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Inhaltsverzeichnis

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Financialisation and the Production of Inequality in Namibia: A Socio-Spatial Perspective

1. Introduction

"We emerge from Apartheid, the oppression of Apartheid, [...] So this is the new Apartheid. This is the privileged minority versus an unprivileged mass. And so we go from Apartheid at our National level, to Apartheid at the global level. And it has to be challenged."

(Dennis Brutus, South African activist and poet in: Thomas 2012: 4)

The paper aims at establishing a relation between the financialising political economy of Namibia and the perpetuation of apartheid geographies, focusing on the production of housing as a field for the exploration of this point. We start by defining financialisation, its uses and its impact, and through this will explain the formation of a world system with shifting centralities in which financialisation signals the dawn of a cycle. This lens will be used to observe Namibia's uneven development, which we will trace from colonial dispossession to racialised capitalism and further to a liberalised free-market economy. Pointing out Namibia's close ties with South Africa and the shared apartheid past, the observations contained in this work will have a socio-spatial emphasis, which will lead to a critical perspective of Namibia's production of housing as exemplary in the understanding of the socio-spatial production of a financialised economy, and how this in fact perpetuates apartheid geographies. This point will be presented based on a 2012 landmark UN report on 'adequate housing', which exposes the corrosive effects of the 'financialisation of housing' in developing countries in recent decades. The paper concludes with outlining what then could be an alternative production of space or alternative economies in today's context, arguing that vis-a-vis the intense pressure for economic growth masked by financialised 'solutions', a quest for fully adequate housing will activate the socio-spatial domain into a politically contested ground where issues of class, race, and justice will be decided.

2. On financialisation

"Capitalist development [...] seems, by reaching the stage of financial expansion, to have in some sense announced its maturity: it [is] a sign of autumn."
(Fernand Braudel 1984 in: Arrighi 2010: 6)

Financial mechanisms are a constituent component of capitalist development, yet only recently have we entered a phase in which they have become the preferred device for accumulation at the planetary scale. Financialisation can describe a number of dynamics: the expansion of financial assets in size, the penetration of finance into economic sectors that were not previously affected by it (e.g. education, healthcare), the proliferation of financial innovation (e.g. sub-prime mortgages, microcredit, futures trading), the insertion and ultimate takeover of productive sectors by parasitic finance (e.g. manufacturing companies opening financial arms and gradually deriving more profits from these than from their core operations), among others (Fine 2010). There are different conceptualisations of the term financialisation: some with an emphasis on socio-spatial issues (Aalbers 2008), while others use it to explain larger macroeconomic dynamics at the planetary level (Fine 2010; McNally 2009; Lapavitsas 2009). The broadest interpretation expands it throughout the entire history of capitalism (Arrighi 2010). We will depart from the latter, and elaborate on the extrapolation of a capitalist accumulation cycle over a historical period to attempt to understand our contemporary condition.

In a simple capitalist accumulation cycle (M-C-M'), a certain amount of money (M) is transformed into either a commodity or a service (C) yielding a return higher than the amount initially invested (M'). Financialisation would, in these simplifying terms, be a process of accumulation that does not necessarily involve an actual commodity or a service at the moment of the transaction, replacing it with the promise of its future realisation (M-M'). While this explanation refers to a single financial operation, Giovanni Arrighi's proposition is to look at this as a pattern being reproduced in capitalist development at the planetary scale and throughout its full history (see Figure 1). Economies undergo periods of growth, many times driven by the insertion of foreign capital, in which accumulation allows for the consolidation of a productive base and development (M-C *cycle*), which is the primary production cycle. Guided by aims of further accumulation, the cycle reaches a point in which financial operations start to yield higher returns and hence become the favoured device for accumulation (C-M' *cycle*). This appears not to happen in a complementary way but in fact the latter causes the unmaking of the former, a process otherwise known as deindustrialisation. This, in Arrighi's analysis, is a cyclical process, with the previous cycle feeding the emergence of the next one and its own ultimate demise, in a process that started more than five hundred years ago. While historically each cycle lasts more than a century, they become shorter every time and shift their core to more populous territories, with increasing global reach, and involving an increasing amount of capital. The four systemic cycles of accumulation he proposes started in Genoa during the 15th–16th centuries; then shifted to the Netherlands for the 17th century; to Britain for the 19th century; and lastly to the United States for the 20th century. It is within this regime of accumulation at a world scale that we can locate our times as undergoing the phase of the financialisation of American hegemony. While it is not certain whether the next stage will be a larger, more populous nation like China, an alliance of nations such as BRICS, or a global regime, it is quite possible that a material limit to financialised accumulation (i.e. through 'fictitious capital', or *credit*) has been reached on the planetary scale. What emerges from this analysis is that we are experiencing 'the autumn' of a stage in the history of 'long centuries' of capitalist development.

