CHAPTER 4

Land-Use Management in Rural Areas

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Abstract

When considering land-use management planning in rural areas and urban transitional areas, the specific disposition of communities in these areas (which in certain aspects differs greatly from those of urban areas) has to get due consideration. The discussion of the rural community environment in this chapter contemplates the traditional African community, with particular reference to its expression in South African society. To emphasise the necessity of a differential approach to planning in rural areas as opposed to urban areas, consider that 72% of the total population that is regarded as poor in South Africa lives in rural areas. Compared to their urban counterparts, rural people also have vastly inferior access to basic social services and the economic mainstream. However, planning for sustainable living in rural areas and urban transitional zones should greatly assist communities in these areas to face the stated challenges. One of the particular notions of sustainable living is that of the resilience of community traditions and cultural precepts, which can assist communities to face the pressures of urban growth, the deteriorating quality of life and the homogenisation of settlement form and design in the developing world. The subsequent discussion will highlight the importance of cohesive communities in general and traditional African communities in particular, which is relevant to the planning of sustainable living.

Keywords: Rural areas, urban transitional zones, traditional African communities, collaborative leadership, community-based systems, tenure systems, economy of affection, agriculture.

1 Introduction

The most significant dynamic that impacts on land-use management and transportation in rural Africa today is the reality of rural poverty. Consider, for instance, that in South Africa (as stated earlier), 72% of the total population, which is...
regarded as poor, lives in rural areas [1]. Rural poverty is forcing many people
in Africa, especially the unskilled and the landless, to seek employment in the
larger cities. The lack of successful land reform, the extremes of rural poverty, the
hope and often the reality of better chances for work and income in the city and
improved transport (to the city) encourage this movement [2]. However, once in
the city, symptoms such as inefficient transport systems, chaotic land tenure poli-
cies and poor access to remunerative structured employment result in uncontrolled
settlements that spread on a far bigger scale than the urban infrastructure can man-
age [3]. In the process, unplanned growth, where huge tracts of land are consumed
for low-density living, limits efforts towards place-based urban development. For
non-urban places, the impact brings ‘diminishing returns’, such as increased traf-
fc, degradation of the environment and other effects layered on places with lim-
ited infrastructure [4].

To address the poverty prevalent under African rural communities, there has
been a growing realisation that it cannot be based solely on economic development
initiatives, but that it needs to consider a sustainable approach. According to
Munasinge [5], sustainable development is the primary challenge of the twenty-
first century (with poverty alleviation as the main goal). One of the most important
concepts underlying the sustainable living ideology is that of place commitment,
which translates to the value of the local context when defining sustainable devel-
opment. The purpose is not to isolate or separate communities but to strengthen the
internal cohesion in local society and its complex integrated production structure,
in order to lay the basis for the necessary independence to implement a system of
fair and equal relations with other local societies [6]. To understand the local con-
text in Africa (with specific reference to South Africa), in rural areas and urban
transitional zones, the traditional African community environment will be dis-
cussed next.

2 Traditional African Community

The traditional community environment tends to be valued by First World eco-
villagers in terms of ‘global sustainability’, of which ‘Blueprint for Survival’ by
Goldsmith and Allan, written in the early seventies, is a prime example [7]. They
argued that the example of existing tribal peoples represented real-life working
models of societies perfectly adapted to their long-term survival needs, and the
needs of the living world on which they depended. These tribal people alone, the
authors contended, had demonstrated a viable means by which the most pressing
problems facing humanity could be answered successfully [7]. The characteristics
of such societies included small, human-scale communities; low-impact technolo-
gies; successful population controls; sustainable resource management; holistic
and ecologically integrated world views and a high degree of social cohesion,
physical health, psychological well-being and spiritual fulfilment of their mem-
ers. According to de Liefde [8], tribes are powerful living and working communi-
ties that know how to transform a shared vision into a combination of fellowship
and collective entrepreneurship. They embrace the view that the individual derives
his meaning and his right to exist through being part of a community. It should be noted, however, that not all traditional communities are sustainable, although those that were not tended not to survive [9]. This focus on traditional communities has also given rise to concepts such as eco-localism, eco-justice and neotribalism. In eco-localism, community-oriented values of stewardship, fidelity, propriety, sufficiency and neighbourliness reflect the perspective of oikonomia, ‘the management of the household so as to increase its use value to all members of the household over the long term’ as opposed to chrematistics, the ‘manipulation of property and wealth so as to maximize short-term monetary exchange value to the owner’ [10]. Eco-justice focuses on the obligations, practices and wisdom that exist in indigenous cultures that are necessary for a just and ecologically sustainable society [9]. Neotribalism may best be described as a movement toward empathic, emotionally based interactions in social configurations (‘tribes’) that go beyond individualism, motivated by emotional, communal and transpersonal reasons [11]. These ‘tribes’ incorporate three essential characteristics, namely, social interaction, shared ties and common geographical location [12]. This need for modern tribal groups is evident in places such as sporting and recreational events, exhibitions and markets, cultural projects, protest demonstrations and memorial services [8].

