

## **Rapid urbanisation and housing transformations in Tlokweng, Botswana**

### **Speakers:**

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**Abstract:** *This paper seeks to explore resilience among communities threatened by rapid urbanisation. While previous studies have identified housing transformation through construction of outbuildings and house extensions as a popular survival strategy among the urban poor, this paper focuses on the commoditisation and transformation of traditional homesteads into rental accommodation in the peri-urban village of Tlokweng. It is based on qualitative data collected largely through in-depth interviews with landlords and tenants residing in traditional compounds within the settlement. Interviewees' responses indicate that housing transformations in Tlokweng have primarily been driven by the village's proximity to the city of Gaborone, land and housing shortages in the city and diminishing opportunities for subsistence livelihoods within the village. It concludes by noting the role played by the transformation in alleviating shortages for rental housing, providing alternative sources of income and decreasing urban sprawl.*

**Keywords:** *urban resilience; housing transformation; sub-letting; Tlokweng*

### **Introduction**

The main objective of this paper is to examine, explore and assess the effects of urbanisation on traditional housing homesteads, patterns and styles in peri-urban villages such as Tlokweng, Botswana. According to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) urbanisation is a "process of transition from a rural to a more urban society ... [and which] reflects an increasing proportion of the population living in settlements defined as urban, primarily through net rural to urban migration" (UNFPA, 2007:6). The definition summarises four major features of urbanisation. First, urbanisation is a dynamic process rather than an incident or a static condition. Second, the urbanisation process affects places, people and ways of living. Third, the growth or increases in the number, proportion or size of urban places or urban population is driven primarily by net rural to urban migration. Despite being popular, the above definition is flawed because it ignores or underplays the role played by in-situ urbanisation processes – a phenomenon that is affecting numerous peri-urban villages in Africa and Asia.

### **In-situ urbanisation**

In-situ urbanisation has been defined as a process through which technological innovations and new modes of production, living and thinking originate in towns and cities and spread to outlying rural settlements and populations (Brookfield et al, 1991; Qadeer, 2004); Kalabamu and Thebe, 2005; Zhu et al, 2007; Xu et al (2011)). In-situ urbanisation is governed, inter alia, by the size of



the nearby city, the distance between the two centres and prevailing modes of transport. In-situ urbanisation often emerges when villages on city fringes become sources of labour for cities as well as dormitory towns for city migrant workers. Decentralisation initiatives by the state and/or corporate institutions may also lead to in-situ urbanisation through the creation of industrial, commercial, educational and other urban type work opportunities in rural areas (UNCHS, 1996; UNCHS and DFID, 2002). Over time communities in peri-urban villages acquire cosmopolitan behaviour, tastes, attitudes and new styles for housing and settlement patterns.

### **Impacts of conventional and in-situ urbanisation**

According to Njoh (2003) and Macionis and Parrillo (2010: 5- 10), urbanisation - especially rapid urbanisation - is always accompanied by numerous challenges and opportunities. While it creates job opportunities and markets for rural produces, it fuels rural-urban population movements and transforms everyday life by reordering existing social structures and introducing new social stratifications, lifestyle patterns, values, attitudes and behaviour. Urbanisation may also lead to the growth of subcultures shaped by unequal access and distribution of income, wealth, political power and other livelihood resources. This paper highlights the impacts of rapid in-situ urbanisation on traditional homesteads and housing styles in Tlokweng, a village on the fringes of Botswana's capital city, Gaborone. The paper is divided into five parts: this introduction which provides a background on urbanisation and its impacts on people and places; the conceptual framework; study area and methodology; findings of the study; and discussion and conclusion.

### **Housing transformation**

As hinted above, housing transformation is one of the major impacts of all forms of urbanisation. The term 'housing transformation' is used here to refer to informal, extra-legal and unplanned processes through which home-owners extend their houses, erect additional rooms or convert part of their homesteads into rental accommodation. It is similar to 'rooming' or multi-habitation – that is, “a situation in which people who do not define themselves as one households share a living space that is clearly not designed for multi-family purposes” (Schlyter, 2003:7).