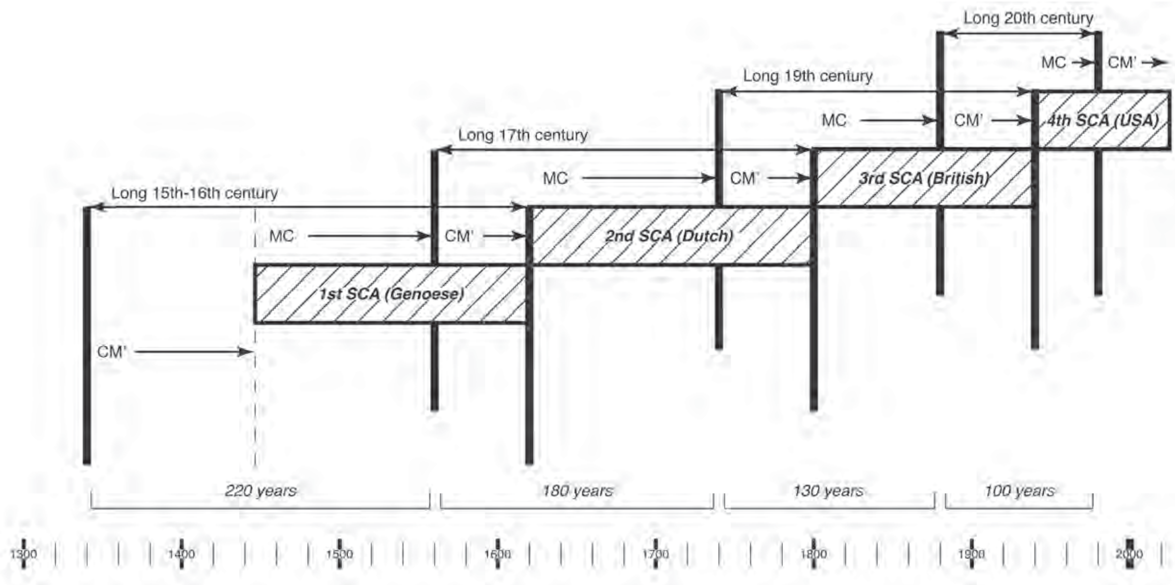

Figure 1: Long centuries and systemic cycles of accumulation (SCA); simplified version redrawn by the authors
Source: Arrighi 2010

As the term might suggest, in financialised regimes, financiers represent a de facto ruling class. During these periods, the degree of sophistication necessary to sustain financialisation scales up this sector (banks, rating agencies, and insurance companies); it also empowers a growing and powerful rentier class, and pushes it into deals at the margins of legality, if not beyond. This is, in short, the situation that was exposed in the 2008 'economic crisis', marked by the fall of Lehman Brothers and many other banks elsewhere in its wake. Today still, the damaging effects are devastating not only for 'the poor', but increasingly affecting middle classes as well as actively expanding the number of the privileged few; in other words, this is a process of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2006). So much so, that even the mainstream media has joined the debate on inequality (Foley 2010; Treanor 2011; just to put two examples in English-speaking media). Some argue that these centuries-long cycles of financialisation have led to levels of inequality, which have reached a historical high at the planetary level.

3. Cycles in the production of Namibia's unequal economy

Following Arrighi's 'long centuries' conceptualisation of history, the first insertion of money-form capital into Namibian territory happened during German colonial rule. During the second half of the 19^{th} Century, the German *Kaiserreich* saw the emergence of doctrines like Friedrich Ratzel's (1966) *Lebensraum* theory, which dictates that a nation needs adequate space to survive in order to prosper. This 'space' could be found in the colonies, considering that by that time, industrialising German cities were faced with overcrowded slums and a population boom. The myth of the *Volk ohne Raum* (in German, 'Nation without space') encouraged Germany to expand for the sake of a better *Reich*.

