

Lauren Royston & Michael Clark - Urbanisation: Low-Cost Housing Not Low-Cost Enough



Photo: Madelene Cronje M&G

Mail & Guardian, April 11, 2014. Urbanisation is inevitable, whether or not election manifestos or government policy documents acknowledge it as such. Approximately 60% of the South African population currently lives in urban areas. This figure will increase as a result of natural population growth and the further migration of people to cities in search of economic opportunities.

In many African countries, including South Africa, the standard government response to poverty associated with urbanisation (existing in backyard shacks, informal settlements and “bad” buildings) has been to focus on improving standards of living in rural areas in order to prevent rural-urban migration, and to criminalise poverty in urban areas by evicting people from their shacks and clamping down on informal livelihoods.

These policies have failed because they do not engage with the reality of urbanisation as a historical phenomenon. Viewed historically, South Africa is not urbanising exceptionally fast at all. South Africa’s urbanisation rate is 1.21%, comparable to Spain’s rate of 1% and much less than India’s rate of 2.47%. In addition, more people are being born in cities than in rural areas.

Read more: <http://mg.co.za/low-cost-housing-not-low-cost-enough>