

# *\_01 context early settlement and form*

The endeavour is to firstly understand the cultural composition of Makhado, whose essence is captured far beyond its municipal borders, inclusive of the agricultural and rural land type that supports the town's economic and social dependence.

Makhado (Louis Trichardt) and its surrounding region provide a small-scale prototype of the settlement patterns typical of South Africa's larger

metropolitan areas.

The modernist town, surrounded by economically yielding land is strewn with collected pockets of migrant and resident black labour in peripheral locations. These "grouped areas" and townships were and still are comprised of inferior housing and services, with buffer zones and other spatial devices used to minimise interaction among races.

It is by this instance that the unfolding of social polarisation of the region is clarified, identifying the directives of early segregation and later apartheid urban form. Also, the urban condition of post-apartheid Louis Trichardt will be discussed, with reference to the planning generators of the last ten years.



Figure 1.1 The Limpopo River



Figure 1.2 Golden rhinoceros found at Mapungubwe

Figure 1.3 Mapungubwe



Louis Trichardt lies dormant to some of the earliest trade routes in Southern Africa. Jansen (2004) suggests that trade attracted the interest of Venetians to southern Africa as early as 800 AD, with Mapungubwe serving as the earliest documented trade post to the region.

Mapungubwe flourished as a city and trading center from 1220 to 1290/1300. Considered by some as the capital of southern Africa's first state, Mapungubwe may have reached a population of 5,000.

The city grew in part because of its access to the Limpopo River, which connected the region through trade to the ports of Kilwa and other sites along the Indian Ocean. This new trade was grafted onto existing regional networks along which salt, cattle, fish, metals, ostrich-eggshell beads, and other items had been flowing for centuries.

The discovery of gold in stone ruins north of the Limpopo River in the 1890s attracted prospectors and treasure hunters to the Limpopo River valley. In 1932, the ruins of Mapungubwe were uncovered. Twenty-three graves have been excavated from this hilltop site. The bodies in three of these graves were buried in the upright seated position associated with royalty, with a variety of gold and copper items, exotic glass beads, and other prestigious objects.

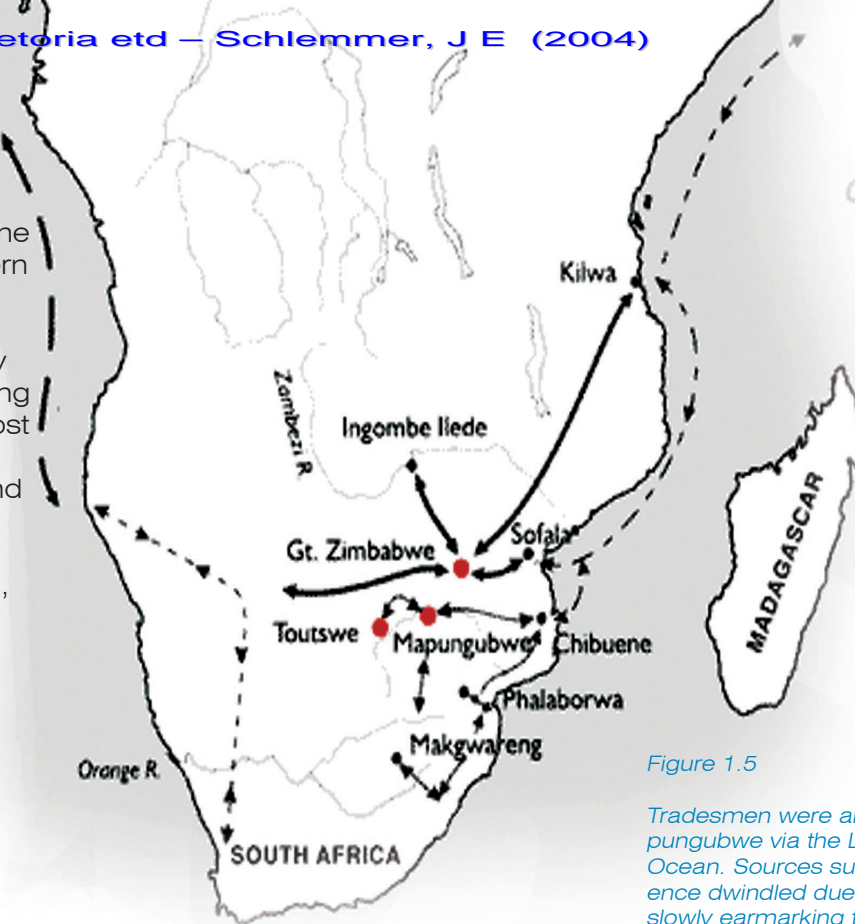


Figure 1.4

Map depicting the trade routes prescribed by early tradesmen. Venetians are the earliest documented foreign people to access the southern parts of Africa. New prestige items, including glass beads and cloth, were introduced through the Swahili trade and were likely exchanged for gold, ivory, and other locally produced goods.

These finds provide evidence not only of the early smelting of gold in southern Africa but of the extensive wealth and social differentiation of the people of Mapungubwe. Most spectacular among these finds is a gold foil rhinoceros molded over what was likely a soft core of sculpted wood.