However, while First-World tribalism or neotribalism is elective and even includes flows between different identities under different circumstances, the tribal life of villagers throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America is driven by considerations of personal and familial survival. De Liefde asserts that the central values of ubuntu are diametrically opposed to the Western culture, which can be explained in terms of the African ‘I am because we exist’ versus the Western ‘I think therefore I am’ [8]. For most people in the Third World, community is a method for existence, not an enriching ideal [13]. As Mbigi states, the African philosophy of ubuntu is based on the notion that our personal survival and salvation lie in our shared destiny with others [14]. Archbishop Desmond Tutu [15] describes ubuntu as ‘the essence of being a person. It means that we are people through other people. We cannot be fully human alone. We are made for interdependence, we are made for family. When you have ubuntu, you embrace others’. Ubuntu epitomises communal fellowship, describing the collective interdependence and solidarity of communities of affection [14]. Although ubuntu is a Zulu concept that means personhood (being a person through other persons), it is also found in many other African ethnic groups: in Shona, it is unhun and, in both Tswana and Sotho, it is botho. It is in stark contrast to the isolation people often experience in conventional suburbia (refer to literature on new urbanism). Ubuntu reflects McMillan and Chavis’ statement that ‘a strong community is able to fit people together so that people meet others’ needs while they meet their own’ [16]. Table 1 highlights the differences between African tribal culture and Western culture.

While a traditional tribal society may be idealised as the solution to the many ills besetting society today, a better approach would be to adapt the strategies of these societies to suit specific circumstances as it relates to community-based planning, sustainable living and place commitment. Martusewicz et al. suggest that, in particular, their knowledge should be respected, there should be a
willingness to learn from them, existing technologies in tribal culture could be used for sustainable living and it should be acknowledged that sustainable living is taught through practice [9]. Zetter and Watson [17] elaborate on this approach, stating that to design sustainable cities, people-based urban environments must be attuned to cultural precepts, encode the history and collective identity of residents, build on community-empowered models of design, as well as be physically adapted to environmental conditions. These parameters constitute the praxis for contemporary urban design (and rural development) in the developing world, which can adapt tradition to modernity in environmentally sustainable ways. It is the antithesis to current world economic trends with its focus on globalisation, which marginalise Africa and make the management of cities that work effectively for their inhabitants almost impossible [3]. Using this approach, development professionals addressing development challenges should assess their role critically, particularly at the micro-level; the nature of the relationship between change agents and the beneficiaries of development should be better understood; the value of alternative social research methods must be better appreciated and, lastly, all stakeholders in development should endeavour to better understand the meaning-giving local (micro-level) contexts in which development takes place [18].

In applying the concept of ubuntu to planning for sustainable livelihoods, the foremost principle is the interconnectedness of all things. Other aspects of ubuntu and traditional African community that deserve closer scrutiny are socio-political aspects that include collaborative leadership and community-based systems, ecological aspects (the view of land) and economical aspects (economy of affection and agriculture).

### Table 1: African tribal culture versus Western culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>African tribal culture</strong></th>
<th><strong>Western culture</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Identity in relation to the environment</td>
<td>Individual stands alone</td>
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<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>Independence</td>
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<td>Co-existence</td>
<td>Individual existence</td>
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<td>Co-evolution</td>
<td>Individual development</td>
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<td>Complementary co-operation in communal interest</td>
<td>Competition in own interest</td>
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<td>Permanent change through interaction</td>
<td>Incidental change through manipulation</td>
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<td>Cyclic changes</td>
<td>Linear changes</td>
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<td>Cultural stability</td>
<td>Cultural instability</td>
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<td>Guiding of values and meanings</td>
<td>Guiding towards goals and results</td>
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<td>Control through communication</td>
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<td>Equality</td>
<td>Inequality</td>
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<td>Serving leadership</td>
<td>Hierarchical leadership</td>
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<td>Social responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility for yourself</td>
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<td>Being human</td>
<td>Human capital</td>
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*Source: De Liefde [8].*
2.1 Collaborative leadership

*Ubuntu* can provide a framework for developing collaborative leadership in community-based planning, where effective decision-making techniques are developed and implemented so as to foster a culture of doing things together in the spirit of harmony and service. It reflects the African adage that *Kgosi ke kgosi ka morafe* – ‘a chief is a chief through the people’. African tribal culture operates according to democratic principles and is possibly one of the oldest democracies in the world [8]. Collaboration (and by extension collaborative leadership) entails a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship between two or more persons, which includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success and sharing of resources and rewards [19]. Collaborative leadership in particular can be evaluated in terms of several principles as laid out by Chrislip and Larson [20]:

