

‘We will not move’ from the Old Location to Katutura: Forced Resettlement in Windhoek, South West Africa (1959-1968)

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Abstract

Until the early 1960s the Windhoek Main Location (now called the Old Location) was the biggest African urban settlement in South West Africa/Namibia. Being situated close to the centre of town, residents had easy access to their places of work. However, with the further entrenchment of spatial segregation under apartheid, plans for a relocation into a newly created township at the margins of the city gradually took shape in the early 1950s and were implemented by the late 1950s. But residents refused to abandon the accommodation they owned to move to rented houses far away from town. Their protest against relocation provoked a massacre on 10 December 1959. As of 1960, the township Katutura became the new settlement and has expanded since then. This article recapitulates the steps towards the relocation despite growing opposition from residents and the Native Advisory Board. Based on documents in the Namibian National Archive and at the Basler Africa Bibliographien, this account of the last steps towards the closure of the location adds to previous work and is part of a more general social history, hitherto not yet in the public domain.

Keywords Windhoek Main Location; Windhoek Old Location; Windhoek Municipality; forced resettlement; 10 December massacre; Katutura; Native Advisory Board.

Opsomming

Die Windhoek Hooflokasie (nou die Ou Lokasie) was tot 1960 die grootste stedelike woongebied vir swart mense in Suidwes-Afrika/Namibië. Dit was naby die stadsentrum, wat dit vir inwoners maklik gemaak het om na hulle werkplekke te stap.

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Met die implementering van ruimtelike segregasie as gevolg van die apartheidsbeleid, is planne vir ’n nuwe dorp vanaf die begin van die 1950s voorgelê. Teen die einde van die 1950s was nuwe woonstelle gereed in Katutura, ver van die stad. Inwoners van die lokasie het geweier om hul woonplekke (wat hul eiendom was) te verlaat en nuwe huise in Katutura te huur. Hul protes het op 10 Desember 1959 tot ’n bloedbad gelei. In 1960 het Katutura amptelik die Hooflokasie vervang, en sedertdien het dit uitgebrei. Hierdie bydrae fokus op die verwickelinge wat tot hervestiging gelei het. Daar is gebruik gemaak van dokumente in die Namibiese Nasionale Argief en die Basler Afrika Bibliographien. Daar word veral gefokus op die rol van die Native Advisory Board, die administratiewe departemente vir inboorlingsake en die Windhoek Munisipaliteit. Dit dra by tot ’n sosiale geskiedenis wat tot dusver ver nog nie deel van die openbare domein is nie.

Sleutelwoorde Windhoek Hooflokasie; Windhoek Ou Lokasie; Windhoek Munisipaliteit; hervestiging; 10 Desember slagting; Katutura; Native Advisory Board.

Introduction

This article¹ is part of a sequence of publications concerned with the social history of what was the biggest African urban settlement in the Namibian capital city, Windhoek, from the early twentieth century until 1960. Formerly a German and later South African occupied territory, the country was then known as South West Africa and has been independent since 1990. The township, originally called Main Location and subsequently named the Old Location,² was closed down despite the protests of its residents. To achieve greater physical segregation under apartheid, the residents were relocated to Katutura, a new township on the outskirts of Windhoek where they were segregated along ethnic lines.

My engagement with the history of the Old Location was triggered by an invitation to contribute a chapter on the role of the Rhenish Mission in the Old Location for a study commissioned by churches and mission societies in Namibia, South Africa and Germany.³ Based on archival research in Windhoek, Wuppertal and

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1. I acknowledge with gratitude the constructive observations and comments on the initial submission by Werner Hillebrecht and two anonymous reviewers. I am also grateful for the gentle editing by Julie Parle and the guidance by Alfred Tembo.
 2. The ‘Old Location’ was the ‘Main Location’ until Katutura was established. In this text, reference is made mainly to the Old Location from today’s perspective.
 3. I thank Hanns Lessing and Christoph Marx, whose invitation led to an engagement with this neglected part of Namibian history. The initial findings are published as H. Melber, ‘The Windhoek Old Location: “It was, indeed when we owned little that we were prepared to make the greatest sacrifices”’, in *Contested Relations: Protestantism between Southern Africa and Germany, 1930s to the Apartheid Era*, eds H. Lessing, T. Dederling, J. Kampmann and D. Smit (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), 275-286.

Basel,⁴ further efforts followed, summarising a wider social history of the place and its inhabitants,⁵ and putting the Old Location into a context of public memory culture today.⁶ These all offer background and contextualisation and shift the focus of the resistance against the forced relocation to Katutura, the role played by the members of the Native Advisory Board⁷ and that by the white administration. Protest culminated in the massacre of 10 December 1959. This marked the beginning of the end for the Main Location and the consolidation of the national anti-colonial resistance movement.

The main sources for this article are documents found in the files of the National Archives of Namibia.⁸ Another relevant account provides a detailed description of the Old Location in 1950/1951, by the then state-employed ethnologist Guenther Wagner.⁹ In addition, valuable documents are held in the personal collection deposited by Tony Emmett at the Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB).¹⁰ The insights presented here follow the pioneering explorations initiated in 1990 with a group of students at the Windhoek Academy/University of Namibia by Christel Stern

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4. I am indebted to Werner Hillebrecht, then Head of the National Archives of Namibia, and his colleagues in Windhoek. Also to Wolfgang Appelt, then at the Archive of the United Evangelical Mission in Wuppertal; and Dag Henrichsen at the Basler Afrika Bibliographien (hereafter BAB).
 5. H. Melber, 'Revisiting the Windhoek Old Location', Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Working Paper No. 3 (2016).
 6. H. Melber, 'In the Shadow of Apartheid: The Windhoek Old Location', *Southern Journal for Contemporary History*, 45, 2 (2020), 33-58.
 7. Terminology is given in the context of the times, though many were/are offensive. The language reflects the views of those executing the power of definition at the given time. Such discriminating language is not reproduced in the affirmative.
 8. National Archives of Namibia (hereafter NAN), Municipality of Windhoek (hereafter MWI), Nie-Blanke Sake/Naturellelokasies, File no. 48/1, Algemeen (storage unit 2/1/378); NAN, MWI, File no. 48/2 (4 volumes), storage unit 2/1/379; NAN, MWI, 1919-1961. Native Affairs/Native Advisory Board, File no. 65/3, Volume I. No further registration numbers were allocated. References refer to the file where archived: NAN/MWI 48/1; NAN/MWI 48/2 and NAN/MWI 65/3 respectively.
 9. G. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey of South West Africa, Part I: District of Windhoek', Unpublished, undated, 1950/1951' of which copies are in the Windhoek and Basel archival holdings. From 1950, Wagner (1908-1952) was employed as an assistant government anthropologist for SWA by the SA government. See J.B. Gewald, 'A Teutonic Ethnologist in the Windhoek District: Rethinking the Anthropology of Guenther Wagner', in *Challenges for Anthropology in the 'African Renaissance': A Southern African Contribution*, eds D. LeBeau and R. Gordon (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 2002), 19-30. The title is inspired by the fact that Wagner, who arrived with his family from Germany in January 1950, entered his race on the entry permit as 'Teutonic'. See Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 24.
 10. Emmett passed away on 6 October 2013 in Bloomington, Indiana, just at the time when I was looking through his collection. I therefore dedicate this article to his memory.

and Brigitte Lau in collaboration with Annemarie Heywood.¹¹ The results of this remarkable project remain as yet the only somewhat systematic efforts to establish a local history of the Windhoek massacre.¹² The protest and its victims are nowadays commemorated as part of ‘International Women’s Day’ (in recognition of the women engaged in the civil resistance) as a public holiday in Namibia. Beyond this official symbolic memory culture, however, in contrast to South African post-apartheid reconstruction and remembrance of spatial memory,¹³ there is little on record to give the history of the Old Location the public space and recognition it deserves.

The following account adds the case of the Old Location as another illustration of what with reference to Vidler¹⁴ has been characterised as:

the tendency of imperial powers to re-name, re-map, and rebuild conquered spaces – to pursue projects that literally shift the ground beneath ‘natives’ feet. ... These changes, of course, are profound statements of power: mapping and building – shifting borders, partitioning spaces, revising place-names – can literally reshape and redirect lived experience, and can therefore make familiar space seem uncannily foreign. Such strategies serve to un-home and so to dominate local populations.¹⁵

This power of definition and execution was anchored in the dominant colonial perception of a ‘single story’. As the only validated, reduced, view of realities under apartheid it also guided racist, de-humanising policies imposed on people. Similarly, and as a student at the University of Cape Town clarified with regard to her own background and upbringing in Khayelitsha, South Africa:

I was unable to describe the houses in Khayelitsha as shacks made of cardboard and other found material or refer to the streets as the ‘dusty’ streets of Khayelitsha because that is not how the people I have encountered in that space

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11. On the role of Christel Stern in the consolidation of the National Archive before Namibian independence and even more so, the work done by Brigitte Lau as head of the archive since 1991 until her death in November 1996, see T. Van der Hoog, ‘A New Chapter in Namibian History: Reflections on Archival Research’, *History in Africa*, 49 (2022), 392-393. For the role of Annemarie Heywood as scholar and mentor see ‘A Tribute to Professor Annemarie Heywood’, in *The Namibian*, 13 April 2016.
 12. Originally published as M. Jafta, N. Kautja, et al., ed., *An Investigation of the Shootings at the Old Location on 10 December 1959* (Windhoek: University of Namibia, 1991), followed by an expanded version as M. Jafta, N. Kautja, et al., *An Investigation of the Shootings at the Old Location on 10 December 1959*, ed. B. Lau (Windhoek: Archeia, 1995). References in this article are to the latter.
 13. See, for example, N. Murray, N. Shepherd, M. Hall, eds, *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the Post-Apartheid City* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).
 14. A. Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Boston: MIT Press, 1992).
 15. J.C. Obert, ‘The Architectural Uncanny. An Essay in the Postcolonial Unhomely’, *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 18, 1 (2016), 87.

speak about it. People do not say ‘I am now going to my shack’, they say ‘I am going to my home’. To reduce the description of Khayelitsha to what it looks like, the streets and the shacks is to undermine the importance of the interactions that happen inside those homes and on those ‘dusty’ streets. ... Khayelitsha is not the infrastructure, it is the relationships and the interactions that take place in that infrastructure and should be described in a way that reflects that. Infrastructure has a social life. It is not just the shack that defines Khayelitsha but the relationships that are built in the process – when family and friends help each other gather the material and when family and friends help each other build the house. It is a home to them not just a shack.¹⁶

The perspectives this brings are as valid today when the dominant views held of the Old Location are translated into the policy in present-day Namibia.

