

How securing tenure effects self -initiated developments in peri -urban settlements of the Eastern District (North -West Province)

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Summary:

The majority of people who reside in peri -urban and closer rural settlements in the Eastern District of the North -West Province prefer to remain there, despite the cost and distance of travelling to the city for work and the relative lack of infrastructure and services. Residential quality of life is considerably better than in most informal urban settlements. Cheap or free land is available to most and, apart from some conflict and vulnerability of certain groups, mainly tenants and women, most people believe they 'own' their land. There is a universally expressed 'need', however, for formalisation of tenure rights. People are prepared and able to invest in housing and property improvements, as well as in tenancy settlements on black -owned land and in trust land settlements, without the housing subsidy, and even before de jure formalisation of their land rights. In such settlements, the substantial bricks and mortar investments being made indicate a commitment to permanent residence.

Among all age groups including young adults, there is a strong pull of place towards their own particular village or settlement. Informal settlements are largely the result of a natural population increase that leads to the staking of additional land claims. Policy errs when it views these communities as 'rural' - they are functionally urban, and have real and complex links with the city and its workings - and when it favours land reform that is tied to some productive activity on the land.

This paper is based on a land reform, livelihoods and quality of life study conducted in the eastern region of the North-West Province (1998). This research combined a number of methods: e.g. baseline study, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), household survey, key-informant interviews and mapping, and anthropological participant observation. The purpose of the research was to establish the need and potential for land reform within nine selected localities (see figure 1). Some of them were at different stages of the land reform process. They cover almost the entire range of peri-urban and rural settlement types in former homeland areas, namely: a proclaimed township; tenancy settlements where black landowners subdivided their land to rent out residential sites (shack farming); trust land settlements; traditional authority settlements; and black-owned agricultural smallholdings. The very large settlements of Winterveld, Mabopane, Garankuwa and Temba, all administered by Transitional Representative Councils, were not included in the research.

With respect to livelihoods, lifestyles and aspirations the majority of households covered in the study seem to have turned their backs on traditional rural pursuits. They are functionally urban. Their focus is not on cattle-keeping or crop production but on cash incomes enabling an urban lifestyle. This lifestyle increasingly involves impressive residential upgrading in settlements that they claim as their permanent, preferred habitat, and where they anticipate eventually enjoying all the urban amenities including flush toilets. This applies to far-flung isolated settlements and tribal authority and tenancy settlements in peri-urban areas.

One of the perceived benefits of residing in the areas researched is relative freedom, for adults and youth, from urban pathologies including crime. The frequently used vernacular is that settlements are 'cool'. Other perceived benefits of country living are documented below and they include cheap and easy access to residential sites. The heart of the matter is that the people themselves appear to be making sound economic 'value for money' choices to live in these localities rather than migrating close to their mainly urban workplaces.

The already extensive and constantly escalating self-initiated and self-funded home-building phenomenon arises out of a de facto sense of ownership of land even though only 29% of respondents claim to hold registered title. A logical concomitant of these substantial bricks-and-mortar investments in home-building, as well as general improvements to properties, is the widely expressed interest in formalising tenure rights to occupied land via de jure individual title deeds.

This proactive self-determination and its relationship to meaningful upward mobility appear to have been overlooked in the extensive problematising of rural realities and potentials. Our observations suggest that residents in these settlements are not dependent on government leadership, intervention or legal edict to further their

interests. Instead they go for the gaps that have become available, specifically in such 'rural' areas, and which offer opportunities for dramatic, affordable improvements to their residential quality of life in advance of the expected formalisation of tenure rights.

Rather than being conceptualised as 'rural', virtually the entire region in which the nine settlements are located is better understood as a vast extension of the urban system; a residential conglomeration on the outskirts of the Pretoria metropole. The Eastern District comprises the magisterial district of Brits, formerly of the Transvaal, the districts of Odi 1 and 2 and Moretele 1, forming part of former Bophuthatswana. The area of the district is around 6 000 km². This is only 6% of the North-West Province's land area but it carries one third, approximately 1.1 million, of the province's population (Statistics South Africa, 1996). This population is scattered across some 140 settlements ranging from small and relatively remote villages, such as Thlolwe, Jonathan and Kwarriekraal, with populations of around 1 000 to 5 000, to the sprawling peri-urban concentrations adjoining Brits and forming a crescent along the north-western edges of the Greater Pretoria metropolitan area. These include 'towns' such as Jericho, Maboloka, Modderspruit and Stinkwater with populations from 1 500 to 15 000 households.

