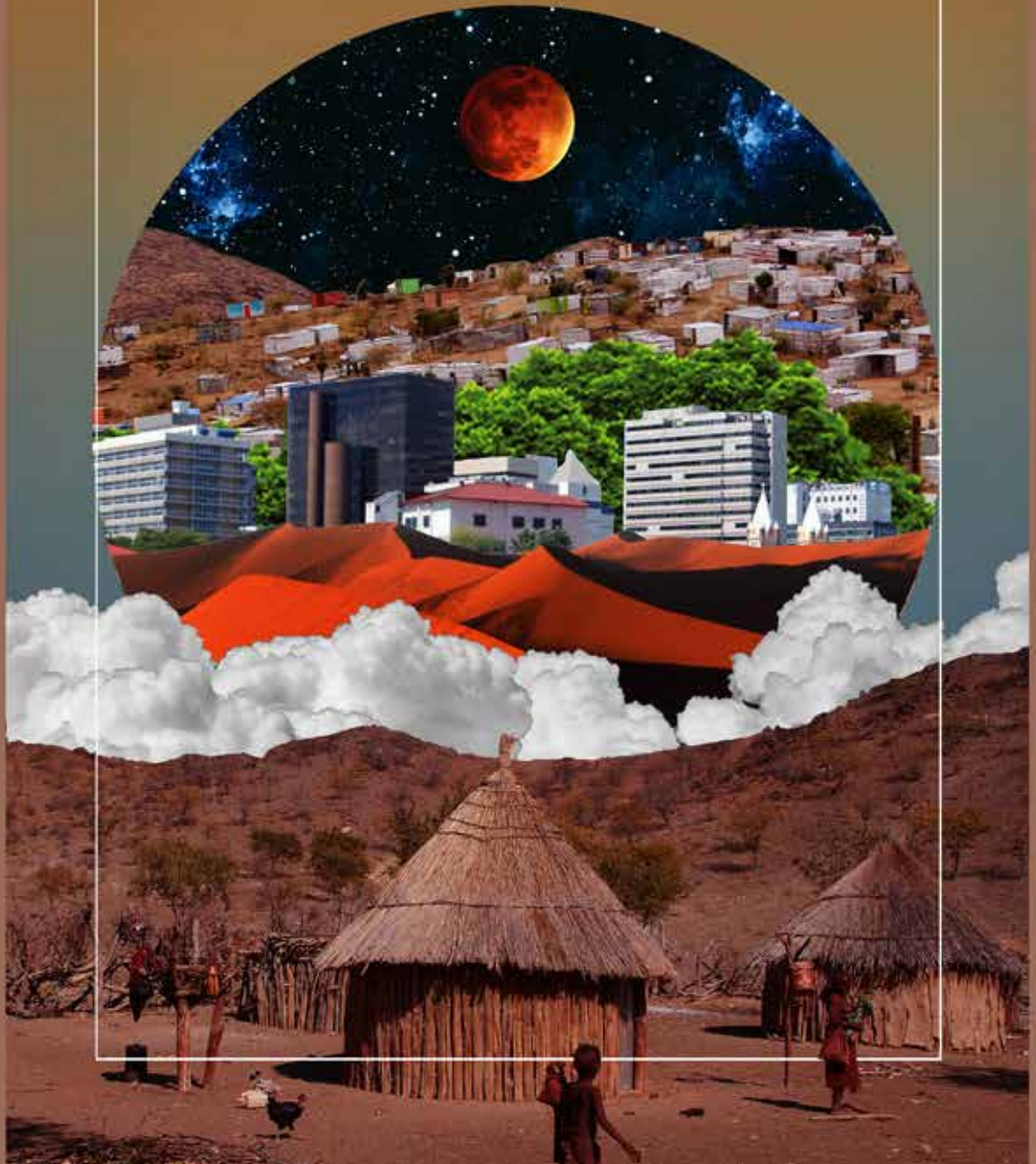


Namibian  
Journal  
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Justice

## Namibia's Housing Crisis in Perspective



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# **Namibia's Housing Crisis in Perspective**

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## **(Re)tracing the History of Spatial Segregation, Urbanisation and Housing in Windhoek**

*Cities are haunted by their own histories. They not only stretch across time, but also extend through space (Patke, 2000: 4).*

*Ellison Tjirera*

### **Abstract**

*Namibia's fraught history of segregation remains the phantom that haunts contemporary urban spaces. The nature of urbanisation, and attendant problems that this process presents – as far as provision of housing is concerned – undoubtedly indicts the history of spatial segregation. Since the lifting of influx control in the mid-1980s, urban areas across Namibia have experienced unsustainable waves of urbanisation and*

*resultant lack of decent housing. This lack of housing has implications for social justice, viz. right to shelter. Archival research findings allow for a retracing of colonial spatial segregation that continues to provide valuable context. This context needs to be thoroughly understood so that a meaningful change of Namibia's urban spaces ensues. The question of housing provision remains a problem area in most of urban Namibia,*



*Photo: Guillermo Delgado*

*for there have been more misses than hits. These misses have implications for social justice as those who suffer the indignities of lack of decent housing are largely the black, urban poor.*

**Key words: colonial spatial segregation, urbanisation, housing, contemporary urban spaces, Windhoek, social justice.**

## Introduction

The recent World Cities Report by the UN-Habitat foregrounds the value of sustainable urbanisation across several dimensions such as the economy, the environment and importantly, the people. Amongst the main findings of this report, “inequality remains a persistent trend in urban areas; and affordable housing remains elusive” (UN-Habitat 2020: xvii). How do we make sense of these enduring urban problems that continue to beset cities of the Global South? Patke (2000) reminds us that cities are haunted by their own histories. In making sense of the maladies of urban inequality and elusiveness of affordable housing, we should then probably travel back in time.

An account of contemporary urban spatiality demands attention to its historical antecedents. This is precisely because urban spaces are endlessly (re)shaped through and by successive dominant practices, social mores and legal systems. Spinks rightly posits

that “all phenomena occur over time, and thus have history, but they also happen in space, at particular places and so also have geography” (2001: 3). It follows that excavating the history of Windhoek – a history that spans over at least three-quarters of a century – allows for an understanding of contemporary spatial layout based on residential segregation and lack of adequate housing. The history of Windhoek is alluded to without absolving contemporary policies that equally explain the housing problem. For one, there are enduring private interests in the provision of housing and lengthy administrative processes. The inertia surrounding zoning and other building protocols suggest that a lot has been left unchanged, perhaps deliberately. As evinced by the 1991 National Housing Policy and its updated review in 2009, there has been due recognition of housing challenges in Namibia. The policy landscape aside, it is widely accepted that the demand for affordable housing by citizens has surpassed the supply, particularly in lower income brackets (Cf. Itewa 2002; Sweeney-Bindels 2011; Remmert & Ndhlovu 2018).