Segregation and Administration

What became known as apartheid was by no means only a South African invention. Social and physical separation of people based on racist classifications emerged in German South West Africa in tandem with the genocidal response to local resistance against settler colonial rule. Segregated living spaces were institutionalised by the colonial administration as early as the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁷

The Old Location came into existence early in the next century, while a (smaller) location in Klein Windhoek was also established before the end of the German colonial period. A small monthly fee had to be paid for occupying a plot in the location. Somewhat misleadingly referred to as ‘hut tax’, the buildings erected were the private property of the residents.¹⁸ The feeling of ownership among those who constructed their homes became a strong factor for resisting re-location to a new township, in which houses were only for rent and owned by the administration. Discussions on the (re-)location of both the Klein Windhoek Location and the Main Location hovered as early as the 1920s. The effects of the global economic crisis in the early 1930s shelved the plans, however, and led to further infrastructure established at the existing places of residence.¹⁹

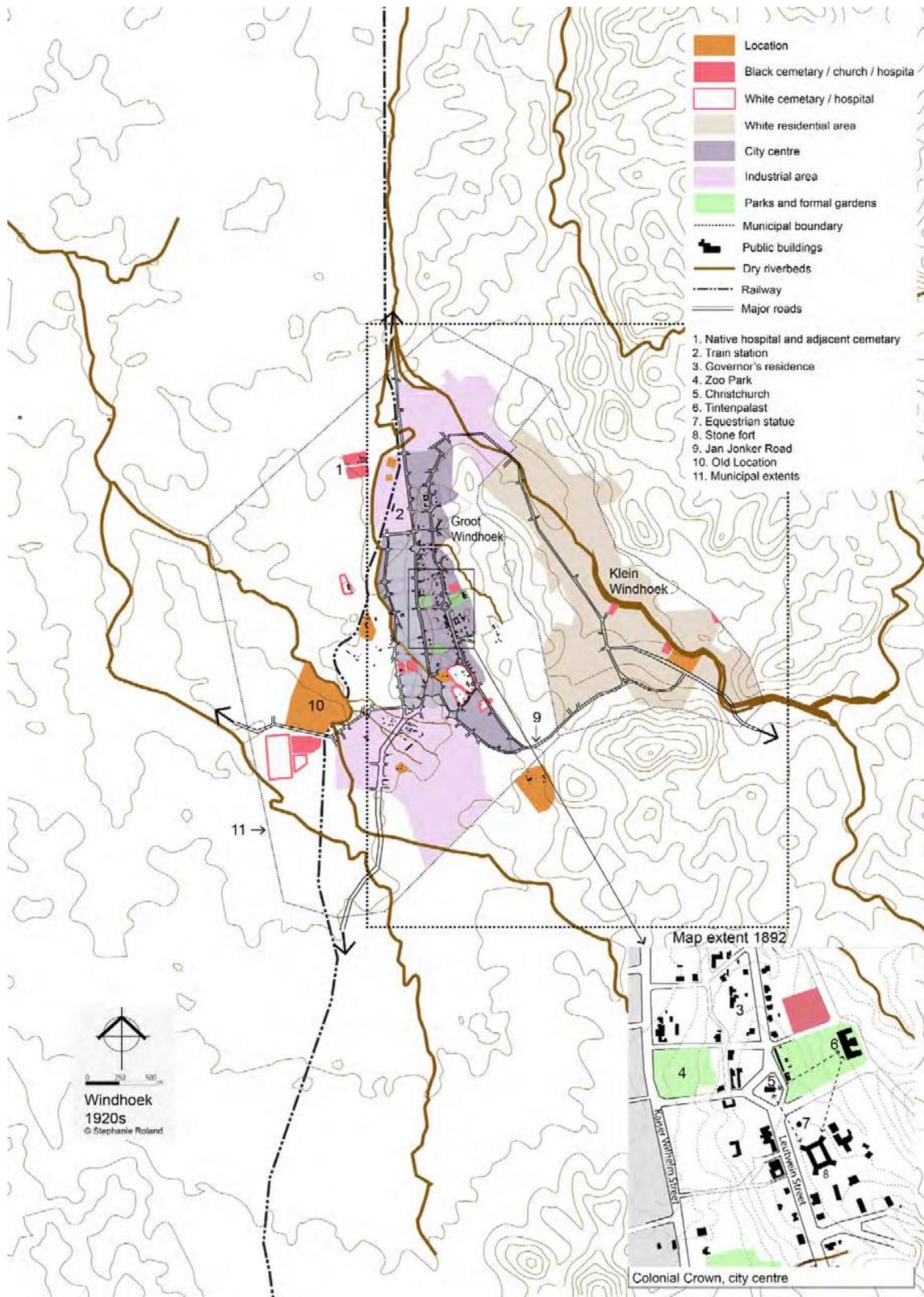
16. Z. Ndzendze, ‘A Different Face of Khayelitsha: Problematizing the Single Story’, UCT Paper, presented at the Mellon Mays Conference, Philadelphia, June 2012, 9.

17. W.C. Pendleton, *Katutura: A Place Where We Do Not Stay* (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 1974), 24; D. Simon, ‘The Evolution of Windhoek, 1890-1980’, in *Perspectives on Namibia: Past and Present*, ed. C. Saunders (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies/UCT, 1983), 83-108.

18. The ‘hut tax’ was a common instrument of British colonialism in Africa to coerce the local population into salaried labour. In the case of the Old Location, it was not the construction that was taxed but the occupation of the plot.

19. For developments during the inter-war period see especially M. Wallace, *Health, Power and Politics in Windhoek, Namibia, 1915-1945* (Basel: P. Schlettwein, 2002); and Simon, ‘The Evolution of Windhoek, 91-93.

Melber – From the Old Location to Katutura



Map 1: The Old Location (S. Roland, Q. Stevens, and K. Simon, 'The Uncanny Capital: Mapping the Historical Spatial Evolution of Windhoek', *Urban Forum*, 2023).

What is remembered as the Old Location was declared as the Windhoek Main Location in terms of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act No. 34 of 1924. It had an area of some 140 hectares. Its boundaries were demarcated and officially proclaimed by Government Notice No. 132 of 1937. Situated in relatively close vicinity to the Windhoek main cemetery at the Gammams and Arebbush (seasonal) rivers in what

is today Hochland Park and at the borders to Windhoek West, it was in the direct neighbourhood of white suburbia and within walking distance to the city centre: 'Segregated but connected to white Windhoek, the Old Location was characterised by its integrated and productive if modest lifestyle.'²⁰

From 1932, the Main Location became the target of urban planning: it was divided into square blocks with roads intersecting at right angles. Houses (huts) were relocated according to the new plot structure. A Municipal Beer Hall (1936) and a Bantu Welfare Hall (1937)²¹ were erected. The location's area was proclaimed by Government Notice No. 132 of 1937.²² Other infrastructure (markets, basic sanitary installations and other amenities for collective use, street lighting, private stores and so on) followed.²³ The anthropologist Guenther Wagner's observations on the ethnic division within the Old Location are worth quoting in full:

The various sections are marked off from one another by lanes or alleys. Except the two Ambo and the two Union sections, each of which is situated in different corners of the Location, the sections occupied by the same ethnic group adjoin one another. Theoretically, people may live only in the section (or sections) set aside for members of their own ethnic group. In practice, the residential segregation according to ethnic groups is not too strictly enforced. Thus, a number of Ambo have recently sold their houses, chiefly to Coloureds. In all cases where these houses were too dilapidated to be removed to the buyers' section, the latter were tacitly allowed to move to the Ambo section. Similarly, a number of Nama, mostly young men, live in the Bergdama sections. The vast majority of Natives, however, live, and prefer to live, among their own people. As among the rural population, kinship counts for more than friendship.²⁴

Permission to reside in the location was granted to those employed in Windhoek or who were recognised as self-employed (traders, shop owners) and their family members (women, children). Bona fide visitors were allowed to stay one month (in exceptional cases up to two months). According to the data provided in an (undated) form based on the Naturelle (Stadsgebiede) Konsolidasiewet, No. 25 van 1945, issued by the Union of South Africa's Department of Native Affairs, the number of people living in the Windhoek main location in 1956/57 was given as 2 667 'Natives' under 18 years (1

20. B. Lau, 'The Old Location', in *Three Views into the Past of Windhoek*, comp. A. Heywood and B. Lau, for History Conference Windhoek, 1-3 June 1993 (Windhoek: Namibisch-Deutsche Stiftung für kulturelle Zusammenarbeit, 1993), 19.

