

**A participatory zoning process at region level:
the amatola district zoning project (eastern
cape province, South Africa)**

Lhopitallier, L.

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Department of Agricultural Economics,
Extension and Rural Development

University of Pretoria

Pretoria, 0002

South Africa



University of Pretoria

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L. Lhopitallier

sperret@nsnper1.up.ac.za

1 The Amatola zoning project

The Amatola zoning project was conducted in 1998-1999, in order to highlight the diversity of rural situations within the Eastern Cape and the changes they are going through. Its results were to be used for discussions around rural development planning in the area.

The idea of conducting such a project was brought forward after conducting various prior socio-economic studies in the local area of Kambashe (1997-1998). It was stated that zoning might enable a better interpretation of the results obtained in Kambashe area, by situating Kambashe in its environment, by identifying the main basis of organisation of the regional layout and the flows of money, population and products. Furthermore, highlighting the diversity of the situations would allow one to envisage the validation or the adaptation to a wider area of the knowledge acquired in Kambashe, in particular the elaboration of a regional typology of households.

It was first decided to test out the zoning methodology (see chapter 5.2.) on six magisterial districts (Peddie, Middledrift, King William's Town/Zwelitsha, East London, Komga, Keiskammahoek). As the results proved worthwhile, it was then decided to extend the study area to the whole of the Amatola District and to design a planning tool from the results. It was also deemed that a study of the Amatola would provide us with results that might be applicable to the Eastern Cape as a whole as this District Council, due to its central geographical position within the Province, encompasses the three main elements :

- Commercial farming areas
- The Southern and Central part of former bantustan of Ciskei
- The Western part of the former bantustan of Transkei

Training played a key role in the whole project. The use of the methodology had to be mastered by a number of people in order for such an exercise to be replicated in other areas when necessary : extension officers from the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture, students, staff members from the Agricultural Research Council and from parastatals were included in the project team and took part in the enterprise.

The methodology used to collect and analyse the data will not be presented in this report. A training manual have been published (Lhopitallier *et al.*, 1999) and explains the procedure used.

The outcomes of this project are currently used through 2 main modes :

- Further research and integration in an existing Geographic Information System, by the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs ;
- Implementation of rural development planning activities, by the Amatola District Council.

2. The diversity of rural situations in the Amatola District

2.1. Urban areas

Urban areas do not fall all under one single category; there is a striking hierarchy of urban centres :

The City: East London.

East London is the main urban centre in the Amatola District. It is endowed with all services and industries normally available in major urban centres. It is the only river port in the country and also acts as a very powerful magnet structuring the spatial and economic organisation of the region. Its spatial influence as the major city in the Amatola District stretches to most areas of the district (its influence is only undermined by that of Port Elizabeth in the westernmost commercial farming areas of the District).

Major towns: King William's Town and Butterworth.

These two towns boast an impressive range of industries and services but do not have the influence of East London on the spatial and economic organisation of the region. Their spatial influence is closely related to their surroundings : King William's Town is the focal point of the former Ciskei whereas Butterworth is the central point of the eastern part of Transkei.

King William's Town is in fact part of an urban sprawl linking it with East London through numerous townships and peri-urban areas (Zwelitsha, Mdantsane...).

Agricultural centres: Fort Beaufort, Adelaide, Bedford, Cathcart, Stutterheim, Idutywa and Komga.

These towns offer all the essential range of services of urban centres and they act as structuring elements within their close rural surroundings at the Magisterial District level.

Minor towns: Alice, Peddie and Nqamakwe.

Such centres do not offer the range of services of the above but still have a great influence on their surroundings (at the Magisterial District level).

Administrative centres or trading posts: Keiskammahoe, Middledrift, Balfour, Seymour, Tsomo, Centani and Willowvale.

Remains of a colonial administration, these centres have never enjoyed the development of other centres, either because of the lack of infrastructure development or because of the closeness of a more attractive centre. They could be defined as minor communication hubs.

