DE-AGRARIANISATION AND RURAL EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

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De-agrarianisation and the Urbanisation of a Rural Economy: Agrarian Patterns in Melani Village in the Eastern Cape

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Preface

This working paper provides research findings emanating from the De-Agrarianisation and Rural Employment (DARE) Research Programme funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and coordinated by the Afrika-Studiecentrum in conjunction with African research teams from institutions in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania and South Africa. We wish to acknowledge the encouragement of Hans Slot of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the editorial skills of Ann Reeves for providing vital back-up for the work of the programme's research teams.

Despite Sub-Saharan Africa's agrarian image, the rural peasant population is diminishing in relative size and significance. From a multi-disciplinary perspective, the DARE has sought to dissect the process of change, drawing attention to the new labour patterns and unfolding rural-urban relations now taking place. The programme research theme consists of four sub-themes: economic dynamics, spatial mobility and settlement patterns, social identity adaptations and gender transformations.

The objectives of the DARE programme have been to:

1) compare and contrast the process of de-agrarianisation in various rural areas of Africa in terms of a economic activity reorientation, occupational adjustment, social identification, and spatial relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly peasant modes of livelihood.
2) examine how risks on rural household production and exchange influence the extent and nature of non-agricultural activities in rural economies.
3) explore the inter-relationship between agriculture and the service sector in African economies; and
4) publish and disseminate the research findings to policy makers and scholars in Africa and elsewhere.

The Afrika-Studiecentrum's role has been to facilitate the formulation of country case study research in various rural African localities by African researchers, provide a discussion forum for work-in-progress, and assist in the publication and dissemination of completed analyses of research findings.

The following study by Dr. Cecil Manona is the product of collaboration between the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Rhodes University and the Afrika-Studiecentrum. The specific objective of the research was to document the changing nature of rural livelihoods, links to urban areas and relationships between agricultural and non-agricultural work, with special emphasis on the evolution of informal economic activities.

The overall findings from the DARE programme are intended to provide insight into the processes of change which are moulding the livelihood prospects of African rural and urban dwellers of the next century. It is hoped that the knowledge gained may be useful for formulating more effective developmental policies to assist in short-circuiting Sub-Saharan Africa's current economic and political vulnerabilities.

Dr. Deborah Fahy Bryceson
DARE Programme Coordinator

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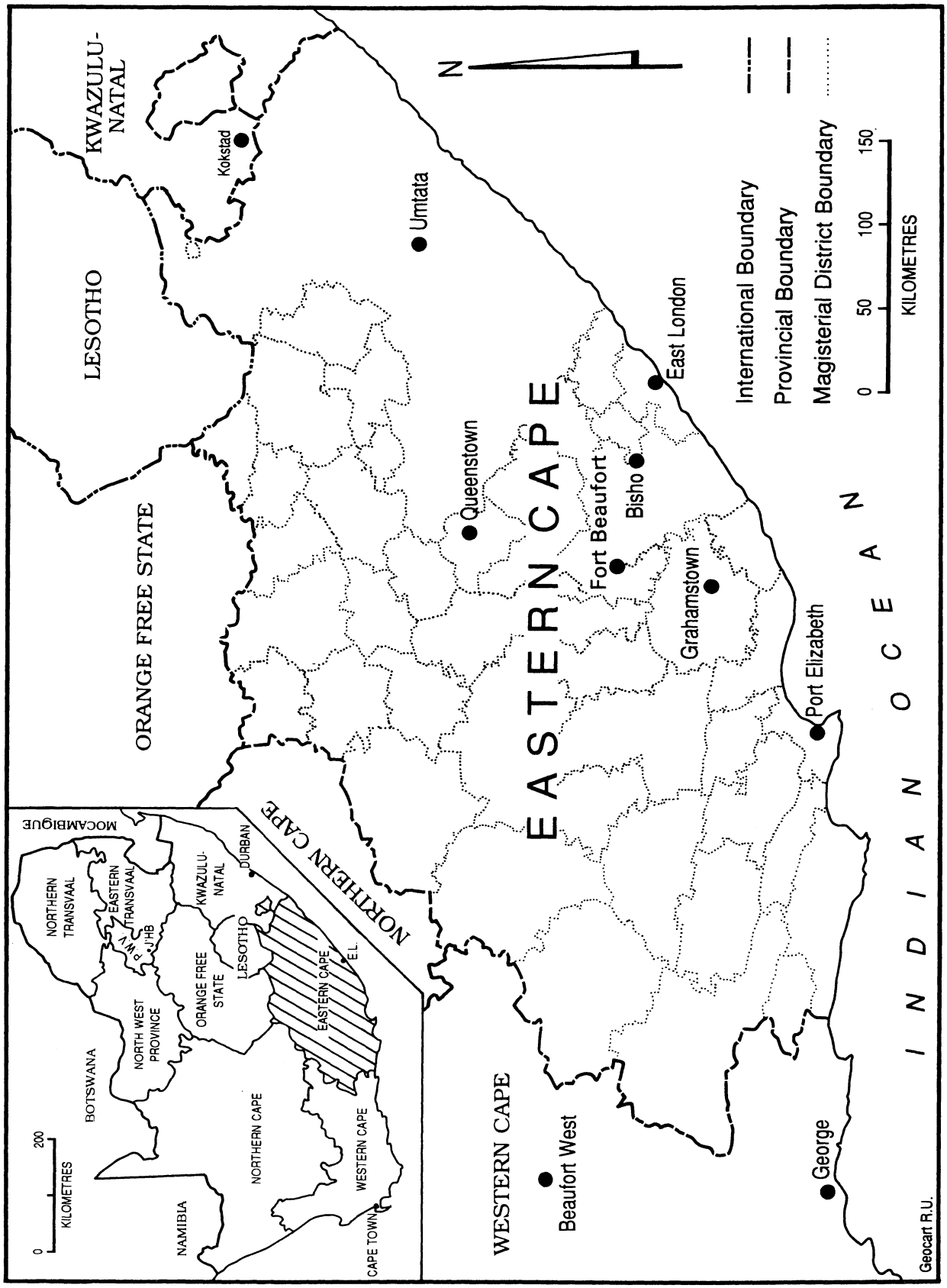
Introduction

Aim of the Study

This study forms part of a larger project conducted in three selected rural areas in Eastern Cape Province and aims to investigate the earning of rural livelihoods in the Eastern Cape (see Map 1). It focuses on the survival strategies of rural people who have limited or no access to land. The investigation is one of several studies exploring the theme of de-agrarianisation in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s. De-agrarianisation is seen as a process of economic activity re-orientation, occupational adjustment and spatial realignment of human settlement away from strictly agrarian patterns (Bryceson 1996).

The concern with the problem of rural livelihoods is seen here against the background of changes which have occurred in South Africa in recent years. One of these changes was the repeal of the influx control legislation in 1986 which has made it possible for blacks to move freely between town and country and to take up residence in urban areas if they want to do so. In addition, the collapse of the bantustan system and the re-incorporation of these territories into South Africa have influenced rural-social relations and opened up new opportunities for rural livelihoods. Thirdly, since the gold boom of 1979-80, the South African economy has entered a prolonged recession. The mines have retrenched tens of thousands of workers with serious consequences for the families of migrant workers in rural areas. This process intensified in the early 1990s. Similarly, there have been retrenchments in the industrial and manufacturing sectors in recent years. These economic shifts have had important implications for rural households which have historically depended on the remittances of migrant workers for survival. At the same time, retrenchments have been coupled with wage increases for unionised black workers. This has accelerated the process of social and economic differentiation in rural areas.

The larger de-agrarianisation project was undertaken in three districts in the Eastern Cape. The first site is located in the rural hinterland of the city of East London. There the research focused on a settlement that is within easy commuting distance of the city. The second research site is situated in the dry interior district of Alice in the former Ciskei. This district, although it is distant from the local metropolitan centres, is in the vicinity of the towns of Fort Beaufort and King William's Town. As a result, the people in this area have access to local employment opportunities. The third research site was in the former Transkei, in the well-watered district of Willowvale. This district is not within the immediate ambit of any industrial centre and the local population has historically relied much more heavily on its agrarian resources than people in the other selected districts. This report concerns the second site identified above.



Map 1: Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Causes and Consequences of De-agrarianisation

The shortage of land in black-occupied rural areas of the Eastern Cape is largely the result of the colonial conquest of the past century and forced removals in this century. Even in the early 195Os, Wilson (1952) observed that in the Keiskammahoek district in the former Ciskei the increasing population pressure had given rise to a situation in which it was impossible to provide every family with land for cultivation. This problem became more serious from the mid 1960s when many landless people immigrated into the Ciskei villages which were already overcrowded (Manona 1980). This is evident in many studies which deal with recent developments in the rural areas in South Africa (cf. Sharp 1994, Deliwe 1997, Illiffe 1987). At present de-agrarianisation is in an advanced stage in the Eastern Cape.