- **Inspire commitment and action.** Power and influence help, but they are not the distinguishing features of collaborative leaders. The distinguishing feature is that these leaders initiate a process that brings people together when nothing else is working. They are action oriented, but the action involves convincing people that something can be done, but neither telling them what to do nor doing the work for them.
- **Lead as a peer problem solver.** Collaborative leaders help groups create visions and solve problems. They do not solve the problems for the group or engage in command and control behaviour.
- **Build broad-based involvement.** Collaborative leaders take responsibility for the diversity of the group and make a conscious and disciplined effort to identify and bring together all the relevant stakeholders.
- **Sustain hope and participation.** Collaborative leaders convince participants that each person is valued, help set incremental and achievable goals and encourage celebrations along the way.
- **Servant leadership.** Collaborative leaders are servants of the group, helping stakeholders do their work and looking out to make sure those others’ needs are met and that they grow as persons. ‘Servant Leadership’ is an outgrowth of a set of leadership principles laid out by Robert Greenleaf. Servant leaders aspire to ‘simultaneously enhance the personal growth of workers and improve the quality and caring of our many institutions through a combination of teamwork and community, personal involvement in decision-making, and ethical and caring behaviour’ [21].
- **Leadership as a process.** Motivation and inspiration happen through the belief in the credibility of the collaborative process and good working relationships with many people.
- Collaborative leaders are rarely dramatic or flashy, and the leadership function is often shared among several people. Their role is to facilitate the constructive interaction of the network, not to do the work for it.
The principles of collaborative leadership, as stated earlier, are manifested in the pillars of tribal leadership, namely mutual understanding, communal awareness of needs, dignity in dealing with others, trust, mutual authority, respect and the belief that improvements in the situation of the community also result in individual improvement [8]. To understand how collaborative leadership works in indigenous African cultures, Mbigi’s description of chiefdoms provides a valuable context [14]. Chiefdoms had four levels of governance, namely the chief, the inner council, the council of elders and the village assembly. The chief was the political, social, judicial and religious head of the tribe, and he had wide-ranging powers. He was assisted in governance by a small group of confidential advisers called the inner council, whose membership was usually drawn from friends and relatives of the chief, as well as key role-players from the community who were influential opinion leaders. The inner circle served as the first test of legislation and decision making. The chief would privately discuss with his inner or privy council all issues pertaining to the administration of the tribe and he could also consult his advisers – either before making a decision or before bringing an issue to the people. After raising an issue with his inner council, he could approach the council of elders. The council of elders was a formal body with wider powers, and composed of hereditary headmen of wards or lineages. In essence, the council for elders represented the people. In serious matters, the chief would call for a meeting with this council and ask for its advice. Serious matters could include disputes, land issues and new laws. The council of elders had two major functions in indigenous African governance systems: It gave advice to the chief and assisted with administration, and it prevented the chief from abusing power by articulating dissatisfaction and offering constructive criticism. De Liefde avers that if the council came to the conclusion that the chief’s decisions were no longer in the interests of the whole community, the chief would be removed from office. He lost his privileges and his decision-making power and had to leave the community [8]. The chief would inform the council of elders of the issue to be discussed, and they would discuss it until consensus had been reached. The tribe always accepted the decision that was reached, since councillors had political legitimacy based on their hereditary profile, and they were usually respected and influential leaders of the community. If the council of elders could not reach consensus on an issue, the chief would then take the matter to the village assembly for discussion (lekgotla). The grass-roots people were the ultimate and final authority of disputed issues. In indigenous African cultures, freedom of expression was an important characteristic of the village assembly, to the extent that even outsiders – such as visitors and strangers – were also allowed to express their views. Everyone participated in the lekgotla and everyone participated in formulating ideas without it being taken personally. It ends with a decision in order to achieve results that are good for the community [8]. Dissent was open and free, with sensible ideas being applauded and inappropriate ones vocally opposed. The value placed on dialogue is reflected in the view that it is the highest form of warfare [8]. The chief did not incarcerate individuals who held opposing views, since the collective survival of the tribe took precedence over the personal interests of the chief. Everyone was free to speak the truth as
they saw it, without the fear of consequences. There was also an element of collective accountability with a focus on putting the communal interest first. Every person was free to participate in the discussion without the fear of victimisation, which resulted in the entrenchment of democracy in the indigenous African culture.

In the 1500s and onwards, these chiefdoms were physically manifested in agrotowns [3]. The structure of these towns resembled a series of villages based on descent and affiliation to a chief or elder with a distinct feature of the space for the kgotla, a communal and ceremonial meeting ground that virtually defines what community means in the African culture [3]. It emphasised the community perspective of the tribe, namely tribal citizenship and individual empowerment [14]. It also resembles what Goldsmith calls ‘the Gandhian ideal for a nation state as an association of village republics loosely organised into larger social groupings, and in which economic activities were carried out on the smallest possible scale, so as to interfere as little as possible with the social and physical environment’ [7].