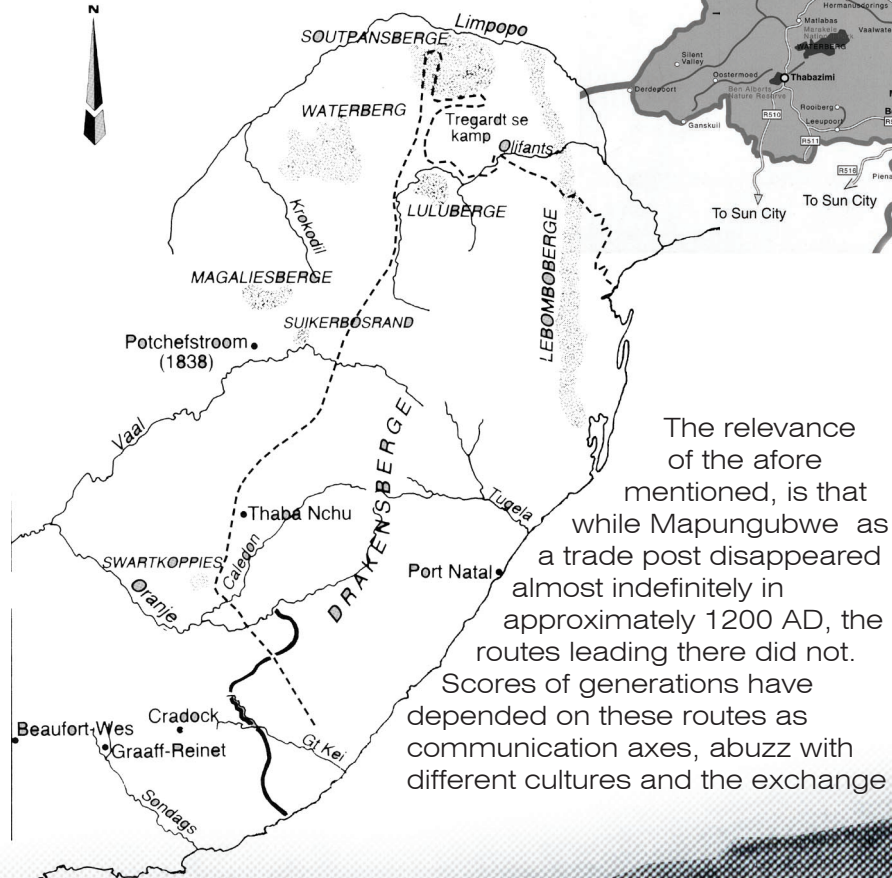
Thriving only from 1290 to 1300, the city's decline was linked to radical climatic changes that saw the area become colder and drier.

Figure 1.5

Tradesmen were able to access the city of Mapungubwe via the Limpopo river from the Indian Ocean. Sources suggest that the city's existence dwindled due to radical climatic change, slowly earmarking the development of Great Zimbabwe



Figure 1.6. Old map depicting the route taken by Louis Trichardt



The relevance of the aforementioned, is that while Mapungubwe as a trade post disappeared almost indefinitely in approximately 1200 AD, the routes leading there did not. Scores of generations have depended on these routes as communication axes, abuzz with different cultures and the exchange

Figure 1.8 The "Voortrekkers" moving across the land.



of resources, which have over time sought alternative paths.

One such pioneer of these routes is the Afrikaner Trek Boer Louis Trichardt, who penetrated the northern interior in 1836. Founded by the trade of salt harvested from the salt pans north west of the Soutpansberg mountain range, hunting and trade in animal hides, and later agriculture, the town ultimately served as a temporal refuge to the tradesman, who was en route to the east coast of

Figure 1.7. The road maps of today that depict the routes first pioneered by Louis Trichardt

Mozambique, where he was to reside until his death.

Templehoff (1999) explains that trade in the region was lucrative, with interest from the Portuguese of Mozambique, and British traders of the Natal coast and Port Elizabeth respectively. Influx of new residents to the Soutpansberg district was thus substantial, strengthening the now established yet small Afrikaner community. This white community collectively began to undermine traditional authorities by their land occupation, and inevitably catalysed years of civil unrest between themselves and the local African tribes. With military support from the Republican Government, the Venda people were overthrown in the Mhephu War of 1898, rendering the sovereignty of the northern interior to the Afrikaners. Louis Trichardt then, was officially proclaimed on 14 February 1899.



Figure 1.9 left: Aerial photograph depicting the mountain and farmlands



Figure 1.10 Albasini Dam

The development of Louis Trichardt after the Anglo Boer War was subject to the economic growth of the Soutpansberg region as a whole, with the prerequisite that the town had to economically sustain an urban community (Tempelhoff, 1999).



Figure 1.11 Construction of railway line at Beit Bridge

The geographical placement of the town thus ultimately won its development over three other possible ventures (Messina, Spelonken and the Soutpan).

Figure 1.12 below: Railway line passing through Louis Trichardt to Messina. It later crossed the border into Zimbabwe



Placed at the foothill of the Soutpansberg, the subtropical climate proved to be ideal for farming in both livestock and later fresh produce. Sufficient water resources were established in the area too, with the construction of The Albasini Dam, named after Jao Albasini – the Portuguese forefather of trade to the region.

Furthermore, the town was almost directly on the coarse of the north-south trajectory between Pietersburg in the south and the copper mining town of Messina in the north, with the connecting railway line passing through Louis Trichardt by 1914. Forming the nucleus of the east-west intersection for traffic along the southern parts of the mountain range, between Blouberg in the west and the area of Tshivase (Sibasa) in the east, the town was now the culmination of all major lines of transport communication in the far Northern Transvaal, firmly locating it as an economic hub for the upper half of the northern province.