The 'homeland' policy also had its influence in the study area. Until the 1970s, due to a lack of employment opportunities, rural areas in the former Ciskei had always been heavily dependent on incomes from urban areas. This dependency was slightly modified by the implementation of the 'homeland' policy which was specially intended to slow down the massive emigration of people from the country to the towns and which made available a number of new job opportunities. One manifestation of this trend was the gradual expansion of the civil service into these rural areas. Similarly, the availability of new jobs resulted from the creation of industrial centres which were located close to the rural areas in line with the industrial decentralisation policy which had been adopted. This enabled many people to retain their rural homes while having access to jobs in small industrial centres close by. In addition, people's close connections with their rural homes were facilitated by the improvement of transport services as a result of the phenomenal growth of the taxi business from about 1980 onwards. Some of the rural dwellers could now commute daily to work and others returned to their homes at weekends or at the end of the month (De Wet and Holbrook 1996). Although migration to large urban centres still occurs, there are now many rural settlements which are appearing close to urban centres, especially small towns. These settlements are inhabited by people who like rural life while recognising the importance of easy access to urban employment. The people who choose to live here are dependent on wage employment even though they prefer to remain outside the confines and costs of organised municipal living.

The Study Area and Methodology

The research began in 1996 in Melani village which is 16 kilometres from Alice in the Victoria East district in the Eastern Cape. Although Melani village is relatively far from the larger cities, it is close to towns like Alice, Fort Beaufort and King William's Town. As a result, some of the people who live in the village have access to local jobs even though wages are low. Until the 1994 general election, the study area was under the Ciskei government.

This investigation was initiated by means of a census covering the whole village.

Thereafter, a questionnaire was used to collect information from a stratified sample of 100 households. The questionnaire was applied to one out of every two adjacent households. The gathering of largely statistical material by means of this questionnaire was followed by more in-depth data collection including case-studies and general observation.

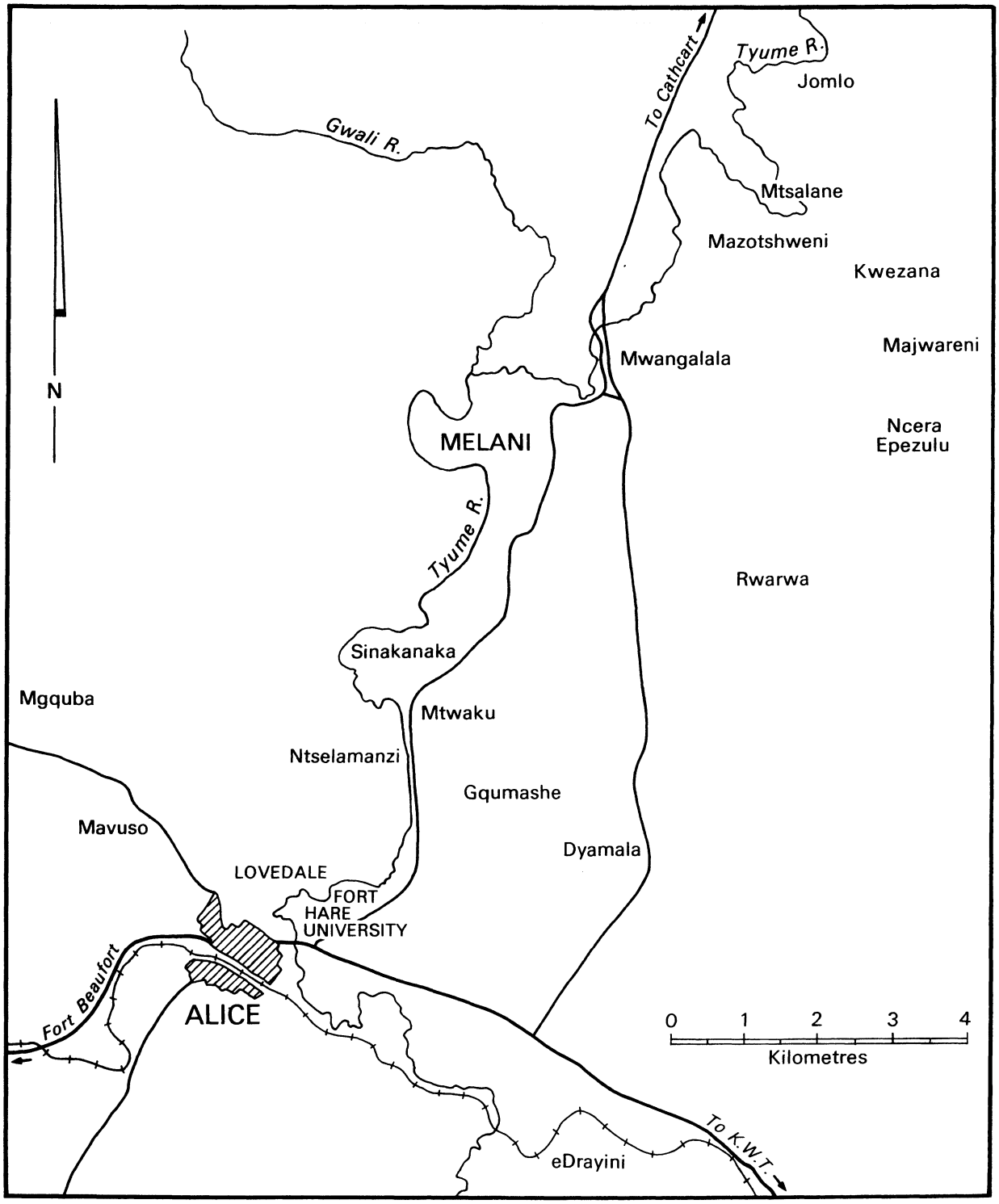
History of Melani Village

The village is named after Melani Vela who, together with his followers, fought on the side of the colonists in the last century and, in 1866, was granted the land on which the village is situated (see Map 2). At that time 19 families were granted residential sites and 19 fields (each of 8 acres) were surveyed and issued as Quitrent land.

After the first group had settled in Melani, other people moved into the village especially after the 1940s. The latter remained landless because they were not awarded government (trust) sites and fields which became available to some of the Ciskei villagers at that time. A few of the original settlers in Melani left the village and their land was used by relatives who still live in Melani. But it seems that up to about the 1950s, the bulk of the villagers were still the descendants of the original settlers of Melani.

From the 1960s onwards this situation changed a great deal with land scarcity increasing as more people settled in the village. In 1963 further land shortages resulted from the implementation of the Betterment Scheme which, as De Wet (1987, 1989) has demonstrated, decreased the amount of land available to the people. Indeed, rural impoverishment worsened under this scheme which became an important means of ensuring better control over the people. The old residents of Melani who witnessed its introduction indicated that their family land was sub-divided arbitrarily and some of the new arrivals in the village who applied for land were settled on land which had been taken away from other families. Those who were settled under this scheme received only residential sites and no fields since arable land was unavailable. In the late 1960s increasing land shortages were experienced in Melani as many landless people from white-owned farms in the neighbouring districts sought and found residential land in the village. These were destitute people who had been evicted from farms or who were not satisfied with farm working or living conditions where they were before. At the time of this present research, the village population was still growing and people from outside were getting residential sites in Melani.

It can thus be seen that for the last sixty years this village has accepted successive waves of immigrants. It appears that many of those who came seeking accommodation in the village did not do so without aim or purpose, but that they came in order to be close to relatives. One important consequence of this pattern of migration has been the relative peace in the community since kinship ties are predominant. In this sense Melani is very different from many other communities which have had to accommodate strangers seeking accommodation and land.



Map 2: Melani Village in Alice District

In Melani the sample included 29 per cent of the households which had moved into the village from white-owned farms, 69 per cent which were associated with the original settlers of the village and 2 per cent who came from other places. As was noted earlier, in many instances the immigrants already had relatives in this village and hence had decided to seek residential sites there. The same thing was occurring in many other reserve areas where people had to accommodate their landless relatives. This meant that land which would normally have been set aside for arable or pastoral use by particular families had to be used for residential purposes. Land shortages became more pronounced and immigrants received only residential sites and no arable land. Agriculture suffered as the allocation of residential sites to new people and other maturing local residents reduced the amount of land which could be used for cultivation and stock rearing.

In the 1960s a portion of a white-owned farm which was adjacent to Melani was released to the Ciskei and then incorporated into the village. It was divided into 16 one-morgen plots which became available to the villagers for cultivation. Likewise, in 1974, part of the commonage was converted into 23 one-acre fields. Taking into account the population growth in this village, it is not surprising that the major problem continued to be one of massive pressure on land and severe overcrowding. In addition, the above description shows the significant extent to which spatial mobility and change in settlement pattern has occurred in the study area.

Infrastructure

The village is situated next to the Alice-Hogsback tar road which facilitates transportation. Villagers travel to Alice where they do most of their shopping. They use privately-owned taxis and pay R5 each way. The residential area is a single unit adjoining fields and the communal grazing area. Next to the village there are two 'released' farms, i.e. farms which were previously owned by white farmers and later incorporated into the Ciskei. These farms are occupied by several families who previously worked there and they have orange orchards which are still productive and provide seasonal work for local residents.

