



Integrated Land Management Institute (ILMI)
Land, Livelihoods and Housing Programme 2015-18

The Integrated Land Management Institute is a centre of the Faculty of Natural Resources and Spatial Sciences (FNRSS) at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) committed to develop reputable and multidisciplinary research and public outreach activities in the field of land, administration, property, architecture and spatial planning.

The Land, Livelihoods and Housing Programme 2015-18 aims at deepening and expanding the focus on these three key issues in Namibia. The programme was developed to guide ILMI's activities by organising it in four aspects: institutional, environmental, fiscal and spatial processes.

Planned layouts v. 'planning for slums': the case of Rehoboth Ext. 5 & 6

Summary

The project in question refers to the case of 'Ext. 5 & 6' in Rehoboth, in which the speaker took part as employee of the town and regional planning consultancy office that undertook the assignment. The aim was to provide a formal layout to an informal settlement East of Rehoboth in the quickest way possible. The case shows some of the challenges that are faced in the process of formalisation when the goal is to provide a planned plot for dignified living of low-income inhabitants vis-à-vis the full land delivery process from surveying to proclamation.

The case outlines the benefits of a planned layout, as well as some of the compromises that need to be contemplated if the aim is to encourage more planned settlements instead of indirectly encouraging the development of more informal settlements through cumbersome procedures.

This document outlines a number of qualitative observations based on the experience of the speaker, Louis Esterhuizen, a town and regional planning consultant.

This is the document of a Brown bag meeting that took place on Monday, October 17th, 12h30-14h00; Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning, Namibia University of Science and Technology.

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The statements in the talk are done in the personal capacity of the speaker.

The main responsible for the project in question was Mr van der Merwe, who unfortunately couldn't attend the talk. Although the speaker indeed participated in the project, the statements should be considered as a secondary account.

Another clarification made by the speaker was that the project is not generally seen in a positive light by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (MURD) in view that inhabitants settled in the area before services were put in place. This is against a directive from the Ministry that was recently circulated to Local Authorities (LAs) instructing them to avoid the practice of settling inhabitants in unserviced land.

Inputs from attendants are marked in *italics*.

Introduction to the planning practice

It is a fact that a town or city whose population grows 4% per year doubles its size every 20 years. Swakopmund is a case in point, as it has a growth rate of about 4.4%. The practice of town planners bears great responsibility as it shapes places that will be there for generations. Although town planners do their best to turn needs into a reality in the built environment, there are many factors that need to be negotiated.

Planning within the process of land delivery

A general planning process has several steps: making of base maps and concept layout, approval by authorities, subdivision of townlands, statement of need and desirability by the Namibia Planning Advisory Board (NAMPAB), approval by Townships' Board, surveying of the area, approval of general plans, legal review, endorsement by Deeds Office, opening of township register, MURD draft of concept note, referral of proclamation notice to legal advisors, preparation of documents for proclamation by MURD, review by Permanent Secretary (PS), Ministers signature of documentation, preparation of proclamation notice, proclamation; and finally valuation, marketing, and financing.

Planners are involved in the first five steps, which can ordinarily take up to 8 months. However, it is often the case that the subsequent steps get delayed, which changes the conditions under which the planning was done; particularly with regards to informal growth.

From this perspective, considering that a settlement can last for many generations, spending eight months on the planning process seems rather negligible.

A good example is the case of Swakopmund, where plans were done for the development of formal areas around the DRC informal settlement, but since it took time to make a decision of whether the plans would be undertaken, the settlement grew and covered the areas that were originally planned.

- *What are the usual delays in the planning process?*

The delays are not inherently planning issues, but rather issues pertaining incomplete forms, missing documents (e.g. power of attorney), etc.

Another challenge is the lack of funds for servicing. Many LAs depend on central funding, the current setup is not made for local development to fund itself gradually. Some LAs simply don't have the means to pay for planning services.

A study by WINPLAN on informal structures in Mondesa demonstrated that there were about 5,900 backyard structures in the area. In some cases there were up to ten different households within a 300m² plot.

Without proactive planning, it will be the landlords who will benefit from the situation.

For those who have to live in overcrowded conditions, the priority is not necessarily to own. They might be better off renting from the LAs at a lower price rather than being at the will of a landlord who is able to charge any rent they deem suitable.

On Rehoboth Ext. 5 & 6

The mandate for the project was to upgrade an informal settlement as soon as possible. To achieve this, the general strategy was to plan the area in such a way that those inhabiting the area would be able to have a more dignified place to live and for them to take the further process of formal development based on a structure.

