-production. From a geographic perspective the implementation of such goals would anticipate careful planning of settlement systems with the mindful integration of local communities into regional planning, reviewed against (i) the spatial north-south divergence of population density and distribution, (ii) demographic structures, (iii) local and regional economic resource bases addressing conservation, protection and rehabilitation of fragile eco-systems, (iv) administrative functions and (v) distances to rural or urban centres of demand, supply and human mobility in the country.

From a regional and urban planning point of view these professional spatial planners' expectations set up a problematic inherent in their work. In planning, their sometimes visionary decisions result from (i) the mitigation of public and private interests, powers and conflict formations, (ii) the spatial organisation of consumption or (iii) their response to altering conduct of social life and negotiation of personal and collective identity at regional and local level.

At this stage it may be opportune emphasising that research for spatial planning will hardly neither capture the diversity of the object under development in plans or official presentations nor will planners be able to gain complete control over the process. The actor networks exercising interests in the outcome of the spatial organisation often remain rather illegible, and the distinctions between urban, rural, cultural and economic expressions of the object (urban; regional) to be planned become inevitably blurred.

Research and writings for planning in urbanisation - Namibian traces and beyond

The inaugural call to present and discuss specific aspects and components of strategic spatial planning for 'urbanisation' in Namibia reminds of the historic origin of 'urban and regional planning' elsewhere, and how its characteristics changed over time in the reiterative attempt e.g. to (i) resolve conflict formations, (ii) direct the needs of less privileged, (iii) support economic growth and development, ultimately (iv) plan the spatial organisation of national territory in order to establish and / or maintain the country's sustainable functioning in stable political environments.

In considering the past five decades only, decolonisation, post-Fordist production regimes, emerging economies and new technologies triggered off phenomena of urbanisation worldwide and across national and regional borders. They attracted basic and application-oriented research conducted by the many disciplines engaging in the Sisyphean urban (planning) task worldwide, which remains funded under the umbrella of changing paradigms and objectives by international organisations until today. In turn, the number of publications almost challenges the human mastery although assisted by the electronic information media and libraries.

With view to the educational profile and the tasks the "Manual on Town and Regional Planning Practice in Namibia, Vol. 1.1" is suggesting, the profession of a spatial planner requires informed multidisciplinary tertiary education and versatile internship training (Simon, 1995, pp. 11-12). Tapping from personal experience, this encourages the subjective highlighting of some works and trends from the so-called 'canon of authors one should have read or tools inevitable for the job' that may contribute to the body of knowledge offered to the coming generation of planners having graduated from Namibian institutions of higher learning. The outline focuses on contributions written in English, unfortunately excluding inspiring literature crafted by people living and texting in different cultures, landscapes, institutional environments and economic opportunities.

Generally, Peter Hall (1975) stands for providing an outstanding historic perspective on regional planning and encompassing a variety of matters pertaining to social science and humanities research supporting planning. Such reading would likely expand towards works fostering e.g. an understanding of the role of politics and policy in the assumed creation of urban and regional well-being (cf. Wolman & Goldsmith, 1992). It could conduct an excursion into key aspects of the increasing importance of service and service industries for urban and rural development (cf. Marshall & Wood, 1995) and include the reconsidering of the nature of space, place and distance faced with the floating implications on forms and means of information technology's mobility polarising new structures of urban-regional processes (cf. Castells, 1991).

Since spatial planning and organisation operates within and across political systems and socio-cultural conditions, it may be interesting to take cognizance of the United Nations University's initiative in 1983 to invite foreign applied geographers to deliberate in Beijing, PR China on regional planning in different political systems (cf. Hottes, K., Diamond, D.R. & Chuan-chun, W., 1985), unfolding concept and practice in regional and urban planning (Diamond, 1985, pp. 1-39) and taking a closer look at the situation in developing countries (Logan, 1985, pp. 40-84). Simultaneously Potter (1985) drew in his well-received book on urbanisation and planning in countries and regions of the 'Third World' attention to the dilemma inherent in *inter alia* economic development and rural-urban migration.