The Occupation Law of 1886 formed the basis of early “land settlement initiatives” in the district, as land could be provided free of charge to prospective owners, subject to them physically developing their properties. One of the first actions of the Union government of 1910 was to effect a legal division describing those areas of the country that were assigned

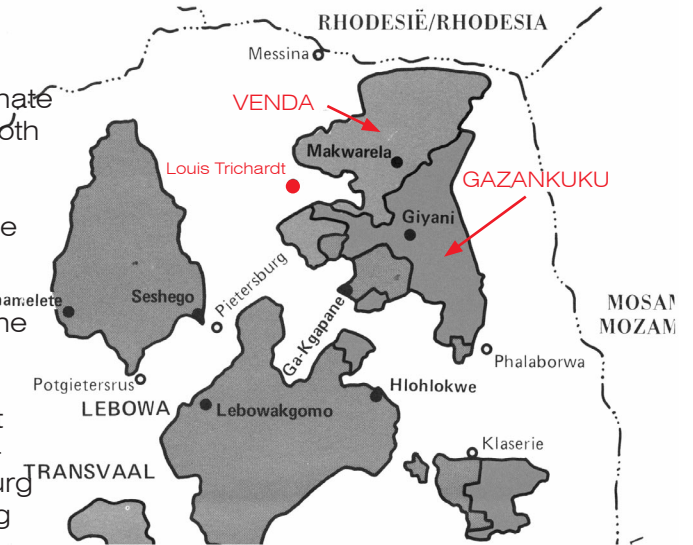


Figure 1.13 above: Homelands of the Northern Transvaal district specific to Louis Trichardt were Venda and Gazankulu

to the indigenous population. The Native Lands act of 1913 prohibited the purchase of land by members of the African community outside the scheduled “land reserves” (Christopher 2001) assigned to them, with the later revised Natives (urban Areas) Act of 1923 re-emphasising segregated areas of African residence under the responsibility of each local authority.

Thus, with legislation firmly in place, as well as strengthened trade routes locating the town within the northern interior and serving the migrating labour force to the district, the foundations of the separate development ideology sought by the Apartheid government were already realised.

# the modern

The growth of technology during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War transpired into a number of important advances for the town with regard to production in farming of cattle, fresh produce and timber, as well as other industrial activities, such as brick-making and mining (Templehoff, 1999).

But perhaps the most definitive earmark of the post WWII period is that of the change of government in 1948. The National Party introduced the new political theory of Apartheid, which identified a new township for black people, and by the 1950's, was the ordering principle of society in Louis Trichardt – demarcating separate areas for Asians, Coloureds and Indians.

Of course racial divide was already inherent in the history of the town, as the first black township was proclaimed on 15 October 1917, north of the current township of Tshikota. But the application of the Apartheid policy would now more consciously govern much of the urban planning for years to come, with their associated problems only surfacing much later. Figure 1.14 illustrates an early map of the town (earlier than 1970), with

particular attention drawn to its road layout. Here, it is understood that important transport routes culminated in the town's interior, with Krogh Street serving as the main arterial.

Jansen (2004) suggests that as part of initial settlement, the town was developed on the highest rise of ground elevated from the large river system that lies adjacent to the town's eastern border. This was done to escape breeding mosquitos and the resultant onslaught of Malaria. Easy access to water however was also a determining factor, thus location within walking or horse and cart distance from the river was essential.

The residual portions of land on the outskirts of the town were and remain today land designated for recreational (parks and sports fields) use. This urban planning would later become conscious of enforcing segregation ideals, as depicted in figure 1.14. The Black and Indian communities of Tshikota and Eltivillas respectively are placed at the town's outer peripheries.