At the end of the 19^{th} Century, the then German South-West Africa had a few scattered settlements with a skeletal colonial administration. Several land deals had been struck between the colonial administration, trading companies and various indigenous leaders, at the expense of the indigenous societies (Wallace/Kinahan 2011). This paved the way for German and South African settler farmers to occupy about half of the territory by 1921 (SWA Administration 1921). The foreign concept of private property was firmly established in favour of the settlers. As the land was parcelled up into large-scale farms, based on its low carrying capacity for livestock farming, the pressure on indigenous nomadic cattle-herding societies grew unbearable. Those dispossessed were forced to move to the fringes of the colonial settlements to seek employment in the colonisers' homes, their farms, or the nascent industries they established. Soon the colonial administration made it its explicit mission to transform the indigenous populations into landless and exploitable wage-labourers (Wallace/Kinahan 2011). The initial capital flows to consolidate a productive base in Namibia thus happened through violent confrontation, not between parties of similar standing, but as the subjugation of an agricultural and sometimes nomadic population by a powerful colonial force. This asymmetry was well understood by Nama Kaptein Henrik Witbooi, who protested strongly against the signing of a protection treaty with Germany by Herero Chief Maharero in 1890 (Lau 1996). Dispossession was the major, albeit not only, reason that led the Herero and Nama to rise up against the German occupation between 1904 and 1907, culminating in the first genocide of the 20^{th} Century, which left tens of thousands of mainly Herero and Nama people dead. Surviving prisoners of war were interned in makeshift concentration camps by the German troops and subjected to forced labour, following the model the British had established in the Anglo Boer War in South Africa a few years earlier. In addition to force, spatial planning in the form of camps and later separate 'native locations' was instrumentalised to extract labour from the subjected people in order to give form to the colonial space in which Namibia's urban experience today is rooted.

These strategies of divide and rule of German colonial times found their continuation in the apartheid planning after South Africa had taken over as a de-facto colonial power under a League of Nations mandate in 1921 (Wallace/Kinahan 2011). Racial segregation was elevated to official policy through the infamous Natives (Urban Areas) Act in 1924, which required municipalities to build native locations separated and reasonably far from towns. It was required for these areas to be serviced, and segregated, along 'simplified' ethnic lines. Municipalities and large-scale employers were required by legislation to provide workers' housing, often in the form of 'compounds' for single men, who were recruited through an increasingly intricate 'contract labour system' from rural areas. These compounds were effectively containers for surplus labour, with the sole function of social reproduction (Byerley 2013). For most of the first half of the 20th century, commercial farming was the mainstay of the growing colonial economy, absorbing the largest part of contract workers. Only after World War II did extractive economies gain the upper hand with the mining and fishing sectors booming and enabling GDP explosion of 1,200 per cent in 14 years, partly supported by South Africa's stimulus for foreign investment. As much as 40 per cent of GDP was remitted abroad, making Namibia increasingly dependent on South Africa's economy (Wallace/Kinahan 2011). However, creating such dependence was in line with the South African National Party's aim to incorporate South-West Africa as its fifth province.

As apartheid policies, especially those controlling influx to urban areas, were dismantled under internal and international pressure from the late 1970s onwards in anticipation of Namibia's Independence, urban growth increased dramatically. The lack of state subsidies for housing spurred the development of informal settlements following global trends, as succinctly described by Mike Davis (2007) in his book *Planet of Slums*. Self-enumeration grassroots 'census' projects show that today about one fourth of the Namibian population live in informal settlements, half of them without toilet facilities (Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia 2012).

Figure 2: Illegal 'squatters' dismantling their shack during slum clearance operations in 2012, with the skyline of the Windhoek CBD in the background
Photo: Tanja Bause

Since Namibia's Independence in 1990, municipalities are required to finance urban development for the provision of infrastructure and services on a cost-recovery basis. Cost-recovery methods include the collection of municipal fees, but more importantly the sale of serviced land, thereby inflating market prices, as we will show below. These practices exclude inhabitants who are in most pressing need of benefitting from urban development, and the consequence is that urban development remains driven by the empowered elite: property developers, real estate agents and financial institutions; in other words, the rentier class. The increase of land values and consequential housing shortage has reached levels that make homeownership unaffordable even to the middle classes: teachers, nurses and other civil servants are forced to live in shacks. Here, technocratic 'solutions', based solely on service-delivery of the barest necessities, and the perpetuation of apartheid-era urban planning tools, results in continued structural inequality

4. Namibia's autumn

Due to its historical dependence on neighbouring South Africa, the largest economy in the region, financialisation dynamics in Namibia are closely linked to those in South Africa. While financialisation in South Africa has been documented (Ashman et al. 2011), the following part will deal with linking these observations with recent developments in Namibia, and its socio-spatial implications.