In South Africa and Zimbabwe, the transformation takes place through construction of backyard dwellings or shacks (Schlyter, 2003; Morange, 2002; and Lemanski, 2009). The shacks are structures often built by occupiers on land belonging to other people. The shack occupiers pay rent to the land owners with whom they share consumption costs for electricity, water, sanitation and refuse collection. The shacks are often “constructed from corrugated iron, metal sheets and wooden planks ... with most comprising a single room in which residents cook, eat, sleep, wash and live” (Lemanski, 2009:473). Lemanski notes that as of 1990 “nearly 60% of Gauteng's township properties hosted backyard dwellings, housing almost half (44%) of Gauteng's Black African population ... By the late-1990s, virtually every backyard in Soweto township hosted an informal shack ...” (Lemanski, 2009:474). According to Schlyter (2003:22), 60% of all residential plots in Unit N, Chitungwiza Township, Harare, had an illegal outbuilding accommodating lodgers.

Unlike Zimbabwe and South Africa, housing transformations in Tanzania is through addition of rooms to the primary house (Sheuya, 2009). New rooms are incrementally added to the main house or other outbuildings such that the house can have as many as 12 rooms instead of the standard four



to six (Sheuya, 2009: 85). A study by Shiferaw (1998) revealed that construction of additional rental rooms was also the major housing delivery system in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Until the 1980s, rooming was unknown in Botswana's rural settlements although it was quite common in Francistown, Gaborone, Lobatse and other townships (Larsson, 1990:129-132). However, a study carried out by the same author in the early 1990s revealed that some households in villages around Gaborone accommodated tenants in their traditional houses (Larsson, 1996:74-75). The tenants worked in Gaborone and commuted daily to work. While most previous studies have focused on housing transformation in townships, this paper is an attempt to explore the extent, nature and impacts of housing transformations in traditional settlements taking Tlokweneng as a case study.

### **Motivation and effects of housing transformations**

Housing transformation has been attributed to three major factors: restrictive or inappropriate state policies, rapid urbanisation and failures in the formal housing delivery systems. According to Lemanski (2009:473-474) and Morange (2002:6), backyard dwellings became increasingly popular in South African cities during the 1960s because the government halted the construction of houses for rural-urban migrants and/or prohibited the growth of informal settlements. Consequently, the growing urban African population found shelter in backyard shacks where detection could be avoided (Watson and McCarthy, 1998:51). Watson and McCarthy (1998) and Lemanski (2009) note that the growth of backyard dwellings in the post-apartheid era has been fuelled by state and municipal housing policies, strategies and programmes that focus on promoting homeownership and ignore the rental housing market. Schylter, (2003), Sheuya (1998) and Shiferaw (1998) attribute the transformation to housing shortages especially among the urban poor in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Ethiopia.

The transformation has been applauded on several grounds. First, it is viewed as a "solution adopted by people themselves in circumstances where no other solutions were offered ... [thereby enabling] more people to benefit from urban services than was planned" (Schylter, 2003:9. See also Morange, 2002:11-12). Second, the sharing of services reduces housing costs. Third, shacks and rental rooms represent capital investments designed to generate regular income to landlords while providing affordable shelter to low income households. Fourth, rental rooms provide working space for home-based enterprises such as shops, salons, carpentry, poultry, laundry and telephone services (Sheuya, 1998 and Shiferaw, 1998). Fifth, additional rooms enable house owners to create more space for food preparation and sleeping besides subletting (Shiferaw, 1998:441). Sixth, backyard shacks in planned areas are said to guarantee more physically and socially stable environments than informal settlements because they are less threatening (Morange, 2002: 11). Last, but not least in importance, backyard shacks and rental rooms provide flexible and personalised relationships whereby tenants and landlords support each other (Morange, 2002:11). Despite the positive contribution to housing delivery, backyard dwellings and house extensions have been criticised for increasing housing densities (overcrowding); promoting ill health; and compromising building regulations, standards and development control codes (Morange, 2002; Shiferaw, 1998; Sheuya, 1998; and Schylter, 2003).

### Conceptual framework

In our view, the cause-effect relationships between rapid urbanisation and housing transformation are best understood or explained by two independent but interrelated conceptual frameworks: the *Sustainable Livelihood Framework* (SLF) and the *Asset Vulnerability Framework* (AVF). The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) considers a livelihood to be sustainable if people are able to maintain or improve their standard of living as well as reduce their vulnerability (Allison and Horemans, 2006). Its main dimensions are Vulnerability Context; Livelihood Assets; Transforming Structures and Processes; Livelihood Structures; and Livelihood outcomes. In the SLF setting, individuals, households and communities are viewed to operate in a context of vulnerability utilising several assets in the form of human skills, natural resources, finances, social and physical capital. These assets gain their meaning and value through Transforming Structures and Processes such as types of government support, state laws and policies, cultural and institutional arrangements and private sector participation (DFID, 1999; Kollmair and Juli 2002). Transforming structures and processes influence livelihood strategies that may be adopted by individuals, households and communities in order to achieve their envisaged livelihood outcomes, which may include enhanced incomes, better well-being and/or improved food security.