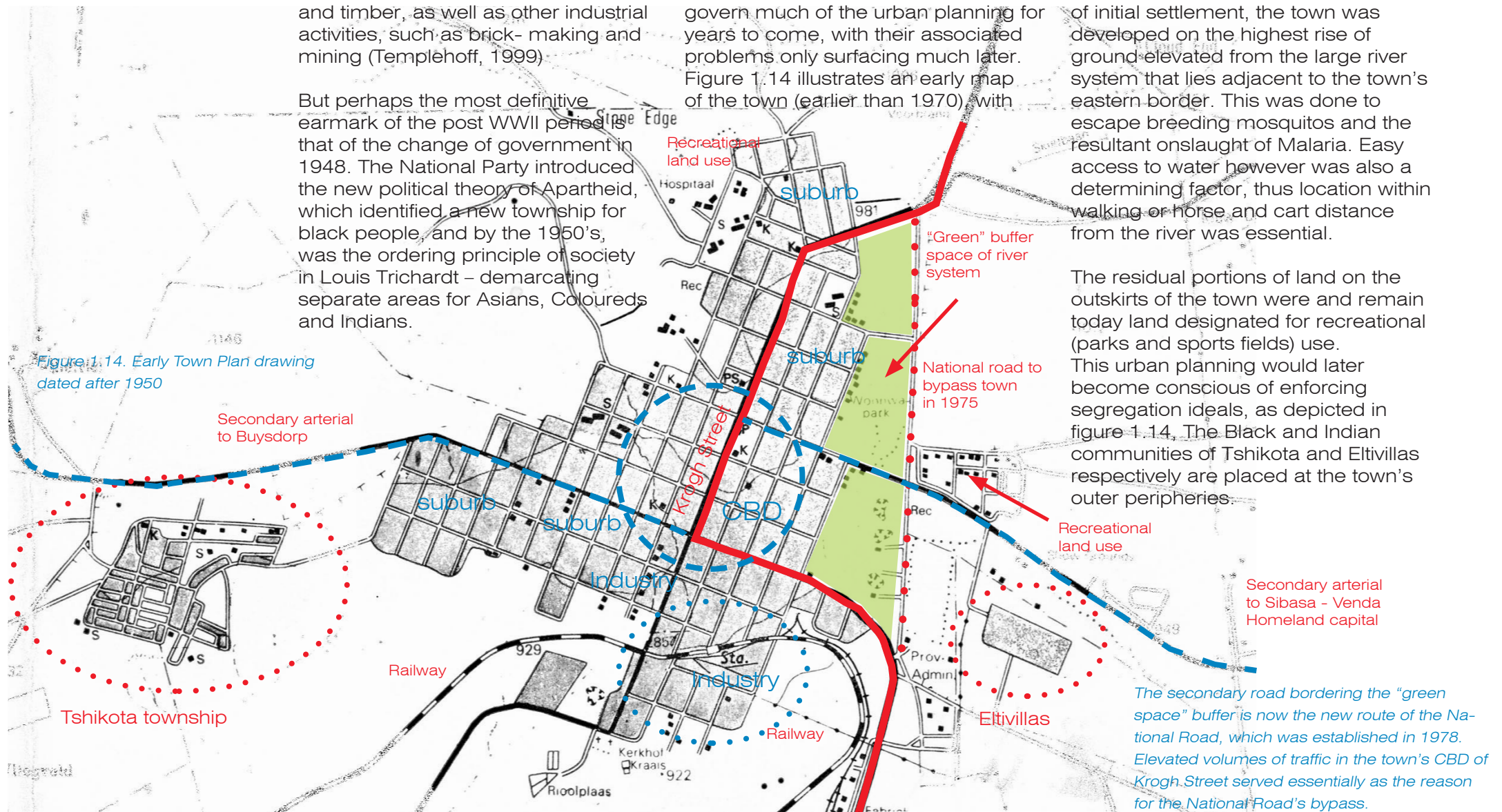


Figure 1.14. Early Town Plan drawing dated after 1950

The secondary road bordering the "green space" buffer is now the new route of the National Road, which was established in 1978. Elevated volumes of traffic in the town's CBD of Krogh Street served essentially as the reason for the National Road's bypass.

Louis Trichardt served as a thoroughfare for people of colour, with migrant labourers commuting to and from the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg). This temporary occupation, together with the ingress of illegal immigrants from African countries north of South Africa, aggravated an already congested township, faced with a shortage of housing and basic sanitary needs. These problems ascribed with the largely unplanned townships were given attention rather sporadically up until the early 1990's. Relocation of residents from overcrowded townships and other areas, such as Gertrudsberg, subject to the Group Areas Act, epitomised the local government's practice of the segregation policy.

Similarly, the Indian and Coloured communities suffered isolation, with Buysdorp serving as the earliest coloured settlement, and Eltivillas to the Indian community.

Templehoff (1999) explains that further relocation of the town's Indian business to Eltivillas took place in the 70's, as a more "sanitised" image of the town was sought after. A new bus and taxi depot serving the large black community who commuted to the town would be provided for here too, with the result that they could then make use of this new business post.

Implementing the Group Areas Act in all its consequences implied that the Central Business District (CBD) would ultimately lose direct access to its Black buying power, which was sourced as far as 60km away. The only Indian traders left in the CBD, were those granted permission on the basis of the nominee system, which lasted as late as 1990 when the Conservative Party refused Indian free trade in the CBD once more.

This decision was ultimately short lived and was the last tool of control the local government could exercise before the new democracy was established in 1994.

The proclamation of the national road to bypass the town in 1975 contended with all communities, but was especially of detriment to the white community.

The new Eltivillas business centre now enjoyed direct access from the national road, and ultimately won obvious economic profit for the Indian community.

The placement of the National road and the development thereafter, ultimately influenced the segregation ideals of the town, and at present day, comprised of contrasted political and economic growth, reveals a number of different urban constituents.

Figure 1.15 below: View of Krogh Street in the 1920's



Figure 1.16 below: 1923 aerial photograph of the town with Krogh street at the centre and the Soutpansberg mountain range behind



Figure 1.17 below: Roadside sign in Johannesburg proclaims Apartheid paranoia



Characteristic to the Apartheid urban form at a macro-scale is racial segregation. This principle has already been identified, but at closer inspection, development of ultimately non-sustaining environments is revealed by a polarisation of social order, or class.

In *The Urban Challenge and Housing in South Africa*, 1996, Dewar identifies a number of modernist town planning principles devoid of integrating people of a low income bracket into the city, namely; Low density sprawl and Fragmentation

Typical to these themes is the development of activity cells of mono-functional type, placed at distances from each other that make their access limited to the automobile. The grain of the city is coarse, with activity pockets bounded by freeways and separating buffers of open space - Dewar (1996)

In Louis Trichardt's application - Figure 1.18, the CBD is circumvented by industrial, suburban and recreational land type respectively, confining programmed activity to different parts of the town.

Dewar explains quite obviously that the costs generated by this type of system are immense, and that there often exists an inefficient and limited public transport infrastructure, denying low-income citizens to basic amenities and small-scale economic opportunities.

The severity of this is best felt at a macro-scale, indicative of the peripheral townships and rural homelands.

The full potential of these principles would however only be reached in the town itself with the decline of the Apartheid regime.

The now openly accessible service centre would succumb to a long overdue mass of occupation, revealing urban typologies again exemplary of other major metropolitan centres in South Africa.