Large sections of the Gauteng-Eastern District boundary were previously the boundary between Bophuthatswana and the Republic of South Africa. The Pretoria metropolitan area, on the South African side, was an area with many job opportunities and which served as an employment and shopping base for most settlements on the Bophuthatswana side of the boundary. In order to be as near as possible to the Pretoria metropolitan area, these former dumping grounds were developed along the historical boundary which now represents the southern and eastern boundaries of the Eastern District. The functional links of the Eastern District with the Pretoria metropole have resulted in about 130 000 people commuting daily between these destinations.

From dumping grounds to attractive residential and community life

From the first 'outside looking in' observation of the habitats of North-West communities it was immediately obvious that conventional stereotypes about the residential quality of life in such localities were off target. No settlement in this region, including even sprawling informal areas such as the notorious Winterveld, resembles urban settlements like Alexandra or Kliptown in Gauteng. There is also little evidence of mass housing development projects, which are inevitably uniform, except around proclaimed townships.

In all, including the more recent informal settlements, there is visible and impressive evidence of transformation – which goes further than infrastructure improvements for residents. There is extensive and continuously increasing activities initiated by people to upgrade, beautify and gentrify their own residential space. This generally consists of large to very large individual stands upon which residents are increasingly involved in establishing gardens, lawns, and trees – far more than the anticipated

subsistence agriculture activities. Behind well-tended hedges, elegant walls, fences and gates a 'housing renaissance' is in process. From the start-up stage of stockpiling bricks to the end products, an ever-escalating number of inhabitants are participating in an impressive bricks-and-mortar investment to upgrade their residential quality of life. This data coincides with CDE research in Winterveld where families were found to have spent an average of R11 000 on their own housing. An impressive achievement for a low-income population!

The escalating, self-initiated, self-funded and self/small-contractor built improvements and extensions to existing structures, or the construction of entirely new cement, clay and face-brick homes, was kick-started by a few individuals. It is now a major sociological phenomenon, an unstoppable peoples' process, and evidence suggests that this rural housing renaissance observed throughout the North-West is a countrywide phenomenon. The great architectural variety of owner-built homes is a striking feature in all nine localities. Furthermore, large and small dwellings are positioned on site according to individual choice. The diversity breaks the original Soweto mould (including recent RDP housing projects). This diversity is a statement that loudly and unambiguously proclaims individual identity and makes a significant and positive contribution to residential quality of life.

A widely accepted paradigm in South Africa is that there is an inevitable, painful, slow evolutionary process of 'urbanisation' to which it is claimed only half of the South African population has adapted, but to which all aspire. There is said to be a rural 'push' and urban 'pull' also applying to peri-urban settlements. The theory is that these settlements are a stepping-stone on this route - a gradual process of becoming urbanised, of inching towards the cities. In actual fact only 15% of respondents in the study (236 were interviewed) have lived at their present residence for less than a year. Almost the same percentage (13%) had been there for 30 or more years, and over a third (36%) had lived there for between 16 and 30 years. The majority (67%) have been there for more than six years and the average length of stay across the whole survey sample was 16 years.

Another widely accepted theory is that these 'rural' populations would, if given half a chance, involve themselves in agricultural activities. They would transform their livelihood base by feeding not only their families from their own crop production, eggs, chickens, milk and meat but by also going commercial with their surplus. In fact, use of land for agriculture appears to be limited, even in the two small holding settlements. A few residents grow maize and some vegetables but the majority of households grow no crops and express disinterest in crop cultivation. The reasons given for why agricultural activities are not a sensible option are as follows: unpredictable rainfall and droughts of recent decades and lack of access to alternative water; invasions by chickens, goats, donkeys, cattle and human crop thieves; the full range of 'normal' agricultural setbacks; the considerable time and labour costs involved; and the cheapness and ready availability of vegetables and fruit from hawkers who buy their supplies from local commercial farms.