Planners were directly involved with inhabitants. They would speak to inhabitants themselves and in some cases requested some to resettle personally. The experience was positive, as some would be asked to move their structure a few meters away to place a road, and the structure would be indeed elsewhere the next day. Those who had to relocate were helped by others to do so, there was a solidary environment in this respect.

The approach was also incremental. Once inhabitants were settled under the new plan, it was decided which services to place first. While one might think that water would be the first priority, inhabitants made clear they preferred to have electricity first and rather continue to fetch water from a public tap located at a considerable distance.

The site was not particularly challenging from the planning point of view. This allowed for planning to be done on site. In one occasion, planners themselves hired a road grader to mark the place where the roads would go through. This helped inhabitants to see clearly the area that needed to be kept clear.

In the experience of this project, plans do not require much community consultation. This is because on the one hand, it is hard for inhabitants to understand plans; on the other, the community's most pressing need is a place to settle with dignity, a place they can be proud of, therefore planning considerations are often seen as secondary. The presence of churches is indeed a priority, but it is sometimes hard to convey the need for other kinds of public infrastructure. This is particularly so in areas that are already populated, it is hard to convince the community for the need of twenty households to be relocated to create 'public open space'. However, this is an example of one of the trade-offs that need to be done in order for an orderly and speedy land delivery, as well as a dignified place to be procured in the short term.

In the twenty years of experience of the planner, it is a curious situation when informal settlers start the process and are content with a small plot; however, once the settlement becomes upgraded or formalised and made to comply with the 300m² that is the norm in Namibia, there is a tendency to then desire larger plots. There was also the case of a Cabinet directive to increase the minimum plot size from 300 to 400m², but it's unclear what the outcome of this has been. This phenomenon would be an interesting subject of study at NUST.

The resulting plan looks rather unusual. The streets are not straight, partly to leave some of the larger acacia trees untouched. Some streets are rather narrow and in other cases it was needed to resort to pan-handle plots. There is also no provision to large open public spaces, but as mentioned, it would've been hard to convey that several households would need to be resettled for this purpose.



Conclusion

The main objective of this intervention was to minimise the time between the layout design, the surveying and the implementation.

Local authorities could re-think the way they budget for new land developments: the payment of planners could be done on a pro-bono basis, the money available could then go to the surveyors so that the area gets defined as soon as possible; at this stage inhabitants would be able to settle down, and rent agreements could be drafted between them and LAs. With this rent, the servicing and the settlement of the bills with other professionals could be gradually done. In this way, the dependency of LAs on the availability of funds in Central Government would be reduced, and LAs would then enjoy much more independence.

Works can start as soon as the planning scheme gets approved; grading could be done, and then urban development could continue based on an orderly layout.

There is a need to discuss the pros and cons of proclamation/ownership vs. the need for urban services. If one waits up to the whole process reaches the point of proclamation, then the process of land delivery will continue to be lengthy and informal settlements will continue to emerge. However, if

one prioritises urban services and a planned layout, then the process of land delivery could have a much better starting point.

This is not to say that titling is undesirable. This can come at a later stage. The experience is that inhabitants don't care so much about a title deed as much as they care about urban services.

In some cases, processes can be delayed for up to two years. Large Municipalities like the City of Windhoek have several departments that need to go through the applications; other LAs have less departments and the process can go quicker. However, it is the sequence in the process that would need to be reconsidered.

Discussion

For the Mass Urban Land Servicing Programme (MULSP), Affirmative Repositioning (AR) has suggested a process called 'pre-allocation'. It consists on granting a plot of planned but un-serviced land to a household that is able to afford a certain amount. This household would then be able to access funds to continue the servicing of the land with their own means and/or with credit granted from commercial banks. It would then be fundamental for MURD to endorse this, so that this 'pre-allocation' has currency with banks, as a title deed to the land would come only later in the process. Perhaps this aligns in some way to the points mentioned in the talk.

It is desirable to come up with proposals leading to a planned form of urban development, otherwise we will continue to plan for areas that have become already squatter camps.

Urban development involves some trade-offs, and if there is something that can wait in this process, it is property. Perhaps other modalities like permission to occupy (PTO) can be considered in this regard.

Another important point is to consider is that this discussion focused on the issue of urban growth, but the issue of densification needs to be also considered. If the drive is only to service new land extensions, then the outcome will be the extension of urban areas horizontally. This will have other implications, such as transport, infrastructure, and segregation.

The experience of densification is indeed important. Swakopmund has recently decided to increase densification, but there are other interest groups that would counter this on the grounds of heritage.