There are spatial changes over time that have bequeathed Windhoek some sense of identity. The Windhoek of today with all its spatial determinants and social ordering exhibits an immense indictment of history. In an attempt to historicise Windhoek’s spatiality, this

article briefly revisits the history of Windhoek, beginning with painting a picture of a colonial outpost of German imperial rule. As German colonial rule was short-lived (1885-1915), though stubborn to efface spatially, the changing of colonial hands and the related making of an apartheid city is worth reflecting on. The apartheid city was predated by a Windhoek that was ready for separation. Retracing the heightening of residential apartheid when Windhoek came under the influence of Pretoria remains extremely important. The amplification of segregation during South Africa's rule (1915-1990) led to "cartographies of balkanisation" (Hanlon 2011: 749) that came to define how residents converse about different residential areas of Windhoek. Normalised are toponymical identifiers that freeze segregation history of colonialism in contemporary urban life.

Tracing the history of Windhoek while appreciating its contemporary nature demands that one assumes using a wide range of sources as far as instruments of data collection are concerned. Revisiting the history of Windhoek requires delving into the archives, and it is for this reason that this article is chiefly based on archival research. A close reading of old maps of Windhoek allows for a decoding of a city that was, *ab initio*, deliberately segregated.

## Theoretical Fetishism?

In broad stokes, this article is anti-theory. The contention is that theory imprisons innovation and acts as a tool for advancing matrixes of power and knowledge from the Western canon. The canon must be subverted, questioned and, if need be, dismantled. Even though we could argue that the use of theory is not necessarily confirmatory, it is not out of place that critiquing a particular theory is equally an act of validation.

Social reality is too complex to be pigeon-holed in this or that theory and the time has probably come to disrupt or totally ignore Western theoretical prisons. In fact, the dominance of Western theories in academia goes against social justice, the very organising principle of the *Namibian Journal of Social Justice* (NJSJ). Necessarily, theory is about "governing interpretations" (Knapp & Michaels 1985, p. 11) and consequently about governing meaning. I argue for an approach – whatever that is – espousing fragments and bits of 'social reality' in and of themselves; a narration of history and events which may be understood in their own right, outside the strictures of theoretical fetishism.

## A Brief History of Windhoek

Modern Windhoek is commonly agreed to have been marked by the arrival of the German *Schutztruppe* and the construction of a fort in 1890



(Cf. Mossolow, 1965; Dierks, 2002; Hartmann, 2004; Gewalt, 2009), but there are recorded indications of human activity prior to this intrusion. Archaeological findings in a form of prehistoric elephant relics during the reconstruction of the Zoo Park in 1962 point to hunters some 5 000 years ago (Sydow, 1961, as cited in Voigt, 2004). Despite this indication of earlier activity, Kotzé (1990) maintains that “as no records exist of what the settlement around the hot springs looked like before the arrival of Jonker Afrikaner in 1840, this is where the known history of the town inevitably begins” (p. 2).

Characterising Windhoek's hydrogeology, some authors point to hot springs in the centre of the city, and the Zoo Park at which the elephant relics were found is situated in city centre (Cf. Tredoux, Van Der Merwe, & Peters, 2009; Brook, Cherkasy, Marais & Todd, 2014:1). Therefore, this is perhaps where the history of Windhoek could *inevitably* start. Nonetheless, when the first Europeans arrived in what is now Windhoek, it was inhabited chiefly by OvaHerero (Wagner, 1951; Katjavivi, 1990). Simon (1983), on the other hand maintains that the arrival of European settlers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was preceded by Windhoek's inhabitation by at least five distinct groups, Damara, Aawambo, Kavango, OvaHerero and Nama (p. 55). Contestation over Windhoek was chiefly between the OvaHerero and the Orlam. The Orlam under Jonker

Afrikaner had a predilection of coming from the south to raid the OvaHerero cattle in the central part (Wagner, 1951). This raiding of cattle and conflict over land and water rights eventually led to a full-blown war between the two groups in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Katjavivi, 1990). Because of this war, Windhoek seems to have degenerated into a 'no man's land' by the time the Germans arrived and turned it into a colonial headquarters. Writing on the period 1884 – 1887, the Swiss explorer Hans Schinz avers that their [Germans] arrival in Windhoek was only acknowledged by some barking jackals that ran off when they came closer (Schinz, 1891). There were some guinea fowls squeaking but there was no sign of humans (Schinz, 1891). According to Wallace (1997), this account is consistent with the dominant missionary narrative of the time, which nonetheless seems to have ignored the Damara settlement in Windhoek circa 1891.

## **Prelude to Colonial Windhoek**

The first intimations leading to the inception of what would become colonial Windhoek can be traced to the arrival of missionaries of the Rhenish Mission Society. German missionaries and Cape Traders were the two major categories of Europeans in pre-colonial South West Africa (Kienetz, 1976). They did not precede the Portuguese sailor and explorer Diego Cão landing

at Cape Cross in 1485, marking the first recorded arrival of Europeans in Namibia (Katjavivi, 1988). Traders and explorers aside, activities of missionaries in and around Windhoek are equally important as this was the prelude to the colonial city in the making.

Missionaries played a role in offering translation services between the locals and the colonisers and their diary entries informed historical writings about Windhoek and Namibia. Some population figures before 1915 use the diaries of missionaries as sources and this raises doubts about the accuracy of data during this period. It is difficult to establish how many people lived in Windhoek before 1926 as no census was conducted before then.

Kotzè (1990) maintains that Heinrich Kleinschmidt and Carl Hugo Hahn arrived in Windhoek by 1842 and arguably found about 2000 people there. On the other hand, Bravenboer (2004) cites 1852 as the year in which the missionary Hahn paid a visit to Windhoek and estimated the number of Jonker's followers to be about 1200 Afrikaners, 2000 Damaras and 2000 Hereros, bringing the total population of Windhoek to 5200.

The first census of colonial South West Africa in 1926 puts the total population of Windhoek at 4532 (Pretoria Archives Depot, SAB/STK/517). In the middle of these disparate statistics, Simon (1983)