In reality most families have had a long-term, hands-on relationship with urbanism, and this is ongoing. For most, urbanisation occurred a long time ago and was not half as difficult as it was made out to be. Actual physical locality has little to do with it. Functionally urban in attitudes, aspirations and lifestyles the great majority may be, but it is inappropriate to conceive of these settlements as displaced urban areas. They feel as strong a 'pull of place' as most people do towards a particular locality regarded as their own home, neighbourhood, suburb, or town. Rather than perceiving their own families as displaced, or discarded urbanites, respondents (1 531 were interviewed) reported that almost all (79%) family members like living where they are and do not want to move to towns or cities. Those who want to stay represent all generations. All nine settlements reveal less of the one-way rural-to-urban flow generally assumed of urbanisation. Interestingly, a total of 34% had migrated in from urban habitats, including Pretoria and Johannesburg.

It could be argued that these are the success stories and that all things being equal there would be less 'pull of place' and more migration from such settlements to better endowed urban centres. As things stand, the local attitude, including that of many younger adults, is that apart from water, electricity and consumer facilities, city living shares the same low-income and unemployment realities, in addition to crime, congestion, noise, more temptations to lead youth astray, much higher costs for far less comfortable residential quality of life and other amenities. Factors such as these do not merely exert a 'rural pull' on existing residents but also produce in-migration from urban areas which over time may increase as it has among more affluent urbanites, such as those now permanently based around Hartebeespoort Dam and commuting daily to their employment in Pretoria.

This 'pull of place' can be related to the considerable economic investment in housing, which leads to the preoccupation with obtaining individual title deeds to protect this investment and a possible means of accessing funds with property as collateral. 'Pull of place' and de facto tenure security have also clearly been influenced by improvements to infrastructure and the expectation that this process will continue, to eventually include indoor flush toilets, tarred roads and other amenities available in urban residential areas, as well as Soshanguve, Mabopane, etc. This will further enhance the quality of life, as well as the self-initiated investment in housing and upgrading of properties, in these localities.

Nearly half of the survey sample of 236 respondents chose their locality because "we could find living space here". "We liked it there" was the response of 7%, with a further 9% citing kinship relations – a 63% positive 'pull of place' total. Only 15% ascribe their present location to evictions, with 5% evicted by the former government and 10% by white farmers. Only 4% were escaping deprivation in deep rural areas, while the same percentage moved there from large towns and cities to escape crime and cost of living. "To find work" in nearby urban/industrial centres was cited by 14%.

Although transport costs to places of employment may be higher, but not astronomically higher, and infrastructure and services less developed than in urban settlements, residents in the research localities score a major advantage with their

accommodation costs. Only 15% of families incur any accommodation costs at an average rate of only R32 per month. The great majority of 85% do not have to budget for any accommodation costs apart from their chosen expenditure on home extensions, improvements and building. Food, household necessities, furniture, appliances, transport, clothing and electricity are the most important items in household budgets at a theoretical average of R969 per family per month.

Sizes of properties in research settlements vary within and between localities but most are larger to very large, ranging from 40m x 25m up to 200m x 200m. In order of respondents' priorities the residential menu available in these settlements is "more land and bigger plots", "cheaper living in general", "cheaper to build", "cheaper land" and "no building restrictions". A total of 53% of the respondents are certain that living conditions are better here than in the bigger formal towns. The main reasons are the availability of land and cheaper living in general.

It is clear that the overriding factors guiding people's decisions and aspirations with regard to land acquisition and settlement are based on sound economic and 'value for money' considerations, linked to quality of life. In the survey only 15% of respondents said that they had to budget anything for accommodation costs, 54% said they settled because they could find living space, 81% believed it was possible to make a living where they were through home business and 79% had no desire to leave to go to the city.

Best value residential and community life options available to those electing to remain in these settlements are a major component, but not the whole, of their functionally urban or mainstream quality of life base.