The great measure of economic differentiation in the community is strikingly evident in the varying amounts of money invested in housing. The dwellings range from simple structures with mud walls to a wide variety of better houses with cement-block or burnt-brick walls. This differentiation is equally noticeable in the personal possessions of the people. One striking feature of this village is the timber processing factory which is situated right next to the residential area. The factory was established by a white entrepreneur in 1982. Since then it has gradually grown in size and was employing 124 people from Melani and the neighbouring villages in 1997. The owner of the factory said he established the factory there 'in order to bring employment to the people'.

In the village there are two schools, a primary and a junior secondary school. The latter accommodates Standards six, seven and eight. Thereafter the pupils can acquire their

secondary schooling at one of the nearby high schools.

A new clinic has just been built in the village. Another important addition to the local infrastructure has been the provision of electricity which became available in 1997. The government subsidised this undertaking substantially but householders had to pay R65 in order to be connected to the electricity supply. However water is in short supply in Melani. The village is dependent on one standpipe for clean water which is supplied by the Binfield dam some 25 kilometres to the east. In the past the village had a bus service which operated in the morning, during the early afternoon and early evening. Now the residents use locally-operated taxis.

The only shop operating in the village does not appear to be receiving much business as most people do their main shopping in Alice.

Local Administration

In many rural areas of the former Ciskei, local government administration is in a chaotic state. The Tribal Authorities which were meant to promote chiefly authority were created under the terms of the Black Authorities Act of 1951. This system of indirect rule relied heavily on the utilisation of headmen in the day-to-day running of the rural administration. When this Tribal Authority system was still functioning, Melani was administered by a headman who had to work closely with the district magistrate and other government officers.

The situation changed drastically when the government of President Lennox Sebe of the former Ciskei was toppled during a coup in 1990. Soon after, Tribal Authorities in the Ciskei as a whole collapsed when Brigadier Oupa Gqozo, the new military ruler, announced that all headmen had to resign their positions. Although Gqozo later tried to reinstate the headmen, in many places he was unable to do so because people rejected them as being associated with the corrupt and inefficient Tribal Authority system. Instead, the Residents' Associations which had been established in these Ciskei communities gradually took over some of the administrative functions of the deposed headmen (Manona 1997). These developments affected Melani where the village headman was deposed early in 1990 and was never reinstated. A Residents' Association was established in the village and, after the local government elections in 1995, Melani became part of the newly-established Transitional Representative Council (TRC) in the area.

The Household

Household Structure and Employment

The village census showed that there were 195 residential sites which were occupied all the time. An additional 37 sites had houses which were used either at certain times of the year (usually during the Christmas season) or had been left vacant for some time.

Household Members at Home

The sample included 527 individuals, 242 males and 285 females. The occupied households were headed by 102 males (52 per cent) and 93 females (48 per cent). The occupational structure of the sampled households is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Occupational Status

Category	Males	Females	Total
In full-time employment	8	33	41
Pensioners	15	39	54
In casual or temporary employment	16	7	23
Self-employed	4	1	5
Housewives	-	5	5
Unemployed	42	53	95
Sick or disabled	7	5	12
University students	4	1	5
School children	119	123	242
Young children (under 6 years of age)	27	18	45
Total	242	285	527

The concept of Economically Active Population (EAP) was used to analyse the employment situation. The EAP includes all individuals between the ages of 16 and 65 who are available for work. It excludes pensioners, housewives who would prefer to remain at home, school children and disabled people. This is in line with the approach of the Central Statistical Services which categorises only those adults who are able to work and are looking for work while unemployed. In the Melani sample there were 169 adults who were economically active and of these as many as 95 (56 per cent) were unemployed and looking for work. The analysis shows that unemployment is more serious among women than among men. There were 41 (24 per cent) other adults who were in full-time employment and 23 (13 per cent) in casual or temporary employment. The remaining able-bodied people included 5 (3 per cent) who were self-employed and another 5 (3 per cent) who were housewives and were not looking for work. Those who were not necessarily able-bodied were the 54 pensioners and 12 other people who were sick or disabled.

The influence of the economic and political decentralisation noted earlier is seen in the study area. Firstly, there are limited government jobs for better-educated civil servants like teachers, nurses and clerks. Others in government pay included watchmen at the local schools (earning R850 per month) and a ranger (earning R1,000 per month) who was in charge of the Melani commonage. Other people in local employment were unskilled

workers at government institutions like the University of Fort Hare, Lovedale College and Lovedale Hospital. Their earnings were between R800 and R1,200. Some of the unskilled full-time workers were employed at the local timber factory, most of them earning R200 a month. A few women were in domestic employment either in the village or nearby and were earning between R150 and R200 a month. From time to time villagers are temporarily employed in local infrastructural development projects. During the research these included the building of two local schools and a clinic, the installation of electricity, and maintenance of the tarred road to Hogsback and Alice. The released farms in the vicinity occasionally provide casual jobs.

Traditionally, Xhosa-speaking people lived in homesteads (*imizi*, singular *umzi*) with extended families defined by patrilineal descent and virilocal residence. The male head of this extended family lived with his wife, his married sons and their wives and children. In precolonial times this grouping could include up to twenty male kinsmen living with their wives and children (Hunter 1936, Hammond-Tooke 1962). Today this traditional structure has been vastly modified and there is a great diversity in household composition.

In the Melani sample 50 per cent of the households were headed by men and the remainder by women. The current diversity in household structure and composition is illustrated in the following table.

Table 2: Types of Households

Household composition	Male	Female	Total
Multi-generational	14	27	41
Father, mother, children	13	-	13
One parent and children	6	7	13
Household head alone	5	6	11
Household head and grandchildren	-	7	7
Children alone, property owner away	2	1	3
Other	9	3	12
Total	49	51	100

In urban areas, a wide range of domestic arrangements can now be observed similar to those in rural areas like Melani. These varying domestic arrangements must be seen as people's adaptations to their diverse social and economic circumstances. The multi-generational households i.e. the ones with three or more generations, are numerically significant as they account for more than 40 per cent of the cases. The different types of households outlined below reflect the complexity of the situation.

(a) Multi-generational type (41 per cent) The main reason for this high percentage is the large number of grandchildren and, to a smaller extent, great-grandchildren in these homes.

(b) The nuclear family (13 per cent) The insignificance of the nuclear type of family is clearly evident. Similar observations are also obtained in other rural areas of southern Africa where there is no point in assuming that the nuclear family should be the basic unit of analysis in circumstances where many spouses cannot live together. For instance, in Murray's (1976: 146, 165) study of rural households in Lesotho, only 16 per cent were of the nuclear type and, in a similar study, also carried out in Lesotho by Spiegel (1979: 53), such households formed a mere 16 per cent of the sample.

(c) One parent and children (13 per cent) The ten cases where the household had a parent and a child or children living at home were composed of the following: five married mothers whose husbands were working in town; two widows; one mother who had never been married; another who was separated from her husband; and a 39-year-old father who was living with his 13-year-old daughter while his wife was working in King William's Town. The man was a former policeman who had been seriously injured while he was in employment and could no longer work. In these cases the effects of migrant labour which necessitates the separation of family members are evident.

(d) Household head alone (11 per cent) They had either been married before or had never married.

(e) Household head and grandchildren (7 per cent) The three cases of parents who were living alone without children included: a couple in their early thirties who had no children; a married couple whose children had left home many years ago and had not returned; and a couple in their fifties who had a child who had gone to Johannesburg to look for work and another child who was living with her father's sister in a nearby village.

(f) Children alone, property owner away (3 per cent) These are children who live alone while their parents are away at work.

(g) Other (12 per cent) This category includes heads and other relatives, especially siblings and parents.

This analysis of household structure illustrates the changed nature of the present rural household in which family members usually try to secure their means of livelihood in town and in the country. Here the measure of 'family scatter' is indicated by some of the categories noted above including 'one parent and children', 'household head alone', 'household head and grandchildren' and 'children alone'.

Household Heads

The census showed that the occupied households in the village were headed by 102 males (52 per cent) and 93 females (48 per cent). Some of the male heads of households were migrant workers who were away for the greater part of the year. Other male heads were with their wives in town. The female-headed households are of the following types:

(a) Those of widowed women (60 cases or 65 per cent of the female-headed households).
(b) Those of women who had never married (19 cases or 20 per cent of the female-headed households).
(c) The households of women who were separated from their husbands (14 cases or 15 per cent of the female-headed households).

It can be seen that nearly half of the household heads were women and that a large proportion of them were widows. The main explanation for this situation is that men in these deprived communities have a much shorter life span than women. As in the past, widows do not have permanent rights to land and merely keep it for the heirs of their deceased husbands.

The increasing autonomy of women is transforming some of the basic norms of family relationships. For instance, women who are widowed at an early age almost invariably return to their natal homes. On their return they try to gain access to their own land, either by securing their own residential properties or by using land which belonged to their fathers. The latter development indicates that important changes have taken place in family law and inheritance.

Household Members away from Home

Householders were further asked to provide the names of those members who were away and returned to their rural homes from time to time. Analysis showed that no less than 73 per cent of the households had between one and eight members who were away, as shown in Table 3. The relevance of direct connections with relatives in urban areas will be discussed in a later section.