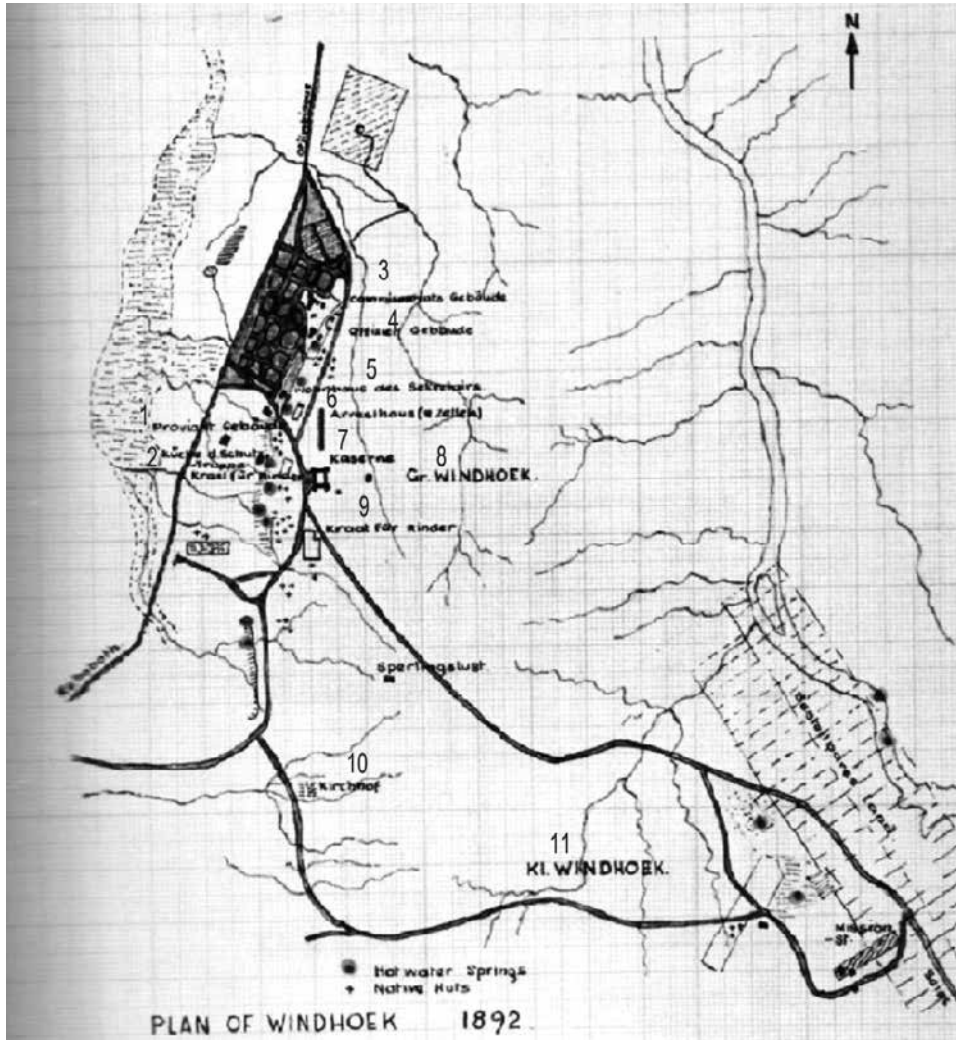
provides by far the most comprehensive data on Windhoek's population from 1921 – 1975 (see Appendix 1).

## **Genesis of Colonial Windhoek – The Arrival of German Schutztruppe**

In December 1891, Windhoek became the seat of the German administration whose previous headquarters had been at Otjimbingwe (Wagner, 1951). Map 1 below shows structures that existed in Windhoek two years after the arrival of imperial German forces. The inscription 'Plan of Windhoek' could easily confuse unsuspecting readers and thus necessitates an explanatory note. A mixture of German and English was used in labelling the map – *plan* (*n.* Der Plan) is a German equivalent of *map* – and the map below will read *Map of Windhoek* in English. What can also be deduced is that this map is necessarily not a duplicate of the original as the use of name 'Windhoek' as opposed to 'Windhuk' (German version) suggests. It is probable that one F.C. Meyer from whose publication the map below was sourced, tampered with it for his own purposes.

The legend of the map is vaguely legible, but gets clearer when magnified beyond the margins of the sheet on which the map appears. A circular sign highlighted in red shows one of the main attractions of the settlement, which played a role in two vernacular names that Windhoek assumed, the

Map 1: Windhoek 1892



Source: NSS, I7220, 'Meyer, F.C. 1953/4 – Windhoek Town Planning

**Key:**

- Food storeroom for soldiers (Proviant Gebäude)
- Kitchen for Occupying Force (Küche der Schutztruppe)
- Commissioner Building (Commisariats Gebäude)
- Building for Officers (Offiziers Gebäude)
- House of the Secretary (Wohnhaus des Sekretärs)
- Prison / Holding Cells (Arresthaus / Zellen)
- Army Base (Kaserne)
- Great Windhoek (Groß Windhoek)
- Cattle Kraal (Kraal für Rinder)
- Cemetery (Kirchhof)
- Small Windhoek (Klein Windhoek)

hot springs. The other symbol is a plus (+) representing what is labelled 'native huts'. Other notable structures without any corresponding legend on the map are *Kirchhof* (graveyard), *Arresthaus / Zellen* (prison / holding cells) and *Kaserne* (army base).

Virtually all of the structures on this map are hardly legible within the confines of what the image resolution allows. Therefore, a translated reproduction of these structures is apt to allow for a reading of the formative years – in the sense of colonial occupation of Windhoek.

The notable structures on the map suggest a strongly fortified outpost of the German colonial empire. Moreover, what is rendered apparent in these structures is a quintessential colonial capital premised on control of the local population and assertion of military power. Colonial historians maintain that the original core structures of the colonial state are the military station, the fortress, the barracks and the prison (Cf. King, 1990; von Trotha, 1990). With regards to Windhoek, the installation of these structures marked a transition from protection presence to occupation of the territory. Before setting up headquarters in Windhoek, the presence of German forces was in part related to dubious protection treaties signed with various native groups who were intermittently at war with each other (Cf. Katjavivi, 1990; Dierks, 2002;

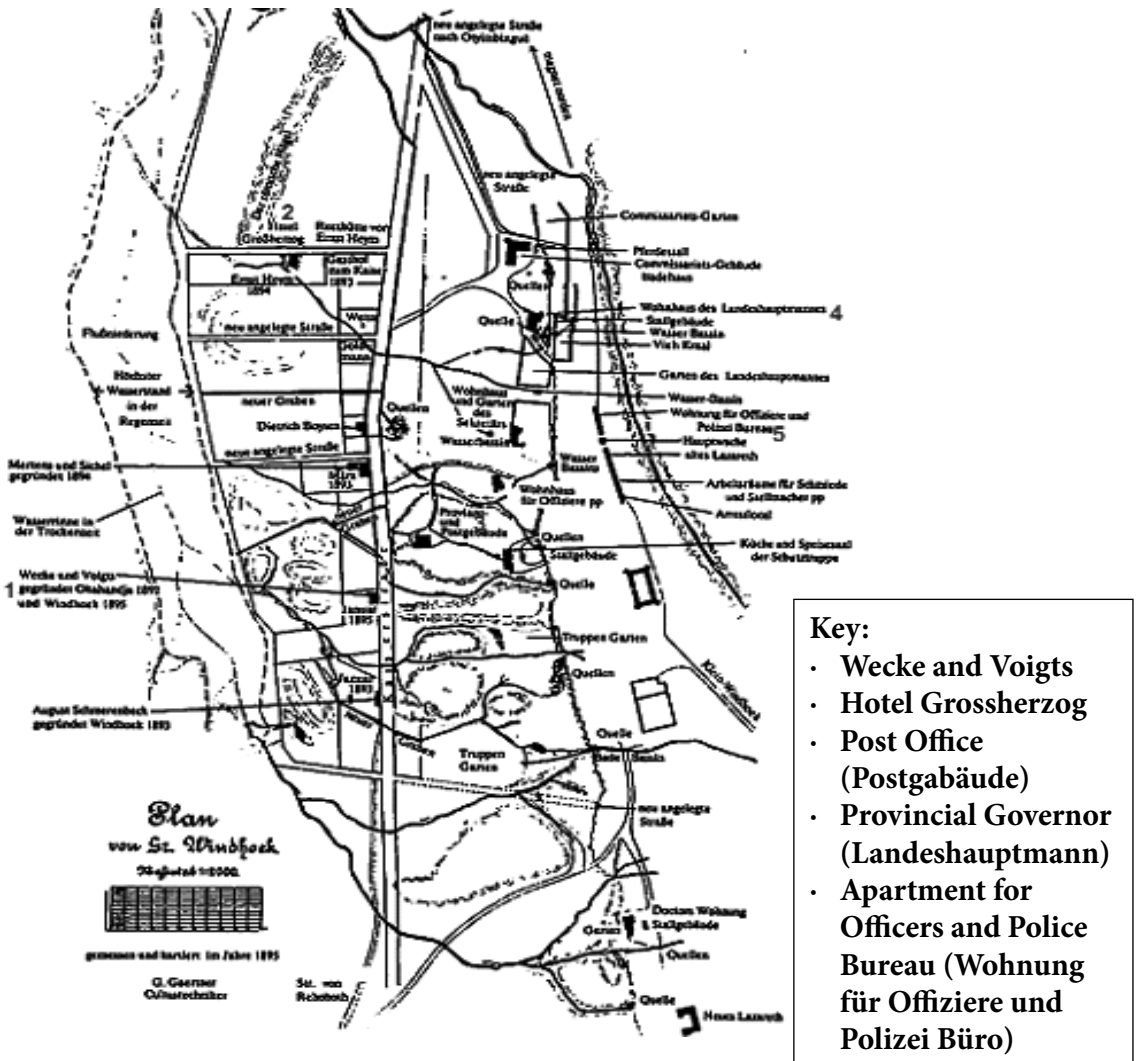
Bravenboer, 2004). The establishment of a garrison in Windhoek and concomitant military structures from 1890 onwards signposted a change in colonial policy. The fortified colonial city was based on a double structure of Gross Windhoek and Klein Windhoek with two separate administrative entities. Klein Windhoek blossomed very quickly into an agricultural settlement of remarkable productivity where settlers resided (Heywood & Lau, 1993). It was only in 1920 that one Windhoek – at least in the realm of law – came into being with the amalgamation of Gross and Klein Windhoek (NAN, LWI, 3/1/23, 63/25/40).