While planners may be much more au fait with institutions that are formed and operated on the basis of voluntary reciprocal associations, they also need to understand the context of tribal authorities, as described earlier. While civil institutions based on neighbourhood, family and church mediate between the individual at the bottom of a hierarchical polity and the state at the top [22], the consensual African tribal environment is much more focussed on largely autonomous, collective self-management. Indeed, projects that have achieved the most success in Africa have as one of their characteristics a well-established culture of collective self-management (financial and managerial) [23]. Planners should be aware of customary rules in a particular area, the role and responsibility of the tribal authority and the role and responsibility of the local government [24]. Awareness of the relationship between tribal and local authorities cannot be underestimated, considering that state administrations in areas such as peri-urban Central Africa have never fully come to terms with the importance of traditional authorities, and vice versa. According to Trefon, in peri-urban Central Africa, traditional authorities and state agents vie for power, access to resources and legitimacy in an unending negotiation process characterised by ‘turf wars’ and hard bargaining [25]. Relations at the level of authority tend to be characterised by conflict, even though a situation of fragile accommodation has been worked out. However, an example of where tribal authority and government can work successfully together is in Botswana. There, the Parliament appeals to extra advisers and tribal leaders to involve their own people in their decisions and, in this way, these decisions have wide support that enlarges the decisiveness of the country [8]. The general acceptance of this hybrid governance context by stakeholders at all levels; consensus on the development direction of a community is possible. Nevertheless, in a situation characterised by ambiguity, opportunism, greed and strikingly stratified power relations, finding the means for reaching such a consensus remains an overwhelming challenge [25]. As development facilitators, planners should avoid at all costs to become involved in local politics. It remains a challenge to steer through the power struggles within a community towards development to the benefit of the marginalised, and this
should be the development facilitator’s stated position on political aspects; if, despite all efforts, opposing factions cannot agree to work together towards development, it may be necessary to postpone or abandon the initiative until they have sorted themselves out [24].

An example of how tribal authority can effect self-development and affect positive social change can be found in the Philippine model of barangays. A barangay serves as a forum wherein the collective views of the people are expressed and channelled to senior levels of government; as the primary planning and implementing unit of government policies and programmes in the community and as a legal mechanism by which neighbourhood disputes are mediated by elected officials without drawn-out recourse to higher courts [26]. This is by virtue of the barangay government’s immediate access to its citizenry, and its executive and legislative, and to some extent, judicial power, for example, in the settling of community disputes. Because of its powers, the barangay council can enact as well as ensure the proper execution of laws that will spur development results. The barangay’s capacity for self-development as described by Carley and Bautista [26] consists of the following:

- Barangays work together with the central government (through the Department of Interior and Local Government) and develop programmes and projects for implementation at the barangay level, in which case, roles and responsibilities related to the particular project thrusts are spelled out in programme documents.
- Barangays have also worked directly with the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to devise community waste management schemes and with municipalities to organise more efficient local service delivery.
- Barangays fostered self-reliance among local communities.
- Barangay captains regularly meet with their corresponding city or municipal mayors to coordinate and collaborate on programmes and to agree on resource allocations from the municipality itself.
- Barangay initiatives have speeded action on matters of direct concern to communities (such as health protection, waste management, public order concerns and settlement of minor disputes) as people actually living in and familiar with the communities are able to deal with concerns in a more direct and efficient manner.
- Barangays engendered and enhanced the sense of, and concern for, community well-being, as they have developed distinct identities.

2.2 Community-based systems

As discussed earlier, sustainable tribal cultures (such as those practising ubuntu) tend to see things through the lenses of family and community rather than the individual. In Martusewicz et al.’s view, the good of the community is placed above or equal to the good of the individual – and community means both the abstraction of the community as a whole and the concreteness of caring for the good of neighbours [9]. These community-based systems are based on trust and
engender sustainability through community-based reward and compensation systems, community-based learning systems and appropriate rituals and ceremonies in communities that foster a sense of belonging.