Present tenure systems and other land reform realities

A detailed land audit of the de facto ownership and administration of land should form the basis of the land reform process in the Eastern District. The dual land registers kept by the South African and Bophuthatswana governments respectively, between 1978 and 1994, hampered the investigation. The reintegration of land information on the four magisterial districts in the Eastern District is incomplete and in many cases unverified. Preliminary work indicated the following distribution: privately owned land (37%); privately owned land under control of a tribe (4%); state owned land (34%); state owned land under control of a tribe (6%); tribal land (18%); townlands (0.8%); and game reserves (0.2%)

The following generalisations with regard to the registration of land are of crucial importance to land reform in the Eastern District. The small extent of privately owned land (37%) results in a limited free land market with limited possibilities for land redistribution based on the 'willing buyer willing seller' principle. The large extent of land owned by the state (34%, excluding land administered by a tribe) presents huge possibilities for land redistribution through the transfer of state land. However, a clear distinction should be made between land administered by the Ministry of Land Affairs, such as former South African Development Trust (SADT) land (the

Development Trust and Land Act, 18 of 1936 established SADT as the holder of the final title to African land and all trust lands were incorporated into the former Bophuthatswana) and land administered by other departments such as the Department of Public Works. State-owned land within local and representative council areas poses a major obstacle to the development and management of such areas by the local councils. Land under tribal control (28%) poses many problems for the land reform process, particularly in the areas of redistribution and tenure reform. Although the State President is the trustee of tribal land, the transfer and development of land can only take place with the approval and cooperation of the tribe. Development and tenure reform in dense settlements on tribal land pose a major challenge to land reform.

Diverse tenure arrangements coexist in the region and in some cases within the same settlements: permit-based rights or permission to occupy (PTO), also called stand cards, on trust land; user rights and communal tenure on tribal land; tenancy on land owned by black landowners; subletting from main occupants (either main tenants or PTO holder); individual ownership with titles or in undivided shares; group ownership through a community trust or recent creation of provisional communal property associations; and squatting on land owned by tribes or private landowners.

The expectation that extremely cheap living is available in this region is obviously influenced by the traditional tenure system. As a traditional authority settlement those with legitimate tribal affiliation are entitled to almost free residential, agricultural and grazing land (affiliation fees for people who apply for a site but do not belong to the tribe vary from R400 to R650). Tenure arrangements surrounding land occupied under the traditional authority system are common knowledge. It is also common knowledge that in trust land settlements, payment per annum is a mere R1 for a residential site and R3 for agricultural or grazing rights, if required.

The land tenure situation in the district is complex, with only 29% of respondents in a household survey of 236 families claiming to hold registered title. The majority of respondents (71%) firmly believe they 'own' their land although they do not have proper titles. Only 3% perceive a problem with long-term security of tenure.

Following 1994, the population has clearly enjoyed a sense of de facto tenure security. There are general expectations of eventual legal tenure, which have been fortified by ongoing infrastructure transformation processes introduced in most settlements. Besides implementation of service delivery projects, land reform projects and especially redistribution and resolution of land disputes have also contributed to or reinforced the 'securisation' of land tenure. It is, however, more difficult to assess the impact of recent legislation that has been adopted to facilitate the land tenure reform process. Legislation includes the amended Upgrading of Land Tenure Rights Act (No. 112 of 1991), the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act (No. 3 of 1996), the Communal Property Association Act (No. 28 of 1996), the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act (No. 31 of 1996) and the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (No. 62 of 1997).

Despite the above positive indications, there is an expressed need for formalisation of land rights and transactions. Some conflict exists around overlapping rights. Vulnerable groups such as long-term 'tenants' and women face potential threats to their security of tenure. Often the emphasis is as much on getting titles than on establishing a legitimate land administration body that could deal adequately and fairly with plot disputes and transactions.

On the open-ended question as to who should allocate land for settlement, 66% trust the government with this task, 19% entrust it to tribal authorities, 5% to civics and 5% to the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO).

When families rent the land on which they stay, land is rented from landowners (51%), the government (20%), other 'tenants' (11%) and tribal authorities (9%). There is acknowledgement from 33% that they have not paid rent for, on average, seven years. The two main reasons for not paying rent are refusal to pay (60%) and landowners no longer requiring rent (30%).

Ninety-two percent of families perceive the houses they occupy as their property. Ownership of such a house is a flag proclaiming progress and functionally urban or mainstream identity. Almost 70% of respondents have no problems or no immediate problems with their land rights, 21% perceive the lack of proof of ownership as a problem and only 3% are troubled about the lack of long-term security.