The rise to power of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994 paradoxically marked the full-scale implementation of neoliberal policies initiated in the early 1990s after the crippling last decade of the apartheid regime. The ANC further inherited the previous regime's foreign debt, and along with new loans from the International Monetary Fund embarked on the privatisation of essential services, as well as relaxing capital restrictions that enabled the massive capital flight of the country's largest corporations, including their headquarters, overseas. Such policies were among the causes for South Africa to be the only emerging market to suffer so many currency crashes over the last two decades (Bond 2010). While the majority of the black population remains trapped in low-skilled jobs in the declining productive sectors, a tiny but immensely wealthy elite has formed and joined the ranks of old, white capital. In the words of Moeletsi Mbeki, the new black elite represents "a small class of unproductive but wealthy black crony capitalism… ironically, the caretaker of South Africa's deindustrialization" (Mbeki in: Ashman et al. 2011: 195). This financialised-deindustrialised form of development continues in the form of 'jobless growth' (i.e. economic growth without employment creation) which, during the last decade, was fuelled by consumer and sovereign debt, causing an increase in the debt-to-income ratio, overall bank lending rates, the number of non-performing loans, and full credit defaults. Financialisation in South Africa coincides with 'classical neoliberal characteristics'. For instance, during the last decade, the construction sector grew by 250 per cent, finance 160 per cent, trade by 150 per cent, and manufacturing by just 13 per cent, while the mining sector lost 40 per cent (Bond 2010). South Africa remains the main trading partner of Namibia, acquiring one third of its total exports, and supplying it with 80 per cent of its fresh produce and 70 per cent of its total imports (WTO 2009). Furthermore, the Namibian Dollar (N$) is pegged to the South African Rand, therefore limiting the role of the Namibian Central Bank to merely adjusting its operations to South Africa's monetary policy. 'National Independence', in these terms, acquires a different meaning.

Namibia, which has even more dominant resource-extraction economy characteristics is, like South Africa, currently undergoing a phase of financialisation. This is visible in the country's everyday life via the widespread availability of cheap credit (i.e. banks offering 'accessible' credit schemes), micro-lending (i.e. retail and other businesses specialising in loans for low-income groups), a decrease in foreign direct investment allocated to productive sectors and increased investments in financial ones (see Figure 3, below), the large proportion of GDP representing financial operations (see Figure 4, below), and incursion into sovereign debt, such as a 'Eurobond' issued at the end of 2011 (Duddy 2011) and a recent N$3bn (€250m) sovereign bond issued at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (RMB 2013). Here the country's limited industrial base is to be considered in terms of the outspoken aim of government to transform the country into 'an industrialized nation by 2030' (National Planning Commission 2004). Namibia, with its 2.2 million inhabitants, 52 per cent unemployment, and vast territory, does not have the economies of scale to guarantee a viable consumer-based local industry, and although an export-led approach to neighbouring countries could be a possible approach, the stagnation of the global economy, and rising labour unrest in both South Africa (Steyn 2012) and Namibia (Grobler 2012), provide bleak prospects for industrialised growth aspirations.

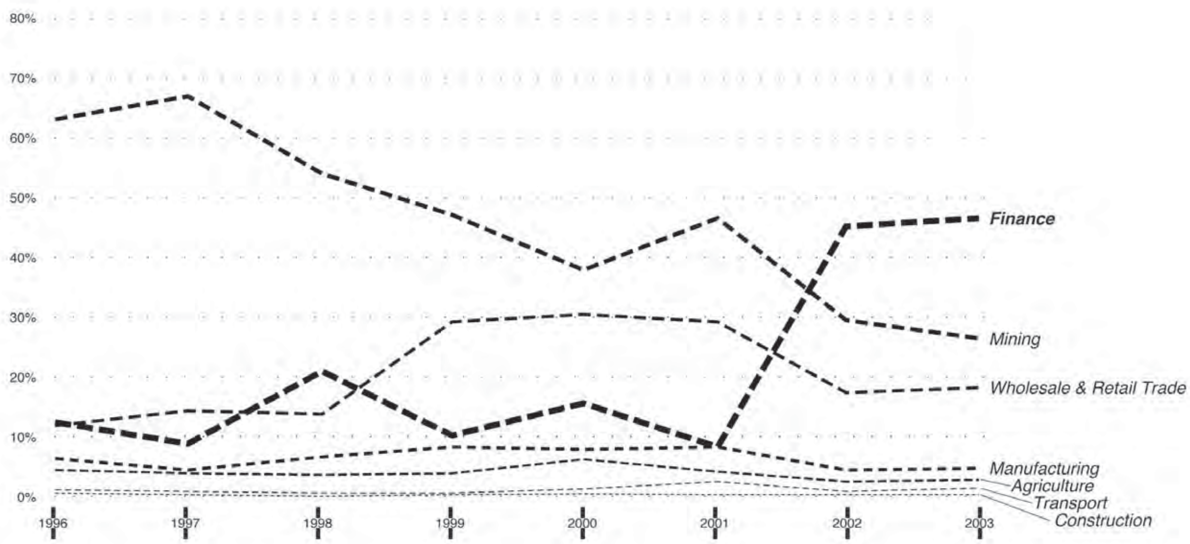

Figure 3: Distribution of foreign direct investment in Namibia by percentage 1996-2003
Source: Redrawn by the authors, from Ikhide 2006