The second map of Windhoek, which is slightly more elaborate, appeared in 1895. Annotated by Günter von Schumann of Namibia Scientific Society, the map of 1895 shows a number of new structures that emphasise the expansion of control over the territory through technologies of discipline represented by a police bureau, for example. The map also points to the gradual expansion of the city and the introduction of civilian communication services. In a modern and expanded incarnation, the national postal operator – Namibia Post Ltd. (NamPost) – remains at the same spot where it was founded in 1895. Similarly, Wecke and Voigts, the oldest department store in Windhoek which was established in Okahandja in 1892 (Wecke & Voigts, 2018) remains at

the same spot and is marked No. 1 on the map. The relocation of this private family business to Windhoek in 1895 could well be as a result of a growing market in the colonial capital. It could also speak to the change in colonial policy, for Wecke and Voigts opened their store initially on a piece of land

given to them by Samuel Maharero in Okahandja at the time when the Germans had a protection treaty with Ovaharero. Cracks in this protection treaty became visible when Curt von François – to the chagrin of Samuel Maharero – established control over Windhoek (Sarkin, 2009). Under Curt

Map 2: Windhoek 1895



von François, Windhoek was firmly established as the centre of German hegemonic colonial dominance. In the wake of at least three military campaigns against Hendrik Witbooi before 1900 – and later the genocidal war of 1904 – 1908, Windhoek housed substantial prisoner-of-war populations (Hartmann, 2007).

As Windhoek's population was expanding because of the new shops that were aiming to cash in on the German troops stationed there – and not least hotels to cater for the new found importance of a colonial capital – it was inevitable that a police force to maintain colonial order was soon going to assume the role of discharging the legitimate use of violence. It was in 1894 that some German troopers as well as a few Africans would be seconded as policemen to the colonial capital (Zollman, 2011).

In German colonial Windhoek, racial segregation was adopted in 1905 to keep the races separate across various spheres of life (Pfister, 2006). From prohibition of mixed marriages to separate health and educational facilities, segregation was enacted through provision of services and morphed into residential divisions (Wessels, Taylor, Correira & Brock [Accepted/In press]). It follows that spatial segregation between the indigenous and European settler community was not invented by apartheid rulers but was initially

implemented during the early years of the Windhoek settlement (Friedman, 2000; Melber, 2020). As early as 1912, town planners established two 'locations' – the 'Main Location' near the city centre for Windhoek's black and coloured population, while Klein Windhoek was for settlers (Friedman, 2000).

## Changing of Colonial Hands

After being under siege from virtually all directions, Windhoek fell to the South Africa Union Forces on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1915 (Pretoria Depot: GG, 603, 9/59/95). General Louis Botha was the Commander of the Union Forces and the Prime Minister of South Africa at the time. The war was in essence between the German imperial forces and the British Empire, and South Africa as a dominion under the Empire simply executing an imperial service, was automatically drawn into the conflict (Cruise, 2015). After conquering Windhoek, the Union of South Africa wasted no time in asserting its dominion over the territory. A Proclamation was issued by General Louis Botha on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1915 asserting South Africa's authority and instituting Martial Law in the territory:

*“The forces of the Union of South Africa (herein after termed the Union) under my command have conquered and now occupy the whole of the territory known as German South West Africa (herein*

*after termed the Protectorate) (...). I hereby proclaim and make known that Martial Law as such law is understood and administered in British territory shall be established throughout the Protectorate from the 9<sup>th</sup> July 1915, being the date of the formal surrender of the protectorate troops” (SAB, GG 603, 9159/86).*

With regard to exerting influence over urban space by demarcating who could settle where and who could not, the South African Administration acted quickly in making its intentions known as official records reveal. As early as 1916, contestation over space had already begun with regards to the presence of native *pontoks* (informal housing units / shacks) around the construction site of a railway line (NAN, LWI: 1/2/5 Vol. 2). The Burgomaster wrote to the Military Magistrate, one Major Gadd, suggesting that the natives be moved away from the railway on account of “the insanitary environ” that their presence invited (NAN, LWI: 1/2/5 Vol. 2).

In his classic essay on sanitation, Swanson (1977) maintains that medical and other public authorities in South Africa at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were imbued with the imagery of infectious disease as a social metaphor that interacted powerfully with racial attitudes that influenced policies and shaped institutions of segregation.

When South Africa took over the then South West Africa, ‘sanitation syndrome’ was variously mobilised to effect racial urban segregation and politics in the colonial capital, Windhoek. Even though the 1916 attempt to move the natives’ *pontoks* on account of hygiene was not carried through (NAN, LWI: 1/2/5 Vol. 2), it nonetheless suggests that the ‘obsession with cleanliness’ has a long colonial history and provenance.

Extending the 1905 racial segregation of the German colonial period, incisive? South African interventions can be traced to the introduction of separate ‘natives’ administration in 1923. Expressive of the continuity of colonial racial segregation, the Natives (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923 overtly sought to set apart and lay out areas of land for residence of natives. As Maylam (1995) observes, the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act can be viewed as the foundation-stone of urban apartheid, for it embodied mechanisms and institutions such as segregated township, influx control and fiscal segregation. With the Natives (Urban Areas) Proclamation No. 34 of 1924, residential segregation was further cemented by outlawing acquisition of land by ‘Africans’ in ‘white areas, and vice versa (Delgado, 2018). Similarly, the Windhoek Municipal Regulations of September 1925 took the segregation process a little further. These regulations provided for instructions related to

the control, management and use of locations. Size of dwelling units and building materials to be used were under the remit of the location superintendent. Matters of sanitation were deemed very important in locations and the medical officer to the urban local authority was to annually prepare a report on the health and sanitary conditions of the location. The principal Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 underwent various iterations between the 1930s and 1950s, reconfiguring spatial segregation in finer detail that prefigured the making of an apartheid city.