All nine localities depend on multiple livelihoods involving outside and self-employment but many households seem dependent on only one breadwinner. Outside and self-employment can seemingly produce similar income levels. Regardless of possible latent entrepreneurial spirit in such communities, there would appear to be a limit to the number of sustainable income-generating, self-employment niches. This limit is symbiotically related to incomes earned in the formal economy. In short, rather than stimulating further self-employment, job shrinkages in the formal employment sector tend to also diminish local economic activities.

Assumptions that new livelihoods opportunities can be created for essentially urbanised and increasingly well-educated populations through subsistence/small-scale, commercial/co-operative farming ventures appear unrealistic and are attracting only a minuscule amount of grassroots interest from this region.

Outside of mainly conventional agriculture, the land reform programme looks to an extension of local self-employment as the means of linking land ownership to a productive economic base. As already stated, this does not seem viable as long as formal employment is static, if not actually diminishing, and wages are generally pegged at the lowest permitted level. Ten spazas in one community may be sustainable, 20 would not be. Introducing new types of enterprise could be of some benefit.

Land reform policies and ownership to either agricultural or home-based economic productivity. No such conditions have ever applied to property ownership among other population groups, of whom many members have successfully seen to their own material advancement, not simply through employment but also by being property owners. Communities are disinclined to expend vast amounts of time and energy trying to live off the land and did not show much interest in agricultural involvement, although its official land reform linkage to land acquisition may sometimes be a persuasive arm-twister. Land is needed mainly for residential expansion, especially in the closer settlements where populations are growing, although in some settlements a desire also exists among certain interest groups for more ploughing and grazing land.

A large section of at least two of the communities, namely Modderspruit and Maboloka, would like to see their areas established as formal townships. They believe this will sort out problems to do with the administration of land by the tribal authority, standardisation of plot sizes and provision of land for social facilities, etc. The physical standardisation of plot sizes is not always possible or even desirable. Variable rates could be believed depending on the size of plots.

In Ga-Moeka a Communal Property Association (CPA) has been created and their constitution has empowered them to perform a broad range of development functions. This has resulted in confusion regarding the respective responsibilities of the CPAs and other community structures, which have traditionally performed many of these development functions. The property, held under the CPA, is privately owned and a broad range of development duties will need to be performed by the CPA or another development structure. The consequence of establishing a system of communal tenure under freehold ownership is that the rights are privatised, as is the responsibility to deliver and maintain services. Local and provincial government will not be responsible for the internal reticulation and maintenance of services. Are CPAs appropriately capacitated to perform these functions? One thing is certain, they will need a great deal of support to fulfil their developmental role.

Options for service delivery and administration are determined by the tenure system and also by the capacity of local government. Under the freehold system, for example with a dense peri-urban layout, development administration demands are high.

Tenure and livelihood aspirations

Almost half of respondents are not troubled by existing arrangements with regard to land ownership and will be satisfied if it could remain as it is. Another 38% prefer private or individual ownership to communal ownership (13%). Tenure aspirations differ between, and in some cases within, communities. In one locality, Maboloka, residents of a particular section aspire to the freehold system and have even recommended that their settlement be declared a township. The District Council for the Eastern District could support such evolution towards individual tenure rights. Officials have suggested that they would promote a titling process in dense peri-urban settlements so as to expand the tax revenue base of the council. Most people aspire to some form of individual control over their plot of land, but do not mind a local

communal form of general land administration. Some say they would like democratically elected local structures to administer the land according to communally decided rules and guidelines. Others trust only government to fulfil this function.

People on the whole are fairly sure about their right to remain on the land, as witnessed by the degree of investment in residential upgrading. However, there are problem areas, for instance where there is tension between 'landowners' and 'tenants' (Majakaneng and Stinkwater). Women and other family members are also vulnerable. Many say rights to land should be registered in the name of a family, or at least with the women as co-holders of rights. The biggest problem is that tenure rights, land transactions and relationships between stakeholders are either informal and/or based on pre-1994 arrangements, which make people, according to the law, very vulnerable to dispossession and conflict.

Any land administration system would have to recognise and deal with the great diversity of tenure at a very local and micro level. People need clarity and certainty about who will administer land rights and in what way. Currently there is confusion around the role of traditional chiefs, civic organisations and other community forums, elected local government, the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) and other government departments. Development and consolidation of appropriate systems for the administration of land rights are prerequisites for the achievement of the goal of tenure security. The relationship between the tenure system and the administration of development, particularly in dense, peri-urban settlements, has been raised as a key concern, and requires more attention in the land reform process.