The dimensions of community-based reward and compensation systems include the status in the community, the success of the community and the competence or capabilities of its other members [27]. These non-material rewards ensure the continual motivation for members of a community (tribe) to fulfil those familial functions that are required to assure the survival and welfare of their families [7]. A negative example of this is when husbands leave their families in search of work; it often causes a break with culture and tradition and dislodges discipline within the family unit. The result is that parents have little or no status within the family unit and within the community [24]. In contrast, where such systems do not exist, co-operation between members of a group can only be obtained by offering people a financial reward or, if the enterprise in question appears to be too contrary to their immediate interests, by coercion. Hence, to ensure its day-to-day functioning, it must exploit forces that are external and random to the system (asystemic), and this causes serious problems [7]. Dawson describes the principle at work here that as long as behaviour patterns remain dominated by the notion of individuals and nuclear units operating largely independently of each other, external factors in the global economy will determine survival [28]. On the other hand, community (tribes) has the power to aid its members to progress in the path of sustainable living. As an example, Mwanyama describes the difference between two irrigation schemes’ members: one composed of tribal members and another of people not related [23]. The study found that where there is a level of trust (such as the group composed of tribal members), responsibility is shared and management decisions are taken collectively. However, the other group, although willing to enjoy the benefits of the scheme, lacked confidence to take responsibility for important decisions and depended on a prominent member (or on somebody with an elevated status) to make important production decisions. Consequently, the management of the scheme (and thus its sustainability) suffered due to a lack of collective responsibility. Also in an urban context, communities are able to engage in creating viable indigenous living spaces, as illustrated by Freund in his discussion of the African city. He states that in the early 1970s, ‘the parasites, the shack-dwellers and the unemployed women, instead of being seen as dragging down healthy forms of development in the city, began to be looked at as the authentic builders of Africa cities, as part of a process of development of below’ [3]. He highlights places such as Kinshasa where the inhabitants for the most part live in les annexes (the outskirts), which have been created through negotiations with local chiefs and show very little urban characteristics, but where the music and the art for which the Kinois are famous get produced. He also asserts that the Lagosian slum-dwellers’ intricately linked (if poorly serviced) built environment serve their needs, emotionally and sociologically, as well as economically. Zetter and Watson [17] also argue that to design sustainable cities, primacy should be given to local communities and their capacity to articulate their socio-spatial needs in sustainable ways. According to their theory, the focus should be on assemblies of buildings and the
spaces and places they create, typically found at the neighbourhood scale –
localities where city dwellers experience and participate in the day-to-day rhythms
and realities of urban life [3].

African community-based learning systems are distinguishable from Western
models in that they entail tacit knowledge transferral and relationship learning. It
is based on the principles that African knowledge is community owned, there are
no divisions between knowledge disciplines (i.e. it is integrated and organic) and
it is tacit rather than explicit in nature (i.e. it can only be transferred through practical
experience based on relationships and trust between learner and mentor) [14].
Furthermore, the practices of African collective learning systems consist of the
following [14]:

• Learning by doing
• Learning is a collective effort
• Teach one and learn one
• Learning is a social process.

Appropriate rituals and ceremonies are used in tribal communities to foster
sense of belonging, thus maintaining non-commodified traditions, which are a hall-
mark of sustainable communities [9]. Evidence of how appropriate rituals and
ceremonies can foster a sense of belonging in an urban context can be seen in the
Ebrié settlements in and around Abidjan. While post-war governments constructed
blocks of flats suitable for employees, the Ivorian people preferred much to live in
compounds that would inevitably contain a varied range of relatives and clients as
well as the core family. Over time, these Ebrié settlements evolved to give Abidjan
a distinctive cultural feeling based on its maquis-restaurants and cuisine, its dis-
tinctive French argot and its cosmopolitan character. These settlements were gen-
erally not disrupted by the French and, after independence, the Ivorian government,
and were allowed considerable economic and planning autonomy in controlling
their own development. This was despite the fact that the Houphouetian political
machine defined everyone (apart from the Ebrié) as outsiders who had their real
home above all their political home in some ethnic hinterland from where their
roots could be identified [3]. Another African example where organisations with
old rituals, ceremonies, histories and symbolic meanings foster a sense of belong-
ing is in Nigeria. Africans not only bring association into the city from the coun-
tryside, but also they create many novel forms of organisation, ethnic, religious
and based on other common interests [29]. Many sections of mainland Lagos have
evolved from desolate stands of housing into liveable neighbourhoods character-
ised by varied forms of micro-enterprise and gradually acquiring basic amenities
thanks to the collective capacities of Nigerians to organise and regulate their lives
‘from below’. Community Development Associations, as they are known, ‘ suc-
cessfully pave streets, constructed security gates, routinely cleared and cleaned
their surroundings (including dealing with the aftermath of flooding) maintained
public water pipes and taps and devised vigilante security arrangements for deal-
ing with the problem of armed robbery.’
It is critical for a planner to be able to acknowledge and identify the rules and patterns of behaviour in community-based systems, which shape social interaction. The latent strength of the community, the general importance of the undertaking, the community and the land are the focus for which people work [8]. Ignorance of this aspect of community-based systems would be neglecting an important resource (social capital) as well as significantly constraining development in rural communities [23]. Understanding and enhancing community-based systems would develop this social capital and aid in the evolution of sustainable livelihoods.

