
B. WELFARE SERVICES

THE IMPACT OF SERVICES UPON RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES

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The Population Census is based on an urban/rural divide which has been determined according to whether there is an operational local authority in a particular area. Although this may result in areas being classified as rural when they are in no real sense so, the very existence of a local authority has significant implications for the population which is defined as urban or rural on the basis of the operation of the local authority. This is the case regardless of whether the urban area is in the RSA or an independent or non-independent homeland. Whether an area is rural or urban has, or had, implications for the operation of the Group Areas Act and influx control, and accordingly for the ability to obtain access to an area, security in that area and ability to obtain housing there. With regard to the delivery of services it is, owing to the basis on which services are provided, generally crucial whether an area is considered rural or urban.

When it comes to the delivery of services one may differentiate between urban areas - whether in the RSA or homelands, white-designated rural areas and rural areas in the independent and non-independent homelands. Ease of access and standards or levels of delivery vary enormously between the three.

In urban areas the state or local authority accepts full responsibility for the planning and provision of services such as education, health, recreation, water, electricity, roads, welfare etc. In the rural areas where there are generally no local authorities **no one plans** the provision of services, and where these are provided, the local population is required to bear a substantial portion of the cost. In the homelands the community, for example, has to take the initiative if it wants a school. It has to obtain permission, build the school and bear the full cost until such time as a subsidy may be paid by the state. In white-designated rural areas the state similarly plays no planning role and the provision of services is entirely dependent on private initiative. This reliance on private initiative has been a dismal failure and has resulted in a very inferior quality and quantity of service in rural areas.

The question is whether these differences have had an impact on the urbanisation process and the nature of rural-urban linkages. Do superior educational facilities in urban areas attract whole families to relocate? Does access to a high level of medical attention draw families

with chronically ill members to town? Does the absence of educational facilities in rural areas deprive rural dwellers of the skills that would facilitate their movement to urban areas? When urban pensions were double those of rural pensions and easier to obtain did this encourage movement to urban areas? There is no doubt that the black urban population is growing but it is not clear how large the percentage of persons newly arrived from rural areas is, nor whether the newcomers have settled permanently or temporarily. Nor are there any figures which would give some indication of the relative importance of the factors leading to the movement to town.

Overall the percentage of the black population found on white farms and in the homeland rural areas is declining but a closer look at the demographic structure of the population would seem to indicate that this is not a straightforward urbanisation process. In many cases it is not the entire family that has moved to town and many people still appear not to be urbanising permanently. There are no figures that could be used to assess the impact of the removal of influx control on the size and permanency of the urbanisation process, but whereas in the past those laws ensured that a migrant retained rural links it would seem that today the inadequacy of housing and services in urban areas and the inability to obtain a secure foothold in the urban areas is serving the same function - to some extent at least. Urban violence and personal prejudice no doubt also play a role. It would seem that the search for employment opportunities or income generation remains the chief factor influencing movement to town. Despite the unequal way in which services are supplied and the superior levels or standards of services in urban areas, services are so inadequate and the availability of housing or security so elusive, that they may not serve to attract the prospective migrant either to bring his family with him to town or to migrate permanently.

Eighty per cent of the black population of Natal and KwaZulu was rural according to the 1985 Census. The classification of the residents of dense informal settlements as rural is alone sufficient to undermine the validity of this distinction. Overestimated as the rural segment of the population may be its demographic structure may be used to comment on the nature of rural urban linkages. Breaking down the population of Natal and KwaZulu by magisterial district and by sex

and into various age cohorts indicates a very differentiated distribution. Basically children, aged persons and women are concentrated in the rural areas while males, particularly those in the economically active age groups, predominate in the urban areas. In the KwaZulu magistracies the different structures appear closely related to rural depth and the availability of employment opportunities. In Natal the position appears somewhat more complicated.

Although the percentage of the black population resident on white farms has declined drastically in recent years as a result of evictions of squatters and the abolition of tenancy, declining employment opportunities on farms, declining security on farms, and inferior access to education and other services, the population that has remained on the farms appears to be relatively stable and permanent in comparison with the urban or homeland population. Whether persons of schoolgoing, economically active or aged age groups for Natal and KwaZulu are taken into account, the percentage resident on farms does not vary much. 10,9 per cent of scholars are resident on farms, 14,6 per cent of the economically active and 11,0 per cent of the aged. The larger percentage for the economically active age group is explained by the presence of migratory farm workers, chiefly in the sugar belt, as is the above average proportion of males in this age group.

With a few minor exceptions blacks may only reside legally in rural Natal on the property of their employers and with their permission. Outside of the Pietermaritzburg-Pinetown-Durban axis there are only 16 black townships so that it is unlikely that a black working in a white-designated rural area would be able to find legal and secure accommodation in a nearby urban area. Blacks resident in white-designated areas should accordingly be limited to persons employed in the area and their dependents. Practice with this in regard to retirement on the farm on which a person has worked has varied with time and location - in those areas in which there were tenants or permanent employees the majority of aged persons appear to have remained on the farms. This has not been the practice where migrant farm workers are concerned. With the progressive abolition of tenancy and squatting and the very much higher standard of housing and other services currently required on farms the number of persons allowed to reside on farms who are not dependents of full time employees is continually decreasing. Farms are being less frequently used as a base from which to migrate and to which to return on retirement. Those who fail to, or do not wish to, find employment on farms are increasingly making a permanent break with their rural roots as they enter the economically active age group. Although their ability to do so has been improved by the abolition of influx control, the extremely low levels of education on farms and poor resources make it very difficult for farm

dwellers to urbanise successfully. Apart from being less likely to succeed in obtaining a job or a house than their urban or homeland counterparts they may well have no home or family on whom they can rely for support should they fail.

