

THE ORIGINS AND DEFINITIONS OF RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES AND THE URBANISATION PROCESS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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Introduction

The topic is a very large one and so there can be no question of a systematic treatment. Instead, I shall raise at a broad conceptual level four issues which demand consideration in the light of the goals of the workshop, as I understand them. These are (1) the scope of the term "rural" in the light of what the Land Acts have made possible; (2) continuities and discontinuities in the rural-urban spectrum and their regional variation; (3) the stability of the spatial distribution of the population in a changing policy environment; and (4) access to productive opportunities and the relation of this to provision of social and physical infrastructure. As will be seen, all these issues are related.

The Land Acts and rural structure

As is well known, the Land Acts divide rural South Africa into two parts: (1) scheduled and released land, which, anomalies apart, constitute the territory of the homelands and (2) other rural land. The differences between these parts are twofold. First, there are different land tenure systems in force. Land tenure in rural areas outside the homelands is now overwhelmingly capitalist in form, whereas land tenure in scheduled areas remains (formally, at least) tribal, with a mixture of tribal and capitalist forms in the released areas. Secondly, there are explicit racial disabilities on the ownership and tenure of land in rural areas outside the homelands and implicit disabilities in areas inside the homelands. These two features are historically, but not necessarily linked. The effects of government policy since 1913, and more particularly since the late 1950s, has been to accentuate the dichotomy between the two parts of rural South Africa. A stark demographic fact indicates this: whereas 35 per cent of the black population lived in rural areas outside the homelands in 1950, only 13 per cent did so in 1985. There has been a systematic state assault on the remnants of black freehold tenure outside the homelands, on the labour tenant system and on other forms of tenancy outlawed under the Land Acts, but which continued to exist. Until statistical material on agricultural production by black households on their own account outside the homelands ceased to be collected, it showed that this was becoming a smaller and smaller proportion of the income of these households. At the same time, average farm sizes have

risen and mechanisation has proceeded - rapidly at some times and in some sectors, more slowly otherwise. Nonetheless, there remained 3,2 million black people in rural areas outside the homelands in 1985. The 1980s have seen a rise in the wage employment/population ratio; agricultural wages themselves have stagnated in real terms. In addition, there is some off-farm working among farm residents.

As far as education is concerned, these people are uniquely disadvantaged; average black education levels are lower on the farms outside the homelands than anywhere else. Social services are haphazardly provided. While there are pockets of good housing, the state has done nothing until very recently to assist in housing provision. Over the last thirty years, most of the outmigration from these areas has been to the homelands, initially mostly to the rural areas and dense settlements in the homelands, more recently increasingly to the peri-urban fringes of the metropolitan areas. Outmigrants, particularly those too old to attend school, are uniquely disadvantaged by virtue of their education and work experience when it comes to competing in urban labour markets. Service provision in rural areas outside the homelands therefore poses special problems of its own.

In the short term, outmigration of black people is likely to continue from these areas, with total population remaining roughly constant or even dropping a little. This past and expected future experience contrasts with that in the scheduled and released areas, where there was net immigration at a rapid rate between 1960 and 1980 and at a considerably slower rate since then. Nobody knows what has happened to the number of people with some sort of access to the land, though we can be certain that the proportion of such people as a part of the homeland population living outside urban and peri-urban areas must have dropped. What we do know is that even among people with rights to the land, agricultural production now forms a small part - nearly always less than a quarter - of household incomes. The incomes of rural people in the homelands are now very highly dependent on what happens in the urban areas of the country as a whole and how the access of rurally-based people to urban labour markets develops.

The increase in dichotomisation since the late 1950s between the two parts of the rural areas means that the Land Acts continue to have a function which racial segregation in the sphere of urban production does not. Put another way, the immediate abolition of the Land Acts would have an effect on population distribution (parts of the rural areas outside the homelands would be re-occupied by black people, legally and illegally) and might (if small farming were found to be viable) have a considerable effect on the structure of agricultural production. On the other hand, if the Land Acts were to be maintained, the dichotomy might start to diminish via a mechanism already starting to become visible: the restructuring of homeland rural land tenure along more capitalist lines. The faster this process occurs, the more rapid will be outmigration from the homeland rural areas.

Continuities and discontinuities in the rural/urban spectrum

It seems sensible to classify settlement types according to the following scheme: (1) Proclaimed urban areas and peri-urban settlements within metropolitan boundaries; (2) other proclaimed urban areas and adjacent peri-urban areas; (3) dense settlements and (4) rural areas. These classifications can be cross-cut by a homeland/non-homeland distinction. Classifying the white, Coloured and Asian population and the black population outside the homelands according to this scheme presents no difficulties. When it comes to the black population inside the homelands, there are considerable difficulties in applying the scheme in practice. The population censuses count the peri-urban, dense settlement and rural population all as "non-urban", so that, for demographic purposes, one has to rely on field work, such as that of Graaff. The conceptual distinction is reasonably clear: classify as rural all those settlements where households at least have the possibility of access to agricultural land and where a significant proportion of them do. Dense settlements and peri-urban areas are then differentiated according to their location; if they lie within a metropolitan region or adjacent to a proclaimed urban area, they fall into the latter category.