2.3 Importance of land (environment)

The importance of land has long been, and continues to be, central to the lives of most Africans, and to the politics and economies of African countries. According to Peters [30], land as a specific policy issue in Africa has been moved onto and off centre stage over the past hundred plus years. In the traditional African community, environment land, particularly communal land, is valued both in tangible (consumption of resources and support of ecological service functions for other economic activities) and intangible (cultural, spiritual, ceremonial and aesthetic) ways [31]. Also, it is characteristic of the culture of African tribes to think in terms of cyclical processes, in which cause and effect are interchangeable factors [8] and which support a sustainable view of land use. Its importance and the influence that the perception of land has had on traditional African communities’ world view cannot be underestimated. As Mbigi states, members of traditional communities reason that ‘defines our sense of belonging, bonding, existence, life and wealth’ and as an African a person’s worth is directly related to his access to property [14]. To understand the esteem in which land is held, it is necessary to understand how land is viewed and how property rights are defined.

Land in the African culture is viewed as a gift from the ancestors and to lose this ancestral base is traumatic [14]. As such, land also has spiritual value [8]. It is, however, more than just a matter of spiritual value; in the traditional African society, members must also demonstrate a close affinity to land by knowing how to utilise it and how to care for it properly [14]. Mbigi’s view reflects what Curtis describes as an economy that is circumscribed by values of propriety, affection, care and the human limits of knowledge of naturally heterogeneous lands [10]. This view influences how property rights are viewed.

In the Western world, the idea of private property rights as a commodity developed in parallel with industrialisation and urbanisation, feeding back into and strengthening these two latter processes [32]. This was preceded by an agrarian revolution (improving agricultural production to make food cheap through resource leverage and optimisation), as well as land reform and distribution [14]. However, land alienation and concentration were for a long time virtually absent in sub-Saharan Africa, as societies did not develop institutional mechanism that tied rulers to a system based on the exploitation of land. Neither truly feudal societies nor the highly regimented small-scale agriculture as found in Asia developed,
which proscribed the large-scale acquisition of land by individuals [33]. Instead, it was deemed that everyone must have access to land in Africa and that it is held in trust by the ruler and then allocated to the people. Tenure arrangements depend on social, legal and administrative institutions in a given society [23]. In indigenous African cultures, people had the following fundamental land rights, which ensured security of tenure [14]:

- Right to use.
- Right to transfer.
- Right to include and exclude.
- Right to improve, build and upgrade.
- Right to security of tenure.

A solely individualistic property rights approach in southern Africa is therefore inappropriate, and recognition of group or collective rights around land is an important complement. The Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa (SLSA) Team proposes that a broader definition of rights, based on people’s own conceptions, should be strived for, which is inclusive of cultural, religious and ethnic dimensions, as well as material needs [34].

For planners, understanding the traditional African land tenure systems and the management of common property is essential when endeavouring planning activities in traditional tribal communities. Especially in rural areas, where access to land is critical to enable people to participate in activities that generate income [35], it is necessary to understand that it may not always be prudent to disrupt existing tenure systems in order to establish successful projects [23]. For traditional communities, it is vitally important that culture is sustained so that they, as members of the community, can survive, often under difficult circumstances [8]. This substantiates Bryceson’s assertion [36] that land tenure is fraught with historically ingrained equity issues that have to be carefully weighed against productivity concerns. The history of land tenure systems in Africa and elsewhere indicates that communal and customary tenure can play a positive role in reducing poverty and vulnerability. Access to communal lands is an important safety net, and allows many people to survive who otherwise would be forced to migrate to the cities, to become part of the urban unemployed [37]. In addition, planners should also be aware that community members participating in projects may fear that outsiders (such as planners) may exploit them and rob them of their land, which relates to South Africa’s history of forced removals as well as land acquisition in the former homelands for agricultural projects [24].

2.4 Economy of affection

The existence of an economy of affection can most probably be ascribed to the essential characteristics of community (such as those found in traditional cultures), identified by Meltzer [12], namely social interaction, shared ties and common geographical location. Clayton observes that the social groupings of rural
communities are spatially circumscribed, often on a clan or sub-clan basis and exist closely within a social context [38]. These micro-communities tend to have an identity of purpose and of interests cemented by a uniformity of activity and a structure of customs and mores, which provides an enviable degree of social cohesion and stability. This social cohesion and stability lend themselves naturally to the establishment of an economy of affection, premised on the presence of structural opportunities for development through horizontal expansion, both economically and socially, within known and acceptable networks. Hyden considers the motto of the economy of affection to be ‘diversification pays’; whether applied by the household unit of the budding business firm or not, the strategy is the same [33]. He also contends that the inclination to spread the risks or maximise the opportunities for gain best summates the prevailing philosophy among Africans with the result that the politics of affection is characterised by investments in patronage relations at all levels. For instance, the head of the household invests in the purchase of land for his wives and offspring even if this means that ownership of many small plots operated at low productivity. If new land is unavailable, existing plots are subdivided or off-farm employment is sought to achieve the same end.