Table 3: Absent Household Members

No. of absent members	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
No. of households	27	20	21	20	5	3	2	1	1	100

Household Income

The difficult task of recording household income was undertaken during this investigation. Income included pensions, wages, remittances and the material benefits of people's informal economic activities as well as the occasional sale of stock and crops. The data that were collected showed that these sources of income provided a total of R70,438 a month to the households in the sample.

Wages and Pensions

The analysis in Table 4 shows that the most important sources of income to these homes are wages (43 per cent) and social pensions (38 per cent). Pensions first became available to blacks in 1944 (Sagner 1998). By 1965 about 70 per cent of black pensioners were resident in rural areas. Whereas in 1970 pensions were worth only R67 per annum, they increased gradually over time and achieved parity with those of white South Africans in 1992 (Ainslie 1998). Women can apply for these pensions at the age of 60 and men when they are 65 years of age.

Table 4: Importance of Wages and Pensions

	Wages	Pensions	Remittances	Informal economic activities	Total
Amount	R33,960	R30,045	R10,719	R4,714	R79,438
Percentage	43	38	13	6	100

Table 5 shows that these varied sources of income appear in different combinations.

Table 5: Sources of Household Income

Sources of income	No. of cases
Pensions and remittances	18
Wages only	16
Wages and remittances	8
Pensions, wages and remittances	8
Pensions only	7
Informal economic activities only	6
Pensions, remittances and informal sector	6
No income declared	6
Remittances only	6
Pensions and informal sector	5
Pensions, wages, remittances and informal sector	5
Wages and informal sector	4
Wages, remittances and informal sector	2
Pensions and wages	2
Pensions, wages and informal sector	1
Total	100

It can thus be seen that the majority of these rural residents are not dependent on just one source of income but on a combination of various means for survival. For instance, in the six households whose incomes are derived only from remittances the various incomes range only from R100 to R400. In terms of quantity, welfare benefits which include old-age grants and disability grants are nearly the most important sources of income and the table above shows that in seven homes these grants were the only source of income. Attention must be drawn to the six cases where people did not declare any specific income for the household. One of these cases refers to a 47-year-old unemployed man and his wife who live with their three children who were aged eleven, eight and four. The two older children were at school. The man said his household was supported by his wife's mother who lives in the same village. He said that he used to work in East London and had returned to Melani when he became ill. In the other cases the people were members of relatively small households, usually including only two people who said they were dependent on other relatives living locally.

Table 6: Range in Household Income

Income	Cases	Income	Cases
Nil	6	R801 - R900	4
R100 - R200	3	R901 - R1,000	5
R201 - R300	6	R1,00I - R1,300	17
R301 - R400	11	R1,301 - R1,600	2
R401 - R500	15	R1,601 - R1,900	2
R501 - R600	13	R1,901 - R2,500	2
R601 - R700	3	R2,501 - R3,080	4
R701 - R800	7		

Remittances

The vast majority of household members who were away working were supporting their rural homes. There were only 17 (16 per cent of the total number of workers) who were not sending any remittances home. In 24 other cases the working household members were giving varying amounts of material support but not regularly. They usually brought money with them when they visited their homes. The remaining 65 household members were remitting the amounts shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Remittances

Amount remitted per month	No. of cases
Up to R100	32
R10I - R200	20
R201 - R300	7
R300 - R400	2
Over R400	4
Total	65

Informal Economic Activities

The vast literature on the informal economy has enabled us to understand how poor people have managed to create income-generating opportunities in many hostile economic environments in this country and elsewhere. One of the major causes of the existence and persistence of the informal economy is unemployment. Indeed, 'it is the incapacity of the formal economic sector to create adequate jobs to assimilate the available labour force .... that could be said to be mainly responsible for the emergence of the informal economy in

African and other developing countries' (Mulinge and Munyae 1998: 26). In addition, the viability of this sector results from the economic crisis which began in the mid 1970s in many countries and which, from then onwards, has subjected people to austere living conditions with decreasing formal employment and increasing poverty (ibid: 28).

Whereas these activities have been studied fairly intensely in South African urban areas, locally there are a few notable observations of this phenomenon in rural areas, especially in Natal (cf. Preston-Whyte and Nene 1991, McIntosh 1989, 1991a and 1991b). These studies of informal economic activities highlight the widespread involvement of women relative to men in these endeavours. In an influential article, Rogerson (1985) explained this situation by noting that women dominate in these areas of economic activity which happen to be compatible with a woman's reproductive role. A similarly salient conclusion on the nature of these activities was made by May and Stavrou (1989 quoted in Friedman and Hambridge 1991) who noted that more women than men participate in the informal sector since more women tend to be confined to the poorest sections of society than men. Another point to note about the informal sector, especially with regard to rural areas, is that those who are involved in it almost invariably get very little for their effort and what they earn is often irregular. This problem is clearly demonstrated by Preston-Whyte and Nene (1991) in their article on black women and the rural informal sector. Now we consider the state and nature of these activities in the study area.

There is no evidence of any long-established involvement of people of the former Ciskei in the formal economy. For instance, the second volume of the *Keiskammahoek Rural Survey* (Houghton and Walton 1952), which was carried out in the Keiskammahoek district some 50 years ago and which is generally considered as the benchmark study of economic conditions in the earlier days of the former Ciskei, makes no reference at all to an informal sector there. This study showed that 5.4 per cent of the people's annual cash income came from the sale of local produce, mainly wool, hides, skins and birdseed, to traders. This illustrates that the informal economy in the study area as we know it today came into existence in the past few decades. The following section shows that nearly a third of the rural households investigated are involved in the informal economy.

Two of the questions which were included in the village census were: 'Is there any business or informal economic activity that takes place in this household? If so, can you tell us what it is?' In 59 homesteads (30 per cent) a positive response was given to these questions. The same questions were included in the questionnaire which was applied to the selected sample households. In the latter case there were 29 households (29 per cent) which were involved in these informal economic activities. In line with the general observations made above, there are more women (55 per cent) than men (45 per cent) who are associated with these economic endeavours. If the agricultural component is excluded, the proportion of female to male participants would be 67 per cent to 33 per cent.

The research revealed that in some cases the people are totally dependent on these

informal economic activities. To this effect, the sample included six households (6 per cent) whose members said they had no other means of making a living apart from these informal economic activities. These cases included two male heads of households who were building houses for people and earning about R450 per month, another male head and his wife who were diviners jointly making about R180 per month, a 39-year-old man who was making bricks for sale for about R400 per month and a 32-year-old unmarried man who said he was supporting himself by mending radios for about R250 per month. The sixth case refers to a 23-year-old mother, Nomthandazo, who was living with her nine-year-old son and an 18-year-old relative. The house they were occupying belonged to Nomthandazo's uncle who was in Cape Town and the household members depended entirely on Nomthandazo's liquor sales which brought in about R350 per month. In these cases the informal sector is vital to household survival.

The material derived from the 29 households which were involved in these informal economic activities is related to the following distinct categories:

(a) The informal sector as a provider of services (11 cases)

In this rural area some of the men make a living by building houses for other people. Usually these men would have no formal training and have gained their building skills from their previous employment. The sample included men who were making bricks for sale, erecting fences in the village or carting water using donkey carts. Since water is fetched from a single source in the village, some of the residents find it necessary to buy water. During the investigation people were paying R4 for 80 litres of water. One of the two water vendors included in the sample estimated that he was making about R300 per month. This category included a man who was mending radios and another who was a diviner. The remaining cases included two women who were doing casual domestic work in the village and another who said she could earn small amounts of money (about R15 a month) by mending shoes. More men than women are involved in the provision of services.

(b) The re-sale of purchased goods (10 cases)

This category includes women who buy and sell small quantities of household goods like groceries, vegetables, fruit, meat and fuel. Those who do not have a regular source of income participate in these activities when they have some extra cash and cease to do so when they do not have enough capital. In a few other cases the women run small shops (*iziroxo*) in their homes. The sale of factory-made liquor, especially beer, is an undertaking which can generate a notable cash income. The sample included a young mother who estimated that her sale of liquor was providing her with about R350 a month. Another

household included in the sample was operating a shebeen which allowed the clients to sit and drink in the sitting room. The householders said they were making a profit of more than R500 a month. However, many people who sell liquor only on an occasional basis do not make much profit.

(c) Sale of stock and/or grain (8 cases)
Earlier it was noted that a few householders (4 per cent) in the sample had been able to sell livestock (cattle, sheep or goats) in the previous 12 months. This is a well-paid undertaking since an ox can be sold for about R1800 and a sheep for about R260. In the other four cases in the sample the residents had sold maize grown in their own fields.

In the above analysis, the scope and nature of the informal economic activities in the study area have been considered. The growing significance of the informal economy is another illustration of the economic dynamics and evolving labour patterns that are being fostered by the on-going process of de-agrarianisation. This economic activity is very pronounced in the study area where the peasantry was seriously undermined around the turn of this century and collapsed soon after (Bundy 1979).