## The Making of an Apartheid City – Windhoek under Pretoria

In spite the fact that segregation was part of Windhoek's residential layout during Germany's rule, it was under Pretoria that a deliberate policy of engineering an apartheid city was put in motion. The year 1964 marked the formal imposition of the apartheid policy of Bantustans. This heinous project was an outcome of the infamous Odendaal Commission Report of 1962-1963. Under the chairmanship of F. H. Odendaal, the then Administrator of the Province of the Transvaal, the first meeting of the 'Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs' (henceforth Odendaal Plan) was held in Pretoria on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1962 (Republic of South Africa 1964). Published in 1964, this report "recommended, amongst

others, the formation of 10 'homelands' for SWA's black population, i.e., they should live apart from the 'coloureds' as well as the 'whites', in accordance with South Africa's revised apartheid policy" (Dierks 1999: 129, but also see Williams and Hackland, 1988).

The Odendaal Plan balkanised the city of Windhoek into antagonistic groupings that could easily be quelled in the event of an uprising. Residents of Windhoek were to live apart and patronise segregated spaces of entertainment, recreation and eateries. But cracks started to appear, questioning the sustainability of legally sanctioned segregation from the 1970s.

Examples of living 'together' in separation abound, such as when Mr Gabriel Petros had lunch at the Continental Hotel in March of 1973, patronising a hitherto whites-only eatery and made front page news in the *Windhoek Advertiser*. Mr Petros was interviewed by the *Windhoek Advertiser's* reporter and their exchange unfolded as follow:

*"Mr. Petros, did you read the recent article in the [Windhoek] Advertiser when the Prime Minister [John Vorster] said non-Whites could patronise White hotels?"*

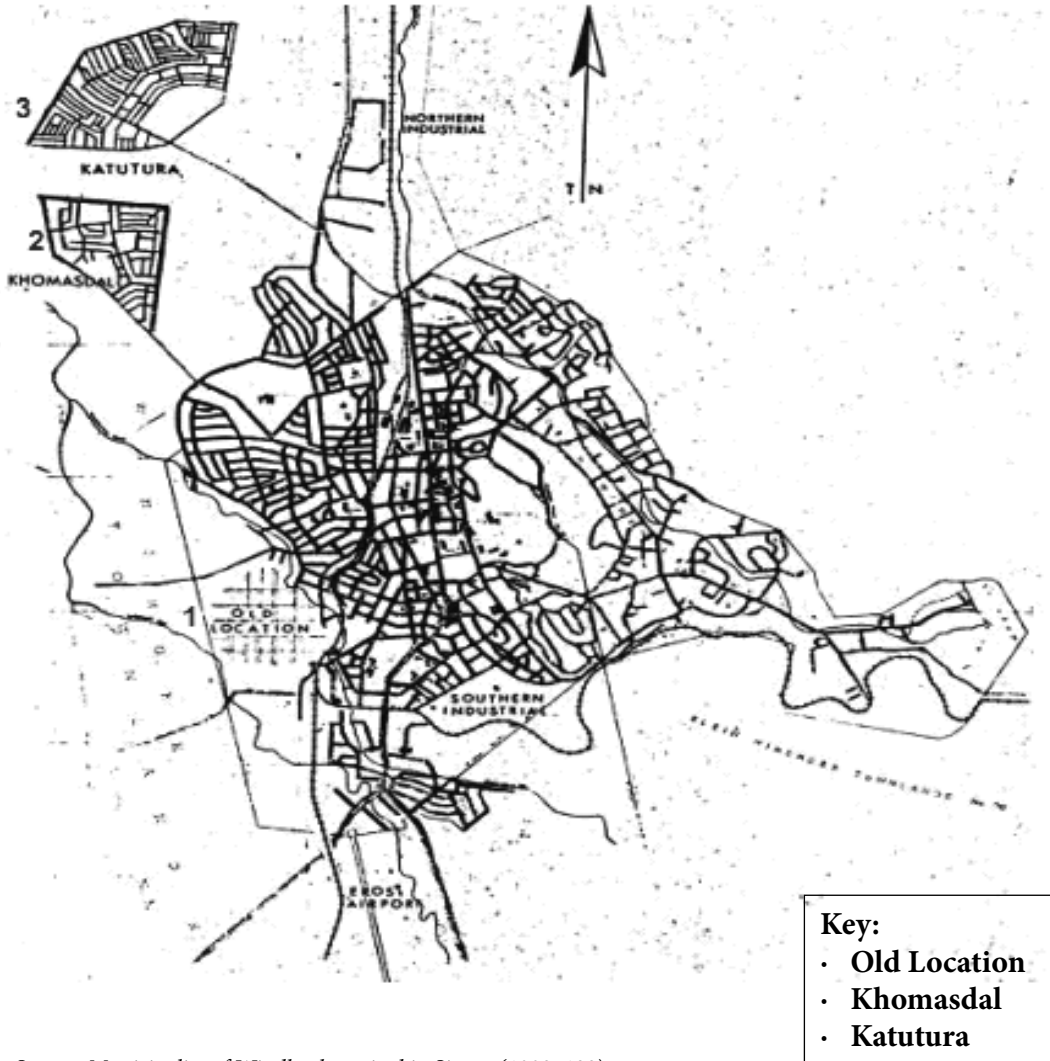
*"No".*

*"Where do you come from?"*

*"I come from Owambo [northern Namibia]"*.



Map 3: Windhoek in 1961



Source: Municipality of Windhoek as cited in Simon (1983: 133)

“Where do you work?”

“I am a waiter at the Grand Hotel”.

“Is this the first time you are patronising a White hotel?”

“Yes”.

“Do you prefer White hotels to non-White hotels?”

“Yes”.

“Why do you say that?”

“I don’t know”.

“Is it because the service is better?”

“Yes”, He smiled (Windhoek Advertiser, March 20, 1973, p. 1).

At the time, a seemingly banal incident of a black man lunching at a hotel patronised by whites was seen as an urban spectacle as it went against the express segregation of the time. It was an anomaly that shook the spatial-temporal axis of colonial Windhoek in the aftermath of the Odendaal Plan's expansive rollout.

Scrutinised carefully, Map 3 above lays bare a Windhoek that was prepared for pronounced spatial segregation shortly before the implementation of Odendaal Plan. Number 1 on the Map is the 'Old Location', the site that a little more than two years earlier had witnessed the most brutal forced removal of inhabitants in the recorded history of colonial Windhoek. In the northerly direction, the Coloureds-only suburb of Khomasdal – marked Number 2 – was to play the role of a buffer zone between the White and Black areas of Windhoek. Number 3 is Katutura to which Black inhabitants were moved in the aftermath of 1959 'Old Location' unrest. A cursory reading of Windhoek today confirms that the Odendaal Plan was very successful at dividing this city beyond imagination.

