

Decolonising apartheid policies to address housing injustices: The trajectory between the Odendaal segregation Plan and the new National Housing Policy in Namibia

Cathrine Marenga (Namibia)

Key words: Access to land; Affordable housing; Land distribution; Land management; Legislation; Security of tenure; Spatial planning; Housing injustice; Odendaal plan; Land policy reform; National Housing Policy

SUMMARY

Attempts to benefit formal planning and land and housing delivery mechanisms to the needs of the lowest incomes have proved insufficient and the challenges created by the actual socioeconomic reality of the many, and the nature of public interventions, resulted in the kind of deeply unequal and segregated urban experience of today. The Odendaal Plan, which was part of the Odendaal Commission of 1964, was created to divide Namibia into ethnic homelands. This plan reveals significant consequences; particularly with regards to movement of people south of the 'Red Line' also known as the Police Zone. Key in this plan was the division of the country into geographical and administrative regions based on racial and ethnic criteria. A different form of urban segregation also exists- desegregation. The redistribution of land, as part of the land reform programme of the country, is often redistributed to already wealthy members of the new political and economic elite of the country which can be considered as a form of "elite land grabbing" which widens the inequality gap. This trajectory can therefore be said to have turned Namibia into a loop of inequality. The manifestation of neo-colonialism reflects in the current housing approaches as they still maintain the historical precedence. The growing inequality condition has been a long-standing process unfolding in and through the socio-spatial milieu. The newly revised National Housing Policy of 2023 has thus been developed as the latest shift in land policy direction. The objective of this study is therefore to explore the trajectory between the pre-colonial policies and post-colonial housing policies by critically examining the colonial and contemporary trends to come up with viable and sustainable land governance solutions. Using a qualitative method, a review of historical literature, as well as contemporary literature to address a knowledge gap will be employed. It will conduct a policy analysis and it will analyse the land development events leading to Namibia's status quo on housing. The Odendaal Plan and the National Housing Policy (all three with emphasis on the latest one) will be the critical documents to understand the transition on how housing injustices are being addressed. What this study intends to highlight is not only a progression of

Decolonising apartheid policies to address housing injustices: The trajectory between the Odendaal segregation Plan and the new National Housing Policy in Namibia (14065)
Cathrine Marenga (Namibia)

FIG Congress 2026
The Future We Want - The SDGs and Beyond
Cape Town, South Africa, 24–29 May 2026

uneven development, but also a number of opportunities. Key findings will therefore suggest adequate recommendations for land policy reform to counter the extensive efforts that the Apartheid administration put into restructuring Namibia through the Odendaal Plan. This will particularly serve as a policy recommendation for the National Housing Policy of 2023 which is currently in its 5-year implementation plan, in pursuit of adopting responsive land policies to transform the trends that have progressively turned Namibia into a reproduction of housing injustice.

Decolonising apartheid policies to address housing injustices: The trajectory between the Odendaal segregation Plan and the new National Housing Policy in Namibia (14065)
Cathrine Marenga (Namibia)

FIG Congress 2026
The Future We Want - The SDGs and Beyond
Cape Town, South Africa, 24–29 May 2026