At this stage there is a need to situate this discussion in a wider context relating the informal sector to the formal economy. Many recent studies have emphasised the prominent role of the informal economy in virtually all African countries. In many it is even considered as the fastest growing economic sector. The informal economy is not a recent creation and has, over time, grown substantially such that now it absorbs a major proportion of the labour force (Hope 1997, Mulinge and Munyae 1998). Mulinge and Munyae further recognise its importance in terms of its great contribution to economic and social development. Similarly, McPherson's (1996) article on the growth of small enterprises in Southern Africa suggests that this sector can play an important role in developing entrepreneurship. Some of these entrepreneurs could subsequently graduate to run bigger undertakings. Undoubtedly, the informal economy needs to be viewed positively and be given every possible support in rural areas which are in the same or a similar situation to that in Melani.

The respondents questioned in the village census said they were involved in the following economic activities.

Table 8: Informal Economic Activities

Type of Activity	No. of cases
Petty trading selling e.g. fruit, vegetables, groceries, liquor, meat, fuel	18
Selling (on certain occasions) livestock, e.g. cattle, goats, pigs and chickens reared locally	10
Doing general household repairs or small-scale carpentry	7
Building houses	3
Operating as backyard mechanics	3
Sewing clothes and/or knitting jerseys	3
Carting goods	3
Doing domestic work for other people locally	3
Operating as diviners	2
Making bricks	2
Hairdressing	2
Selling wood	1
Selling crops (especially mealies)	1
Lending money	1
Total	59

In other cases the activities involve petty trading (the selling of fresh produce, groceries, liquor, meat and fuel), and the occasional sale of livestock as well as pigs and chickens raised at home, house building and carpentry, car repairs, sewing and knitting, carting goods (e.g. wood or water for sale), brick making, hairdressing and money lending. Although the profits which the people make are extremely low, these endeavours are vital to household survival. It is therefore necessary for this situation to be taken into account in the discussion of land policies.

Household and Agricultural Activities

Agriculture in the study area consists of crop production and stock farming under dryland conditions and under irrigation in a small government-sponsored project.

Landlessness and Dryland Cultivation

Over time the population of Melani has increased and the allocation of more and more residential sites to people who have come and settled in the village has reduced the amount of land which could be used for agriculture. It is therefore not surprising that only a small percentage of the village residents have access to arable land. As many as 137 households (70 per cent) did not have any land. The remaining 30 per cent included 19 cases (10 per

cent) with access to Quitrent fields, 23 (12 per cent) with one-acre fields and 16 (8 per cent) with one-morgen plots. Altogether the sample includes 25 landholding households, namely 10 with eight-acre Quitrent fields, eight with one-morgen plots and seven with one-acre fields. It is thus clear that the size of the plots of land available to the people varies a great deal. The fact that there are more female heads of households (14) than male heads (11) who cultivate their landholdings is indicative of the changes that are occurring in rural areas. For the most part, each household provides its own labour although there is also some dependence on labour obtained from outside the household. Unlike some parts of Transkei, there are no ploughing companies or groups in Melani. However, extra-household labour is usually sought by those with cultivated fields when hoeing has to be done.

Another major change that has occurred in cultivation is the abandonment of cattle in ploughing. It is now done almost invariably by means of tractors. The government tractors which could be hired by people in the past are no longer available.

One resident in Melani and another tractor owner from a neighbouring village use their tractors in the village. In two instances in the sampled households people said they were either using horses for ploughing or hoeing. Those who have land were asked to indicate whether they used their land frequently or not. All the landholders said they used their land every year. However, most of the cultivation is done during the summer season and the bulk of the arable land lies fallow in winter. The availability of agricultural equipment to landholders was investigated. The responses showed that two of the landholders in the sample have no implements at all, 20 have one or more hoes and a further three have hoes and a ploughshare or hoes and a cultivator.

On the whole each household provides its own labour for cultivation. Of the 25 landholders in the sample, 19 of the people (76 per cent) did all the work themselves. In the remaining six cases the people organised work parties (*amalima*) for the time-consuming activity of hoeing. Today in places like Melani these work parties are organised mainly for hoeing and they involve a relatively small number of people, about six to ten people. As in the past, the people who do the hoeing are not paid and tend to see the exercise as a form of entertainment and of rendering assistance to people who are in desperate need of labour. The people who take part in these work parties are provided with food in the morning, at noon and at the end of the work party. Ideally, they should be provided with liquor after they have eaten their midday meal and at the end of the day.

Although it is difficult to get reliable estimates of crop production, it is clear that the yields are generally very small. The data collected showed that in the previous season all the landholders had planted mealies on their land. The poor crop performance of the majority of the people is shown in Table 9. In the field, the well-known 50-kg bag (*ingxowa*) was used as a standard measure to estimate maize yields. Also, it must be noted that the above estimates do not include the mealies eaten before harvesting.

Table 9: Maize Yields of the Previous Summer Season (1996)

No. of bags	0	1/2	1	2	3	4	5	6	10	15-30	Total
No. of cases	1	5	3	1	8	1	1	1	1	3	25

It can be seen that the majority of people produce very small amounts of their staple food, i.e. maize, from their fields. The cases analysed above include that of a 47-year-old unemployed man who planted maize in his one-morgen plot and reaped nothing at the end of the season. The analysis also refers to three landholders who did much better than the others and obtained between 15 and 30 bags of maize. They had been able to cultivate larger amounts of land and it seems they were able to tend their fields well. Other crops which are cultivated in the fields, but to a much smaller extent than maize, are beans, pumpkins, water melons, potatoes, and peas.

In a few cases (14 per cent of the sample), people with no land of their own gained access to land by means of sharecropping, a practice involving two partners, one providing the land and the other supplying everything necessary for its cultivation. The crops that are reaped are then shared equally. In some cases the people who were sharecropping were using land which belonged to individuals who were working in town. The data showed that there were more women than men involved in these sharecropping arrangements. Also, the fact that people without land were able to gain access to the fields of the landholding indicates that some householders are unable to cultivate all of their fields.

At the same time, there is substantial involvement by people in the cultivation of vegetable gardens which form part of the residential properties. In the village as a whole there are 91 households (47 per cent) with gardens ranging from about 250 to more than 800 sq metres. Largely on account of droughts and a shortage of labour, these gardens are not cultivated all the time. The crops that are usually grown are maize, cabbages, potatoes, beans, peas and spinach. The produce from these gardens is usually only for home consumption.

Very few of the crops that are produced are sold. Only 6 of the 25 landholders in the sample managed to sell something they had cultivated. With the exception of a Quitrent landowner who has his own tractor and who said he reaped 30 bags of maize, there is not much produce to be sold. A 50-kg bag of maize sells locally for about R60.

Problems of Dryland Cultivation

The above discussion suggests that dryland cultivation as it is practised in places like Melani poses many problems. The greatest concerns are the expense and the risk involved in the whole exercise. The fact that people rarely use cattle for ploughing and have to hire tractors which they consider expensive constitutes a major part of this problem. There is

also a shortage of labour. But it should be noted that in this regard 'we are not dealing with an absolute shortage of labour, but rather with a shortage of effective and motivated labour' (De Wet 1985: 100). It is true that cultivation is a physically-demanding exercise and is adversely affected by the absence of able-bodied men and women who are away at work. Some of the men who used to work in town have lost their urban jobs and are now at home but there is no evidence to show that they are doing any cultivation. Instead, the majority of the people in the village have no interest in agriculture or cultivation. Whereas the people readily take any jobs that become available locally, they devote the rest of their time to other activities like ceremonies and sports activities.

Droughts also increase the negative effect of the above-mentioned factors. Over a decade ago De Wet (ibid: 103) noted that in the Amatola Basin not far from Melani the drought 'plays havoc with yields and, accordingly, undermines people's willingness to commit already scarce resources to agriculture, even after it has rained'.

The Irrigation Scheme

In Melani there is an irrigation scheme embracing 16 one-morgen plots and which must be described here in some detail on account of its success. This scheme started in the 1960s when a small holding which belonged to a local white trader was incorporated into the village and was divided into 16 plots which were taken up by residents. These plots were located in an area that was below a dam. In 1974 the plot holders were motivated by an energetic extension officer in charge of agricultural matters there at that time to use the local dam water for irrigation. People took this advice and established the Nompumelelo Farmers' Cooperative with each member contributing R30 towards the project. Some of those who were involved in the task said that the scheme functioned fairly successfully for about two years and that they were able to produce a wide variety of vegetables. Thereafter, they were not able to find suitable markets for their fresh produce. Then the plot holders used the land for dryland cultivation and ceased to irrigate it.

In 1989 the Ciskei government acting through the local (Tyali) Tribal Authority found that Melani would be a suitable place to establish an irrigation scheme for the benefit of the villagers. Consequently, consulting engineers (Mullins and Middleton 1989) were engaged to plan the scheme and they, in turn, commissioned me to do an evaluation of the socio-economic circumstances of the community. Although the positive results of this evaluation did lead to official acceptance of the irrigation scheme, political conflict in the former Ciskei stalled its implementation. For instance, in 1992 the irrigation pipes and other material which had been sent by the government to Melani were burnt during the extended rioting at that time. As a result the plans had to be shelved.