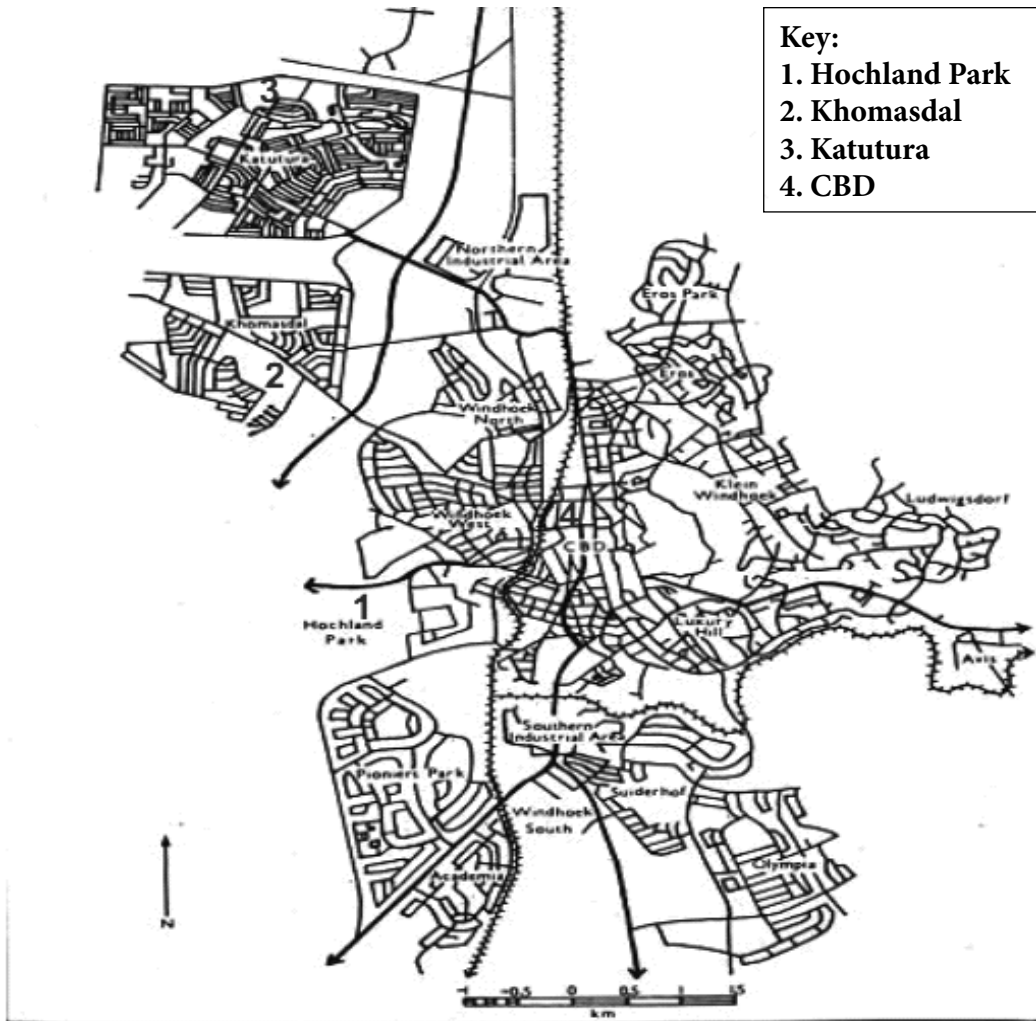
The township of Katutura is still to a great extent divided according to different ethnic groups and Khomasdal is still predominantly a suburb of Coloureds. It is important to note that the category 'township' applies to Katutura only from 1979, when

the first extensions were proclaimed townships. In this sense, 'township' is not only a black suburb in everyday language, but a legal category that until then privileged white suburbs in terms of planning, servicing and urban land tenure.

## **Residential Apartheid and Urban Housing**

Shack demolitions or forced removals are by all accounts reminiscent of the 'Old Location' in the late 1950s. On 10 December 1959, protests mounted in Windhoek as blacks were forced to leave the 'Old Location' and move to Katutura, a new apartheid township. Thirteen were killed and 54 injured (Tonchi, Lindeke & Grotperter, 2012: XXV). This is not to say that Windhoek was a neatly integrated city before the forced removals of the 1950s, but thereafter, as I argue above, residential segregation became codified and implemented to the letter. In colonial Windhoek, *de jure* segregation goes back to the late 1930s although expansive *de facto* residential segregation took a decisive foothold in 1956 after a visit by a delegation from the Windhoek Town Council to the Native Affairs Department in Pretoria (SAB, NTS, 4566, 1115/313). Under the chairmanship of one Mr F.H.C. Dixon, the delegation visited the native townships of Atteridgeville and Saulsville in Pretoria as well as Meadowlands and Daveyton in Benoni (SAB, NTS, 4566, 1115/313). The stated aim of the visit was "to make the

Map 4: Windhoek in 1981



Source: Simon (1983: 138).

Council and its officials more familiar with the many aspects of the housing of Africans” (SAB, NTS, 4566, 1115/313). But a closer scrutiny – considering the spatial politics of apartheid South Africa – suggest that this visit was

aimed at learning about effective strategies of how best to segregate and keep blacks as far away as possible from whites. Even though the language of the report compiled after the Windhoek Municipal Council visit to Pretoria

and Johannesburg was couched in the narrative of drawing an enviable 'model township' for blacks, there were clearly other forces at play. One such force could be gleaned from allegations that the moving of blacks to Windhoek's new location was being delayed by the Union Native Affairs Department, exposing European residents of Windhoek to tuberculosis (Windhoek Advertiser, July 5, 1957). Therefore, the black body was classified as a carrier of diseases whose proximity to European residents presented a danger best to be avoided through residential segregation.

By November 1959 it became apparent that the removal of Blacks from Windhoek Location in the western part of the city to a newly constructed apartheid township of Katutura was imminent as a defiantly worded letter by Hosea Kutako to the Administrator Viljoen suggests (SAB, NTS, 4590, 1115/313[1]). On 23 November 1959, Chief Hosea Kutako of the OvaHerero wrote to the Administrator of South West Africa citing several reasons as to why they were opposed to relocation. One of the reasons was that the Old Location was a suitable place because of its proximity to the workplaces of most of the residents. A rebuttal in which Administrator Viljoen rubbished virtually everything raised by Hosea Kutako was only written on 18 December 1959, a little more than a week after what is today known as the 'Windhoek Massacre of 10 December

1959' had taken place (SAB, NTS, 4590, 1115/313[1]). Writing a decade after the 'Old Location' forced removals, White observed that the new black township of Katutura is methodically planned, well-constructed and a thousand times superior to the conditions in which its inhabitants existed when they used to live in their old shanty-towns (White, 1969). White's observation notwithstanding, residents of 'Old Location' raised various issues regarding their objections to being moved. The proximity of the 'Old Location' to workplaces of most of the residents was one of the main reasons for their reluctance to move (SAB, NTS, 4590, 1115/313[1]).