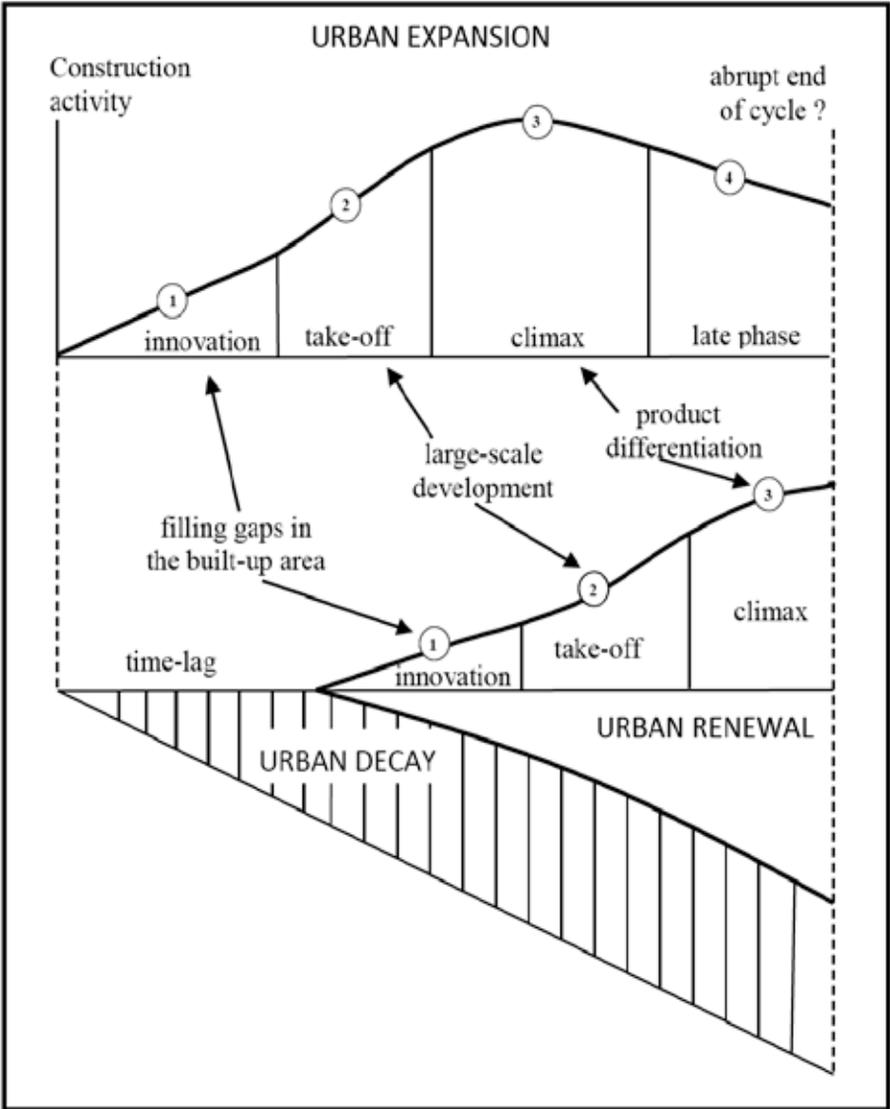
Almost a decade later the developmental paradigm shift marked by 'sustainability' invited challenging research on the growth, the governance and planning of cities in an era of global urbanisation; the publications of Zetter and White (2002) and Evans, Joas, Sundback and Theobald (2005) present such examples.

Until today the professionalization of geography outside schools and universities confronted the discipline with ever-changing tasks and challenges to find solutions to problems which the world's societies present, jointly or in competition with neighbouring disciplines all in response to labour markets (cf. Becker, 1991, p. 48-49; 1997a). Johnston (1993, p. 152) underlined the market value of applied geography with reference to spatial planning, and urban geography always claimed a particular role in urban analysis and local-regional planning, often moving closer to social science domains of sociology, architecture or political studies.

Lichtenberger (1992) exemplified in her hermeneutic approach to political systems and city development in western societies, how the 'life cycle concept' may be translated into an analytic "dual cycle model of urban redevelopment and urban expansion" (Lichtenberger 1992, p. 26). With reference to the polarising processes of urbanisation and urban development her article entices into investigating the applicability of the concept to the urban planning of the Namibian settlement system, namely the major urban centres in the process of expansion and redevelopment (see Fig. 1).

Of similar appreciation may be Hoyle's model (Hoyle, 1988, p 14). In his model he demonstrates major factors that form the platform of port-city dynamics and development (cf. Hoyle, 1988, pp. 3-19), the systematic assembly of which may assist in the decision making of the planning (see Fig. 2). Linked with the 'Retreat-Redundancy-Revitalisation' (R-R-R) model offered by Pinder, Hoyle and Husain (1988, p. 249) exposing the instrument of 'problem perception / analysis' with search for an 'increasing perception of resource opportunity', the two presented models may turn into a promising and reflective technique, which could support strategic spatial planning in the process of revitalising urban structures, functions and networks in their hinterlands and forelands.