## *post-apartheid*

Class stratification is further supplemented by Smith (2003) who notes the collection of better housing for the small Indian/Asian and coloured middle-class typical of the apartheid landscape. This helped relieve the rather monotonous areas built for the non-whites.

He suggests however, that even with the repeal of group areas legislation, this pattern was to persist well into the most contemporary urban form of our cities.

In *Confronting Fragmentation, Housing and Urban Development in a Democratising Society*, Smith makes reference to more urban contexts of "accretions of informal housing...and the spontaneous occupation of

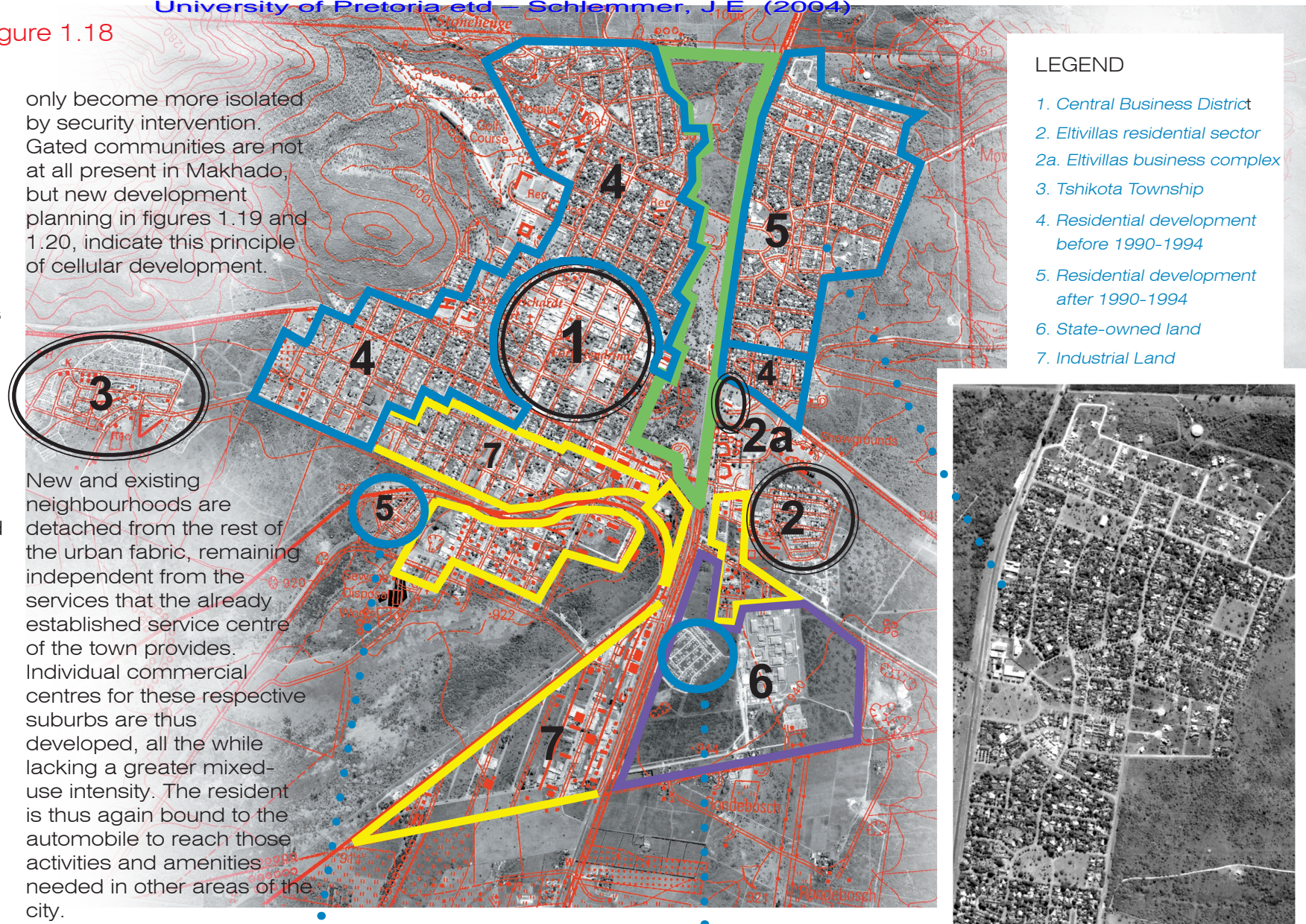
unused land" to support his argument.

While this is not necessarily the case in the town of Louis Trichardt, this activity is definitely typical of large scale land use in the agricultural districts within the Makhado municipal borders.

Also, the purchasing of property by the now financially capable Black and Indian community is typical, with interest in land occupation reaching prospective businessmen from the major metropolitan areas, such as Johannesburg.

Smith quotes David Simon (1989) to have captured change of this nature - "*The vision of the post-apartheid city was thus one of continuing segregation and separation, or fragmentation, with little impact on the existing highly unequal housing stock...Whites would tighten their belts, but few would be forced down the housing market. The black political elite, bourgeoisie and administrative strata would grow...and gain access to better residential areas, But for the mass of blacks in townships and 'shacklands', and for many Indians/Asians and Coloureds, little improvement could be appreciated. The prospect was thus of class divisions steadily augmenting the racial separation inherited from the past, to produce a city characterised by some as 'deracialised apartheid'.*"

Figure 1.18



For fear of enduring unsafe and insecure working environments, a large constituent of business and commercial interests have vacated our cities' CBD's, for new development elsewhere.