Another start towards the implementation of this scheme was made by the Department of Agriculture in 1994. This time the department made provision for irrigation facilities for the plots which were used by people belonging to the Nompumelelo Farmers' Co-operative

which had existed in the past. The services of an extension officer based in Alice were made available to the people associated with the scheme and the government installed the underground irrigation infrastructure free of charge. The plot holders were asked to buy the sprinklers and other equipment used above the ground. The latter expenses amounted to just over R500. The first plot holders to cultivate this land under irrigation did so at the end of 1997. Since their first harvest we have not visited the village to monitor the progress of this project. However, since this small-scale undertaking provides at least a limited number of villagers with water for crop production, it contrasts greatly with the frustrating dryland farming option which was described earlier.

Stock Rearing

Nearly half of the householders in the village (46 per cent) rear livestock. First, we consider the very important issue of cattle ownership.

Table 10: Number of Cattle Reared

No. of head of cattle	1	2-3	4-5	6-8	9-10	11-14	21	Total
No. of cases	6	5	9	5	3	1	1	30

It can be seen that two-thirds of the people who rear cattle have only one to five head of cattle. At the other end of the scale is the case of an 80-year-old widow who owns 21 head of cattle, and who lives with her daughter, grandchildren and other relatives. She has two sons, one working in the mines and one in Cape Town. One instructive finding relates to women and their involvement in stock rearing. The research shows that the 30 householders owing cattle include 17 male heads and 13 female heads. As illustrated in Table 11, a few householders rear goats and sheep.

Table 11: Goats, Sheep and Donkeys Reared

	No. of stock									
Stock	1	2 -3	4 -5	6 -8	9-10	11-14	15	2 1	25	Total
Goats	3	7	1 0	9	2	1	1	-	-	33
Sheep	2	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	9
Donkeys	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

Another small group of people rear donkeys which are used for transport. A very few householders (4 per cent of the sample) indicated that they had been able to sell livestock in

the previous 12 months. Although there are only a few people able to sell their stock, some important information did emerge. All this stock was sold locally. It included cattle and goats belonging to only four householders in the village. The sales consisted of:

(a) 5 goats at prices ranging between R200 and R220 each, as well as 8 sheep in the same price range. The total realised was about R2,730.

(b) One ox for R1,800.

(c) Three sheep at R260 each for a total of R780.

(d) Two goats at R200 each for a total of R400.

This indicates that the sale of stock is a lucrative venture even though very few people are able to benefit from it. Many of those who have stock tend to use it locally for ceremonial occasions.

Rural-Urban Interaction

General Factors of Rural-Urban Interaction

Recent studies of rural areas in Southern Africa and beyond commonly stress the importance of town-country interconnections (Baker and Ove Pedersen 1992, Potts and Mutambirwa 1990). The intentions and motivations of people who are in the country and those who are in town but with rural connections had to be taken into account in this study. These urban-rural links which reflect on-going migratory labour are strong in the Eastern Cape. But this situation needs to be explained especially in view of the fact that influx control regulations which made it very difficult for migrant workers to establish themselves permanently in South African towns were lifted in 1986. At present, the urban environment is not sufficiently attractive to many of those who go to town to work, hence the people's continued attachment to their rural homes and landholdings. In other words, people seldom abandon their rural homes in favour of permanent urban residence. They try to take advantage of the opportunities available both in town and in the country, thereby avoiding risks which could make them more deprived. In addition, these are the rural homes to which urban workers expect to retire.

Similar perceptions and behaviour patterns are noted by Potts and Mutambirwa (1990) with regard to migrant workers in Harare who, even after independence and the abandonment of all legislation restricting the stabilisation of African labour in the towns, desperately try to keep their rural land to which they hope to retire. Potts and Mutambirwa state that 'the evidence is very strong that most migrants do not feel that conditions allow them to survive permanently in town. The maintenance of rural links is crucial to their economic security' (ibid: 698).

Links with Towns

The village census showed that there were 37 sites which were not occupied and which belonged mostly to people who had gone to town. The majority of those people were working in town and returning home at certain times of the year only. In some of these cases the rural homes were kept by children whose parents were working in town. The analysis of rural household structure presented earlier noted this trend. In addition, there were few people who appeared to have left the village for good. It has already been noted that the people in the study area have strong links with urban areas. Table 3 showed that no less than 73 per cent of households had from one to eight members who were away from home.

This migration situation is influenced by the availability of some limited economic opportunities locally such that at least a number of the people could work and live at home or come home as frequently as possible. Table 1 showed that among the 169 able-bodied adults in the sample 64 (37 per cent) were in employment and were living at home.

Location of Absent Household Members

Information relating to the location of the absent household members was sought. These members were either in nearby towns or in distant centres. Table 12 shows the places where these relatives were residing and the approximate distance of these places from Melani.

Table 12: Location of Absent Household Members

(a) Those who were close to their rural homes

Location	No. of cases	Approximate distance from Melani
Alice	27	16 km
King William's Town/Dimbaza/ Keiskammahoek/Cathcart	9	50-79 km
East London	17	140 km
Total	53	-

(b) Those who were in distant centres

Location	No. of cases	Approximate distance from Melani
Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage	12	246-271 km
Cape Town/George	90	910-1025 km
Johannesburg/Pretoria	28	1014-1072 km
Total	130	-
Total no. of those away	183	-

This means that 29 per cent of the absent relatives were in places fairly close to their rural homes and the remaining 71 per cent were in more distant places.

Activities of Absent Household Members

We enquired about what absent householders were doing where they were living. Table 13 shows that the vast majority of the people (58 per cent) were working while others had gone to look for work, to attend school or to visit friends or relatives.

Table 13: Reasons for Absence

Reason for Absence	No. of household members	Percentage
Working	107	58
Looking for work or not working	32	18
Attending school	23	12
Visiting	21	12
Total	183	100

Nature of Contact with Towns

It was also necessary to investigate the nature of contact between the rural and urban relatives. This is shown in the following table.

Table 14: Frequency of Home Visits

Frequency of home visits	No. of people
At weekends	7
Fortnightly	5
Monthly	12
Quarterly	2
Twice a year	10
Once a year	68
Once every two to four years	2
Total	106

It can be seen that nearly a quarter of the people (23 per cent) who were away were in regular contact with their rural homes, i.e. going there every weekend, fortnightly or at least monthly. It is also worth noting that 64 per cent of those who were away tried to get home at least once a year. The latter were mostly people who worked in distant places like Cape Town and Johannesburg. In other cases those who were in town had usually lost their jobs on account of retrenchment and had no alternative but to return home.

Many of the adults who work in town rely heavily on their rural kin especially with regard to child care. Elderly women have the responsibility of rearing the children of their working daughters or sisters who try to come home whenever they can. Likewise, the rural relatives, especially the children, go to town frequently so that they can receive material assistance.

The attraction of the rural areas to those who are in town is fostered by some improvement in general infrastructure. The building of schools has continued in these areas. For instance, in Melani, the old primary school in the community has recently been rebuilt and significantly expanded, the water supply to the village is being developed, a small irrigation scheme had been established and a new telephone system introduced. Probably one of the most important of these rural improvements is the introduction of electricity which became available in Melani in 1997.

Other Aspects of Social Interaction

Extended Family and Kinship

This report dealt earlier with various aspects of individual households but it is necessary to stress that the household should not be seen in isolation. Its individuals see themselves as part of a wider grouping of cognate and affinal kin. The older literature on the Cape Nguni indicates that one of the basic features of social life was the agnatic lineage. More recently, however, Hammond-Tooke (1984) has questioned this view and come to the conclusion

that the operation of the agnatic principle in everyday life was very limited. Groups of agnatically-related homesteads may be found in rural areas but these must be seen as 'agnatic clusters' which do not constitute lineages. In the circumstances, I have found it necessary to pay more attention to the extended family which is currently of great relevance to the people.

The Xhosa term for kinship is *ukuzalana* (from *ukuzala*, 'to beget') which suggests common descent, loyalty and affection among kin. As in the past, *ukuzalana* is today undeniable and morally imperative, at least ideally. But even though people still view kin as people of common descent, in the study area the kinship principle operates situationally. The kin-based networks created by people do not involve all one's kin but only those kinsmen with whom relationships can be established and maintained. This means that there is now less emphasis than previously on the agnatic principle. Those kin to whom one can turn in times of need and on whom one can rely are readily included in one's network of cooperation. Yet, by virtue of relying on kin and not on strangers, the ideal of kinship as a 'traditional' resource is not threatened. Indeed, it is regularly reinforced. It must be pointed out that although there is now less emphasis on the agnatic principle, ceremonial occasions are times when the idea of kinship solidarity is symbolised. Available members of what remains of the agnatic cluster try to meet at occasions such as weddings and family rituals. The section that follows deals with certain categories of religious practices which reveal people's social identity and how they view their rural homes.

Ritual Practices of Householders

Occasional Beer Drinks

The occasional beer drink known as *utywala bekhaya* or *imbiza yekhaya* which is held 'for the ancestors' or 'for the good of the homestead' is common because it is inexpensive. Ideally, a beer drink should be provided by people from time to time. However, the need for it may be prompted by a certain occurrence. For instance, a 57-year-old married man who had not been in employment for eight years hosted a beer drink at his house because he had been able to get a job with a building contractor who was building extra classrooms at the local school in Melani.