The Asset Vulnerability Framework on the other hand, seeks to identify asset management practices that promote “resilience or the responsiveness in exploiting opportunities, and in resisting or recovering from the negative effects of a changing environment” (Moser, 1998:3). It is premised on the assumption that when exposed to some form of either internal or external stress, risks or shocks households tend to develop and adopt certain contingencies in order to deal with their ordeal. According to Moser (1998:4) urban assets include labour (skills, competencies and inventiveness); human capital (healthy, educated, skilled etc. population); land and housing; household relationships; social capital expressed through solidarity, reciprocity and trust. Moser (1998) further identified housing as a less familiar productive asset that is transformed and managed to reduce vulnerability to external pressures by generating income through, for instance, renting of rooms and the use of its space for home-based productive activities.

Overall, the SLF and the AVF both recognize that urban dwellers, for example, individuals, households and communities have productive assets such as land, housing and its associated infrastructure. When the urban dwellers are faced with adversity, they can mobilize, transform and manage such assets to improve their livelihood. The corollary of such livelihood improvement is resistance to vulnerability brought about by internal-external factors such as urbanization.

### Study area and Research Methodology

Tlokweng was selected for the study because it is the oldest peri-urban settlement whose establishment pre-dates all towns and cities in Botswana. Established in 1885, Tlokweng abuts the City of Gaborone which was designed and built a few years before the country’s independence in 1966. According to the 1964 census, Tlokweng had a population of about 3700 inhabitants. Its population has since increased to about 36326 in 2011 (GOB, 2012). The settlements’ rapid population growth is attributable to its close proximity to the city – which it serves as a ‘dormitory town’. Tlokweng, together with Palapye, were the first two villages to be granted ‘urban’ status following the 1981 population census. In Botswana, a village attains ‘urban’ status when 75% of its population is engaged in non-agricultural activities.

### ***Changing socio-economic and vulnerability experiences in Tlokweng***

Besides experiencing rapid urbanisation and population growth, Tlokweng has witnessed several socio-economic and political shocks and stresses. First, when the Batlokwa migrated from South Africa in 1887, they were permitted by the Bakwena chief, Kgosi Sechele I, to occupy the land in Tlokweng on condition that they paid him rent in the form of cattle (Schapera 1943). However, due to misunderstandings between the Batlokwa chief, Kgosi Gaborone, and Kgosi Sechele I, later ceded the land to the British Government in 1895 without allocating alternative land to the Batlokwa. The British Government formally granted the land to the British South Africa Company (BSA) in 1905. The Batlokwa became tenants and were required to pay rent to the BSA Company. However, with financial assistance from the British colonial government, the Batlokwa reclaimed back part of the land in 1933.

Second, with the coming into effect of the Tribal Land Act (1968) in 1970, the Batlokwa chief and headmen once again lost control over land in Tlokweng. The Act transferred land administration duties from chiefs to land boards established by the state under the same act. In addition, the act vested ownership of tribal land into various land boards. Batlokwa tribal land was vested in Tlokweng Land Board. Third, following the 1993 amendments to the Tribal Land Act, all tribal land (including that in Tlokweng) became accessible to all citizens. The amendment, as Kalabamu (2012) observes, has had the effect of escalating the demand and commoditisation of land peri-urban areas such as Tlokweng and Mogoditshane. Fourth, as a consequence of rapid urbanisation and in response to increased demand for serviced residential land in Gaborone and surrounding settlements, large tracks of land previously reserved for agricultural uses has been converted to urban uses (Kalabamu, 2012).

The above political, social, economic and demographic changes have overtime intensified and increasingly threatened the sustainability of the Tlokweng community. The threat is further aggravated by the shortage of land and the settlement's location. Tlokweng is hemmed in by the city of Gaborone to the west, South Africa to the east and freehold farms to the north and south. As a result, the village has no space for lateral expansion or growth.