Fig. 1: Dual cycle of urban redevelopment and urban expansion (Lichtenberger model)



Source: Lichtenberger (1992, p.26)

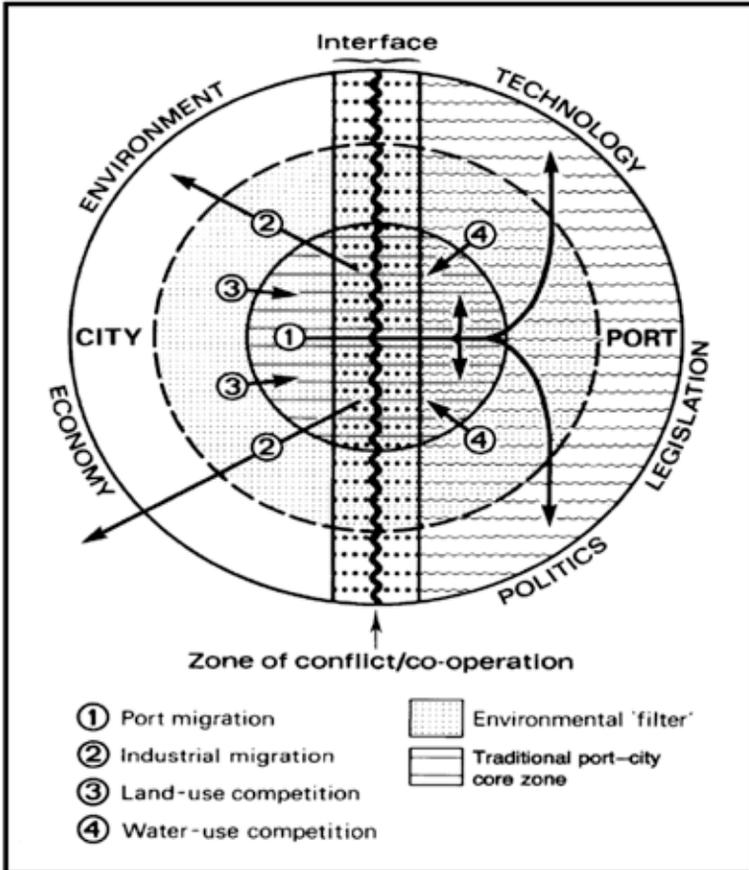
Re-Drawn: Stankevica

The dual cycle model of urban redevelopment and urban expansion (Fig.1) states that “urban development is not taken to be a unilinear process, but is considered a two-way process of urban expansion and urban redevelopment, with growth in general and, therefore, expansion of the urban system always preceding urban redevelopment. The time-lag between expansion and redevelopment of the physical structure is directly dependent on the extent of the investment deficit in the older built-up area.” (Lichtenberger, 1992, p.26)

Against the background of practice in (un-) planned spatial developments in developing countries, Becker (1991) examined the possibility of typifying territories for rapid assessments of complex regional and urban planning situations and, it may be worth noting that in 1979, for example, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific published best-selling guidelines for rural centre planning; the publication is still a state of the art compilation offering conceptual reasoning of recommended, rather technical planning steps for regional and local implementation.

Progressing to South Africa, the new era of human geography and social sciences fostered a remarkable boom in research and publication from 1994. Observing e.g. peoples' regional movements and behaviour in taking hold of urban land produced a number of analytic and statistical publications, seeking the understanding of the manifold dimensions of transformation likely conducive to spatial planning and organisation of territory as well as space for actor networks. Quite characteristic in this regard and approached from distinctly different angles are the publications conducted by e.g. Donaldson and Marais (2002), the Centre for Geographical Analysis of the University of Stellenbosch (2004) and, recently, Van Huysteen et al. (2011). Van Huysteen and her team presented an indispensable cartographic collection of thematic maps based on statistic evidence for further employ in spatial planning and decision making (public and private), while the team around I.J. Van der Merwe of the Centre for Geographical Analysis, University of Stellenbosch, projected the growth potential of towns in the Western Cape Province within the framework of central place concepts. Donaldson and Marais edited an examination into processes and outcomes of reform, restitution and restructuring as agents of rural-urban transformation of spaces from 1990.