This diaspora from the central business district has left the core of our cities almost economically and socially delapidated, not to mention the physical deterioration of the sub-urban fabric that has had to carry the weight of often sporadically placed and low density office parks and new business centres. Thus again, just as in apartheid town planning, activity pockets are realised, over-catering for basic programmes in the sub-urban fabric and leaving the inner city almost obsolete of further economic and commercial investment.

The relocation of the CBD of Makhado is hardly comparable to that of Johannesburg, but there are smaller businesses that have proclaimed rights in the suburbs. Similarly, internalised neighbourhoods have now

only become more isolated by security intervention. Gated communities are not at all present in Makhado, but new development planning in figures 1.19 and 1.20, indicate this principle of cellular development.

New and existing neighbourhoods are detached from the rest of the urban fabric, remaining independent from the services that the already established service centre of the town provides. Individual commercial centres for these respective suburbs are thus developed, all the while lacking a greater mixed-use intensity. The resident is thus again bound to the automobile to reach those activities and amenities needed in other areas of the city.



Figure 1.19 Cellular housing develop-



Figure 1.20 Prison housing placed adjacent to N1 Highway



Figure 1.21 Development after 1990



The urban form identified in our housing type is characteristic of the one plot syndrome, typical of the South African city. The misconception is that each household's needs' can be met within the individual dwelling unit. The available financial resources for housing and urban development are however far from sufficient. The planning and management focus must then re-orientate itself from the individual unit to collective spaces and public institutions, with "Positively designed and celebrated urban public space" supplementing the paradigm shift in urban place-making - (Dewar 1996).

Post apartheid development policies including the Development and Facilitation Act (DFA 1995) and The White Paper on Spatial Land Use and Development (2001) have sought to compliment this change, by "rejecting low-density, segregated, fragmented and mono-functional development, and to rather embrace

compact, integrated and mixed-use settlements" (White Paper 2001:6)

Dewar (1996) too identifies several changes that must take place at urban management structures and suggests essentially two principles key to the remediation and future planning methodologies.

The first is to maximise the urban generative capacity by creating more urban systems that generate economic, social and commercial opportunities and facilities.

These include:

- a. Demarcating areas of development, differentiating between landscapes of urban, rural and natural landscapes and thereby promoting
- b. Compactness and densification of the urban fabric, with the use of housing infill

projects principle to achieving this.

- c. Integrating, overlapping and combining different land uses, activities and elements as opposed to their separation is another important objective, with Dewar recognising housing projects as infill to the existing urban fabric.

These opportune environments must be made accessible; with most of the daily activities accessible by foot. This obviously does not cater for all needs, and thus other viable and efficient public transportation systems are therefore essential to support the now agglomerated, higher-order activity environments employed. Dewar argues that by the "extroversion" of more intensive activities and facilities towards dominant transportation routes, and in particular more public ones, this objective can be achieved.



Figure 1.22: Home adapted for business rights, bordering on Rissik street



Figure 1.23: Home adapted for business rights, bordering on Rissik street

# current issues

## Makhado Integrated Development Plan

Issues identified by the Makhado Integrated Development Plan (2002) reveal environments far removed from those ideally described by Dewar and the DFA, with particular reference made to the inadequate provision and maintenance of basic amenities – such as water and sanitation, roads and transport and a severe shortage of housing. The latter of which is a major concern in the townships and informal settlements within the municipal borders.

Makhado is essentially a regional service centre for those who commute from the surrounding townships, rural and agricultural lands. The services provided include basic business and commercial activities (banking facilities, manufacturing), with the bulk of employment indicators attributed to

trade and manufacturing.

The labour source to these services is still largely contained to the black labour force on the existing townships and rural lands.

The economies of surrounding townships and rural areas comprise mostly of informal activities and largely serve the immediate consumption needs of local people - IDP (2002)

The Agriculture, Trade and Services sectors largely drive the formal economy of Makhado Municipality, with a portion of the town's economy comprised of the processing of primary products produced in the area. 1997 indicators show that Agriculture contributes 16.4% towards the GGP, predominantly ascribed to the horticulture production in the Levubu Valley and Letaba

The high contribution of trade to the GGP of 25.6% is a function of the town with regional trade supported by

the high degree of accessibility due to the N1 highway. The importance of the national road will increase dramatically in the future, as trade links with countries north of South Africa will be augmented even further by the Trans Limpopo Spatial Development Initiative (TLSPDI). This initiative came into being with the signing of a landmark agreement between Zimbabwe and South Africa, the corridor running from Polokwane to Victoria Falls in Zambia.

Other local economy contributors are the development of a maximum-security prison, valued at an estimated R350 million, and local tourism. Tourism is one of the biggest generators of income to the Limpopo province, with game farms, traditional and cultural facilities in the Venda areas, the Soutpansberg biosphere and the close location of the Kruger National park being a few examples of tourist attractions close to the town.