21. Named the 'Sybil Bowker Hall' after the wife of the Location Superintendent Captain Bowker, who founded the welfare movement in the location. See M. Wallace, "'A Person is Never Angry for Nothing". Women, VD & Windhoek', in *Namibia under South African Rule: Mobility & Containment, 1915-46*, eds P. Hayes et. al. (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 88-90.

22. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1.

23. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 91.

24. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 104.

265 male, 1 402 female); 7 097 above 18 years (5 156 male, 4 608 female), in a total of 9 764. Coloureds were numbered at 569 under 18 (284 male, 285 female) and 504 above 18 (255 male, 249 female), in a total of 1 073. 'Natives' in the town area (including the Ovambo compound) included 50 under 18 (35 male, 15 female) and 2 700 above 18 (2 550 male, 150 female), in a total of 2 750. The total 'white' population of Windhoek was estimated at ± 15 000, thereby exceeding the number of registered 'non-whites'.²⁵

The Non-European/Native Advisory Board

The Non-European Advisory Board was established in accordance with the Natives (Urban Areas) Proclamation (34/1924) and established for the Windhoek Main Location in 1927. It comprised the superintendent of the location as ex officio chairman and twelve members representing the various ethnic groups. Six were elected by the residents, the other six were whites from the administrative bodies appointed by the municipality after the elections.²⁶ Terms of office were in both cases three years. Every resident above the age of 21 and in fulfilment of the specified tax obligations, was entitled to vote.²⁷

In January 1948, a total of seven candidates campaigned for the three seats, with 1 936 votes cast. Of these, 1 681 votes were in favour of the three elected candidates. In 1951, eight candidates were nominated for three vacancies, with a markedly lower number of votes cast (674), re-electing the three candidates elected in 1948. Reproducing the ethnic affinities, the Advisory Board had a combined majority of Damara and Ovaherero councillors representing the residents in the location, while the municipality often appointed representatives of the minority groups among the six non-elected members to achieve some balance. In 1951 all except one of the members were classified as literate. The stated task was 'to establish closer contact between the European authorities responsible for the administration and welfare of the non-European community and the more intelligent and public-spirited members of that community'. But in fact, the Board's declared aim of teaching its members 'the spirit and technique of local government in a democracy' was defeated. Wagner argued that:

The functions of the Board are [thus] still essentially limited to the airing, under European guidance, of current issues relating to the welfare of the residents of the Location by a selected body of non-Europeans. The Advisory Board has no say in the financial administration of the Location and is not informed in any detail on income and expenditure. Having no funds at its disposal, the Board does not draw up a budget or vote money.²⁸

25. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, unpaginated. Given the number of black residents not officially registered, a comparison based on official data seems unlikely to reflect the true demographic proportions.

26. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 106f.

27. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 107f.

28. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 110.

The Board thus essentially served the purposes set out by the municipal administration. During 1947/48, for instance, the Board discussed in total 59 issues on its agenda. These issues related to matters of health and sanitation (15), the Board's working procedures (10), labour conditions (8), housing and new township (6), education (4), transport (4), stock (3), law and mitigation (3) and six miscellaneous topics. Wagner writes that 'a considerable number of further items concerned matters relating to the reserves, conditions on farms, transport facilities from Ovamboland, &c. all of which, strictly speaking, should not have come within the Board's sphere of reference'.²⁹

Based on his perusal of several volumes of minutes, Wagner concluded that 'despite its limited powers, the Advisory Board perform[ed] an indispensable function in that it offers a regular opportunity for an exchange of views and ideas between the European authorities and a representative body of non-Europeans'. As he further observed: 'Tensions due to deep-rooted tribal antagonisms appear ... to be very rare' among the members of the Advisory Board.³⁰ However, while open to the public, the meetings and deliberations of the Advisory Board attracted little interest from the inhabitants of the Old Location and only few people from the community were ever in attendance.

Board members were frequently re-elected, although an exception was Aaron Mungunda.³¹ He and another member, Clemens Kapuuu,³² served on the Board without interruption from 1927 either as elected or appointed members. While Board members were tasked to report back any decisions to the residents of the sections they represented, they complained that hardly anybody was interested or attended such meetings.³³ Board members also complained that while they were regarded as interlocutors to the people in their section, these usually did not consider them as authorities with a recognised position, unless it was based on their status within the traditional order. This was evidenced by events in 1947 when some form of organised opposition to the Board emerged among a group of Herero, who challenged the legitimacy and the degree of representation of the Board.³⁴ Aaron Mungunda was the

29. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 111.

30. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 111f.

31. By profession a chief clerk, born around 1894.

32. Born around 1893 and a general dealer. His son (with the same name) succeeded Hosea Kutako as paramount chief of the Ovaherero Traditional Council, played a significant role in the resistance to the forced resettlement, and was involved in the creation of the South West African National Union (SWANU) the country's first national liberation movement. In 1964 he became a co-founder of the National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO). A shop owner, he refused to move to Katutura until the final, forced closure of the Old Location. He was assassinated in 1978 in Katutura. On his role, see J.B. Gewald, 'Who Killed Clemens Kapuuu?' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 3 (2004), 559-576.

33. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 114.

34. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 115.

only member whose representation was not questioned, and this was largely because of his status as a member of the former ruling Herero clans.³⁵

Until August 1952, the minutes of the Board's meetings were taken only in Afrikaans (the official language in SWA when under South African rule), and after that, on a decision taken by the Town Council of Windhoek, also in English. The meetings were chaired by J.A. de Wet, the superintendent of locations in Windhoek, and were attended by councillors from the Old Location but also the (much smaller) Klein Windhoek Location.

Township Plans

Despite earlier, pre-World War 2 discussions, no shifting of the position of the location received much attention until the Natives (Urban Areas) Proclamation No. 56 (1951) introduced stricter control measures of movement and physical separation. Such an approach to urban living precluded Africans 'being urban, and the black population was prevented from developing and spatialising an urban identity'.³⁶ This approach was probably in reaction to the coming to power of the pro-apartheid National Party in South Africa in 1948. The policy 'increasingly legislated and restricted black urban residents (while promoting white immigration), using pass systems based on employment, curfews, and repatriation to the rural homelands'.³⁷

In 1952, a memorandum drawn up by the Windhoek Municipality observed that the location was in the way of a further expansion of the 'white' city, and as such, according to a study by J.C. Obert, presented 'a very serious problem in the future development of the town'.³⁸ Moreover, a 1952 inspection report of the Old Location delivered to Windhoek's chief 'native commissioner' describes the location as 'depressing' and 'nauseating' and tellingly asserts, in Obert's words (and with his emphasis, here italicised), that 'the Windhoek location as it stands is a menace not only to the health of its inhabitants but *inevitably also to the European community of Windhoek*'.³⁹

35. Wagner, 'Ethnic Survey', 115.

36. S. Roland, Q. Stevens and K. Simon, 'Segregation and Memory: Windhoek's Spatial Evolution as the Capital of Namibia', in *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians Australia and New Zealand: 37, What If? What Next? Speculations on History's Futures*, eds K. Hislop and H. Lewi (Perth: SAHANZ, 2021), 243.

37. S. Roland, Q. Stevens, and K. Simon, 'The Uncanny Capital: Mapping the Historical Spatial Evolution of Windhoek', *Urban Forum*, published online 4 February 2023. DOI:10.1007/s12132-023-09484-0.

38. NAN, Municipality of Windhoek, *Outline Development Plan, 1952*, quoted in Obert, 'Architectural Space in Windhoek, Namibia: Fortification, Monumentalization, Subversion', *Postmodern Culture* (online), 26, 1 (2015).

39. NAN, *Outline Development Plan, 1952*, quoted in Obert, 'Architectural Space in Windhoek'. Obert's emphasis, quoting from NAN, SWAA 2/9/3/10 Vol. 1, Inspection

At the last meeting of the year's Advisory Board (19 November 1952) the visiting mayor of Windhoek for the first time mentioned that plans for moving the location were being considered. At a meeting on 15 July 1953, it was demanded that there should be a final decision on the future of the location. As it was argued, people had been asking for 25 years and had been told to wait but they were keen to invest in the improvement of their houses.⁴⁰

At the meeting held on 17 March 1954, F.K. Weigmann from the Windhoek Town Council informed the members of the Advisory Board, on behalf of the city's mayor, that:

a Commission has been sent to the Union to investigate Non-European Housing so that when it is decided where the Location is to be rebuild a scheme would be available to start with. ... Different types of houses are being considered and will be built, so that one day when it is completed, it would not look like a Location, but like a decent Township.⁴¹

In his annual report of the Non-European Advisory Board for 1954, presented to the Windhoek municipality on 8 March 1955, Chairman P.A. de Wet reported that the shift of the location was now definitively approved, and that the Town Council had already instructed the town planners to plan the new residential area.⁴²

The final decision to relocate the inhabitants of the Old Location to a new township was brought before the Advisory Board at a meeting held on 16 March 1955. Councillor (in Afrikaans: Raadslid) A.S. Mungunda said that they were not against the relocation of the location but that the future location should be proclaimed as a permanent place for the people as they would like to own their houses and to add improvements, and therefore would like to have the assurance that these would be permanent homes. In response, Mr Eedes, the representative of the native commissioner, pointed to the fact that a location would not be proclaimed. The municipality was only obliged upon request of the administration to provide ground for 'non-whites' to live there. But the ground remained the property of the municipality, though if urgently required for the development of the town it could be re-possessed while another location would be allocated for the 'non-whites' to live. He then stated that this was the difference between a location and a reserve, and the latter could only be taken away again upon a decision of the Union Parliament.