### ***Research methodology***

The study on which this paper is based sought to identify the effects of urbanisation on traditional settlements in Botswana taking Tlokweng as a case study. The study was divided the study into three phases. During the first phase, quantitative data was collected while qualitative data was collected in the second phase. The third phase was used to map physical changes within compounds in the traditional or unplanned part of the village. A total of 74 homesteads or compounds were studied. However, this paper largely depends on data collected through in-depth interviews during the second phase.

In-depth interviews were undertaken by the authors between November and December 2012. A total of nineteen house owners and twenty-three tenants were interviewed using different sets of questionnaires. Respondents were selected through purposeful sampling based on house ownership, existence of rental rooms or out-buildings. Plots or compounds without rental rooms or structures were left out. In each compound, either the landlord or a tenant was interviewed but never both a tenant and house owner. Only one tenant was interviewed in compounds with several tenants.



In-depth interviews generated qualitative data which was analysed through ‘constant comparative’ techniques. All responses and narratives were read and re-read several times while noting emerging issues, similarities and differences between each interviewee. The analysis focused on summing up and categorisation of survival strategies through housing transformation.

## Findings

This section presents and discusses qualitative data collected during in-depth interviews as well as secondary quantitative data obtained from census reports and the mapping exercise.

### *Renting in Tlokweng*

According to the 1991 census, Tlokweng had a total of 2647 households of whom a third (or 33.6%) was renters (Table 1). By 2001, the proportion of renting households had increased to about 57 per cent. The percentage of households living in their own houses dropped from almost 59 per cent in 1991 to 38 per cent by 2001. The percentage of households living in rent free accommodation remained unchanged. Both censuses indicate that private landlords in Tlokweng provided the bulk of rental accommodation – about 70 per cent in 1991 and 80 per cent in 2001 (Table 2).

**Table 1: Households by type of house ownership**

Type of housing	1991	2001
Owner occupied	58.5%	37.9%
Rented	33.6%	54.1%
Free	7.9%	7.9%
Total	100.0% (n=2647)	99.9% (n=5909)

Source: GOB, 1994 and 2004

**Table 2: Renting households by type of landlord**

Landlord	1991	2001
Government	7.9%	5.1%
Private household	70.3%	80.3%
Private company	2.8%	1.7%
Free	19.0%	12.8%
Total	100.0 (n=1099)	99.9 (n=3661)

Source: GOB, 1994 and 2004

### *Rental housing in Tlokweng*

Rental accommodation provided by the household sector in the unplanned or traditional section of Tlokweng largely consists of one or two roomed detached houses erected anywhere within the compound – not necessarily in the backyard. Figure 1 shows several units occupied by house owners and/or tenants in various compounds. Units for tenants have separate door entrances which open to the outside as shown in Figure 2. Thus once a tenant enters the compound he or she does not have to go through a corridor or share any indoor space with the house-owner or other tenants in order to access his or her room(s). This arrangement is designed to promote privacy and ensure that tenants do not encroach on the private life of the landlord’s family or other tenants. The arrangement borrows from traditional Tswana housing practices whereby parents, daughters, sons and visitors occupied separate units within the homestead or compound.

Most structures built for rental purposes are often erected in rows along the rear and/or side boundaries (Figures 1 and 2) such that the plot owners’ dwellings are either at the front or in the middle of the compounds. In addition, rental dwellings are relatively smaller and roofed with corrugated metal sheets. Owners’ are more spacious and of better quality than renters’ rooms. It is worth noting that the design of rental dwellings is a prototype of buildings plans adopted in urban

self-help housing schemes undertaken in Gaborone and other townships during the 1980s and 1990s.

As showed in Table 3, the mapping exercise carried out during the third phase of our study revealed that there were no tenants in 32% of the 74 homesteads surveyed; 26% of the homesteads were inhabited by tenants only; while 42% were occupied by both owners and tenants – which suggests that Tlokweng communities are not only accommodating tenants within their homesteads but developing compounds for rental purposes only. Subletting is least common in the oldest parts of the village may be because the plots are relatively small due to intergenerational subdivisions and inheritance practices.