Unequal access to education is reflected in figures for the percentage of the population which has received no education at all. It is highest in rural Natal (50,3 per cent), followed by rural KwaZulu (44,4 per cent) and then urban Natal (26,4 per cent). The very poverty of education on white farms hinders the escape of farm dwellers to an area where superior education is provided. Persons become trapped in a vicious circle from which they cannot escape - and yet the farms do not have the capacity to absorb such persons into the workforce and cannot offer them even residential security.

Where the expected escape from such a situation would be to urbanise, in the South African context people may have no choice but to move to another rural area - either in the RSA or a homeland.

In certain white-designated rural areas there are dense black populations whose structure resembles more closely that of a rural-homeland-migrant-remitting-area than of a white-designated rural area. In these areas de facto black settlement has occurred which is not dependent on the location of the employment of the household head. These are areas where tenants have never been evicted; where the population growth on labour farms has been unrestricted; where people have simply settled when evicted from other rural areas or where informal black towns have developed without any formal declaration. A population breakdown in these areas reveals above average percentages of children and aged persons and a predominance of women in the economically active age group. The majority of men in this age group are normally absent as migrants as is the case in the rural areas in the homelands. Such communities are found in the magisterial districts of Babanango, Weenen, Ngotshe, Klip River, Umvoti, Bergville and Estcourt. With regard to service delivery these communities may be in a worse position than homeland rural areas. In theory the provision of services in these areas is dependent on white or employer initiative. Where they are absent there is no one to take the initiative and services may be totally non-existent. In such circumstances it may be necessary for a crisis to develop before the authorities step in to deal with an 'oil-slick situation' or to develop an area prior to consolidation into a homeland. Urban/rural linkages in these communities are probably more current and regular than in the white farm communities.

A comparison of the population structure of the rural areas of the homelands with that of Natal and the urban areas of the homelands combined may throw some

light on the nature of the urbanisation process and the factors influencing it. The partially transitory nature of movement to Natal or the urban areas from the rural areas of the homelands is illustrated by the fact that 28,7 per cent of the 5 - 14 age group, 48,1 per cent of the 20 - 54 age group and 23,1 per cent of those aged 55 or older reside in Natal or the urban areas. Although these figures are static and accordingly do not reflect the movements of individuals over time or necessarily indicate future trends, the implication is still that many urban workers/dwellers are migrants in the sense that they have gone to the urban area alone and left their dependents, both old and young, in the rural areas. A further implication is that many workers will return to the rural areas on retirement. Despite the fact that services are inferior and more expensive in rural areas, it would seem that the likelihood of being unable to obtain access to any services at all, as well as to being unable to find a secure and acceptable home in the urban periphery, encourages many migrants to retain their rural links intact and to return there on retirement.

Educational facilities are worst on white farms and there is considerable evidence of dependents who have been sent away in order to obtain an education. Frequently however they are forced to seek the education which they have found unobtainable in the white-designated rural areas, not in the towns but in the homelands. A similar situation confronts farmworkers facing retirement. They are unlikely to have the option of moving to an urban area. The only openings available, none of which the worker may claim as of right, may be movement to a homeland or to a white-designated area which has de facto become a black resettlement area.

The existence of better health and welfare services in urban areas does not necessarily imply that individuals would be better serviced were they to move to town. Even where this is the case a lack of housing and security might make the cost of taking up the health or welfare service too great. There is however considerable evidence of individual members of households relocating to urban areas when they were chronically ill and required regular attention. In such a case the ill individual might lodge with an individual migrant from the rural household who resides within reach of the superior medical facility.

When social pensions were initially extended to blacks (1944) they were considerably higher and easier to obtain in urban than in rural areas. In 1965 in order to prevent persons moving to urban areas to avail themselves of the larger pension all pensions were equalised. Although service delivery has improved in rural areas there are still places (7 magisterial districts in Natal in 1985) where there is no service at all and others where it is most unsatisfactory. The distribution of pensionable persons however does not appear to have been influenced by this fact. 84,7 per cent of persons aged 65 or older in Natal and KwaZulu are rurally based. The percentage of the population which is pensionable in rural Natal is lower (3,4 per cent) than that in rural KwaZulu (5,2 per cent), reflecting the fact that some farm workers are migrants and that others are not permitted to retire on the farm on which they have been working. Such persons are unlikely to have the option of urbanising to improve their access to pensions and other services.

Discrepancies in levels of access to services or lack of access is not solely explained by the urban/rural divide. It is frequently explained by the KwaZulu/RSA divide. Similarly the possibility of improving service delivery may not lie in an urban area but in the removal of the artificial boundaries between the RSA and KwaZulu.

Improvement in service delivery both for its own sake and to prevent unnecessary urbanisation will be difficult to achieve without planning and the development of rural growth points. In many of the rural areas of the homelands this may require the development of new growth points, but in much of Natal it could be achieved by opening up the already existing approximately 250 small towns to the majority of the rural population who surround and support them. Such persons are unrepresented in the administration of these towns; they do not contribute to their rates; they have no means of applying pressure upon third tier government to ensure delivery of those services which should be supplied by or in such towns. The effective and efficient servicing of rural populations can only be achieved through such towns - but it will not occur until they are democratically controlled by all whom they serve, or should serve. □