On the ruins of the 'Old Location', the Whites-only suburb of Hochland Park – marked Number 1 on the Map – was erected. The distance between Hochland Park (the former 'Old Location') and the CBD (marked Number 4) is much shorter than the distance to Katutura (marked Number 3). Unsurprisingly, transport costs which the forced relocation from 'Old Location' to Katutura dictated were the centre of contention, among other reasons. From the foregoing account, 1956 to 1959 form a crucial historical moment without which it would be difficult to account for contemporary Windhoek in its various facets. Therefore, what is happening in Windhoek today is perhaps a reincarnation of residential apartheid and its brutality. 'Old location'

has returned, as it were. Although racial elements of segregation remain, the divisions have increasingly assumed the dimension of social class. In this view, contemporary Windhoek bears witness to racial segregation interwoven with socio-economic segregation (Friedman, 2000). Economic dualism, social inequalities and heterogeneous cultural groupings lend credence to the assertion that racial segregation remains a stark feature of Windhoek's cityscape.

The drastic rearrangement of residential Windhoek from 1956 and the eventual culmination of a forced relocation of the black population in 1959 form a historical watershed that defines contemporary city space as well as physical and cognitive maps of the city. This event was taking place within an atmosphere of increasingly insistent calls for separate homelands spearheaded by Pretoria. As I will show later, the removal of blacks from the 'Old Location' was to be followed by separate locations in the new 'township' of Katutura. In a substantial way, this had everything to do with the 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act in the Union of South Africa. As Dubow demonstrates, this Act signalled a decisive change as it dispensed with the assumption that 'bantus' were a single "homogenous people, and instead envisaged the creation of self-governing African territories, supposedly based on historically determined ethnic

grounds" (Dubow, 2014: 105). From the vantage point of the colonial government in Windhoek, the events of 1959 were vastly unsettling, so much so that a commission of inquiry was instituted to provide a detailed report on the direct causes that gave rise to the 'unrest' and presumably ascertain what should be done to prevent this happening in the future. What gave rise to the 'unrest' was nonetheless common knowledge, for the letter written in November 1959 by Hosea Kutako to Administrator Viljoen clearly states the reasons why the black inhabitants of the then 'Old Location' did not want to be relocated. It follows that the 'unrest' was, needless to emphasise, the response to the forced relocation or removal. Still, the commission of inquiry was set up and held. Solely constituted by the then Judge President of the High Court of South West Africa, Cyril Godfrey Hall, the report of this commission was part of a dossier sent to the Council of the League of Nations in 1960 (AMPT PUBS, 6/532, UG 23 - 1960). Unsurprisingly, the report exonerated the police force and concluded that the use of firearms was justified, for municipal officials would have lost their lives. In other words, some lives were more important than others, so the colonial regime decided.

To Namibians and *Windhoekers* in particular, 10 December 1959 was a turning point in race relations as it marked the most direct confrontation

aimed at balkanising the city administratively and residentially. Despite its importance in shaping the residential urban landscape of Windhoek permanently, the 'Old Location' Massacre has – until recently – been condemned to historical oblivion in the politics of memory. On 10 December 2011, exactly 52 years after the 'Old Location massacre' or 'native unrest' – depending from which angle you are looking at it – a memorial grave with a shrine was erected at the 'Old Location' Cemetery in memory of those who died at the hands of the South African colonial police. This indicates that this massacre finally received recognition – perhaps belatedly – at the highest level of Namibia's leadership. It took the Namibian government and the Municipality of Windhoek 21 years to accord this massacre some noteworthy recognition. But this belated recognition seems to have a context. Forced removals akin to those of 1959 are a rule rather than an exception in contemporary Windhoek. The spectre of postcolonial living conditions provides a fertile ground for informality of housing amongst blacks. Even though Namibia ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1994, the right to adequate housing remains a concern. Article 11.1 of this instrument maintains that:

*"The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard*

*of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions".*

Concretely giving expression to the right to housing is rendered an obligation under Article 144 of the Constitution of Namibia, viz.: "[u]nless otherwise provided by this Constitution or Act of Parliament, the general rules of public international law and international agreements binding upon Namibia under this Constitution shall form part of the law of Namibia". Translating international law obligations binding on Namibia into concrete interventions has proven difficult with dire implications for social justice. Often, the major 'excuse' deployed to account for the inability of meeting international law obligations has been lack of resources.

The two photos below show demolition of a housing structure during the forced removal of black inhabitants from the 'Old Location' in 1959 (left) and demolition of shacks in Okahandja Park, an informal settlement in Windhoek, 2012 (right) (LaRRI & FES 2012). Even though this is not unique to Windhoek, the degree to which the clamping down on 'informal' housing stretches is ruthlessly aggressive. Invoking Proclamation AG 21 of 1985, the City of Windhoek has synonymised 'informal' dwelling with insecurity and rendered everything it

*Photo 1: Old Location Returns to Windhoek*



Source: NAN and Tanja Bause as cited in LaRRI & FES 2012, p. 4.

deems ‘informal’, a blemish that could be tolerated in certain locales but should not be accommodated so as to avoid contaminating the fantasy of the cleanest city in Africa. The Squatters Proclamation, AG 21 of 1985 provides for the removal of persons unlawfully present on land or on buildings, and for the demolition of structures which are unlawfully erected. Some parts of the Squatters Proclamation of 1985 have been invalidated by the Supreme Court in 2013. In *Shaanika and Others v Windhoek City Police and Others*, the Supreme Court declared sections 4(1) and 4(3) of the Squatters Proclamation to be “inconsistent with the Constitution, and invalid and of no force and effect” (SA35/2010) [2013] (15 July 2013). Yet, local authorities in several cases continue to act against this judgment, for shack demolitions continue to be reported across urban Namibia (Cf. New Era, 2015; The Patriot, 2017; Bayer

2020). These flagrant actions on the part of local authorities have serious negative implications on social justice and the rule of law.

It is widely recognised that at independence, the Namibian government inherited a very unequal pattern of settlement resulting from segregation laws followed by successive colonial administrations (Peyroux, 2001; Itewa, 2002). In the post-independence period, shelter or housing provision has not been approached from a social justice perspective. Even though several national housing programmes have been implemented by the government over decades to deal with the ever-increasing backlog of housing, most houses constructed have been unaffordable to the majority of the urban poor (Weber & Mendelsohn 2017; Remmert & Ndlovu 2018). The housing backlog is estimated to be

around 100 000 (Sweeney-Bindels 2011: 7), but recent studies suggest that the latter figure could be conservative (Cf. Weber & Mendelsohn 2017; Remmert & Ndlovu 2018). The high rate of urbanisation has not made things easier, as more people continue to flock to urban areas where provision of housing is under acute strain.