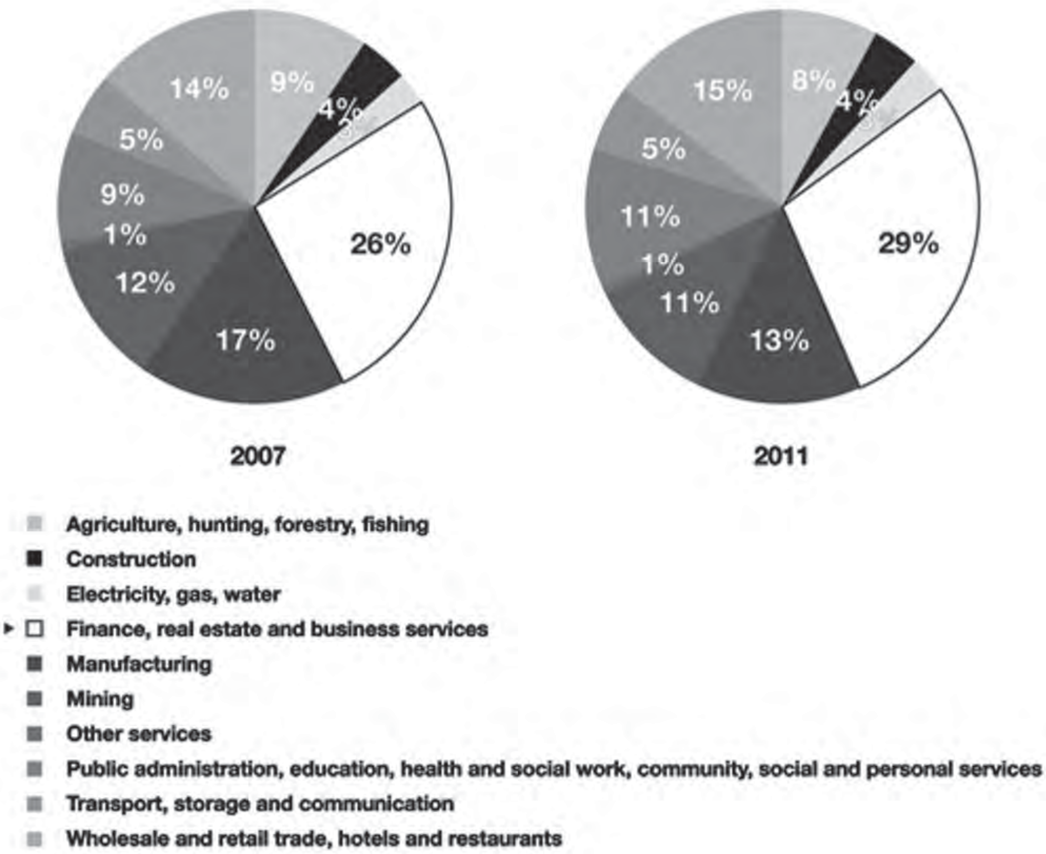

Figure 4: GDP by sector, as percentage
Source: Redrawn by the authors, from OECD et al. 2013

Ultimately, the expansion of the financial sector ought, in principle, to be reflected in the wellbeing indicators, to justify the burden of future debt. However, the opposite appears to be the case. In terms of overcoming the apartheid legacy of inequality, little has been achieved in the 23 years since independence. Annual household income, expressed per capita and according to different language groups, shows that the highest average incomes are generated among German-speaking Namibians with an annual N$158,298 (€13,200) at their disposal, while African (i.e. black) groups vary between N$6,853 (€570) and N$26,696 (€2,230) on average. To put this in perspective, the lowest 25 per cent spends 53 per cent on food and beverages and 24 per cent on housing, the highest 1 per cent spends 7 per cent on food and beverages and 22 per cent on housing (National Planning Commission 2010); this also exposes the asymmetric impact of inflation on households from different income groups, as the heaviest burden is carried by the lower income groups.