Fig. 2: Factors involved in port – city development (Hoyle model)



Source: Hoyle (1988, p.14)

The Hoyle model (Fig. 2), likely applicable to Lüderitz and Walvis Bay, summarises port-city inter-relationships evolving from the retreat and subsequent redevelopment of waterfront zones. “Urban land uses are divided from port functions by the interface zone of decline and decay, often an area of conflict but sometimes marked by co-operation and competition. [...] as waterfront sites become available, there is competition for redevelopment of at least some of the most advantageous locations, both from land-based concerns (housing, restaurants, shopping complexes) and from maritime interests (marinas, recreation, water-based facilities).” (Hoyle, 1988, p. 13)

In full acknowledgement of the many published governmental and non-governmental research findings - statistically supported, cartographically presented and reflectively texted with deep insight into Namibian affairs - a few eclectic observations from a Namibian academic corner of scientific production work may suffice to conclude this particular outline:

The Policy Framework for Long-term National Development (Vision 2030) serves as an indispensable document meeting the future that “accompanies all institutions of public and private development planning (both sector and spatial) in their monitoring of performance and designing of future development programmes in the country” (Becker, 2006a, p. 18); and so are the Namibia 2004 Millennium Goals. In terms of public research in spatial planning, it is appreciated in teaching spatial planning to work with the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) conducted by Koch, Pallett, Tarr and Wetzell (2011) for the Karas Region’s Integrated Regional Land Use Plan (KIRLUP).

Research on problem formations in conjunction with urbanisation were among the early studies from Independence. Frayne (1992) laid a foundation for later urban studies in Windhoek, continuously followed by a kaleidoscope of investigations into rural and urban issues such as migration, dynamics of social structure (cf. Winterfeldt, 2010, pp. 139-170) or local authorities and urban administration in Namibia (Geography and Environmental Studies Series; 1. 2002). Convinced that the translation of the sustainability paradigm into urban and regional planning would require a systematic GIS and computer-assisted storage, monitoring and mapping of data for decision-making processes resulting in consumption of land and eco-systems, Becker, Metz and Smit (2003) designed an application-oriented urban zoning model and technique for Windhoek.

Findings cascading from the social sciences and humanities housed in the national University of Namibia seldom present themselves explicitly as ‘application-oriented’ or ‘spatial planning- directed’, but rather as analytical reflections. Mufune (2011) provided an introduction to the variety of concepts and issues underlying the interpretation of ‘the rural’ in Namibia, which facilitates a pointed and informed sociological access to the problematic of rural areas of the country; almost a convenient reference book essential for students and professionals in planning as a first brief.

The Journal for Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, launched in January 2012, accepted a number of contributions that bend towards knowledge building, which might be useful for a more mindful and people-centred urban and regional planning. Namely:

Successful regional planning requires people’s participation in spatial planning from the beginning. Meticulously initiated research could play such an educational role, when explaining to people with lay / indigenous knowledge through scientific research in communities their perceptions of ‘climate change’ and ‘variability’ (cf. Kaundjua, Angula & Angombe, 2012, pp. 21-32). The result might turn out as a (by incident) covered valuable awareness campaign prior to specific spatial planning processes entering targeted development areas. A similar strategic assessment of field research applies to an evaluation of information deficits / needs expressed by residents with likely little formal education, living in the poverty-stroke pseudo-urban environment of Greenwell Matongo, Windhoek-Katutura (cf. Mchombu, 2012, pp. 75-92). Equally crucial for urban planning proves to be an understanding of the mostly mobile migrant population that chose “rural-urban migration as an option to make a living at workplaces away from social networks and livelihoods at home (cf. Becker, 2006a, p. 23). Mlambo (2012, pp. 129-138) contributed to this understanding, when he embarked upon his remarkable voyage attempting to reconstruct

the physical and emotional conditions of city space in times of crisis through rethinking the poetics of urban informalities in fiction.

Seconded by the GIS Laboratory of Spatial Analysis of the Department of Geography, History and Environmental Studies, University of Namibia, it may be noted that current human and physical geography research covers fields of interest inherent in regional and urban planning, critically testing the meaning of 'sustainability' in landscapes of mining or of 'global warming' in flood risk geo-ecosystems under conditions of regional contingency planning.

In the last analysis, the information gathered in the Atlas of Namibia on land and its people (Mendelsohn *et al.*, 2009) is a welcome cartographic and illustrated compilation of facts, figures and maps that may be used for regional planning, and a 'must' for the personal library of regional geographers. In fact, the atlas should be further developed into a planning atlas in terms of a single sheet collection easily to alter when necessary.