Figure 1. 24 Bus and taxi terminus in the town's CBD



Figure 1.25 Wholesale depot



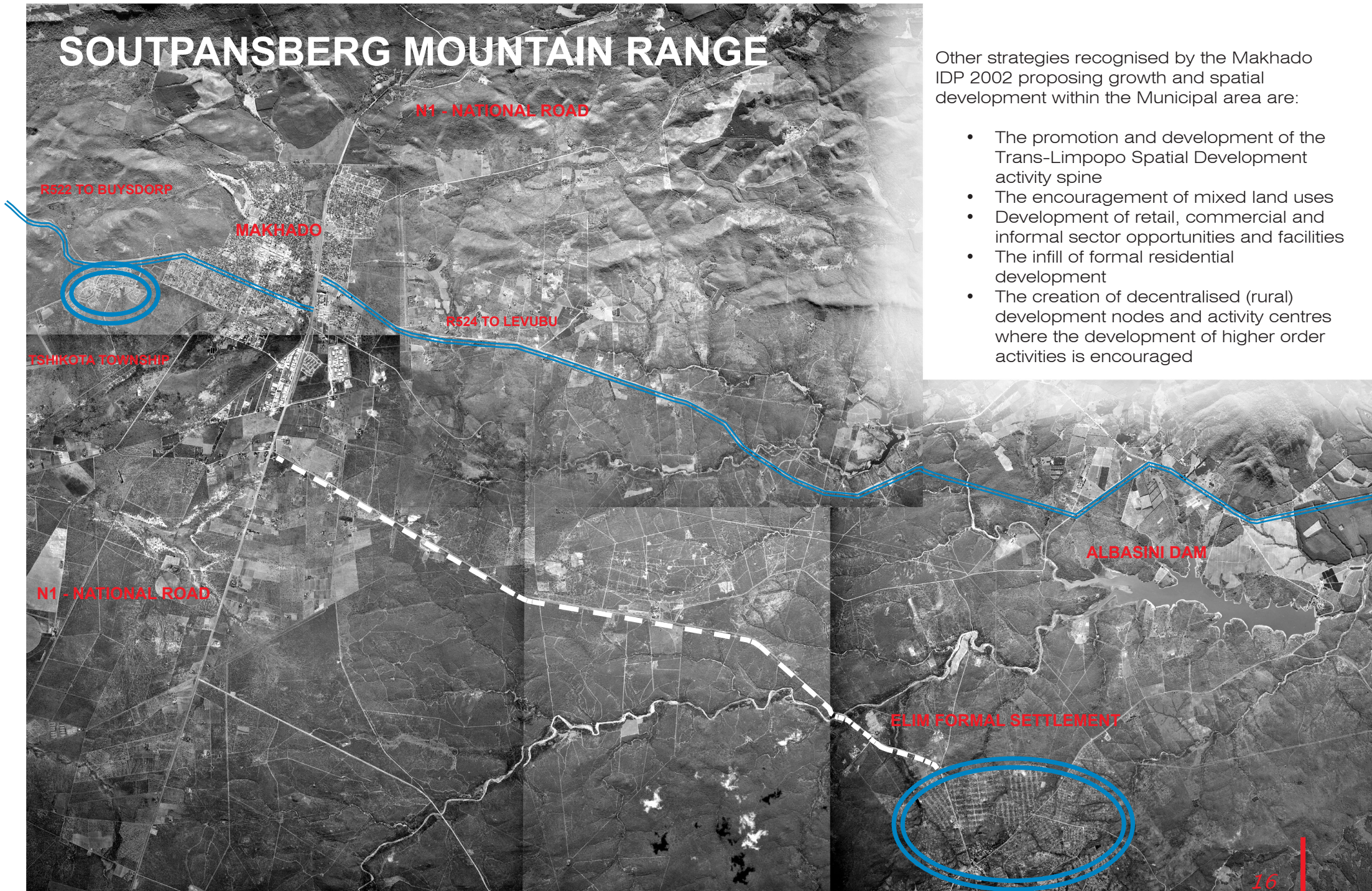
Figure 1.26 Banking facilities



Figure 1.27 The View of Songozwi Street



# SOUTPANSBERG MOUNTAIN RANGE



Other strategies recognised by the Makhado IDP 2002 proposing growth and spatial development within the Municipal area are:

- The promotion and development of the Trans-Limpopo Spatial Development activity spine
- The encouragement of mixed land uses
- Development of retail, commercial and informal sector opportunities and facilities
- The infill of formal residential development
- The creation of decentralised (rural) development nodes and activity centres where the development of higher order activities is encouraged

figure 1.28 - macro scale land use and movement analysis

The IDP (2002) has identified the need for a mixed-use typology, but its literal application is now asked.

The more specific programme envisaged by the council is to allow for major business and retail development that will sell goods and provide services to the general public and commercial sectors. A culture of wholesale purchase is strongly associated with the community of Makhado, and is thus sought to be endorsed even further, with particular focus on making this market more accessible. It is wished that bulk supplies can be defragmented into singular consumables at more competitive wholesale prices. Emphasis is specifically placed on including both businessmen and consumers of the low-economic sector in this market. There definitely exists the potential for local employment and business interest to achieve this.

Makhado and its profit yielding agricultural lands for example are often only used as means to support the growing export market (nationally and internationally), which in turn contributes to the local economy.

There is however a large opportunity to direct this financial income to the local economy first. For example, most of the vegetables bought at leading supermarkets and vegetable stores (Fruit and Veg City) in the town, come from the surrounding area, some as close as 20km, but are first sent to Polokwane and even Johannesburg before returning to Makhado for sale.

The IDP also states, that while the town is used for most service purposes, weak economic linkages exist between activity centres of the rural land type and the more formal economy of the town.

There is also a significant leakage of local buying power to the larger nodes, such as Polokwane. This again stresses the need for the town to provide for those business and commercial amenities sourced elsewhere.

The town perhaps emanates a static and sometimes unapproachable image for business opportunity from the low-economic market. Makhado has become too dependable on the masses of people included in its municipal borders that support it. Little effort has been directed to local business empowerment from the informal and low-economic market.