Report: Windhoek Location (Chief Native Commissioner). Dept. of Native Affairs, 1952.

40. This and the following are from documents in NAN/MWI 65/3, vol. I, unpaginated.

41. Minutes of the monthly meeting of the Non-European Advisory Board, held in the Office of the Superintendent of Locations, 17 March 1954, 3.

42. NAN/MWI 65/3, vol. I, unpaginated.

However, Chairman P.A. de Wet intervened saying that according to his information certain municipalities in the Union had proclaimed locations. He also assured the members of the Advisory Board that there was no reason to worry, since the future location would be built with permanent houses at a major cost. The money for the construction costs would have to be paid back over a 50-year timespan. It would therefore be very uneconomic to assume that the location would be shifted again after 50 years.

At the Advisory Board meeting on 20 July 1955, Assistant Native Commissioner Warner read an (undated) message from the South African Minister of Native Affairs for 'the natives' in South West Africa, in which he explained that since 1 April 1955 the administration for 'native affairs' in the territory had been transferred to his ministry in the Union of South Africa. He informed them that the one 'who always was your father, i.e. the administrator in Windhoek' would remain acting in his (the Minister's) name. The message went on to say, that in future SWA would benefit from the 'plans tested in the Union [of South Africa] and approved for the natives there, who were pleased about these, and which will help you [the 'natives' in SWA] too'.⁴³ This confirmed the municipality's plans to replicate the new township in Windhoek along the same lines as townships in South Africa.

On 20 March 1956, the town clerk of Windhoek, Conradie, informed the main Bantu commissioner that the Municipal Council had registered 'with satisfaction' the letter of 1 February 1956 informing them that the Hon. Minister for Native Affairs had endorsed the plans for the establishment of a new location situated approximately seven kilometres to the north of Windhoek's central business district. The area demarcated for the new settlement was duly proclaimed officially, along with provisions for the construction of a new Ovambo compound for the contract workers. The plans also included a five kilometre buffer zone, which made provision for the construction of a new hospital at the margin of the location to serve all 'natives' resident in the whole country. It was also assumed that this new hospital would be coordinated with the state hospital for whites.⁴⁴

The Name Katutura

In 1957 there was a flurry of events leading to the adoption of the name for the new location. These events began on 9 May 1957 when the Native Advisory Board submitted a name proposal for the new location. The name suggested by the Board was Katutura Township, which according to the superintendent of the location meant 'Something we have long waited for'.⁴⁵ Another proposal was to name it after

43. NAN/MWI 65/3, vol. 1, unpaginated.

44. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, unpaginated.

45. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, unpaginated.

Superintendent de Wet in recognition of his efforts.⁴⁶ However, De Wet indicated that he was satisfied with the name put forward by the Native Advisory Board. On 20 May 1957 the Town Council adopted the recommendation to name the new location Katutura Township.⁴⁷ On 17 October 1957, the commissioner informed the town clerk of Windhoek that the Minister for Native Affairs had officially endorsed the plans for the new location.⁴⁸ But its name remained a matter of further debate.

On 28 October 1958 the Town Council discussed the name again because the mayor made it known that

he had spoken to numerous leading natives who had given the assurance that they had no objections to moving to the new location. It had also been ascertained from members of the Native Advisory Board that 'Katutura' means 'at last we have a permanent residence'.⁴⁹

By 30 October 1958 Councillor Dr Max Weiss expressed doubts about the new name and said that there were reports about disturbances concerning the planned resettlement.⁵⁰ According to Weiss, the superintendent was now of the opinion, that 'Katutura' really means: 'We have no permanent home',⁵¹ and he went on to argue: 'Considering the present situation of SWA and all the discussions and investigations going on in the UNO etc which certainly do not [do] justice to the facts, we have to be very careful and must avoid [any] hostile misinterpretation'.⁵² On 6 November 1958 Weiss recommended that the new township should be re-named more appropriately than the current suggestion of 'Katutura'.⁵³

This appeal fell on deaf ears, and it does seem that the meaning of 'Katutura' was indeed understood and intended to illustrate the opposite of the initial translation. Instead of acquiescing to the re-location of the township, there was talk of a different interpretation, one that indicated anticolonial resistance on the part of local communities. Was the choice of the name designed to mislead, if not to fool the coloniser? According to the online History of Old Location and Katutura, 'Councillors Alfred Mungunda and Joshua Kamberipa called the township Katutura, which means:

46. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, unpaginated.

47. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, unpaginated.

48. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, unpaginated.

49. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, Council Minutes, 28 October 1958, agenda item 422. New 'Katutura' Native Location.

50. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, Council Minutes, 28 October 1958, agenda item 422. New 'Katutura' Native Location.

51. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, Council Minutes, 28 October 1958, agenda item 422. New 'Katutura' Native Location.

52. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, Council Minutes, 28 October 1958, agenda item 422. New 'Katutura' Native Location.

53. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 1, Council Minutes, 28 October 1958, agenda item 422. New 'Katutura' Native Location.

“We do not have a permanent habitation”⁵⁴ In addition, an encyclopaedia consulted translates the Otjiherero name as ‘The place where people do not want to live’.⁵⁵ There is also verbal evidence to back up this assertion.⁵⁶

First Relocations

In contrast to the population figures provided in 1956/57, the number of Windhoek residents had increased significantly and in 1959 it was estimated to have risen to about 20 000 white residents, 18 000 Africans and 1 500 so-called Coloureds and Basters.⁵⁷ Registered male workers included 1 424 Herero, 1 634 Damara, 247 Nama, 1 445 Africans from the Union of South Africa, 32 from Bechuanaland and eight from Nyasaland.⁵⁸ Ovambo contract workers numbered 4 130, of whom about 2 800 were accommodated in the newly built compound at the margins of the area allocated for Katutura, while about 1 300 lived in domestic quarters with their employers in town, and 719 older (‘non-contract Ovambo’) were resident in the location.⁵⁹ A total of 108 ‘natives’ in Windhoek held trade and business licenses for their own economic activities, while more than a hundred residents owned operational motorcars. It was envisioned that the entire population of 18 000 Africans would be relocated to Katutura, and that they would commute daily to their places of employment. Nikolai Mossolow, who authored the article providing this information, conceded that the relocation of people from the Old Location created an economic problem because of the higher bus fares and the rent payable for housing in Katutura.⁶⁰ Mossolow, however, considered the upgrading of infrastructure as a more decisive pull factor than the resistance to the move.⁶¹ He argued in the racist perspectives of the day, that the new settlement was arranged according to ‘European patterns’. It had streets, canalisation, flush latrines, electrical light and more, all of which were

54. ‘History of Old Location and Katutura’, Namibweb, accessed 30 March 2023, <https://www.namibweb.com/hiskat.htm>.

55. ‘Katutura Definition’, English Encyclopedia, accessed 30 March 2023, [https://www.encyclo.co.uk/meaning-of-Katutura#:~:text=Katutura%20\(Otjiherero%3A%20The%20place%20where,into%20the%20suburb%20Hochland%20Park](https://www.encyclo.co.uk/meaning-of-Katutura#:~:text=Katutura%20(Otjiherero%3A%20The%20place%20where,into%20the%20suburb%20Hochland%20Park).

56. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer who suggested these explanatory notes.

57. The Rehoboth Basters (their own self-reference) are a specific population group with own history and identity residing since the late nineteenth century at Rehoboth (some 85 kms south of Windhoek).

58. In 1966 the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland became independent as Botswana. Nyasaland was as a British Protectorate part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. After being dissolved, it became independent as Malawi in 1964.

59. All the figures are from N. Mossolow, ‘Eingeborene in Windhoek’, *Der Kreis*, 12, November 1959, 439. The discrepancy in data can to some extent be explained by the fact that there was no need to register residency (still the case today), and at the time because of the number of Africans living without permits in the urban areas.

60. Rent increases were between 2/6 and 3/6 to £2 and in some cases the distance to town meant paying bus fares. Workplaces were no longer in walking distance.

61. Mossolow, ‘Eingeborene in Windhoek’, 439.

considered ‘unnecessary’ luxuries if the ‘developmental level of the primitive human’ be taken into consideration.⁶² In Mossolow’s view therefore, the municipality was providing amenities that were far beyond the standard of living accustomed to by native Namibians, and were thus ‘unnecessary’. According to a note from the Windhoek Municipality, dated 26 June 1959, it was anticipated that a portion of the population living in the Old Location would be relocated to Katutura by mid-1960, whereafter ‘the remainder will be shifted with intervals of 6 months over a period of 3-4 years’.⁶³

But resistance mounted. A young teacher who came to a Herero school in the location in April 1959, had the following experiences to report in a conversation he conducted with the parents of one of his students. He agreed that the houses in Katutura had a great deal of space and additional amenities:

The houses in Katutura may be newer and nicer than this, ... but how much rent will we have to pay the Boers? And the bus fare to work is expensive. If we can’t pay, we’ll be kicked out and deported to some reserve ... These were arguments I came to hear again and again as I visited my students’ homes. The most precious aspect of Old Location life was the lack of government presence. Here the people found a reprieve from the Boers’ efforts to implement their apartheid state. But in Katutura every man, woman and child would be registered with the Native Commissioner, who, for the smallest problem, could revoke a person’s residence permit. No permit meant no job; and deportation to the distant native reserves would be the next step. There would be nowhere to hide in the new township. ... every aspect of our lives would be open to government scrutiny.⁶⁴

On 9 September 1959, the head of the municipal Native Affairs Department submitted a proposal based on an initiative taken by the Native Advisory Board in July 1959 to visit locations in South Africa to familiarise themselves with housing schemes there. He argued that considering the agitation among the ‘local natives’ regarding the transfer to Katutura such a delegation of the location headed by a white official and composed of the different ethnic groups be sent to the Rand on a study tour. This was accepted by the Municipal Council on 21 September 1959.⁶⁵ On 24 November 1959 the council discussed the growing unwillingness of people residing at the old location to resettle to Katutura. During the meeting it was reported that a new political organisation, similar to the South African-based African National

62. ‘Die neue Siedlung ist nach europäischem Muster angelegt, hat Straßen, Kanalisation, Wasserspül-Latrinen, elektrisches Licht und manches sonst, was der primitive Mensch auf seiner Entwicklungsstufe für unnötig halt’, Mossolow, ‘Eingeborene in Windhoek’, 439-440.

63. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 2, unpaginated.

64. J. Ya-Otto, with O. Gjerstad and M. Mercer, *Battlefront Namibia: An Autobiography* (London: Heinemann, 1982), 44.

65. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 2, unpaginated.

Congress (ANC), had been founded.⁶⁶ It was also strongly recommended that an information campaign should be carried out to overcome the influence of this new political organisation.

The council also noted that the 'Coloured' and Rehoboth Baster communities, for whom a separate location was being constructed, were influenced by the Herero not to relocate to their planned new township, Khomasdal.⁶⁷ The council thus felt that its construction ought to be accelerated.⁶⁸ The move further entrenched the spatial relocation and racial segregation and it divided the communities. While many rejected such separation from the other African residents, some argued that this would enhance their prospect as 'in-betweeners'.⁶⁹ As a result of the move, a new divisive identity formation influenced the re-positioning of the so-called coloured communities.

A member of the Advisory Board since 1941, Gotthard Yoshua Kamberipa supported the relocation to Katutura and blamed the people who had decided to join the political campaign opposing the move. He continued to collaborate with the administration.⁷⁰ Together with a few others he moved voluntarily to Katutura at the end of 1959, but the residents at large were angry about this. Out of frustration, his old house was burnt down by angry residents, who refused to relocate.⁷¹ In an interview conducted as late as December 1978, Kamberipa stated that those who were against the relocation refused to talk to him at a meeting in Katutura.⁷² He was

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66. In April 1959, the Ovambo contract workers under the leadership of Sam Nujoma formed the Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO) as a political organisation. In May 1959 Ovaherero formed the South West Africa National Union (SWANU). As of September, the SWANU leadership was extended by including Sam Nujoma and other OPO leaders into its executive, thereby turning SWANU into the first national movement. After the massacre in December 1959, the issue of armed resistance as a last resort led to the formation of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in April 1960 as a successor to OPO. For the organisational developments at the time, see R. Gibson, *African Liberation Movements: Contemporary Struggles Against White Minority Rule* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 120ff.; and T. Emmett, *Popular Resistance and the Roots of Nationalism in Namibia, 1915-1966* (Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 1999), chapters 11 and 12.
67. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 2, unpaginated, Council Agenda, 24 November 1959, agenda item 492.
68. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 2, unpaginated, Council Agenda, 24 November 1959, agenda item 492.
69. J.M. Betts, 'Namibia's No Man's Land: Race, Space and Identity in the History of Windhoek Coloureds under South African Rule, 1915-1990' (PhD thesis, University of California, 2010).
70. G.Y. Kamberipa, 'Tätigkeit als Kommunalpolitiker', in *Was Herero erzählten und sangen. Texte, Übersetzung, Kommentar*. Bearbeitet von E. Dammann (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1987), 316-320. As Dammann notes (ft. 27, 320) at the time of the interview Kamberipa was very isolated politically.
71. Kamberipa, 'Tätigkeit als Kommunalpolitiker'.
72. Kamberipa, 'Tätigkeit als Kommunalpolitiker'.

convinced that the relocation to Katutura would be a positive experience and bring progress for the people. He pointed out that there were entertainment facilities (dancing floors and cinemas) and that a well-equipped state hospital was being built. He continued to serve as a councillor.⁷³

The lack of authority and legitimacy these board members had among the residents of the Old Location became increasingly obvious prior to the outbreak of open resistance of residents to the forced removal. Board members now insisted that they had never abandoned the claim to remain in the Old Location but that the municipality did not listen to their objections. In 1959, the dissonance between the municipality, the Advisory Board and the residents increased and culminated in a meeting held in the Old Location on the afternoon of 29 October 1959. It lasted for more than three and a half hours and was attended by about 3 000 residents.⁷⁴ Chaired by A.J. Potgieter, a number of local dignitaries were in attendance, including Mayor J. van D. Snyman, Magistrate Hager, Commissioner Blignaut, the administrator for non-white Affairs, De Wet, and several other high-ranking white officials. These high-placed officials all attempted to explain to the public the need for the removal to Katutura. In their introductions, Chairman Potgieter and the location manager stressed that all the necessary decisions concerning the relocation had been taken care of. It had to accommodate the growing number of residents and their hygienic conditions were also being organised in cooperation with the Advisory Board which had endorsed everything. The chairman quoted from the minutes of 16 June 1954, 8 April 1956, 17 April 1957, 25 September 1957 and 18 October 1957, which all recorded discussions suggesting that the members of the Advisory Board did not object in principle to the relocation.

Board members Kapuuu, Tjieuza, Kamberipa and Kariseb objected to this interpretation. According to them, the idea for the relocation came from the Windhoek Municipal administrators who were under pressure from the Union government while the Town Council preferred to improve on and expand the area of the Old Location. They claimed that it was the municipality that tried to impose its plans on residents to establish a new township outside Windhoek. The council's proposal to name it 'Katutura' ('a place where we do not stay'), they claimed, indicated their resistance to the move. Following the councillors' efforts to distance themselves from the decision, six representatives speaking on behalf of the different ethnic groups (Herero, Ovambo, Damara) were allowed to voice their views. They all dismissed the proposal as a planned move to implement the South African apartheid

73. Kamberipa, 'Tätigkeit als Kommunalpolitiker'.

74. More on this significant turning point at the end of the article. All information following here is from BAB, Private collection of Tony Emmett, Notule (Minutes) van n' algemene vergadering van die nie-blanke bevolking in die Windhoek lokasie gehou op Donderdag 29 Oktober 1959. Signed by A.J. Potgieter, chairman (mimeographed, undated, Windhoek).

laws for physical separation of the black majority from the areas reserved for whites, and stressed that these laws should not be applicable to South West Africa as a mandated territory. Nathanael Mbaeva – also (mis)spelled Baheva – declared:

You are beginning to exercise this apartheid at a place, which does not belong to you. Don't you know that this place belongs to us and only to us? We are people in our own land and do not need to go to another place. We do not allow apartheid. If we move to Katutura we have allowed apartheid.⁷⁵

The determination not to move was stressed by all six speakers. The chairman then concluded that the residents had had the opportunity to voice their opinions and that it was now too late. Bantu Commissioner Blignaut made the closing statement in which he stressed again that since the mid-1950s it had been decided that the location would be moved and that this was following the request made by the council members. Other speakers were now claiming to speak on behalf of the people and some of them 'talked a lot but said not much and made a lot of accusations'.⁷⁶ Blignaut further claimed that many people simply wanted to 'talk to be heard' and others only wanted to see their names in the newspapers. The latter was a reference to readers' letters from location residents, who had voiced their frustration and protest against the planned removal in local newspapers. He added that the man who wrote about apartheid was not knowledgeable on the topic. After all, he himself represented a certain (ethnic) group, which meant that the residents lived 'in apartheid' among themselves. In closing, the chairman thanked the residents for their good behaviour during the long meeting.⁷⁷

The minutes, which record in surprising clarity the objections raised, document the openly hostile attitude of the residents to the planned removal. By dismissing all complaints and concerns as 'agitation by a radical minority' and even ignoring the desperate efforts of the council members to save face in front of the people as a warning sign, the municipality seemingly misjudged and underestimated the potential of the people to refuse their relocation to Katutura - or maybe not. The fact that only six weeks later the tension escalated into a massacre⁷⁸ provokes the suspicion that the signs were indeed noted. The full force of 'maintaining law and order' seems to have been applied in cold blood as a planned police intervention when they opened fire on an unarmed crowd. This was an indication that the decision was taken to enforce the relocation, even if it meant by means of terror and intimidation.

75. Notule (Minutes), 25; verbatim translation from Afrikaans by the author.

76. Notule (Minutes), 25.

77. Notule, (Minutes), 26.

78. For details see Jafta, Kautja et. al., *An Investigation of the Shootings*, section 3.

Anatomy of the Massacre of 10 December 1959

Following the massacre of 10 December,⁷⁹ a memorandum was drafted by the Johannesburg-based attorney, E.M. Wentzel,⁸⁰ on behalf of Chief Hosea Kutako for the Herero Royal House, Sam Nujoma for the Ovamboland Peoples Organisation (OPO) and ... Kaukeutu/Kaukentu [name unclear] for the South West African National Union (SWANU) as the petitioners.⁸¹ Compiled despite administrative obstruction – since attorney Wentzel was denied access to the Old Location for meetings with his clients – the document was submitted to Justice Hall, the chairman of the commission.⁸² It stated: ‘...the conditions under which the African people live in the Old Location are shockingly deplorable. This is not of their choosing. It is caused by the cruel poverty by which they are burdened’.⁸³

The memorandum stressed that the name Katutura signified the general feelings: ‘All these removals without their consent make the African people feel aliens in their own land’.⁸⁴ The signatories refuted the claim by the colonial administration that ‘communists’ had instigated the protest against the relocation, stating that ‘the African people do not need any organisation to tell us [about] the evils which the removal implies.’ They rejected the allegation and said they knew of no ‘Communist influence in South West Africa’.⁸⁵

79. On eyewitness accounts and a list of those killed and injured, see Jafta, Kautja, et al., *An Investigation of the Shootings*, 31-40.