Spatial planning formations in Namibia – Structures, processes, challenges

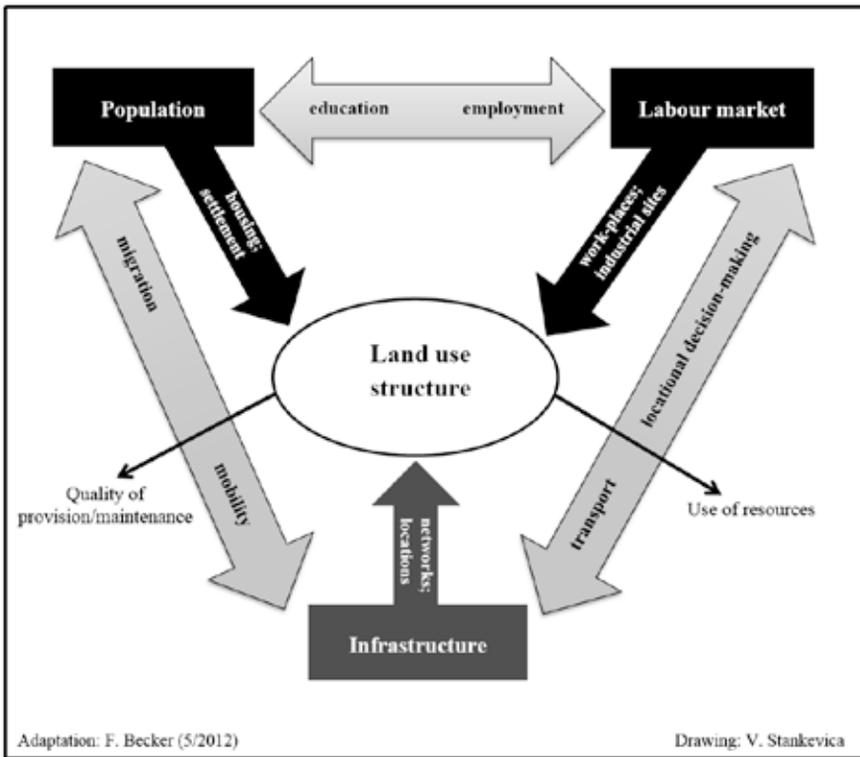
The spatial organisation of the territory of Namibia deserves prime attention and respect from all:

- the state apparatus and the local state, which may be described as the "set of institutions charged with the maintenance and protection of social relations at the sub-national level. This set includes local government, local judiciary, licensing authorities and the machinery of local politics" Dear (1994, p. 334), including traditional authority (cf. Tötemeyer, 2006);
- the citizens across ranks, income and 'power' in respect of the freedom, rights and responsibilities conferred to all of them from Independence;
- and the international community of investors and travellers hosted for mutual economic growth, positive resource transfers and national development.

In this context, the visionary objective to achieve equivalency, sustainability and distributive spatial development in order to strengthen Namibia's regions along with shared accumulation of means of re-production ultimately contributes to peace and stability in the country. It demands sound monitoring and handling of actions that would bar the securing of the society's well-being and future.

This statement is to remind actors in spatial development planning that decisions and subsequent processes generate particular, often undesirable effects without sustainable perspectives following increasing consumption and use of land by e.g. housing, industry and terrestrial infrastructure, which are likely endangering natural resources and the availability of scarce space. The quality and availability of land/space will, to a great extent, coin the attractiveness of the country in the global competition for industrial / service locations.

Fig. 3: Components of land use and spatial structure



Adaptation: F. Becker (5/2012)

Drawing: V. Stankevica

Source: BBR Bonn (2001, p.4)

Figure 3 illustrates the usual network of major components that influence the transformation of spatial structure and development. The components are tightly linked with each other, and any decision taken in one of the system's component alters the property of another such as land use structure, industrial location, infrastructure, commuters' distances to workplaces or household sizes. In Namibia, a spatial organisation policy might prefer to translate the principle values of the mentioned Torremolinos Charter (1983) with the assistance of concepts and instruments addressing regional development flowing from the Charter's fields of assumed action. In practice this could imply to charge regional planning authorities to take a fresh look at their areas and implement strategic approaches to planning that would respond to local distinctiveness and reflect appreciation for their local communities.

- functional settlement nodes such as the urban triangle 'Tsumeb – Grootfontein – Otavi' (cf. Becker, 2006a, p. 30);
- the need for substantial port development and incubation of urban economic growth in Lüderitz;
- the lacking of structural diversity in the urban economy of the regional mono-centre Keetmanshoop;

Spatial planning in urbanisation: Observations from an academic perspective

- the trans-frontier urbanisation in the local Rundu – Calleei area (cf. Becker, 2006a, p. 30);
- the life-cycles of the mining towns Rosh Pinah and Oranjemund once their citizens face mines' closure;
- the corridor development 'Rehoboth – Windhoek – Okahandja'.