**Figure 1: Owner-occupied and rented dwellings in Tlokweng**  
Source: Google maps, 2012



**Figure 2: Typical rented dwellings in one compound, Tlokweng**  
Source: Authors' photo, 2013

**Table 3 Status of compounds in studied clusters**

Area	No rental dwellings	Rental dwellings only	Owner plus rental dwellings	All homesteads
Oldest cluster	52%	19%	28%	100% (n=21)
Mid-cluster	13%	13%	73%	100% (n=15)
Newest cluster	29%	34%	37%	100% (n=38)
All clusters	32%	26%	42%	100% (n=74)

Source: Field surveys, 2012

### ***Drivers for rental housing in Tlokweng***

The experience of a 64 year old female respondent summarises the major factors that drive supply of rental housing in Tlokweng. This is what she told us:

I was born in 1949 here in Tlokweng. My parents were pastoral and arable farmers... I went up to standard 3. My husband was a professional teacher and I was a farmer. I built this home through cultivation. We used to keep livestock but it has all died due to drought. I am [now] running a business of rental houses... I have two residential plots in Tlokweng... The first house on this plot has since been destroyed because it was too small and primitive. I destroyed it and decided to use modern building materials. I built the main house to reside in it with my children.

I started the business of rental houses in 1985 after my husband passed away because things became a little tough for me. I had to pay school fees for the children. Then I realised I had to build a rental house. I am the one who laid the bricks, with the help of my children until we put up a complete structure and I rented it out for P25. From there I saved some of the rental money and extended it gradually until I had a total of six rental rooms. At the moment the rent is around P400 [US\$ 50] per room. I built an apartment on the second plot. The apartment has a kitchen, bathroom, toilet and sitting room. Its rent goes for P1200 [US\$ 150].

The main factor which attracts people to my compound is lack of accommodation. People also want a tidy environment, and they are also after electricity. The crime rate is very high in Tlokweng, which is why I have planted thorny trees around my plot. I have also put up burglar bars in all the houses. This makes my plot less susceptible to theft... Sometimes I even clean the front of tenants' rooms because they are students at the University of Botswana and do not have enough time to clean... I also try my best to make them feel at home. When they are with me I want them to take me like I am their blood parent. Some of the tenants are working, there is even a lawyer renting in one of the rooms. One is a student at Limkonkweng. There is only one working in Tlokweng at Senn Foods, the rest commute to Gaborone.





From the above narrative, vulnerability and threats arising from changes in livelihood resources appear to be the primary force behind establishment of rental business. The respondent lost cattle through drought and later regular cash income through her husband's death. In the meantime, her financial obligations such as payment of children's educational fees had risen. Contributory factors included shortage of rental accommodation in Gaborone where her tenants are studying or working; proximity to Gaborone which enable her tenants to commute to school or work; employment opportunities for non-resident populations; availability of infrastructure facilities (water, electricity and transport); and modern houses. In addition, rental housing appears to be a reliable source of income and not just a poverty reduction strategy.

Another female respondent (82 years old in 2012) also stated that she started rental business after experiencing income and livelihood challenges. This is part of her story:

... I went to school in Tlokweng up to standard 6. I was never married. I never had a permanent job. At one time I worked as a temporary teacher because I did not have enough qualifications ... I do not have any ploughing land or any livestock. I used to keep chicken but they all died because of the disease outbreak. I am not running any business. In the past I used to make and sell traditional beer and was also involved in *motshelo* [loan-scheme]. I built this house [which she occupies] using *motshelo* when I was still working for the council as a cleaner but after my son had graduated from school. I built the other [tenants'] houses to earn a living because I am not working. I once joined the destitute programme, but was cut off ... So renting is my only source of income...

The above two narratives suggest construction of rental rooms or units is initially a hard and demanding task. The first respondent had to depend on her own and children's labour to build her first rental house while the second one rely on cash loans. Other respondents expressed similar challenges. However, some respondents started rental businesses when some rooms fell vacant. "I built that house for my daughter who later got married and moved out. So I rented it out to get some income. I built the other two housing units in 2011 rental. Have six rental rooms in total. They all go for P450 each", said an 83 years old female respondent. To some, renting rooms is undertaken to supplement salary earnings as reported by a 48 year-old man who formerly worked for the Botswana Housing Corporation. "I started the business of rental houses in 1983 – before I got married. I wanted to raise money for my wife and kids while they were still living with my in-laws. I also had to take care of my parents and my salary was not enough ..." he said. "After building my own place where I could stay with my family, I built a second one around 1999. The third one was built in 2010 with my retrenchment package. The fourth [last] one was built last year ... At this point I have 3 houses with 8 rooms in total which I rent out..." he added.

Subletting in Tlokweng has now crossed cultural boundaries. "I am renting two houses since 2006. My children are the ones who pushed me into it. I did not want to build rental houses because I am a pure Motswana. I don't even want electricity and they forced me to connect. There are four rooms in total which are for rent. They have helped me not to die of hunger" said an 87 female from the royal family.