Townships exist around most towns but, apart from Mdantsane and Zwelitsha that are becoming urban centres of their own, they have not been considered separate areas as they are strongly integrated to urban areas, because of economic and demographic patterns.

2.2. Industrial areas

Industrial areas are neighbouring East London (West Bank and Fort Jackson), King William's Town, Zwelitsha, Berlin, Dimbaza and Butterworth. These areas have developed considerably between 1980 and 1994 in or around the former bantustans, due to fiscal advantages and to subsidies granted to industries in order to promote employment. The effect of the end of apartheid was that this financial support stopped and a drop in the economic activity has been felt with a lot of industries closing down or relocating in other parts of the country.

2.3. "Grey" areas

By "grey" areas, we refer to informal settlements spreading around a number of towns, mainly urban centres situated in the former bantustans. Such areas have been identified around the towns of Alice, Idutywa, Nqamakwe and Butterworth. Such settlements are the result of migration of people from the neighbouring rural areas or even from people who used to live within the town but can no longer afford the housing rents. Generally, such settlements have been established on commonage or municipal land.

2.4. Peri-Urban areas

The concept of peri-urban areas is a key element for the understanding of spatial dynamics within the District. These are areas that have very often been mentioned during the interviews and frequently referred to as ‘urban-influenced areas’. The definition is quite straightforward and highlights the impact of urban centres on the surrounding rural hinterland. These areas have been defined as the ones from which people can commute daily to an urban centre. They appear as spatial rings around urban centres and along the main roads. Welfare payments and wages are the main sources of income for such areas. We are in fact facing a rural population with urban living patterns. Such areas are partly a result of Betterment policies, which created ‘closer settlement schemes’, and partly a result of the collapse of the rural economy. Not all villages enclosed in the peri-urban ring are former closer settlement schemes.

2.5. Communal areas

The main issue in characterising such areas is obviously the land tenure issue. These areas are characterised by the absence (apart from some few isolated areas of freehold or quitrent tenure) of private ownership of land assets and therefore by the existence of communal management of most productive resources. The past tweaking (especially through Betterment Planning policies) of such communal management systems has had a dire impact on the productive base of such areas.

“Communal areas” is a generic term that conceals a wealth of diversity that the zoning has attempted to highlight and characterise. Initially most interviewees would say “everything is the same, employment is rife and pensions are the main sources of income”. However, it turned out that communal areas were extremely diversified and that understanding this diversity was a key aspect in designing proper development plans. Such areas can therefore be sub-divided according to the main productive activities being pursued :

- *Urban influenced communal areas* : such areas have been previously described under the peri-urban areas section.
- *Tourism influenced communal areas* : such areas are located along the coastline and around the mountain resorts of Hogsback and Katberg areas. The nearby presence of tourism based activities close to such communal areas seems to stimulate a number of local initiatives (arts and crafts) and to offer employment opportunities within such areas.
- A peculiar type of area can be found in the Southern part of the Middledrift district. A famous priestess resides in that area and people from all over the country come and visit her. A thriving accommodation business has developed within that area due to the influx of pilgrims.
- *Remote communal areas* : some areas were qualified “remote” during the interviews. Obviously the concept of remoteness varies from one area of the District to the other. In the former Ciskei area, parts of the Victoria East district and the Amatola Basin were qualified as remote, the reason being that transport to and from those areas was scarce. However in the former Transkei area, some areas deemed remote can be objectively qualified so as transport infrastructure is totally absent from such areas and people from such areas have to travel by foot for long periods to access the transport network and its related opportunities.
- *Communal areas with livestock and crop production* : such areas are further subdivided on the map according to the main production system (cattle, goat, sheep, mixed livestock, and crop...). There will not be a thorough description for each of them. The choice of production system is largely related to the ecological conditions within each area. What must be highlighted here is the fact that, although agricultural activities still occupy space, they play a marginal role in most households’ income.