The observations below highlight particular settings in Namibia, which demonstrate to what extent spatial organisation has quietly taken grip of the country's territory from within and through international raw material mining demands, contrasted by developments shaping the problematic of regional and urban planning in northern Namibia, along the central coast and the capital city region, namely referring to:

- the Oshakati – Ongwediwa - Ondangwa – Helao Nafidi (Oshikango / St Clara) polycentric settlement region;
- the 'tourism - mining - sustainability' paradox in spatial planning;
- the coastal Walvis Bay – Swakopmund – Wlotzkasbaaken – Henties Bay – Arandis agglomeration.

The **Oshakati – Ondangwa – Helao Nafidi (Oshikango / St Clara) polycentric settlement** appears to be in the process of regionalisation expressed by a cluster of similar opportunities. Prosperous rural areas, open spaces for urban expansion, educational facilities, new settlement and pseudo-urban sprawl, the flood-risk Cuvelai system in the west and the road from Ondangwa to Oshikango with a mix of scattered and centred service industries (banking, investment, trade centres) characterise the rather flat northern-central landscape. Oshakati (Municipality), Ongwediwa (Town Council) and Ondangwa (Town Council) form a polycentric line of urban settlement. Ondangwa seems to turn into a traffic and transport swing at the junction of the railway line and highway of the Trans Kunene Corridor heading to the north. From the regional planning point of view one might pose the question whether the 'urban triplets' should not institute a joint planning authority in order to address the spatial organisation and structure of their town areas in a functional divide, avoiding unnecessary and costly overlapping of investments and provision of services. In comparison to similar examples elsewhere, such an authority could be designed and implemented without touching the administrative autonomy of the three towns. Without doubt such an endeavour would face the politico-economic and socio-cultural web of individual and collective interests.

Regional and urban planning in the focussed landscape will likely have to consider aspects and factors that may determine the future organisation and production of space or, in other terms, the access to ownership over the means of production in this regionalised laboratory of change (cf. Becker, 1997b). The mapping conducted by Mendelsohn, el Obeid and Roberts (2000) visualises a valuable annotated collation of thematic maps, data, graphics and pictures. The presentation of their regional profile virtually exemplifies numerous cases of spatial development, territoriality, spatiality, regulation of transformation and the interface between Government and Local Authorities. The following scenario of spatial development offers a rough synthesis of problem formations, the resolution of which might open opportunities for regional and local, socio-cultural and politico-economic development:

Urbanisation in the demarcated Oshakati – Ongwediwa - Ondangwa – Helao Nafidi (Oshikango / St Clara) polycentric area is accelerated through the regional road / rail

infrastructure development. The cessation of the civil war in Angola, the subsequent urban growth and sprawl of the booming frontier town Oshikango with its Economic Processing Zone (EPZ) as well as the tarmac road between the Regional Council centres Rundu and Eenhana along the northern frontier explain the variety of land use transformations along the Trans-Cunene Corridor showing expanding trans-frontier settlement (Tuguva – Katitwe); inviting Angola to the ‘SADC Corridor’ and arching the destinations Walvis Bay and Maputo.

In the western part of the area it will be interesting to observe further effects, which the implementation of the Northern Corridor Concept might continue to bring about. The economic and social fabric along with the activities close to the corridor junction Ondangwa could reinforce the administrative and traffic-oriented function of this expanding transport cross. In the long run this could lead to bypassing the growth centre Oshakati and the populous heartland of the Oshiwambo speaking population.

Spatial organisation and planning on all levels of Government implies to go beyond traditional land use patterns in order to combine and integrate policies and programmes for sustainable development. Field studies for planning purposes in this central-northern region of Namibia cannot but note the uncounted numbers of houses or already abandoned constructions, both either complete or incomplete. The constructions were often planned to function as income generating ‘shebeens’, located in sorghum fields harvested on communal land. Seemingly still not monitored, the ‘untamed’ stream of investment generally exported to the area from the urban centres of employment even from outside the country, raises the question whether the investment of this financial potential could not have been organised with the assistance of an early settlement outlay integrated in the process of local master planning.

The National Housing Advisory Committee (NHAC) of the Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing & Rural Development (MRLGH&RD) emphasised the rather disregarded and untapped potential of individual private investments in rural areas, which has generated an almost unvalued housing stock. Often located in zones governed by customary law, such distant investments confirm a strong trust in ‘home’ as an expression of local identity away from home. Despite the fact that all over the world such investments often appear to be rather ‘dead capital’ lining roads, common knowledge proves that, over time, many of such seemingly unpromising investments have created settlement nodes essential for regional development.