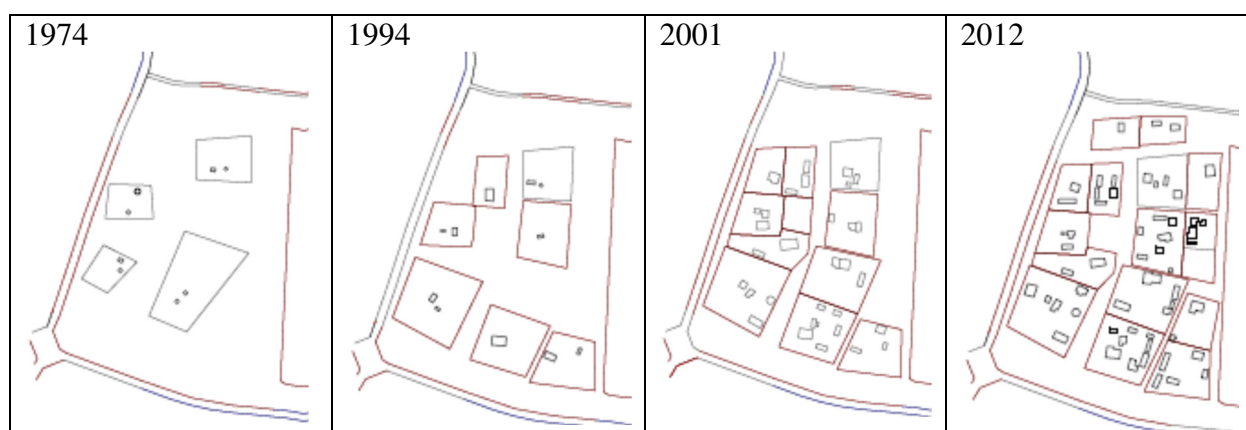
Tenants had many reasons for wanting to rent dwellings in Tlokweng as expressed in the following selected excerpts:

- I came to stay in Tlokweng because that is where I conduct most of my work. It is the most convenient location because I do not have to get a bus to go to work *(40 year old builder from Zimbabwe)*.
- I work as a crane operator for a brick moulding company in Tlokweng ... I came to rent a house in Tlokweng because the rent is lower and houses are relatively easy to find. I wanted a house which has got electricity, water and flush toilets. All those things are available here. I was also looking at the rental amount which I can afford to pay *(28 year old man born at Chadibe, near Francistown)*.
- Before we came here we stayed at Broadhurst [in Gaborone]. We moved from Broadhurst because there were no flush toilets - we were using pit latrines. We wanted flush toilets because they are tidier and we have kids. This place is clean place and the rent is reasonable..." *(37 year old woman married to a self-employed electrician from Mahalapye)*.
- Before I came to Tlokweng I lived in Phase 2 [in Gaborone]. I moved because rent there is more expensive. I was looking for a decent complete house with electricity, kitchen, toilet and, if possible, a bathroom ... this is the kind of house I wanted although I think the rent is too high ..." *(27 year old woman who has just completed her tertiary education in Gaborone)*.
- I came to stay in Tlokweng because of lack of accommodation in Gaborone also because rent in Tlokweng is lower than in Gaborone *(28 year old air technology services technician working in Gaborone)*.
- Work as stock packer at ... in Tlokweng. I moved from White City [in Gaborone] to Tlokweng after I found a job at ... I wanted to live in Tlokweng because I am now working in Tlokweng... *(20 years old youth from Bobonong)*.
- I am a student at Baisago University [in Gaborone]. I came to Tlokweng [from Phakalane] because it is still not yet that heavily populated or congested like Gaborone. I like Tlokweng because it still has a traditional village set-up like my home. There isn't too much noise and hence I am able to study without being disturbed *(24 year old man from Kgagodi village)*.
- I work for a construction company in Gaborone ... and my wife also works for a cleaning company in Gaborone. . Before we came to stay here we were staying and working in Palapye ... I live in Tlokweng because I found a job in Gaborone and I found accommodation here" *(40 year old man from Serowe)*.