Idinara, the Dinner

This is also a small ceremony mainly for family members and neighbours. It may be a thanksgiving occasion for a deceased relative or an occasion to thank ancestors for making it possible for one to continue working.

Rites of Passage

These include the birth rite, *imbeleko*, which affiliates a child with his or her family group. It seems there are few (if any) people who perform this rite immediately after the birth of a

child. It may be done much later, usually when the child or adult becomes ill. As such, the practice has lost much of its previous significance. It tends to be seen primarily as a means of securing the ancestors' blessings for the child.

All boys go through an initiation ceremony at about the age of 18. The rite culminates in the *umphumo* during which the boys are formally accepted by the community as new men. These are occasions for much feasting and traditional entertainment. Marriages involve smaller or large ceremonies depending on the people's material means. The last rites of passage are the mortuary rites which start with *ukukhapha*, to 'send away' the soul of the deceased to the next world. The second one is *ukubuyisa*, to 'bring back' the soul of the deceased so that it can be close to the living family members. These rites are elaborate and in most cases cattle are slaughtered during these occasion.

Rituals for Health

There are two rituals observed for the purpose of improving the health of family members. In some instances good health is sought by means of *intambo*, a necklace made from the hair of a goat or an ox that has been sacrificed. Another occasion which attempts to improve the health of family members involves the performance of *umhlwayelelo*, a very elaborate ritual with much symbolism. On such occasions diviners play a prominent role and spend several days at the home of the patient who is being treated. The person or people to be cured by the diviner (usually two or three people) dress in traditional attire and spend the night in a specially-built grass hut. On the following day two men who are closely related to the family accompany the diviners (often two diviners) who go and make the sacrifice to the ancestors on the banks of a selected river.

These rituals which attract varying numbers of people to the homestead preserve the people's moral links with the past and provide occasions for rural and urban relatives to meet.

Neighbours and Friends

Neighbourliness (*ubumelwane*) makes it possible for people to find close associates among people they see regularly. Neighbours are normally the first people to respond to emergencies like serious illness or a death in a home and they give whatever help they can. For instance, in the case of a death they will notify close relatives of the deceased who live far from the home. Thereafter, they will visit the home as often as they can - sometimes every evening - and attend prayers there. Neighbours assess the needs of the home and, where necessary, assist with small donations even if they may have to make other donations during the funeral. The cleaning of the home is done by the women who also prepare the food served after the funeral. The men's duties include painting and renovation of the home, the gathering of wood and the slaughtering of beasts for the funeral. At virtually every funeral of an adult there is a speaker who represents the neighbours because 'it is the

neighbours who know you best'. Apart from the generalised notion of neighbourliness, there are specific networks which bind individuals living close to each other. These are people who are interdependent and help each other when one of them is short of food or money. The neighbourhoods themselves are known as *iziphaluka* which serve as geographic units for the organisation of commonly-observed ceremonies like marriages, the initiation of boys to manhood, etc. It is the specific duty of newly-married women to cook and serve food on these occasions.

The Position of Women

Allocation of Land to Women

The widespread dependence of rural women on wage employment has given them a greater measure of independence than before and has enhanced their social status. In particular, this is evident in the women's ability to control their own lives and to gain access to land in their own right. Until the early 1950s, residential land in the study area was allocated only to married men. By that time the growing number of unmarried women with children was making it necessary for women to be provided with residential sites.

Over time, women in general have gradually gained access to land in their own right and at present gender discrimination in the allocation of land is non-existent. During the research the village Land Committee which is under the Residents' Association allocated residential sites twice, to male and female applicants. I was assured that there was no discrimination at all against women in this matter. In addition, the allocation of residential sites to women is now a well-established practice in many rural areas of the Eastern Cape. In this regard, it cannot be said that customary expectations are preventing women from gaining access to land. These informal and fairly egalitarian tenure arrangements are evolving in a situation where traditional authority has no direct influence. However, it must be borne in mind that there are some places where patriarchal norms are still dominant as, for instance, is noted by Walker (1994, 1996) with regard to KwaZulu-Natal, and Levin (1996) concerning the Northern Province. This tends to be the case in those places where chiefs continue to have great political influence. However, in Melani and many other rural areas in the former Ciskei there are no headmen, and chiefs are no longer involved in local administration.

Female Participation in Local Political Affairs

In Melani the changing status of women is evident in the role women play in political affairs. It has already been noted that the much-hated Tribal Authority system came to an end in the former Ciskei and that the emergent Residents' Associations tried to take over some of the administrative functions of the deposed headmen. Meetings of the Melani Residents' Association are held on Wednesdays. Women are well represented in the committee of this association and they take an active part in discussions. This is occurring

in the context of the ANC's major principle of non-sexism which has given women scope for participation in politics and public discussions. Much of this became possible after the demise of the authoritarian and male-dominated Tribal Authority. Also, the free participation of women in politics is in sharp contrast to what was happening in the area a few decades ago. In her study of the villages in the Keiskammahoek district in the late 1950s Monica Wilson (1952: 115) noted that women were barred from holding political office and were not allowed to take part in the political affairs of the village. All participation in political activities was confined to men. Wilson observed that: 'a woman is not allowed to attend meetings of the village section council...unless she is concerned with the matter under discussion and even then she must sit some distance apart from the assembled men and be represented by a male spokesman'. Such gender discrimination in the public sphere is non-existent today and it is likely that in the future the role of women in local politics will be even more important than it is at present.

Women in Voluntary Associations

Women also play more important roles in various community endeavours and associations than men do. They constitute the bulk of the membership of the various mainline and independent churches in the study area. Also, they are active members of other voluntary associations and committees. Many villagers are members of *masingcwabane*, burial associations whose members contribute money (and sometimes groceries and cool drinks) when a member of the association is bereaved. There are other associations which give similar assistance when members are hosting ceremonies such as weddings and boys' initiation.

De-agrarianisation and Rural Development

Land Tenure and Land Reform

Legal Status of Residential Sites in the Village

In this village there are 19 Quitrent residential sites which were granted in the past century to the followers of Melani. Some of the people who inherited this land were in possession of title deeds. However, there are some problems in this area. Firstly, the title deeds are still in the names of the original grantees because, in accordance with the laws of the previous South African government, people could not effect legal transfers. Secondly, the researcher was told that some of the original Quitrent landowners left the village and their land was taken over by their relatives.

The remaining 176 occupied sites in the village were acquired by means of the old S.A. Trust title, or simply informally. Those who got their sites through the S.A. Trust are supposed to have official papers known as Certificates of Occupation. People who obtained sites recently have no official papers at all. It can thus be seen that these villagers do not have secure land rights. Those who inherited Quitrent land were not able to register their

land in their own names. Also, the old S.A. Trust tenure provided a very inferior type of tenure and those who got sites recently hold the land merely under customary law.

Problems with Land Administration

As in other rural areas of the former Ciskei, land administration in the study area is in a chaotic state. For instance, in Melani, people are no longer paying for their Quitrent land and their title deeds are still in the names of the original grantees who died long ago. This is not surprising since it has been virtually impossible for those who inherited land to transfer it to their names. Also, other land holders have not received permits for the residential sites they occupied. In the past, villagers were issued with 'certificates of occupation' for the land which was allocated to them. Today land allocation is informal and has no official recognition. All this causes a great deal of insecurity and confusion which, in turn, contributes to the underdevelopment of the area. Also, there are hardly any records of arable holdings since stock records are not properly kept and those that are available are simply inaccessible. At times the stock dip which is supplied free by the Department of Agriculture becomes unavailable for several months and, as a result, the stock become heavily infested with ticks. In this confused state, extension officers are no longer in control of the movement of stock into and out of the village. There is thus virtually no means of preventing the spread of stock disease. Unlike in the past, the few people who own stock do not pay any grazing fee which would, ideally, be used for the maintenance of grazing areas.

Land Reform

Land reform in rural areas has been considered by several researchers including Cross (1987), De Wet (1987) and McAllister (1992). These researchers stressed that it would be unwise to embark on comprehensive land-tenure reform in these areas. They pointed out that there was no evidence to suggest that communal tenure is incompatible with development. Similarly, they noted that it is not necessary to have freehold tenure in order to facilitate development. More recently De Wet (1997) has emphasised the need to treat tenure reform with extreme care so that no further damage is done to communities affected by the reform.

From the publication of the Green Paper on land in South Africa (South African Government 1996) to the subsequent release of the relevant White Paper in April 1997, the Department of Land Affairs has been paying attention to the development of tenure policy in the country. One important guiding principle that is embodied in this White Paper is that tenure reform should allow people to choose the tenure system that is appropriate to their circumstances. It is apparent from the evidence presented above that in places like Melani people are not only overcrowded but that there are some who would welcome other options of gaining access to land so that the congestion could be relieved. It seems that all possible

steps should be taken to enable at least some people to gain access to state land. People could be provided with various options so that their specific needs are fulfilled. If nothing is done, overcrowding will simply worsen. In some cases rural people in the former Ciskei and Transkei are involved in land invasions i.e. taking any private land they can.