In Namibia, questions concerning cause-and-effect formations gain momentum, when trying to define the dynamics and potential of such assets that have set additional (re-) production linkages (backward and forward) into motion. One of the burning issues is finding an answer to the question, what detaches value from a simple house and fixes it in such a way that allows us to realise it as capital, and then add value to it?

One may estimate that Namibians in low-income brackets have accumulated millions of dollars of real estate. To date, easy access to formally instituted property building systems that would legally determine the economic potential of people’s assets (properties) is still carefully, not to say at slow pace instituted; the capital could be utilised to produce, secure or guarantee greater value in a regional or wider national market economy.

In conclusion, any spatial organisation and regional / urban planning in the Oshakati – Ongwediva - Ondangwa – Helao Nafidi (Oshikango / St Clara) polycentric setting with agricultural environments unfolds processes of convergence and divergence in the development, production and transformation of territorial space in northern Namibia. The concepts that are underlying the ideology of changing societies such as ‘sustainability’

*Spatial planning in urbanisation: Observations from
an academic perspective*

and 'equity with growth', deeply affect the problem formation inherent in governmental land claim and customary distribution habits. The culture of communication, the way the parties concerned deal with and talk to each other will possibly determine the quality and productivity of politico-economic and socio-cultural discourse in the transformation processes, their projection in the region and direction of land utilization for spatial development.

The **'tourism – mining – sustainability' paradox** in spatial planning emphasises the situation that Namibia's wide and open natural landscapes constitute a branded source of economic wealth to the tourism industry, well guarded by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET). Nature's touristic wealth becomes challenged whenever (non-) renewable strategic mineral resources are prospected, extracted or over-exploited by international and domestic mining industries. Collateral effects such as uncontrolled consumption of land (and landscapes), disregard and violation of legislation - with perhaps tacit approval - transform natural and socio-cultural environments into deserted, geo-ecologically depleted and likely contaminated mining landscapes.

At the end of mining cycles the strategic question arises usually, how to extend the urban life cycle of the then former mining town, its local and regional economy and the livelihood of citizens. By experience, this inconvenient question is often considered too late. Although of high priority the carefully structured and comprehensive (spatial) planning process pointing into the future is retarded, if not neglected (cf. Shaw & Williams, 1994, p. 234).

The MET strives to bind the preventive instrument of Environmental Impact Assessment to the process of single sector and spatial (regional; urban) planning in order to minimise unwanted developments. Crucial factors investigated in the (spatial) planning process refer to (i) the fragility of geo-ecosystems; (ii) availability of potable water; and (iii) carrying capacity of the environment concerned. The ministerial work proves an admirable persistence in pursuing environmental concerns over natural resource and landscape conservation as well as protection in an attempt to live the philosophy of sustainability.

The Ministry's core business focuses on 'environment and tourism' as an agent for growth and development. The spatial projection of developments on communal lands, arid landscapes and remote communities generated a participatory system of expanded regional, local and individual benefits, rights and responsibilities. The implementation of concepts, programmes and projects pertaining to the development of tourism and protective conservation of natural heritage continue to penetrate the country and trigger off the transformation of land-use patterns and classified protection areas. Subsequent effects and spatial projections observed in the reform of 'tourism and environment' tied and still strengthen the triangular relationship between: (i) progresses in sustainable tourism; (ii) conservation and protection of fragile eco-systems; and (iii) the mindful integration of local communities into regional planning.

The ministerial sector activities like 'conservation' and 'tourism growth and development' testify the determination to transform 'space' into environments with prospects for mostly poor people struggling in regional survival economies. The additional establishment of 'community forests' couples with the introduction of prominent development concepts coined as 'community-based tourism' and 'community-based natural resource management'. It accompanies efforts, which entail the restructuring of territorial as well as social spaces and include the endeavour to (re-) introduce perhaps lost, indigenous land-use practices and income opportunities, locally.

At the (inter) national level, the State and MET confirm the governmental preparedness

to further the trans-frontier consolidation of protected areas within the SADC Region. One would assume that this means the production of spatial systems suitable for tourism requiring nature conservation, both with integrated regional tourism development planning.

At sub-national level, the 'Parks and Wildlife Management Bill' (PWMB) defines six different levels of conservation areas on communal and commercial (farm) land. It is hoped that the later interpretation of the Act will turn into a powerful planning tool for the governance of various processes of local and regional spatial organization, which regulate the national territory and its social spaces; in response to rising land claims in conjunction with emerging rural and urban settlement systems in communal areas, growth centres or agglomerations.