A similar trend appears in South Africa, with nominal wages appearing to have increased in almost equal terms for black and white populations between 1995 and 2006; however, real wages (i.e. adjusted to inflation) show that white households have increased their yearly income by 40.5 per cent, while the majority (of black, coloured and other households) have theirs decreased by 1.8 per cent during the same period (Bhorat et al. 2009). This resonates with the reality of a financialising economy: more jobs are required in sectors that demand highly educated individuals, whereas sectors able to employ low-skilled workers show signs of low growth, decline, or a state of crisis (e.g. the agricultural and mining sectors, which have seen a high number of legal and 'wildcat' strikes in the recent years). Through this process of active production of inequality new forms of segregation, sustained in socioeconomic terms, continue and expand many of the fundamentals of apartheid.

This process of uneven development is also taking place in Namibia, as the country's indicators reveal. The poorest 75 per cent of the population receives 37 per cent of annual income, while the richest 4 per cent absorb 30 per cent of annual income. Even starker is the contrast between the poorest 25 per cent's average annual per capita income of N$3,535 (€300) and the richest 1 per cent's average annual per capita income of N$253,138 (€21,160). In other words, the average annual per capita income of the richest 1 per cent is 71 times more than that of the poorest 25 per cent. Although the exact number seems to be contested, Namibia's GINI coefficient lies somewhere at 0.74 (Sweeney-Bindels 2011), making Namibia compete for the position of most unequal society in the world, with South Africa.

Currently, commercial banks service mainly the upper and middle incomes with credit, and although they've embarked on marketing campaigns to attract lower incomes, new financialised 'alternatives' are now in place to 'democratise finance'. In Namibia, this is exemplified by the recent establishment of the micro-finance bank FIDES, a German-Swiss-Belgian-French-owned initiative of 'socially responsible investors'. Since it first got its licence in 2010, the bank has created about 10,000 borrowers, and plans to expand considerably in the coming years (Incofin 2012). The paradoxes and inherent inequalities of such institutions are not only found within the bank's own operations (Sasman 2012), but also in the practice of labelling the poor as 'risky', and thus penalised, in the form of higher interest rates. This fact becomes clear in the Usury Act of 2004, which stipulates interest rate ceilings for conventional money lending institutions at 1.6 times the prime lending rate, as opposed to micro-credit institutions, which are allowed to lend up to N$50,000 (€4,160), and are set at twice the prime rate (Ministry of Finance 2004). However, such banks are not the only micro-credit institutions in the everyday life of the poor, but are accompanied by plentiful credit, easily available at furniture, clothing, and grocery stores, as well as through non-registered moneylenders, offering so-called 'cash loans'. This status quo is underpinned by stagnant and sometimes decreasing real wages (in 2008, real wages in Namibia decreased 3.2 per cent according to the Labour Resource and Research Institute's 2008 *Wage Bargaining Report*); by inflation levels above average wage increases (with the highest point reached at 10.4 per cent in 2008 according to the World Bank 2013a); by a decrease in foreign aid since Namibia was declared an 'upper middle income country' by the World Bank in 2011 (World Bank 2013b; Heita 2011); and by the state of paralysis of trade unions (in the Namibian context the largest organized group that is best positioned to rally social justice issues) due to internal conflicts (Grobler 2012). The advancement of credit in this context gives William Morris' phrase 'poverty is punished for being poor' (Morris 1889) contemporary validity.

5. Financialisation of housing in Namibia

Examining the contemporary context of financialisation is instrumental in understanding the processes underlying the current production of space. The housing situation in Namibia is characterised by a backlog of about 105,000 houses (First National Bank 2012), at a time in which the yearly housing production reaches less than 1,000 units per year. Housing and land prices stand at a historical high: house prices, as reported by the FNB House Price Index, quadrupled between 2000 and 2010, supported by an increase in the mortgage loans of 100 per cent (Mwilima et al. 2011). Neighbouring South Africa boasted the highest increase in house prices globally (389 per cent) between 1997 and 2008, only followed by Ireland by half a percentage rate (Economist 2009). Currently, the most affordable formal housing schemes in Namibia exclude the overwhelming majority of the population. Government expenditure on housing, currently at 0.3 per cent of national expenditure, is at a historical low (Sweeney-Bindels 2011).