Currently the Department of Land Affairs is drafting legislation to ensure a smooth transition to a situation in which people as a whole have secure land rights. To this effect, in January 1998 representatives of the department produced a document (see Thomas *et al.* 1998) in which they proposed certain measures which would be necessary if people are to enjoy security of tenure. These measures include: firstly, a law which would define and confirm people's land rights; secondly, a registration system which would enable people to register their rights; and thirdly, the provision of a fair system of administration of land rights to holders of group-based rights of access.

It seems that such land-reform measures would be appropriate in communal areas like Melani where the land situation is in such a chaotic state. In this new approach to land reform, the people's rights to land which exist in practice would be confirmed by law. As it is, the proposed measure would be in keeping with the provisions of the White Paper on land policy which stipulate that 'all tenure reform processes must recognise and accommodate the *de facto* vested rights which exist on the ground' (South African Government 1997: 61).

In the light of the large degree of insecurity caused by the absence of a land registration system in Melani, and undoubtedly elsewhere, the proposed registration system seems to be very appropriate. It implies the phasing out of the discriminatory permit system of the past and the promotion of a procedure by which people acquire full legal rights to their land. In this proposal the question of costs has been considered and it is stated that 'the system would be relatively low cost and quick because it would dispense with expensive conveyancing procedures and survey requirements' (Thomas *et al.* 1998: 526). However, in this proposal it is recommended that land registration be provided to those people who need it. In places like Melani the likelihood is that people would willingly register their land rights for their own benefit. Already the introduction of essential services like electricity is pointing to the urgent need of site registration. The registration of land will become unavoidable when government housing provisions are effected in rural areas. In this housing scheme the government is providing family settlement grants worth R15,000 for first-time home owners in rural areas.

In view of all these land problems, it is clear that the establishment of a legitimate system of administration of land rights is long overdue. Ideally, the system of administration would have a wide variety of functions, including the formal allocation of residential sites, the identification and allocation of suitable land for cultivation and stock rearing, stock management, and the development of local infrastructure with special emphasis on water provision and veld management.

Local Government

Rural development in the study area and elsewhere will largely depend on how the current local government progresses there. It has already been noted that in many rural areas of the former Ciskei the Tribal Authorities have ceased to exist. The newly-promulgated Regulation of Development in Rural Areas Act removes the powers of traditional leaders to handle development in rural areas in favour of district councils (DCs) and transitional representative councils (TRCs). These new rural councils face enormous problems including a shortage of funds and personnel. But unlike the Tribal Authorities, which tended to be non-representative and authoritarian, the new councils are elected by the people themselves and are therefore perceived as legitimate institutions. This enabling environment can foster an improvement in the quality of life of people in these rural areas.

The current government policy strongly emphasises the need for municipalities to institute long-term development planning to ensure a coordinated approach within their geographic spheres of operation. The 1995 Development Facilitation Act No. 67 requires local authorities to set up Land Development Objectives (LDOs) which will guide those in authority on the use of local land for business, agriculture, education, services, etc. In addition, this Act stipulates that these local authorities must compile Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) which specify how the local authority is going to implement its development strategy with the resources at its disposal. This is supposed to be a planning exercise for a period of five years. The Alice Transitional Local Council and Transitional Representative Council which are the recognised local authorities in the district have already started this planning process and were able to hold the Planning Committee's first meeting in April 1998.

Rural Non-Farm Employment

The material presented above has illustrated the unsatisfactory conditions of rural dwellers who derive either very little or nothing from the land while there are also few employment opportunities locally. Earlier it was noted that in the sample there were 95 economically-able adults (56 per cent) who were unemployed and were looking for work. They included many people, especially men, who were working in town and had lost their jobs through retrenchment. This return migration which appears to have assumed importance since the 1980s is the consequence of economic decline and rising unemployment in urban areas. Undoubtedly, these pressures highlight the urgent need for the creation of a range of economic enterprises in the non-farm sector in rural areas. It is appreciated that these ventures would need to be small-scale rather than large-scale.

Earlier the significant transformations which were associated with the apartheid era were described. Wage labour employment was firmly entrenched in these rural areas. Currently, on account of the shortage of local employment opportunities, some 56 per cent of rural residents are unemployed and seeking work. It is in this context that the rural

enterprise development advocated here must be seen. Where possible people have taken advantage of opportunities to find local employment so that they can live at home or be at home as frequently as possible. Clearly, people would gladly work if the employment situation improved.

In addition, about 70 per cent of these rural homes are receiving material support from relatives who are away at work. Whereas most of these remittances are wholly used for the day-to-day maintenance of the household, there are many cases where this support also goes towards improvements in the home. In the circumstances, it seems that some of these remittances, which in certain cases are substantial, would be invested in at least some local economic enterprises if a more enabling environment were to be created.

The research has also shown that there is a greater proportion of women unemployed than men. This fact needs to be borne in mind when rural employment opportunities are provided and augmented. Unlike many other rural areas in Sub-Saharan Africa, the women in the study area are relatively free to become fully involved in new employment opportunities. The changing status of women highlights the various ways in which women are able to take full control of their lives without having to tolerate gender discrimination regarding whatever they do. On the whole the women under discussion are better educated than their menfolk and there are few social constraints to hamper their full participation in rural development.

It should also be noted that the development of these small-scale economic ventures and industries can be effected by means of local government policy that has recently been formulated in South Africa. According to the White Paper on Local Government (South African Government 1998), this new local government system should provide scope for local structures to be thoroughly involved in community development planning. Specifically, it emphasises the need for the existence of district governments which would, among other things, focus on economic planning and development. This is one of the challenges facing rural areas in South Africa at present. General improvement in the infrastructure of these areas and the creation of enough non-farm employment will depend on the performance of district governments.

Conclusions

The main aim of the larger study was to investigate the generating of rural livelihoods in three selected rural areas of the Eastern Cape. The data relating to Melani illustrate the virtual collapse of agriculture and the subsequent dependence of rural people on non-agricultural incomes which include wages, social pensions, remittances and, to a smaller extent, informal economic activities. This is occurring in a rural settlement close to small towns in the Eastern Cape. The situation shows that assumptions about a sectoral divide whereby rural dwellers are seen primarily as agricultural producers and urban residents as those engaged in industry are inappropriate here and undoubtedly in many other rural areas

of the province. Here both de-agrarianisation and the urbanisation of the rural economy have played an important role in the change from the agrarian patterns of the past to an overwhelming dependence on non-agricultural resources.

This social change implies greater similarity between urban and rural social structures. For instance, the material presented here shows that the study area is a socially heterogeneous environment. Firstly, there is a good measure of economic diversification illustrating that people's livelihoods have vastly varying bases. Also, there are wide varieties in living arrangements and domestic groupings. Households range from the relatively large and complex, proportionally significant, multi-generational households to smaller types of units which include people who live alone or only with their spouses. Here the convergence of urban (cf. Pauw 1963) and rural social structures is evident.

Strong town-country interconnections reflect the intentions and motivations of people involved in circular migration in the Eastern Cape. There is a regular flow of people and goods from the towns to the rural areas because, in spite of the repeal of the influx control regulations in 1986, living conditions in town are not yet sufficiently attractive for people to abandon their rural homes. This is why people continue to invest in rural areas to which they hope to retire. In addition, links with these rural homes are motivated by child-care needs. Many urban workers, especially women, find it more convenient to leave their children with female relatives in the country than to rear them in town.

The constant movement of people from the country to the towns is a means of reducing rural poverty. Those who are in desperate need of material support visit their relatives in town and usually get whatever assistance they can. Similarly, many rural children move to town to attend school and others visit urban relatives when they need medical attention. Very clearly, the maintenance of these urban-rural links is an important means of coping with the demands of present-day life.

The study area continues to be a home and an important point of reference and source of identification for many people in the area and elsewhere. This strong identification is illustrated by the visits many people make to their rural homes and by the material resources they send. The positive image of the rural home is further enhanced by the new infrastructural improvements that are being made in the village including the installation of electricity, the construction of a new school and the extension of another, the establishment of a clinic, and the start that is being made regarding the provision of water. However, in spite of the acknowledgement that there are improvements in the infrastructure of these rural areas, there is a crying need for more development. For instance, the ever-increasing number of residential sites allocated is simply wiping out the village commonage and the chaotic situation in land administration is a great impediment to development in the area. There are no payments for the land which the people use, commonage fences are in a poor state and sometimes dipping facilities for stock are unavailable. All this causes a great deal of insecurity and uncertainty which, in turn, contributes to local stagnation.

The study shows that there is an urgent need for the generation of rural employment. Apart from the fact that as many as 56 per cent of able-bodied adults are unemployed, there are many people who have become frustrated when unsuccessfully looking for work in town and have returned home. Similarly, the contraction of urban employment since the 1980s has resulted in retrenchments which make it necessary for people to return to their rural homes. Most of the people who are thus affected are men. Also, the creation of more jobs would certainly promote the development of rural enterprises especially in the informal economy. Here the initial capital necessary to start small businesses could come from local employment of whatever nature and the remittances of absent household members.

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