80. BAB, Private collection of Tony Emmett, Memorandum submitted to the Hon. Justice C.G. Hall, Judge President of the High Court of SWA, a Judicial Commissioner appointed by the officer administering the Government, Windhoek, Typed, unsigned, undated, ca. January 1960.

81. As Werner Hillebrecht pointed out to the author (personal communication, 12 July 2022), this was most probably Uatja Kaukwetu (also spelled Kaukuetu): ‘Uatja Kaukwetu was part of the young Herero intelligentsia of the 1950s. He was the first to take up correspondence with Prof Joachim Israel in Sweden, which led to the award of bursaries for young Namibians to study in Sweden. Kaukwetu studied in Wellington, South Africa, and was a founder member of SWANU. He was arguably the most charismatic leader in the resistance against the forced removal from the Windhoek Old Location to Katutura, and spoke at the women’s demonstration to the Magistrate’s Court on 3 December and during the demonstration on 10 December 1959. Kaukwetu went into exile in (1960? 1970?) but returned like other SWANU leaders in the late 1970s. He died in 1980 and is buried in Okandjetu.’ See NAN biographical database (BIONA), version 12 July 2022.

82. Comment by Werner Hillebrecht in personal communication with the author (12 July 2022): ‘Interestingly, the Memorandum is not found among the papers of the Hall Commission as archived in the National Archives of Namibia.’

83. Memorandum, 5.

84. Memorandum, 5.

85. Memorandum, 9 and 10.

The memorandum cited the *Windhoek Advertiser* of 2 November 1959, which reported after the meeting held on 29 October, that ‘the natives are almost unanimous in their refusal to move to Katutura judging from the spontaneous response’.⁸⁶ A subsequent march of a large number of women was organised on 3 December 1959 to the administrative offices. This was in protest against the arrest of four women and was another sign of determined resistance. On 8 December an organised protest was staged by SWANU and OPO of all municipal undertakings in the location (buses, beerhalls, cinema and dance halls):

The boycott was considered necessary because the residents had no adequate means of making known their opposition to the removal and furthermore because it seemed that the authorities wished to carry on the removal irrespective of whether the residents agreed or not.⁸⁷

The growing mass protest resulted in the holding of a meeting on the afternoon of 10 December 1959, during which the mayor, Snyman, threatened to close the beerhall and to withdraw the buses if the boycott continued the next day. According to the memorandum, the members of the Advisory Board were threatened that they would be blamed for any troubles ‘because they were being stupid’ and the Bible was quoted as saying: ‘He who does not want to listen has to feel’.⁸⁸ Major Lombard of the South African Police reportedly said that: ‘The towns belong to the whites and the reserves to the Africans.’⁸⁹ An effort by an Advisory Board member to clarify the background to the boycott was dismissed by Bantu Commissioner De Wet, who said ‘that the officials had not come for discussions but to warn the people’.⁹⁰

Later in the afternoon, a large police contingent entered the location and people gathered to find out what had motivated their presence. Major Lombard asserted that the crowd took what he called an ‘intimidating posture’ and he demanded that they disperse within five minutes. However, he did not make this announcement with a loudspeaker or a similar device and many of the people did not hear the instruction. According to the memorandum, without any warning, the police then opened fire indiscriminately on the people, killing twelve and wounding many more. This was done while the crowd was engaged in dispersing. It was claimed that it was only in response to police brutality that some residents retaliated by throwing stones.⁹¹

86. Memorandum, 15.

87. Memorandum, 15f.

88. Memorandum, 16f.

89. Memorandum, 17.

90. Memorandum, 18.

91. Memorandum, 19f.

The violent clashes led, among other things, to the damage and destruction of two cars and a motor bike belonging to members of the administration and town council. This resulted in a lengthy administrative exchange over the terms of compensation. The original suggestion was to cover the losses by paying the owners the money from the Bantu Affairs budget. But the office of the Commissioner for Bantu Affairs rejected such claims with the argument that the budget made no provision for such expenditure. After several weeks of negotiation, the office of the administrator indicated a (somewhat reluctant) willingness to solve the matter if all costs were covered by insurance and the estimated loss of value before the damage was considered. The 1959 Ford Galaxy belonging to Mayor J. van D. Snyman was then evaluated and a remaining uncovered loss of £647 was estimated. In the case of the 1958 Austin that was the property of P. de Wet (and was apparently uninsured) the balance was £1 063. He received payment of £911.8.0. In a letter dated 21 March 1960 he complained bitterly that he had suffered a loss of £200. His appeal to receive the difference was turned down at the Council meeting of the municipality on 19 April 1960.⁹²

The Hall Commission and Other Propaganda Efforts

What was officially called the Hall Commission was a one-person affair, quickly created to justify the killing of unarmed protesters. It was a ‘whitewash’ par excellence, in every sense.⁹³ Justice Cyril Godfrey Hall⁹⁴ was appointed on 31 December 1959 as chairman and only member of the Hall Commission of Enquiry into the events that took place in the Windhoek Location on 10 to 11 December 1959. As its title suggests, the aim was to fabricate a narrative to exonerate officialdom of its lethal intervention. The hearings took place from 10 to 14 January 1960. The testimonies reveal a clearly biased approach: 18 members of the police and military and five high-ranking white officials of the Windhoek Municipality testified. Only two women who were residents of the Old Location, (and who had not in fact been present at the demonstration), were called to speak.⁹⁵ Four leading community members volunteered to testify on their own account. They were the OPO’s President Sam Nujoma, SWANU Vice-President Uatja Kaukwetu, Zedekia Ngavirue, who was employed as the Old Location’s first local social worker (but was soon

92. NAN/MWI 48/1, unpaginated.

93. Details are presented by W. Hillebrecht, ‘Legitimising and Implementing Apartheid: Three Commissions of Enquiry and their Consequences’, in a final manuscript for publication in volume 3 of UNAM History of Namibia (Windhoek: UNAM Press, forthcoming). Werner Hillebrecht kindly shared the text with me and the following summary relies heavily on this. At the time of my studies in the National Archives, the Hall Report as well as numerous documents in his collection (many deliberately neglected or misrepresented in the report) were not yet accessible. These were registered in 2018 as NAM, Findaid 2/244, AACRLS.013, Hall Commission 1960.

94. Judge President of the SWA Division of the High Court of South Africa.

95. Hillebrecht, ‘Legitimising and Implementing Apartheid’, 10.

thereafter sacked), and Clemens Kapuu. The latter ‘only testified about the papers confiscated at his home by the police, and denied any involvement, a conduct that ... shocked many people.’⁹⁶

The published report presents what can only be deemed a deliberately manipulated narrative.⁹⁷ Justice Hall was eager to deliver on his ‘whitewash’ mandate by presenting selective quotations out of context. He constructed a scenario in which a few Namibian nationalists, some of them already abroad and campaigning at the United Nations, had plotted to instigate an uprising. Furthermore, as Hillebrecht argues, it is clear that the report deliberately ignores a great deal of relevant evidence, including that:

the Advisory Board had approved a relocation to a much closer south-westerly site. The relevant facts in the testimony of Pieter Andries de Wet, the Director of Non-white Affairs [sic] of the Municipality and former Location Superintendent, who had given a factual chronology of the development of the removal plans, were ignored, and his offer to present minutes of the meetings of the Advisory Board was [also] rejected. ... The testimony of Director de Wet that the inhabitants had solid economic reasons to reject the removal, was ignored as well. Upon questioning, he testified that moving to Katutura substantially increased the living costs of the inhabitants.⁹⁸

Not surprisingly, the response to the Hall Report was mixed. It was largely approved or cautiously criticised by the local white-owned media, but the *South West News*, the only black newspaper of the time, was adamant in its rejection. Its issue of 14 May 1960 published several strongly-worded texts, including a letter written by Chief Hosea Kutako to King Baudouin of Belgium, another to the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan and one to President De Gaulle of France. He declared:

We regard this report as biased and misleading. It was designed to [white]wash the inhumane and brutal action of the Union government ... With regard to the allegation that our people are inspired by outside agitators, this is not true. We need not to be told of our sufferings. ... as long as we remain oppressed, so long will you not be able to point with pride to your achievements. ‘The bell may toll for us; it tolls for each and all of you as well.’⁹⁹

96. Hillebrecht, ‘Legitimising and Implementing Apartheid’, 10.

97. The report was published as South African Bluebook by the Government Printer in Pretoria under the official publication number UG 23-60 and is now available at the National Archives of Namibia, AP 4/1/12, Findaid 2/244, AACRLS.013, Hall Commission 1960, 3.