The list of formal mechanisms for access to housing is not long: private individuals developing their own property with or without credit provided by commercial banks and state mechanisms, i.e. the Build Together Program (BT), the National Housing Enterprise (NHE), and, although in practical terms not a 'state mechanism' but certainly a state-supported mechanism, the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN). While approximately 70 per cent of the population is not eligible for mortgages, commercial banks realised a 17 per cent annual growth of mortgages from 2001 until 2010, with the share of mortgages of total loans rising from 30.1 per cent 2001 to 52.3 per cent over the same period (BoN 2010). Of the government housing mechanisms, BT targets low-income groups of monthly incomes up to N$3,000 (€250) with loans ranging from N$3,000 to 40,000 (€250-3,330) at four to seven per cent interest rates. In the first phase of the project (1992–1997) a mere 10,244 houses were completed, and in the second phase (1998–2010) another 16,428 houses. NHE provides houses for incomes N$5,000 (€415) or above (representing less than 13 per cent of the population) through mortgages administered via commercial banks at prime interest rate less one per cent. Housing delivery of this model has fallen dramatically short of its 1,200 houses per annum target. Only 253 houses were built per annum during the 2003–2011 period, down from

600 houses per annum between 1990 and 2002 (Sweeney-Bindels 2011). In both cases government subsidies channelled towards these programmes have ultimately been used solely to cover overhead costs, as loans are ultimately repaid by beneficiaries. Only SDFN, through its savings group scheme, its self-construction component and collective land purchase, is able to target incomes below N$2,000 (€166), with 34 m² houses worth N$25,000 (€2080) each. Through this programme 366 houses were built in 2009–2010, with a government contribution of (N$3,791 [€315] per house).

The vast majority of projects developed under these schemes follow the model of the individual plot with a detached house, while urban development follows along the embedded patterns of 1960s apartheid planning. These mechanisms for housing production compose the 'formal' sector and, partly excluding SDFN, represent 'financial solutions' to the Namibian housing question.

The regressive character of such financial mechanisms for access to housing has recently been exposed at the planetary scale. 'Housing finance' is defined by the UN-Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as "the financial policies and programmes that aim to finance the cost of housing for individuals and families by providing loans (mortgages or micro loans) or grants (subsidies or tax exemptions) for the purchase, rental, construction or improvement of housing" (Rolnik 2012). The report expands on the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights' inclusion of 'the right to housing', by elaborating on what 'adequate housing' entails: it exposes the limitations of equating 'the right to housing' with 'affordability'. 'Adequate housing' must consider the location within the urban fabric, its proximity to infrastructure, accessibility, the capacity of inhabitants to transform it, and many other factors which compose a full lived experience. Massive financialised housing projects in developing countries, including Namibia, have neglected these many aspects and by doing so turned 'the problem of the homeless' into 'the problem of those with homes', by providing cheaply built minimum-sized houses, more often than not far from desirable areas, with little or no infrastructure, and with little or no nearby job opportunities. Namibia's capital city, Windhoek, is a good case in point; the so-called reception areas for arriving migrants, located in the North and West of town, are planned far away from employment opportunities, urban facilities and services, on the fringes of the apartheid townships, thereby exacerbating the marginalisation of the urban poor. The report further condemns 'financing' as inherently discriminatory, as it necessarily divides those who are able to repay loans from those who can't, potentiating the acquisitive power of the empowered, while deeply immersing people into debt, who more often than not end up losing the very home they were promised they would own. The report recommends the need for states to invest more resources into housing and to encourage the supply of social rental housing, as well as other forms of collective and individual tenure, and most importantly, indicates the fundamental need to develop alternatives, in collaboration with groups of low-income inhabitants. In view of this, the field for possible alternatives narrows down to a field which is not only small and marginal, but that is in danger of being seized by market forces, and needs to be defended.

6. Defining the field for alternative housing and urban policies in Namibia

Alternatives operate at different levels; they range from the superficial to the fundamental. Superficial alternatives include those initiatives which provide variations of a current scheme in order to seize a portion of its customer base; in other words, competition. Fundamental or systemic alternatives are concerned with challenging the assumptions on which current approaches are based, aiming to generate alternatives that differ fundamentally from such processes. One such assumption holds that housing prices will rise indefinitely. This has resulted in significant vested interests in property and real estate which municipalities are hell-bent to guarantee at the expense of affordability for the majority. In this respect, Namibian municipalities have done a good job, as housing prices have risen four times in the last decade and mortgage lending has risen from N$1.8bn (€150m) to 20.5bn (€1.7bn) in the same period; concomitantly, rent inflation has risen steadily as well (Mwilima et al. 2011). The second assumption, the myth that homeownership is the most secure form of tenure, has since been debunked after the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the US, where large numbers of 'homeowners' were foreclosed, leaving a shattered social fabric behind. However, considering the stagnant real wages and high unemployment rate, a question necessarily arises: where does the effective demand for market products (land and housing included) come from? The answer appears to be in financial mechanisms for the middle and higher incomes which commercial banks currently service, but also in extending this 'solution' to poorer sectors. Despite of the toxicity of this operation, it is nevertheless packed into a positive developmental rhethoric: 'access to banking', 'servicing the underserviced', 'making finance work for the poor'. 'The unbanked' groups form part of the conditions that lead pro-business development organizations to consider Africa as the next (and some even say 'last') 'untapped market' (New Era 2013). The pressure to expand and find new markets to ensure the unquestioned economic growth does not only affect Namibia: it is a planetary condition. Alternatives operating at the fundamental level would in principle need to challenge the previous assumptions. In the Namibian context, with its large housing backlog representing an 'untapped' market for capital to seize, contesting financialisation of space will become an arena for intense class struggle. It is in this way, that the struggle for adequate instead of merely 'affordable' housing, is not just a 'service delivery' issue, but a political battleground.