The Indian community on the other hand own the majority of trade and business activity in the town and surrounding districts, a legacy that

Figure 1.32 Vegetables sold at the local taxi rank in town



Figures 1.29 to 1.31 A variety of wholesale depots found in the town

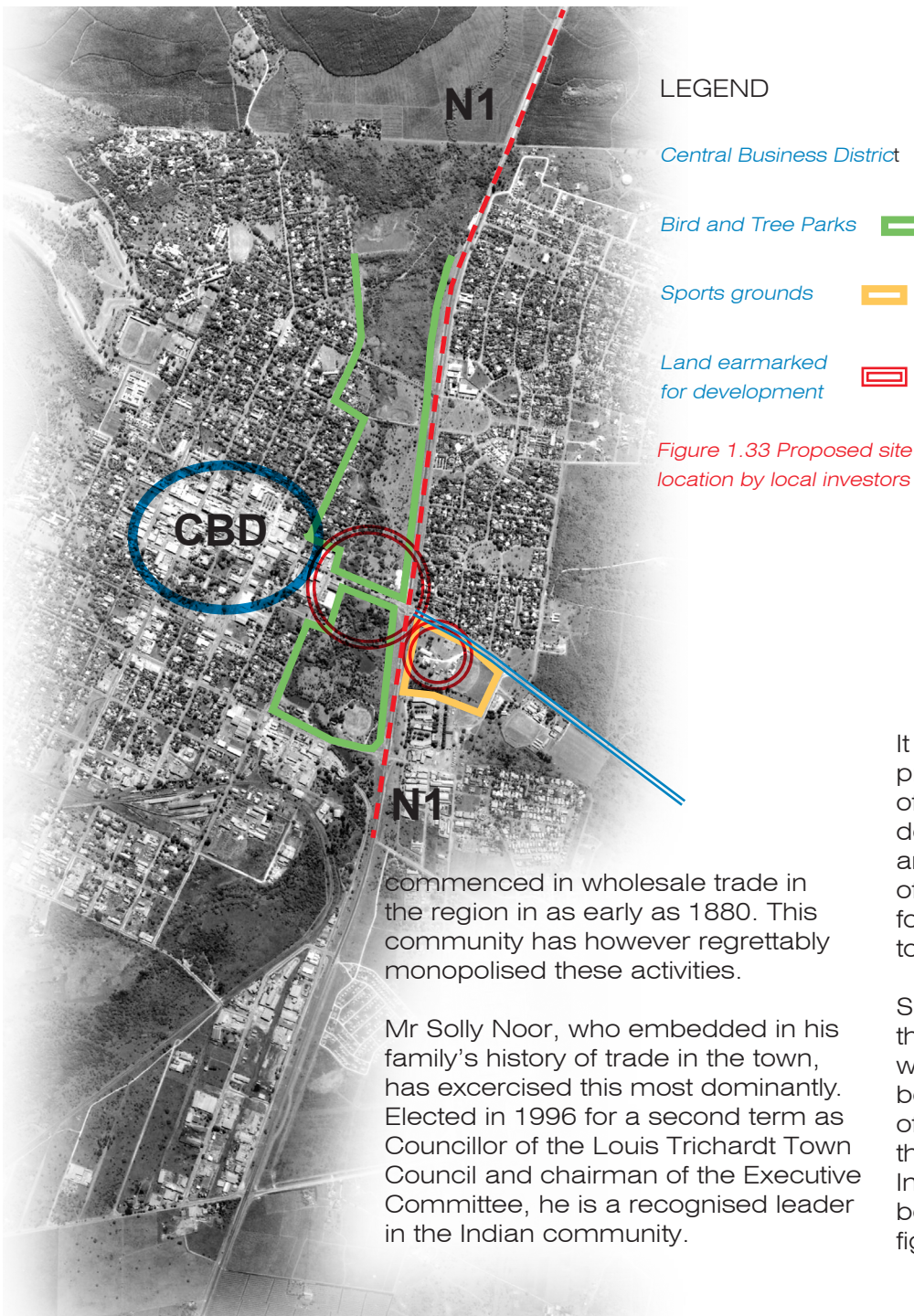


Figure 1.30



Figure 1.31





It is essentially by his control of the property market that reveals volumes of the business and commercial development of the town, with present and future development prospects of extending the town's business footprint to the national road and over to its more eastern borders.

Some of the decisions contained thus far have caused much debate with the town's residents, specifically because proposed development is of "greenfield" nature, threatening the existing Sports Grounds and Indigenous Tree and Bird Parks bordering the National road - figure 1.33.

Mr Noor's interests are however correct in part, as they reflect those guidelines set out in the Makhado IDP 2002. Yes, the CBD is too small to cater for the existing and forecasted numbers of commercial and residential interest; and his envisaged building programme of a shopping mall will provide a greater variety for the consumer market and essentially attract the buying power of those Makhado residents spending their money in Pietersburg. It is however limited by its mono-functionality and will remain a strictly diurnal pavilion, uncelebrated by all spectrums of public activity. Save for parking lots strewn sporadically alongside the N1 and the eradication of important plant and animal life, locality for such a building is quite contentious.

Another concern again is the control the Indian community maintain in the town's trading realm, and would ultimately have on such a new development. Rates of lettable space that Mr Noor owns in town have steadily increased, which will inevitably force those tenants to leave the town for either the suburbs or more attractive rates in the proposed shopping centre. The property market is ultimately monopolised by Mr Noor, and should be made more accessible to other prospective investors.