98. Hillebrecht, ‘Legitimising and Implementing Apartheid’, 9 and 11.

99. ‘It Talks for Each and All of You as Well, Says Chief Kutako’, *South West News*, 1, 2, 14 May 1960, 4. Reproduced in *A Glance at Our Africa*. Facsimile reprint of *South West News/Suidwes Nuus* 1960, comp. D. Henrichsen (Basel: BAB, 1997), 50, also online at <https://www.baslerafrika.ch/a-glance-at-our-africa/>

In the tense atmosphere, concerns were raised, even within the white community about the international image and reputation of the South African administration in South West Africa. A local newspaper reported on a council motion adopted on 25 April 1961, which created the impression that the Windhoek Municipality would 'recommend to the authorities to allow investigations to be made by UNO and other authorised bodies to investigate the true facts of conditions prevailing in Windhoek, in order to expose the agitators to the world.'¹⁰⁰ A special council meeting held on 9 May 1961 lasted for almost two-and-a-half hours and provoked a heated exchange among the councillors over what was then established as a misunderstanding and a misleading report. At the end it was confirmed that the Town Council never intended to involve 'big politics' in the matter and that it was never the intention to invite any outside agencies.¹⁰¹

With the expressed intention of counteracting a negative international damage, early in 1960 the Windhoek Municipality commissioned a propaganda film 'to show the difference between the old and the [new] locations'.¹⁰² The Town Council decided in December 1960 to make a film based on amateur pictures taken locally during the riots. On 20 June 1961 the film was on the agenda. Subsequently, in a letter dated 18 October 1961, the town clerk wrote to the South African Information Bureau in Pretoria, requesting support to improve the quality (sound, sequences and so on).¹⁰³ Pretoria replied on 5 December 1961,¹⁰⁴ expressing its concern that the film was unsuitable for distribution abroad in the light of events. The Information Bureau was afraid that foreigners would gain what it called a 'damaging impression' of how forcefully the uprising was put down. It was even feared that some of the scenes might be cut and abused by unscrupulous elements. The pictures of the new housing scheme (in Katutura) were considered far better. It was therefore proposed that there be more emphasis placed on this part and that the first part of the film be cut drastically. It was suggested that this should be done before a reproduction of the film could be considered.¹⁰⁵ On 14 December 1961 the mayor of Windhoek decided that the film should be abandoned.¹⁰⁶

100. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

101. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

102. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

103. All documents in NAN/MWI 48/1 are unpaginated.

104. Ref. no. 15/2/17, U 48/2 VAN18/10/61, NAN/MWI 48/1.

105. In the original: Dit ons oorwoë mening dat die film nie vir buitelandse verspreiding geskik is nie, ... veral omdat die skokende tonele ... 'n onuitwisbare skadelike indruk op die ontvanklike gemoed van die buitelanders... Ons voorstel is dat u dit drasties sny. Dit moet beslis eers gedoen word voordat afdrucke onder oorweging kom.

106. A copy of the film (without sound) and entitled, tellingly, 'Thankless Pride', is in the NAM. It originated from the estate of Nietzsche Reiter, the photo shop owner tasked with the compilation of the film (See NAN/MR 0141 and NAN/SV 0067).

Subsequent Relocations and Closure of the Location

After the violent protest, the municipality announced that all location residents who were willing to resettle voluntarily, could do so immediately. On 17 December 1959 the mayor applauded the officials for dealing with this voluntary resettlement efficiently and speedily and at the mayor-in-council meeting of 17 December it was resolved that the Council should authorise the ‘expenditure of giving a party to those members of the staff who were connected with the “great trek” to Katutura in appreciation of their loyal service.’¹⁰⁷

In response to an enquiry made on 4 June 1960, four days later, the Town Clerk replied that already a total of 610 houses were occupied in Katutura.¹⁰⁸ They were allocated according to ‘ethnic groups’ and were occupied by a total of 2 427 people in the following groups: Herero 276, Damara 758, Nama 104, ‘Coloureds’ 571, Ovambo 413, Ovambandero (sic) 21, and ‘Others’ 284. Another 262 houses were completed but not yet occupied. They were allocated in the following manner: Damara 113, Herero 107, ‘Ovambanderos’ (sic) 42.

In the council meeting on 15 August 1961, it was recorded that on 7 and 8 August 1961 all inhabitants of the Klein Windhoek location ‘were shifted to Katutura without any incidents and with their full co-operation.’ During the preceding week, there were 108 inhabitants who had moved on their own accord, while the remaining 177 families (785 inhabitants) were moved during the next two days, i.e., a total of 893 inhabitants.¹⁰⁹ On 27 April 1961 Mayor Snyman presented a report to the administrative secretary in which he summarised the progress with the resettlement to Katutura. By this time a total of 3 593 people (1 356 Damara, 584 ‘Coloureds’, 504 Ovambo, 62 Ovambanderos, 368 Herero, 277 Nama and 442 members of other groups) were resettled into some 893 housing units, while about 420 housing units were completed but remained unoccupied.¹¹⁰

Because some of the occupants had decided there was no use in prolonging their resistance, a few more residents left to settle in Katutura, 697 houses in the old location were then demolished.¹¹¹ However, an estimated 12 000 people were still residing in the Old Location.¹¹² It was estimated that another 2 000 housing units would be needed for accommodating the residents in Katutura.¹¹³

107. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

108. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

109. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

110. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

111. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

112. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

113. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

The council meeting held on 28 February 1961 had to acknowledge certain differences between Commissioner Weitz and the Municipal Manager of Non-European Affairs. The latter informed the council that Weitz had seen a deputation representing Headman Hosea Kutako who had requested 'that those Herero who refused to have their properties valued and to move to Katutura had requested permission to be given plots to erect houses in the old location and to renew or refurbish and/or build on to their present buildings'.¹¹⁴ Weitz felt that this was reasonable, but the location superintendent (Potgieter) informed him that according to the instructions issued by the mayor on behalf of the administrator, any further construction in the Old Location was now prohibited. The council confirmed this position.¹¹⁵

Because by this time there were many vacant houses in Katutura the voluntary moving of people was accelerated. On the agenda submitted to the Town Council on 14 August 1962, item 22 reflected that a total of 371 families (comprising 1 544 individuals) were re-settled in Katutura between 13 July and 7 August 1962. But, as a note dated 10 August 1962 by the municipality explained, this was only after the Town Council had been informed in June 1962 that there were 974 houses in Katutura that still remained unoccupied. With this in mind, it was decided to approach the residents in the Old Location whose shelters had already been evaluated.

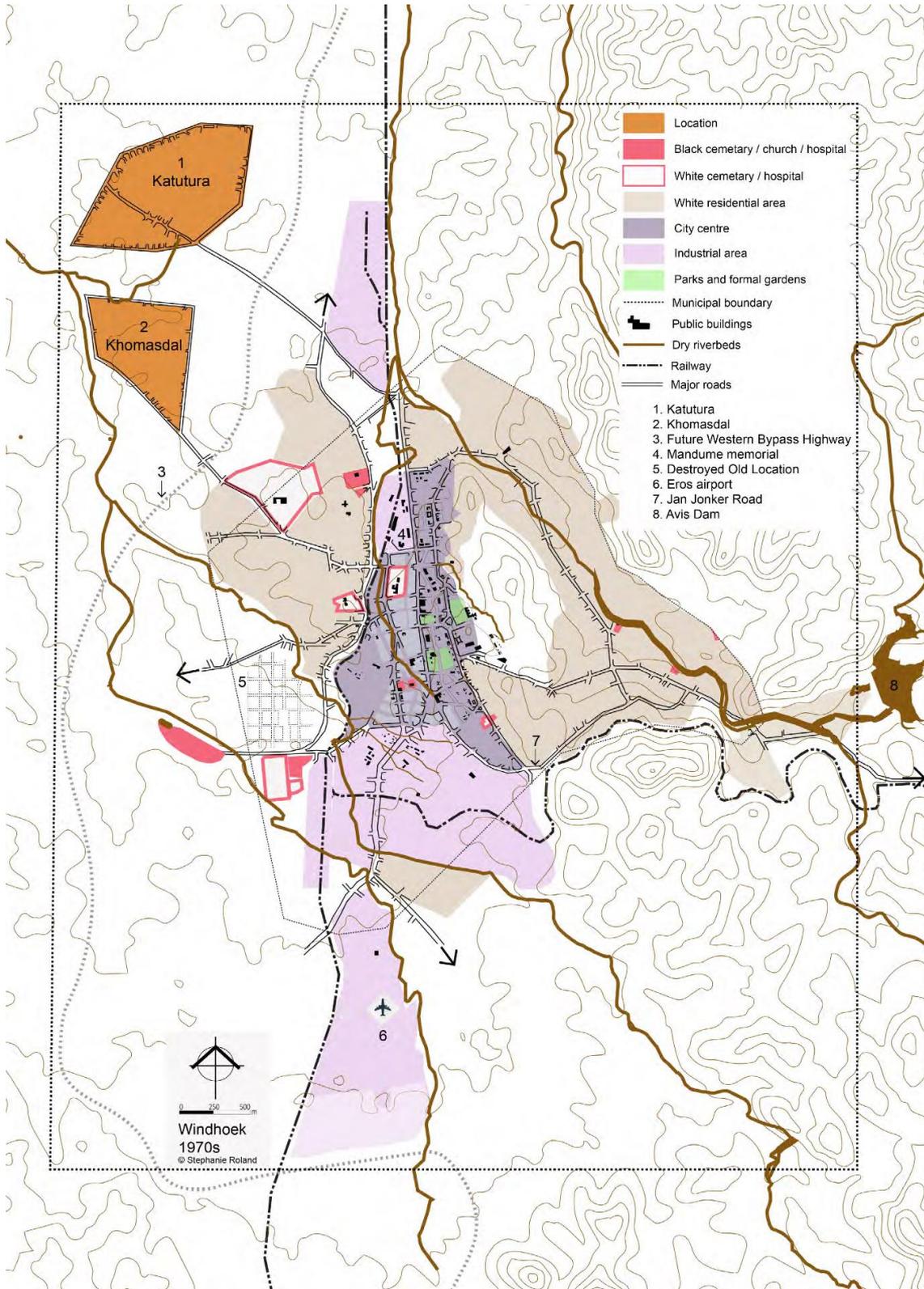
According to the report, only a few people objected to the re-location. But this was somewhat inaccurate because as it turned out, many families refused to be moved when the date (set at 13 July 1962) arrived. It therefore took until 7 August 1962 before some of the vacant houses in Katutura were eventually occupied. The homesteads of those who had left the Old Location were immediately destroyed by a bulldozer.¹¹⁶

114. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

115. NAN/MWI 48/2, vol. 3, unpaginated.

116. MWI 2/1/378, NAN/MWI 48/1, Verskuiwing van Inwoners van die ou lokasie na Katutura inboorlingsdorp. Munisipaliteit van Windhoek, 10 Augustus 1962, mimeographed.