The economy of affection, however, is not limited to rural settings but also applies to the urban environment. Hyden [33] describes a few examples, such as that of a business entrepreneur, who in order to safeguard his own position and respond to the affective pressures of his home community, tends to invest in many small enterprises, which absorb labour at low levels of productivity rather than the improvement of productivity within one or two operations. Another example is that of urban–rural remittances. Urban migrants almost invariably claim that they plan to retire in their home villages, consequently remitting considerable amounts of money not only to sustain the family members left on the land but also to invest in agricultural expansion and improvement. Thus, urban environments should make provision for an extended family (rural connectivity) that is conducive to African living [29].

Similar examples of an economy of affection can be found in other parts of the world. The social organisation that takes place on the fringes of Beijing and elsewhere in China has resulted from the reintroduction of markets to the Chinese economy and provided opportunities for new forms of development to emerge, such as Zhejiangcun and other migrant villages. The construction of these villages (called da yuan or an informal village) is financed in two ways, either money pooled by a group of three or four successful businessmen or through prepaid rents (it is quite common for a compound’s developers to collect rent before building is complete) [22]. In Zhejiangcun, social facilities have been developed by individual migrant entrepreneurs. In the largest da yuan in Zhejiangcun, services such as day-care centres, beauty salons, grocery stores, telephone services, clinics and entertainment facilities are run mostly by the families of the developers [22], which demonstrate a form of economy of affection.

To assert the possibilities that an economy of affection can have on economic growth, Hyden [33] points to the example of Latin America. Although urban–rural
remittances are generally less extensive in Latin America than in Africa, studies from that continent show how the economy of affection provides the basis for survival strategies of the poorer segments of the population. The Lebanese example shows that societies organised along the lines of an economy of affection can achieve quite impressive economic results but that their social and political fabrics tend to be fragile and, if torn, hostility among groups is likely to be both strong and difficult to overcome.

2.5 Agriculture

As discussed earlier on, in *ubuntu*, the interconnectedness of all things are emphasised, and nowhere else is it more evident than in the agriculture system of the traditional African community. Collaborative (tribal) leadership, community-based systems, land having tangible and intangible value and economy of affection all result in a multiplicity of agricultural systems. Added to this multiplicity is the influence that the high degree of autonomy from other groups and institutions in society has on most African farmers [33]. This context must be evaluated when considering agriculture as the principal economic sector that can be used for sustainable development in Africa. As Johnston [39] states, small-farm strategies have significant economic advantages because of the fit between the resource requirements of such strategies and the resource endowment that characterises late-developing countries where the bulk of the population still depends on agriculture for employment and income. While formal education at specialised institutions has become an important factor in commercial agriculture in the past few decades, smallholder farmers have had little if any access to new technology, which is anyway often not suited to their circumstances [24]. Mbigi believes that, in particular, the following focus areas would support economic growth in Africa, namely, emphasis on the role of peasant farmers, emphasis on the role of female peasant farmers and emphasis on regional economic integration [14]. The complex farming and livelihood systems within which rural communities exist are multiple, diverse and dynamic, often aimed at managing risk, reducing vulnerability and enhancing security [31]. Members of these communities tend to be involved in various agricultural and non-agricultural activities as part of their strategy to fulfil their food needs and cash requirements [23]. In addition to agricultural activities such as rain-fed farming, livestock rearing, poultry production, etc., community members also engage in many other small business activities such as sewing, selling drinks, constructing roofs, baking, etc., as well as relying on pensions, disability grants and claiming through social networks. Through diversification, these households are able to buffer themselves against risk in agrarian environments as well as (hopefully) generate an adequate and sustainable livelihood [40]. Accordingly, if and when productivity gains take place due to structural adjustment, it may not necessarily translate into a greater willingness to engage in surplus agricultural production but instead lead to a reallocation of household labour to off-farm activities [36]. This is the motivation for most urban migrants, who almost invariably claim that they plan to retire in their home villages, consequently
remitting considerable amounts of money not only to sustain the family members left on the land but also to invest in agricultural expansion and improvement [33].

The increase in diversification of traditional rural societies can be ascribed to the growing pressures of the world economy [41]. While African farmers today are engaged in commodity production, usually for world markets, their systems and modes of production remain pre-capitalist in nature, characterised by low productivity levels per unit of land [33]. Traditional rural societies have evolved agricultural systems in which limited technology is applied to enable the needs of subsistence and limited exchange to be sustained over long periods of time. Over time, these systems are capable of adapting to the growth of population, the introduction of new crops and techniques, and to a degree of commercialisation [41]. Consequently, Third World agricultural systems have come increasingly under pressure as they have been incorporated into the world economy, and this incorporation disrupted or destroyed established mechanisms for coping with harvest failure, population growth and the need for surplus production [41]. This has led to the extension of rural households to urban areas as a means of survival and hence the urban–rural hybrid system, so characteristic of African cities [33].