Some localities are extremely large and it would be difficult to find sustainable tenure solutions at the locality level. Localities are often divided into physical sections, certain of which may desire different tenure solutions. In others, there are different interest groups such as tribal structures and civics that maintain a distinct geographic identity and have diverse aspirations. There may be some geographic, historical, cultural or other identity that could be used as the basis for tenure work to proceed at the very low or micro-level. In some localities, tenants are extremely hard to reach. Their tenure aspirations have not yet been established. The solutions pursued by tenants may be relatively diverse – an upgrade where people are now, the purchase of land for settlement and secured tenancy agreements or contracts.

Employment and basic services are priorities, and all other development is secondary. Only 28% of families express a particular need to build a new house with the RDP housing grant. The need for land for business purposes is considered more important than the need for agricultural land. Although 11% show some interest in land for agricultural purposes only 2% want to own a farm. Hence, the keeping of stock and crop cultivation are perceived as supplementary small-scale activities rather than ways to sustain life.

Although 51% of respondents believe that families could make a living from gardening and crop cultivation it is not a major enterprise in the communities. It is by

and large a private rather than a co-operative venture. Only four out of 236 families indicated that they make any income from crop cultivation. Produce is for own use. Only 17% indicate an interest in commercial stock farming. Of this group 64% believe that it could take place here; 92% consider it as an individual possibility; and the majority have taken no action apart from entertaining the idea. The biggest constraint is perceived to be lack of water (20%) and only 12% consider land shortages as a problem.

In contrast to the relative lack of interest in farming activities, 81% of respondents believe that it is possible to make a living through home businesses because they believe that the market and buying power exists. Few respondents (25%) object to the mixing of home businesses and residential functions in the same area. Other local economic development options and possibilities should be investigated as part of the land reform process.

Conclusion

The field research took place in 1998 at the early stage of land reform implementation in the region. It became obvious that there was a lack of unambiguous information to communities about existing land reform parameters (particularly the linkage to agricultural or home-based economic productivity and tenure options). Lack of implementation of land reform and lack of response to land reform initiatives from within communities or to real community needs have all contributed to continuing ignorance and frustration, as well as problems and iniquities around land reform in most localities.

Surprisingly, 74% of respondents are completely uninformed about the government's land reform programme. The standard answer is "I don't know anything about it". Another 12% are misinformed and almost without exception associate land reform with the RDP subsidised housing scheme. Only 14% of respondents have some knowledge about the programme. The informed basically perceive land reform as a mechanism "to get people their land back".

Community and beneficiary education is needed on all aspects of land reform, but especially tenure options and their implications: legal (right to alienate and lease land rights in case of freehold); financial; practical (weight of community controls); protective legislation; grants; and other available assistance. The CPAs are widely seen by members as a kind of general development forum, without any clear understanding of what communal ownership entails. Given that there are few communal resources and that land rights are relatively individualised in these localities, it may be appropriate for land rights to be converted over time to individual freehold.

People of the Eastern District have shown that they do not really need formal legal title to improve their quality of life. The subjective reality for most people of this region is that land reform happened in 1994, with de facto security of tenure. They have apparently wasted no time in literally building on this base, proclaiming their

roots and attachment to their own particular locality, insisting that no other location will do. They express a sense of being in control of their own destiny. They do not anticipate any further pushing about, like pawns on a chessboard, by players in Pretoria or elsewhere designing development blueprints that take no account of people like them or what people like them want. They appear to be making their life and wanting to improve on it in these settlements.

This cluster of circumstances surrounding land values, costs, and tenure entitlement rather than merely a 'culture of non-payment' seem to influence and justify a general outlook that cheapness of land tenure is an intrinsic, key economic advantage of living in such localities. "We love the country because we can live here so cheaply" is stated not with any overt sense of exploitativeness or advantage presently being taken of existing circumstances, but more as a fact of life.