Melber – From the Old Location to Katutura



Map 2: Location of Katutura (S. Roland, Q. Stevens, and K. Simon, 'The Uncanny Capital': Mapping the Historical Spatial Evolution of Windhoek', *Urban Forum*, 2023).

The authorities responded to such remarks from inhabitants of the Old Location, using intimidation and threats of deportation to the reserves to bully those who were unwilling to move. On 13 June 1960, Mayor Snyman, after consultation with the administrator of SWA, issued the order that:

- i) no further erection of temporary houses in the Old Location shall be granted;
- ii) all houses vacated as a result of its inhabitants being resettled to Katutura will immediately be demolished; and
- iii) the influx of ‘natives’ as well as ‘coloureds’ will be strictly prohibited.

This led to a dispute when Bantu Urban Area Commissioner Weitz disagreed with the location superintendent Potgieter by ‘seeing no reason why he should refuse a permit for Herero who remained in the Old Location requesting an expansion to their houses there’.¹¹⁷

By 1968 the last inhabitants of the Old Location had been either resettled to Katutura or had left the city for rural areas and reserves.¹¹⁸ The few remaining structures were destroyed, and the location was officially closed. The adjacent cemetery that had been there since the 1920s was also abandoned. Neglected by public services, though in the direct neighbourhood to the carefully cultivated ‘white’ cemetery, it soon ended in decay:

Those killed by the police in the Old Location massacre of 10 December 1959, a turning point in Namibian history, are also buried here, and [are] honoured by a cenotaph. Though individual graves continued to be tended by relatives of the deceased after 1967, the municipality let the site lapse into total decay. The place, which once had a fence, a chapel, and a water supply, degenerated into a shameful and vandalized abode for vagrants. Only after independence were serious efforts made to protect and rehabilitate the site.¹¹⁹

The remains of Anna (‘Kakurukaze’) Mungunda, who was shot and killed on 10 December 1959 while trying to set fire to the car belonging to the location’s superintendent, have since then been re-buried at the Heroes’ Acre, which was opened officially in 2000. Sam Nujoma, co-founder of SWAPO and Namibia’s first president from 1960 to 2007, portrays her in his memoirs in the language of the heroic genre:

I was very moved to see her body. I knew her of course. She seemed to be shining even in her death. We knew when we saw those bodies of innocent people that we had to find a way of fighting against those Boers. It was what really inspired me and others to leave the country, to prepare ourselves for a protracted armed liberation struggle.¹²⁰

117. NAN/MWI 48/1, ref. no. NB 261, Letter of 21/2/1961 from the Manager/Municipal Non-European Affairs to the acting mayor, councillor J.L. Levinson.

118. A local journalist estimated an ‘exodus from the Location of 3 000 to 4 000 people’. See Jafta, Kautja, et al., *An Investigation of the Shootings*, 41.

119. Hillebrecht, ‘Where They Lie Buried’, *Three Views into the Past of Windhoek*, 26.

120. S. Nujoma, *Where Others Wavered: The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma* (London: Panaf, 2001), 76-77.

From Protest to Anti-Colonial Resistance

It was in this climate of fear and growing anti-colonial resilience that the formation of organised resistance in various forms of political associations thrived. It also created a fertile ground for the establishment of the South West African National Union (SWANU), the National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO) and the Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO), later re-named the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), whose activists began to leave the country for mobilisation abroad.¹²¹

In this sense, the forced relocation from and the massacre at the Old Location, in combination with the contract worker system and the pass laws, were decisive elements of the emergence and formation of the anticolonial resistance movements resulting in the struggle for Namibian independence, which was successful three decades later. As Hillebrecht puts it: 'What the perpetrators of the massacre had not foreseen was that their actions strengthened the long-term resolve to build a strong organisational basis both inside and outside the country for the eventual liberation of Namibia.'¹²²

Another factor, of which authorities seemed totally unaware, blinded by their 'single story', was the prevailing community spirit in the Old Location. It fostered resilience and was a fertile ground for forms of solidarity to prosper:

It was easy to be mistaken about the Old Location. ... It was as if the very hardship of life in the Old Location created a great family in which each member looked out for every other. In spite of the hardship, there was a strange contentment with Old Location life.¹²³

This turned togetherness into a political force, translating into forms of organised, anticolonial resistance. The seminal work by the late Tony Emmett, published in 1999, testified to the importance of the events described above by devoting a sub-chapter to 'The Katutura Removal and Windhoek Shootings'.¹²⁴ Emmett suggested that:

The authorities' attempts to move residents of the old location to a new township and the resistance they met represent a significant point in the political history of Namibia. Not only did resistance to the removal provide the first major

121. J.A. Müller, *The Inevitable Pipeline into Exile: Botswana's Role in the Namibian Liberation Struggle* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012). On the role of Botswana as a host country for refugees from white settler colonial neighbouring territories see P.P. Molosiwa and M.M.M. Bolaane, "'A peaceful country": Refugees, Masculinities and Anti-radical National Identity in early Postcolonial Botswana'. *Historia*, 66, 2 (2021), 48-73.

122. Hillebrecht, 'Legitimising and Implementing Apartheid', 13.

123. Ya-Otto, *Battlefront Namibia*, 35.

124. Emmett, *Popular Resistance*, 303ff.

issue taken up by the newly formed nationalist organizations shortly after their launching in 1959, but it also represented a transition in the style of political mobilization in that it transcended parochial issues and united a broad cross-section of groups and classes in a confrontation with the colonial state.¹²⁵

It should also be noted, that as Müller has pointed out at some length, Namibians returning from studies in South Africa to the emerging urban arena of the 1950s, were a transmission belt in the formation of an intellectual vanguard. They entered into new forms of exchange and mobilisation distinct from previous indigenous traditions and practices with the dominance of the traditional (ethnic) leaders, and thereby induced social diversity over and above seemingly primordial loyalties and forms of organisation.¹²⁶ *South West News*, the first black newspaper founded in 1960 and published in nine issues,¹²⁷ documents this fascinating tendency of not only engaging critically with the white settler dominance but also the role of ethnic identities and tradition.

The internal dynamics at play, in the formation of and marking this important turning point, can also be traced in the stance taken by the members of the Advisory Board after 1956. By this time, they were becoming aware that the new location was much further away from the Old Location than they had originally anticipated and their suggestion to call it Katutura signified a largely shared, united protest, one that voiced the rejection of most residents. Their initial opposition gained further momentum with the emergence and role of the new political organisations such as OPO and SWANU and the Herero Chiefs' Council. It culminated in a public 'key meeting which shaped this transition from protest to politicised resistance',¹²⁸ one that has already been summarised in some detail above. Called between the Windhoek Town Council and the Advisory Board, it took place on 29 October 1959 next to the Sybil Bowker Hall with about 3 000 residents in attendance:

In the course of the meeting, four of the African members of the Advisory Board among them C. Kapuuo and F. Gariseb, stated categorically that they [had] never supported the move to Katutura. Then six men rose, stressing that they spoke for the people. ... Mr Emanuel S. Vetira closed his statement with the words: 'We will not move.'¹²⁹

125. Emmett, *Popular Resistance*, 285.

126. As suggested: 'In the case of both SWANU and SWAPO the roots of organised Namibian nationalism are to be found in South Africa'. See Müller, *The Inevitable Pipeline into Exile*, 37.

127. BAB, Henrichsen, *A Glance at Our Africa*, <https://www.baslerafrika.ch/a-glance-at-our-africa/>

128. Jafta, Kautja et al., *An Investigation of the Shootings*, 26.

129. Jafta, Kautja et al., *An Investigation of the Shootings*, 27f., based on Archives of the Windhoek Municipality (MWI 48/31) with no further details given.

According to an eyewitness who attended the meeting, Chief Hosea Kutako added: 'If you want to force us, you [will] have to take our corpses [to Katutura]'.¹³⁰

At the close of the meeting the general feeling was one of futility and humiliation. ... Mayor Snyman's closing words, after three hours of being confronted with the people's refusal to move, were: 'It was decided that you must move'. It seems that this acted as a catalyst for the diverse elements which brought about the events of 10 December 1959.¹³¹

These events marked a cornerstone in the further formation and consolidation of the Namibian anti-colonial struggle. As aptly observed by one of the local witnesses (who later became a political activist):

The location movement was good while it lasted: it brought everybody together for a time and finally put tribal separations in the past; it made people conscious of what they had that was precious, in spite of the whites; it showed them how callous the whites could be in taking that away. But that resistance was broken; ... They think this is the end. We'll see, this is only the beginning!¹³²

Thus, the forced removal, the protest and the killing of demonstrators turned the location into 'a source of potent symbolism for the emerging nationalist movement, as well as a focus for nostalgia', becoming a significant reference point for 'nationalist iconography' in Namibia.¹³³

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130. Jafta, Kautja et al., *An Investigation of the Shootings*, 28.

131. Jafta, Kautja et al., *An Investigation of the Shootings*, 28.

132. Ya-Otto, *Battlefront Namibia*, 54.

133. Wallace, *Health, Power and Politics*, 55 and 56.

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