To underscore the existence of this hybrid system, Trefon [25] describes three economic activities, namely, agricultural activities, fuel wood harvesting and coal production and animal husbandry. Agricultural activities in urban transitional zone areas differ mainly from those in rural areas in the methods that are produced, with urban transitional zone farming taking place on smaller plots and using improved seeds, insecticides and chemical fertilizers that are acquired in town as the main example. Fuel wood harvesting and charcoal production are the cause of most urban transitional zone deforestation and land degradation, notably around the larger urban areas. Concerning animal husbandry, although pigs and chickens are farmed primarily, ducks are also reared, under conditions that range from village-like practices where animals roam around freely and feed themselves to semi-industrial systems where they are bred in pens or cages and nourished with commercially purchased feed and treated with veterinary products purchased in town. A very serious handicap to these initiatives, as well as urban transitional zone agriculture, is widespread theft.

When planners develop a strategy for sustainable livelihoods, the complex farming and livelihood systems of traditional communities as presented earlier are a useful departure point, specifically the view held by members of these communities that farming is their main employment and the most important contributor to family income. For Goldsmith [7], the answer lies in focusing on the development of intermediate technologies at the village level and the provision of agro-ecological training teams so that communities can be taught to manage the land together. Others, like Bank, propose that economic activities normally associated with village life be promoted in the urban setting, such as urban transitional zone farming [29]. As an illustration of how it can be promoted, peri-urban farming in Kinshasa as described by Trefon [25] is discussed. Three main types of space are used for urban transitional zone farming, namely, farming within the house lot, just beyond the village limits and, increasingly due to soil fatigue, farther and farther into the
village outskirts referred to as forest by farmers outside of Kinshasa. The types of crops grown and their ultimate use (sale or family consumption) determine where they will be grown. Vegetables for household consumption are grown on the house lot, supplemented by staples grown beyond the village limits. Market gardening takes place on perennial space in proximity to the village to grow for the urban market. Farming in the forest is also largely destined for commercial purposes and takes place on large plots of up to one hectare. All work is labour intensive and carried out with rudimentary tools. A fourth category of agricultural space is the plantation, ranging in size between 5 and 30 hectares. These considerably larger plots are owned by urban elites and exploited exclusively for commercial purposes.

An important component in planning for sustainable livelihoods should be the attention given to women in agriculture. Usually, rural development programmes assume that every household has a male head who is also the ‘farm manager’, which often does not reflect reality, particularly in much of sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. de Lange et al. [24] states that in the former region, it has been estimated that as many as one-third of rural households are headed by women. In addition, even where there is an identifiable permanent male ‘head of household’, cultivation, particularly of subsistence crops, may well be a female activity. Dixon approximates that for much of Africa, women probably contribute 60–80% of the labour and management that goes into crop production [41]. In irrigation scheme studies conducted by de Lange et al., as many as 80% or more of farmer groups consisted of women [24]. Regard for women is therefore essential as e.g. the presence of an irrigation scheme generally increases the workload of women, because activities such as transplanting, harvesting and levelling are burdens of women, as is the extra weeding that results from applying water in the schemes. Where these irrigation schemes showed special consideration for women, their performance has increased [23]. van Koppen also stresses the importance of the inclusion of women at farm and forum levels in Asia, Africa and Latin America to enhance productivity [42].

When the improvement of agricultural yields due to basic agro-ecological training assists in satisfying basic needs of the community, other training demands will develop for literacy, numeracy and other life skills [24]. Some of these can be provided concurrently with agro-ecological training (for instance hand sewing), increasing confidence as well as the measure of success in implementation of agro-ecological training [24]. In Tanzania, the initiators of irrigation schemes included other processes such as fuel-saving technologies, milling machines, monitoring, nutrition education, etc. [42].

3 Summary

As stated previously, there are significant differences between planning for urban spaces and for rural areas and urban transitional zones. The foregoing discussion highlighted particular aspects associated with the traditional African community environment, which can significantly influence planning outcomes in rural areas.
and urban transitional zones. Essentially, traditional community contexts influence socio-political aspects that include collaborative leadership and community-based systems, ecological aspects (the view of land) and economical aspects (economy of affection and agriculture). It is critical for a planner to be able to acknowledge and identify the rules and patterns of behaviour in community-based systems, which shape social interaction and enable the development of social capital. Planners should also understand the traditional African land tenure systems as it is fraught with historically ingrained equity issues that have to be carefully weighed against productivity concerns. Last, but not least, the reality of an economy of affection and the complexity of farming and livelihood systems of traditional communities as presented in this chapter should form the basis of any sustainable planning approach in rural areas and urban transitional zones.

References