With falling global demand due to austerity measures in many countries, stagnant growth rates will be pushing markets to seize territories that have already not been commodified or financialised. Worldwide, the housing sector has been a target for market expansion since the post-War period, which was translated into the promotion of the commodification of housing, individual homeownership, privatisation of social housing programmes, de-regulation of housing finance markets, and the dismantling of rental rights. Alternative arrangements, while sometimes well established, have also been either marginalised or eliminated; these include rental housing, cooperative and collective ownership, as well as some savings groups-based schemes (Rolnik 2012), not to mention legalised squatting, as happened in the Netherlands. In this context of desperate search for market expansion, can alternatives to the current financialised mechanisms be expected simply to 'emerge'? The current ruthless quest for economic growth will demand not only the strength for alternatives to sustain themselves, but also to step up and 'fight back'.

What are the margins of potential alternatives to these overall dynamics? Are there currently anti-systemic social processes emerging, and, if so, who is taking part in them? How are they operating? These questions, after the argument presented, are necessary to imagine urban transformations which offer alternatives fundamentally opposed to the current form of urbanity in crisis. While anti-eviction campaigns, housing bond boycotts, and the well-known Abahlali base Mjondolo shack dwellers' movement are leading a significant socio-spatial struggle in South Africa today, Namibia does not yet show major signs of social discontent. The successful and long-standing SDFN program has been hampered by the City of Windhoek's ban on the collective purchase of land; government housing programs have left applicants more than a decade in waiting; and a large number of inhabitants have endured the hardship of living in informal settlements for too long. This paper does not idealise grassroots movements, but acknowledges that the quest for an alternative production of housing production, educational infrastructure, transportation systems, waste recollection and recreational spaces – simply, the production of an alternative urbanity, will need to contest its right to become. It is the socially relevant role of the many different actors whose fields relate to socio-spatial processes (policy makers, architects and planners, and academics, among a long list) to start not only imagining but testing new collaborative constructions and methodologies which incorporate these social dynamics into renewed or emerging urban practices aiming to fully understand urban ecologies, and through this, trying to overcome the current crisis of urban inequality, of increasing financialisation in general and of space in particular, and exploring alternative paths that do not lead to another 'long century', but rather, potentially, to a 'Southern African spring' of a fundamentally different kind.

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Abstracts

This paper posits that the present is characterised by a planetary condition of financialisation. The paper traces the historical development of Namibia's economy on its journey from colonial dispossession to racialised capitalism and further to a liberalised free-market economy. It proposes that Namibia's economy is increasingly financializing, and thereby is not only dismantling the rather modest national productive base, but actively hindering the prospects of overcoming the legacies of a deeply unequal society and its apartheid geography. In this context, where the quest for economic growth is as desperate as it is ubiquitous, only 'active opposition' will be able to develop and push for alternative economies, and the alternative production of housing, space, and more equitable social arrangements.

Der Beitrag postuliert, dass die Gegenwart durch einen weltweiten Zustand der Finanzialisierung charakterisiert ist. Er skizziert die historische Entwicklung der Wirtschaft Namibias von der kolonialen Enteignung über einen rassistischen Kapitalismus hin zur liberalen, freien Marktwirtschaft. Argumentiert wird, dass Namibias Wirtschaft zunehmend finanzialisiert wird, was nicht nur die ohnehin verschwindend kleine produktive Basis bedroht, sondern auch aktiv verhindert, das Erbe einer tiefgreifend ungleichen Gesellschaftsordnung und seiner Apartheidsgeografie zu überwinden.

In einem Kontext, in dem das Streben nach ökonomischem Wachstum so verzweifelt wie allgegenwärtig ist, kann nur eine „aktive Opposition“ dazu führen, alternative Ökonomien, eine alternative Produktion von Wohnen, Raum und sozial gerechteren Arrangements zu entwickeln und durchzusetzen.

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