Reading through the above excerpts, and other narratives that have not been presented here, easy availability and relatively cheap accommodation are the prominent factors which attract tenants to Tlokweng. All most all tenants interviewed perceive rents to be lower in Tlokweng than Gaborone. Other contributing factors are (i) proximity to Gaborone; (ii) proximity to work in Tlokweng; (iii) housing shortages in Gaborone; (iv) availability of infrastructure services (electricity, water, sewage, transport etc.) in Tlokweng; and (v) quiet rural environment, reminiscent to villages where most tenants were raised. It is worth noting that most of the tenants interviewed grew up in rural areas and came to Tlokweng or Gaborone to take up jobs or pursue further education. In addition, most tenant respondents were youths at school or young adults employed in casual or technical jobs. Most land lords were elderly people with neither technical nor professional skills which suggest that they could not readily utilise cash employment opportunities associated with urbanisation.

### ***Benefits of housing transformations in Tlokweng***

Besides providing affordable accommodation to students and low income migrant workers, the transformation has had many direct and indirect benefits to Tlokweng communities and beyond. First, it has served as new source of sustainable livelihood for Tlokweng communities. Second, it has increased the housing stock within the Greater Gaborone region. Third, the transformation has indirectly decreased or slowed down the demand of land for housing in Greater Gaborone. The mapping exercise undertaken by the author revealed gradually increasing building densities throughout the village. As shown in Figure 3, higher densities have been achieved through infilling (utilising vacant spaces between plots) and construction of additional structures within existing plots. In this cluster, the number of plots increased from 4 in 1974 to 14 in 2012 while the number of structures increased from 8 to 44. The process underscores resilient and sustainable use of land resources. Fourth and related to the foregoing, housing transformation processes in Tlokweng have facilitated optimum utilisation of infrastructure facilities.



**Figure 3 Footprints of increasing plot and building densification in Tlokweng (1974 – 2012)**

Source: Digitised from library aerial photographs and field surveys



## Discussion and conclusions

In terms of the conceptual framework, we note that land shortages and tenure insecurity as well as attainment of urban status constitute the vulnerability context in Tlokweng while the spacious yards or homesteads are livelihood assets which communities have commoditised and transformed into rental accommodation. The establishment and growth of Gaborone Township has provided opportunities for non-farm income and livelihoods. As revealed by several narratives, many homeowners interviewed once worked as maids, cleaners or labourers in the city. The narratives further indicate that the demand for rental accommodation in Tlokweng is driven by housing shortages in Gaborone. Rental rooms are perceived by respondents to be a more reliable, regular and sustainable source of income and livelihood than crop and cattle farming which are tedious and vulnerable to drought. Provision of infrastructure utilities (tarred roads, electricity, water and sewerage) has, at the same time, promoted the transformation process by creating living environments that are comparable to those found in the city. Thus in accordance with the sustainable livelihood and asset vulnerability frameworks, the prevailing housing transformations in the village of Tlokweng has managed to reduce communities' vulnerability caused by land shortages, tenure insecurity and urbanisation by generating new sources of incomes through rental dwellings.

Housing transformation in Tlokweng is slightly different from processes experienced in other countries. First, unlike South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania or Ethiopia where the transformation takes place in state sponsored urban projects, the same process is happening on customary land in a traditional settlement where rental accommodation was previously unknown. Indigenous communities have converted owner-occupied homesteads to include rented dwellings. Second, in Tlokweng the demand for rental housing is exogenous – an overspill from Gaborone – whereas in other studies it is endogenous or internal to the respective city or town. Third, unlike South Africa where the additional accommodation is built by the lodgers, the construction of rental space is the responsibility of the landlord – a process similar to that recorded in Tanzania and Ethiopia. Fourth, rental dwellings in Tlokweng are generally of high quality and comparable those occupied by landlords unlike South Africa where shacks and temporary structures are the order of the day. Fifth, while the shacks, extensions and outbuildings in South Africa, Zimbabwe and other countries are illegal, the rental dwellings in Tlokweng are not. Construction of additional units to meet increasing demand in any homestead is a popular and legitimate practice in traditional Botswana settlements.

The transformation of traditional homesteads from utilitarian to rental housing has had numerous positive effects. The process has enabled landlords in Tlokweng to obtain sustainable sources of income while providing cheap / affordable accommodation to low income migrants working or studying in Gaborone. Interviewed tenants consider Tlokweng to be a safe place with quality services and infrastructure. In addition, the process has increased housing stock in the Greater Gaborone region and slowed down the increase in demand for residential land. In short, experiences of housing transformation processes in Tlokweng have positive outcomes and deserve full support by policy makers and city managers.





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