Yet there is the paradox that everyone wants individual title deeds to their properties, including all residents of GaMoeka who have supposedly chosen the communal property option and Mabaloka residents with no quibbles against the traditional authority under which they fall. Some respondents stated that this would qualify them to obtain bank loans to start businesses, and other steps to protecting their housing investment, obtaining building bonds, or enabling them to upgrade their accommodation at no risk. It also seems that there is an understanding that, although present costs of acquiring or occupying land in these localities are low, the future will be otherwise, to the advantage of those getting in on the ground-floor now.

There are governing principles defining land reform as a meaningful, long-term investment in upward mobility. Land ownership can be acquired cheaply in settlements within reasonable striking range of main labour centres, without the hassles of residing in cities. These contain good to top-of-the-range housing in attractive garden settings, with proper infrastructure which includes a convenient local commercial base benefiting consumers as well as local entrepreneurs. Indeed investment in these settlements is seemingly a sounder 'provident fund' than ownership of cattle.

Regardless of the distance to main urban centres or existence of some subsistence agricultural activities, quality of life orientations and aspirations, as well as the income base in all localities, are mainly those of people generally described as urbanised. With the exception perhaps of Jonathan's previously small-scale commercial farming community, a number of whose inhabitants succumbed to an imposed 'push', most residents in these nine localities do not appear to be moving gradually along a rural to urban continuum. They have strong roots in their own localities and most, including many young adults, have no desire to migrate elsewhere.

What people have achieved is impressive. The creation of decent housing, an essential requirement for upgrading quality of life has been self-initiated and self-funded through a residential renaissance. They appear to have assessed that this bricks-and-mortar investment combined with 'land for the landless' promises will bring

them eventual ownership of individual title deeds, the inevitable continuation and growth of urban spread in the direction of their localities and ongoing community development by the government. This adds up to a sound strategy not merely for survival but for further future upward mobility. Some broader strategic questions regarding the sustainability of dense peri-urban settlements in the former homelands areas need to be asked and investigated: How to transform them into economically viable urban centres with enough employment opportunities? Will formalisation of tenure rights in these peri-urban areas add substantial further impetus to residential and economic development? When formalisation of rights and extension of infrastructure services bring additional living expenses, will these peri-urban areas still be such apparently attractive places to live? Is the system flexible enough to cater for a range of tenure needs with appropriate options? Will we see a sufficiently decentralised, flexible and capacitated tenure administration system to cope with the diversity of tenure needs and conflicts situations? What is expected of government to remove obstructions and facilitate access to finance, services, etc., in order to free people's own energy and initiative.

Land transactions in most of the communities are informal, which leaves buyers extremely vulnerable to dispossession. This problem cannot be resolved until the tenure systems have been formalised and people's rights been secured. The system of land administration will, however, need to provide the following: security of land transactions, also determined by the proximity and appropriateness of the registration system; clear and agreed upon systems and procedures; and effective, accessible dispute resolution mechanisms. An appropriate decentralised system of land administration, which is adequately resourced, will provide certainty to rightsholders and underpin tenure security.

In summary, the people in the Eastern District need to receive information and education on land reform, tenure options, registration, grants and other assistance. The better the information, the more equipped are people to make informed decisions. Tenure rights and land transactions need to be formally recognised, and attention must be given to women and other vulnerable groups in this regard. A land administration system needs to be implemented that recognises local diversity, is close to the people and offers quality facilitation and mediation to ensure negotiated solutions to tenure issues and conflicts. Some additional land, especially for residential expansion, business use, social facilities and limited agricultural use, must be made available. To facilitate this, integrated land-use, development and economic planning must be undertaken, supported by intergovernmental cooperation and coordination. Ideas and assistance for economic development initiatives would be helpful, and there needs to be access to finance and services, as well as support for local economic development.

There needs to be greater understanding of people's strategic access to and use of land. This impacts on planning for land-use, infrastructure development, transportation and economic investment. It is important to keep in mind that access to, and the economic and other linkages with, Gauteng urban centres are vital to

support and sustain local economic development and continued viable habitation in the peri -urban areas of the Eastern District.

Rural and peri -urban life is presently perceived to be cheap and relatively pleasant, and residential quality better than in urban townships. However, one does not know how this will change once the District Council and other authorities start levying rates, service charges, etc. More research is needed in this regard, and the positive image of peri -urban living needs to be reflected in order to start preparing people for the future eventuality of paying more for this amenity.

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