In some regions, it is likely that rural areas will shade into dense settlements and peri-urban areas in a rather indistinct fashion. This is likely to be the case where homelands extend close to cities: Pretoria, Bloemfontein, East London, Durban, Pietermaritzburg. It may be that such a situation offers opportunities to black households (lacking elsewhere) to locate along a urban/rural continuum so as to take advantage of both urban and rural production opportunities. In practice, this opportunity may be restricted by the rigidities of tribal land allocation. Service provision in such situations - where the effective boundary of the metropolitan area could be expected to move out over time - would pose different problems from provision in either peri-urban communities outside the homelands

or in more remote dense settlements and rural areas in the homelands.

The stability of the spatial distribution of the black population

The issue here is how stable the spatial distribution of the black population will be under changing policies. One aspect of the issue has already been debated in relation to the abolition of the pass laws. Without reviewing that debate, one may make the following observations:

- (i) between 1980 and 1985 the Cape Town, Durban and Bloemfontein/Botshabelo metropolitan areas all had black population growth rates in excess of 10 per cent p.a. However, in the cases of Durban and Bloemfontein/Botshabelo, the increases were effectively confined to the homeland areas. For the metropolitan areas as a whole, 80 per cent of the net immigration occurred in the homeland parts.
- (ii) abolition of the pass laws will make the non-homeland parts of the metropolitan areas more accessible to black immigrants. So will designation of non-homeland land as suitable for township development, especially in the PWV. It appears that the rate of black population growth in the non-homelands parts of the PWV and Port Elizabeth has accelerated; it now probably stands at 6-7 per cent p.a. in the PWV and 7-8 per cent in Port Elizabeth.
- (iii) however, a rapid rise in the black population in the urban areas will not necessarily prevent a rise in the rural population as the following projections from the Urban Foundation demographic model show:

	1985 (million)	2000	growth (% pa)
Metropolitan:			
non-homeland	5,4	10,5	4,5
homeland	3,9	8,0	4,9
Urban:			
non-homeland	1,5	2,4	3,2
homeland	1,1	1,9	3,7
Dense settlements:			
homeland	2,1	3,3	3,1
Rural:			
non-homeland	3,2	3,2	0,0
homeland	7,2	7,8	0,5
Total	24,4	37,1	2,8
% metro + urban	49	62	
% metro + urban + dense	58	70	

In terms of actual outcomes, I am inclined to think that at present these projections are on the low side as far as urbanisation is concerned. But

they illustrate the point that even at high metropolitan growth rates, the rural population may still increase slightly. Or put the other way round, the requirements for an absolute decline in the rural population are urban growth rates at a historically unprecedented rate.

- (iv) the arguments of section 1 and this section indicate that population increase in the rural areas will depend, perhaps heavily, on:
- (a) how the rural land tenure system evolves both inside and outside the homelands and whether the Land Acts are modified or abolished;
 - (b) the rate at which residential land in metropolitan areas outside the homelands becomes available to black people, particularly in the PWV.

It will also depend on:

- (c) the rate of growth and composition of final demand for goods and services. The faster the economy grows, the more rapid urbanisation can be expected to be. On the other hand, both internal and external factors associated with growth - other than the observed regularity that people spend proportionately less on food as their incomes rise - can shift the composition of demand towards, or away from, agricultural products;
- (d) access to employment by economically active people in rurally-based households. The next section will expand on this point.

Access to productive opportunities and its relation to physical and social infrastructure

It was noted in section 1 that the incomes of rural households in the homelands now depend heavily on incomes generated by rurally-based people in the urban areas. The mechanism which has underpinned this phenomenon has been the contract labour system. This system reached its peak in the 1970s; it is likely that the proportion of black people employed under this system has dropped since then, and it is almost certain to drop further. This is itself a consequence of urbanisation; the question is whether decline in the use

of the contract labour system will proceed at a rate compatible with the urbanisation rate or whether there are rigidities which raise the spectre of rural marginalisation and a widening rural-urban income gap. Certainly, the evolution of this gap needs to be watched, though data capable of yielding clear conclusions are hard to come by. New productive opportunities in the rural areas may affect this gap quite considerably.

When it comes to considering levels of service, the relationship between infrastructural services, services directly supporting productive activities, and household incomes is of the first importance. Especially in a period of low economic growth, the consequence of pumping infrastructural services into situations where household incomes are very low and there is little scope for development of productive activities will be a waste, in that facilities will be provided in areas of high out-migration and fiscal crisis, and it will be impossible to provide these services without high levels of state subsidy. Quite a lot of homeland "development" activity in the last quarter of century has made just these mistakes and the first task of new policies is to see that they are not repeated.

The whole issue is much complicated by the confused state of regional development policy. There are attempts to replace the old emphasis on decentralised manufacturing with a more comprehensive approach to exploiting regional comparative advantages. But these will run into two difficulties: the vested interests which the existing Regional Industrial Development Programme has created and the difficulties of formulating and putting a more comprehensive programme in place. In addition, one has to try and discern whether there are trends in the spatial distribution of production other than those introduced by government policies - this in itself is a controversial issue.

Conclusion

Changing access to services affects rural-urban linkages, but it does so in an environment where many other factors are having the same effect. How these other factors operate will determine the importance of the particular effect which it is the task of the workshop to analyse. Our knowledge of the other factors - a number of which have been discussed in this brief paper - is very insufficient. But it may be that an understanding of the rough shape of the complexities may contribute to avoiding a few pitfalls. □