### **Urbanisation in Windhoek**

Coquery-Vidrovitch (2009) argues that except for the unusual case of Cape Town, African colonial cities were populated with an average of at least ten times more Africans than Europeans. Windhoek has been an unusual case, for it has been a peculiar settler colonial city as the urban population was predominantly comprised of white settlers for most of the colonial period. It was only in the 1970s that the white population of Windhoek became the minority (Cf. Simon 1983; Pendleton, Crush & Nickanor 2014). For this reason, focusing on this period since the 1970s will give a sense of how migration is directly related to the changing nature of the Windhoek's socio-economic fabric and the attendant political contestations which this change invites. Given the political background and the restrictions on the movement of black Namibians, it was to be expected that one of the most pressing problems which the Municipality of Windhoek had to contend with was the influx of people seeking better life chances in the Capital (Bravenboer, 2004). Migration

to urban centres was largely temporary in both legal status and practicality, serving the labour needs of the colonial system (Cf. Frayne; 2007; Winterfeldt; 2002). The presence of many Aawambo migrants in the urban central towns of Namibia, especially Windhoek, has its history in the early experience of rural-urban migration (Frayne & Pendleton, 2001). Findings from the City of Windhoek in 1995 showed that 85 percent of the inhabitants in informal settlements came from northern regions (City of Windhoek, 1995). Chiefly because of this internal migration stream fed by the northern regions of Namibia, which accounted for at least 35 percent of Windhoek's total population in 2001, a sizeable number of Windhoek's population reside in informal settlements (Pendleton, Crush & Nickanor 2014), and judging from the expansion of existing informal settlements and the establishment of new ones, the number of improvised housing units will keep on rising. According to the UN Habitat (2010), more than 60 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's population lives in slum conditions. Needless to say, the expansion of slums is largely fuelled by migration, but chiefly driven by unemployment and poverty. It follows that rural areas need to be made economically and socially viable so that pull factors outweigh the push factors in rural-urban migration. In this way, urbanisation could be managed sustainably. Rural-urban differences



in life chances reflect the dualism of socio-economic divisions that are so pronounced in most of urban Namibia.

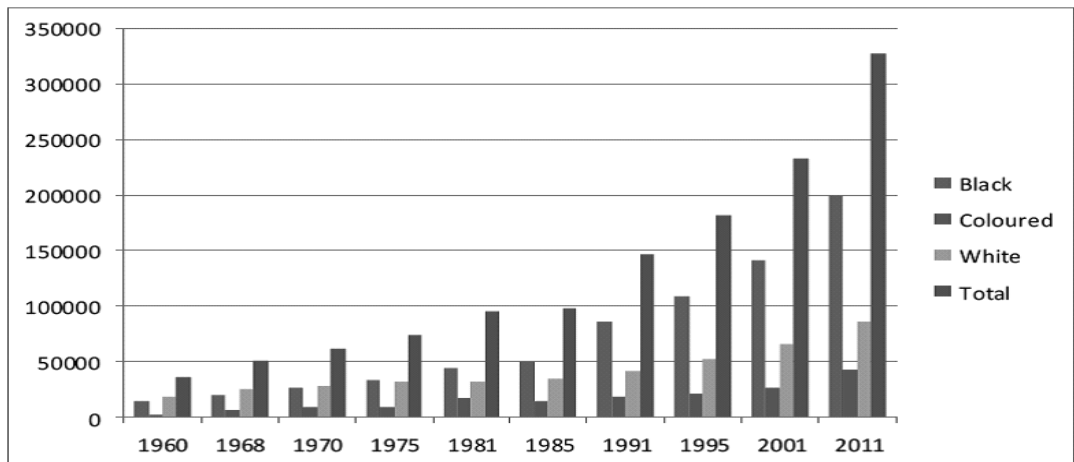
A cautionary note by Pendleton, Nickanor & Pomuti (2012) on reading Figure 1 is worth reproducing in full:

*“Beginning in 1981 ‘racial’ group designations were not used for Municipal areas and people were free to live anywhere in the city; however, because of the relatively homogeneous character of the areas (e.g., Khomasdal was primarily occupied by ‘coloured’ people) it is possible to designate areas as primarily occupied by particular ‘racial’ groups. After independence, some areas previously occupied by whites have become more integrated. Figure 1 should thus be viewed as suggestive rather than definitive” (p. 29).*

By far the largest urban centre in Namibia is Windhoek whose population is almost 20 times that of the second highly populated urban locality (NSA, 2013). Tvedten (2004) contends that there is no other country in Southern Africa with such a large proportion of its urban population living in the capital as Namibia. The population of Windhoek increased by 40 percent between 2001 (233 529) and 2011 (325 858) (NSA, 2015). As of 2020, Windhoek population is about 431 000 (PopulationStat, 2017-2021).

It has been amply demonstrated that urban migration in Windhoek is not unidirectional as it involves a complex relationship between rural and urban households through an interplay of food transfers and remittances (Cf. Moorsom 1997; Frayne & Pendleton 2003). This rural-urban interplay is

Figure 1: Population growth of Windhoek 1960-2011



Source: Nickanor (2013: 55). See also Pendleton, Nickanor & Pomuti (2012: 2).

nonetheless not unique to Windhoek, but observable in several cities in Southern Africa (Pendleton, Crush, Campbell, Green, Simelane, Tevera & De Vletter 2006).

Development policies and plans do not normally integrate the realities and complexities of internal and international population mobility in any substantive manner (Crush & Frayne, 2010). In the case of Namibia – save for recognition in passing that the gap in average income and living standards drives rural-urban migration – the National Poverty Reduction Action Programme (NPC, 2002), for example, hardly deals with the issue of migration. In a 2015 Migration Report – based on the 2011 Census – the Namibia Statistics Agency admitted that little is known about the effect that the influx of migration to urban areas has with regards to economic growth or the worsening of poverty (NSA, 2015).

## Conclusion

By locating Windhoek within its historical context, this article traced the development of the city back to shortly before the definite assertion of colonial authority and conquest by the German ‘protection’ troops. By gleaning together core structures of the colonial state from Windhoek’s ancient maps, I sought to show that Windhoek was founded – at least from 1890 as a German garrison – on the principles of control and conquest. The contestation that preceded the arrival of Germans made occupation somewhat effortless. In turn, the German colonial policy laid the groundwork for the comprehensive implementation of apartheid laws in most of Namibia and particularly in major urban centres. From the early 1950s, residential segregation as a policy was being prepared for thorough implementation. The Windhoek Town Council’s 1956 visit to the Native Affairs Department in Pretoria became the

### Appendix 1. *Population of Windhoek 1921-1975*

Race	3 May 1921	5 May 1936	7 May 1946	8 May 1951	6 Sept. 1960	May 1968	6 May 1970	May 1975
Whites	3 460	4 812	6 985	10 310	19 378	25 417	27 351	32 112
Coloureds	273	1 448	1 353	1 208	2 738	5 925	8 411	9 057
Blacks	-	4 385	6 591	9 080	13 935	19 369	25 945	33 180
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 733</b>	<b>10 651</b>	<b>14 929</b>	<b>20 598</b>	<b>36 051</b>	<b>50 711</b>	<b>61 707</b>	<b>74 349</b>

Source: Simon (1984)

crucible that would three years later offer 'guidance' in the forced removal of black residents of the 'Old Location' to the new township of Katutura north-west of Windhoek. By taking seriously key events that are situated in Windhoek's past – from its origins as a colonial town to a quintessential apartheid urban form – I dealt with this urban agglomeration as a historical object. An appreciation of Windhoek's history allows for a nuanced understanding of segregation, persistent inequality, and the elusiveness of affordable housing. Dealing with the crisis of urban housing decisively requires a different approach. This approach should treat housing as a human right. To be sure, leaving housing provision to the vagaries of markets and speculative capitalism is an act of abdication.

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