In anticipation of an instituted spatial planning legislation that would direct the consumption and regulate the land-use of Namibian territory in an integrative manner, the 'national spatial planning law' would have to comprise national to local spatial planning elements such as (i) national guidelines; (ii) planning legislation and special acts; (iii) advisory comprehensive plans; and (iv) the legally binding implementation of plans. Within the framework of a national spatial planning law the elements of a compound spatial planning system would mark, connect and mitigate the paradox of spatial organisation and structure such as the one currently represented by the precarious 'coastal frontier', marked by the **Walvis Bay – Swakopmund - Wlotzkasbaken - Henties Bay – Arandis agglomeration**.

One feels tempted to brainstorm whether this 'spatial planning region' within the Erongo Region should not become an instituted, autonomous 'spatial planning authority' with the required human resources and a board membership invited from the different urban administrations and the various economic sectors. In comparing, any formation of such authority elsewhere strives to assess, plan and mitigate the land use beyond the horizon of public or private interests, but for the sustainability of the living-space marked by e.g. the Dorob National Park (12/2010), including the different socio-economic structures and functions of the distinct urban settlements forming an agglomeration under Namibian conditions.

With view to Lichtenberger (1992), after a long period of silent decay prior to and in the early years from Independence, the urban development along the coast and including Arandis is in the process of vigorous redevelopment; tamed only by limited natural resources like scarce potable water provision.

Agents and actors driving this redevelopment cover all sectors of the economy, and particularly productive activities in proximity to each other, collectively using the available and additional infrastructure provided, namely:

- the mining and fishing industry;
- leisure / holiday / retirement / second home markets;
- housing needs, estate services, construction industry;
- political stability investment / capital influx from African countries;
- trade, services, port development, import – export;
- seasonal and leisure tourism;
- urban administrations.

Without providing a detailed analysis of the agglomeration in this writing, each municipality, town or settlement offers a historic uniqueness, while the redevelopment of these polycentric growth centres shows characteristics of convergence and divergence in urban development simultaneously (cf. Lichtenberger 2002, p. 25). Becker (2009, p.

*Spatial planning in urbanisation: Observations from
an academic perspective*

109) exemplified a cryptic spatial classification for regional planning in Namibia inviting an almost inaugural discussion or debate. In 2009, he concluded that the 'coastal Walvis Bay – Swakopmund - Wlotzkasbaken - Henties Bay – Arandis agglomeration' would need (i) 'development planning', (ii) experience 'stress on resources' and (iii) sustainability as prime 'tourism destination'.

In a rather holistic approach to national spatial planning Government would be in the position to project a variety of ministerial sector activities on space, similar to the quality of country planning e.g. exercised in Botswana. In collaboration with sister administrations and their parastatals, less incremental planning with more cooperation in comprehensive regional and urban planning would regulate the structural distribution of the economy, society and the consumptive habits towards land, ultimately 'Earth's space' or national territory. Equally important, an instituted cooperation in spatial national planning could transform the 'culture of communication' into a more participatory style that might accelerate the achievements envisaged for regional development, urban sprawl or local infrastructure.

Quo vadis, spatial planning education?

In setting the scene for this contribution, the opinion was aired that 'spatial planning' should receive serious academic attention in order to foster the building of this special and professional human capacity in Namibia. The wider institutionalisation of this 'professional career with a passion' in the curricular settings of (post-) graduate degree study opportunities in 'Spatial Planning' in the country should rather inspire than challenge curriculum designers of tertiary education. Simon (2005) - with the Town and Regional Planners Act (1996) likely in mind - conditions in his "Manual on Town and Regional Planning practice in Namibia. Vol.1" indirectly a desirable perception of prerequisites required to achieve the ideal of a 'planner'.

The variety of routes, study options and perceived planners' profiles, leading to professional spatial planning, are versatile. Tertiary education syllabi along with extramural modules ought to integrate essential parts of the academic grounding and practical training inevitable for the pursuance of a passionate career in urban and regional (spatial) planning (cf. Becker, 2012). In a visionary endeavour, fields of study offered - and to be expanded - comprise *inter alia* application-oriented geography, history, sociology, environmental management and governance, demography and statistics, GIS and remote sensing, computer-assisted cartography as well as (planning) law. Interest in such a demanding knowledge-based educational context requires courage to imagination and creativity in studying and, subsequently, in spatial planning later, spiced with the urge for social responsibility and the art of conflict mitigation. Once felt, crucial answers to planning questions become rhetoric, for instance:

- Do I, my family, my children want to live in the region, town or house I envisaged and planned for my fellow citizen(s)?
- What kind of quality of life would urban planning recommend to people?
- Would a mutual idea and shared vision support the sustainability of regional development?

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*Spatial planning in urbanisation: Observations from
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