State support services are close to non-existent in many areas, fencing is highly degraded and there does not seem to be much livestock management being practised. Most crop production only takes place in residential gardens and there is very little marketing of production.

2.6. Commercial farms area

Commercial farming areas also show a great diversity. They differ from the communal areas for their land tenure system is of the freehold type. It therefore offers a great tenure security and the land assets can also be used as

collateral to obtain loans for investing in agriculture activities. The main criterion in order to highlight such diversity is the choice of production systems being set up by farmers.

Perishable products production

Such farms are specialised in the production of perishable products (dairy products, vegetables and fruits) destined for the urban markets. These holdings are generally taking advantage of their geographical situation as they are often situated in the vicinity of towns or major road networks and they are also close to sources of water for irrigation purposes.

However, some patches of perishable production do not respond to such geographical criteria :

- in the Adelaide district, a remote valley in the Northern part of the District takes advantage of excellent agronomic conditions and niche markets to specialise in vegetable and fruit (strawberries) production ;
- in the Cathcart district, a number of remote farms (i.e. : accessible only by dirt roads) have turned to dairy production. This is due to a reorganising of the dairy sector : Bonnita was keen on extending its dairy production and has therefore approached farmers situated in good agronomic settings for dairy production and offered them incentives to switch to dairy production. It has therefore extended its collection zone to what would seem to be uneconomic areas (because of the costs for storage and transport).

Vegetable production in those districts bordering the former Transkei is also geared towards the huge market that Transkei represents. Traders from Transkei come directly to such farms and collect the goods for the Transkei market.

The irrigated production of citrus is mostly concentrated in the Fort Beaufort and Adelaide districts. It is included in a highly integrated commodity chain with the Kat Co-op and the Outspan export structure in Port Elizabeth. It is interesting to note the creation of a second private co-op in Fort Beaufort by a group of farmers. Furthermore, a group of less than 20 formerly disadvantaged farmers who have inherited Ulimocor farms are still expecting a settlement of their land tenure situation in order to secure the necessary funding for the upgrading and expansion of their activities.

Beef production

A great number of commercial farms are geared towards the production of beef meat. These are generally situated in areas where the carrying capacity remains good (4-6 ha / LSU), mainly due to sufficient rainfall. Meat is either sold to abattoirs, butchers or traders who organise stockfairs.

An interesting fact is that such farmers generally buy a number of cattle from the communal areas, mainly through traders and especially during winter and drought period when cattle can be acquired at low prices from communal farmers.

Small stock production

Small stock production occupies the lower rainfall portions of commercial farming districts. The main productions are merino sheep and angora goats although a number of farms also produce meat, mainly for the communal areas market. Wool is marketed through BKB in Port Elizabeth. Most of these farms, especially those close to the communal areas or to the main roads are suffering from stock theft.

Game farms

Game farming is rapidly expanding throughout the commercial farms of the Amatola District. This rapid expansion is mainly linked to two factors : the prevalence and increase in stock theft and the uncertainty regarding the prices of domestic animals.

Farmers do not switch outright to game farming, it is generally initiated as a sideline activity because of huge capital investment necessary for setting up a game farming venture (fencing costs, building of accommodation). Therefore, game farming ventures are often the result of a grouping of neighbouring farmers into a conservancy scheme

whereby each farmer commits piece of land to the conservancy and shares the cost and benefits of his participation according to its share of land given to the conservancy scheme.

2.7. Forests

For most, State forests are found in the districts neighbouring the Amatola Range, along the former Transkei coastline and in the Nqamakwe and Tsomo districts and were mostly owned by the former bantustans. They are either “natural” or planted forests. With regard to “natural” forests, inhabitants from neighbouring villages collect firewood from them and send their cattle there for grazing. With regard to planted forests, the locals can be employed as foresters, a situation that has become increasingly rare since 1994.

Tensions between communities and forestry operators are often tense as communities would like to become more involved in the management of forestry. A number of incidents around the Hogsback forest are a reminder of such claims (communities orchestrating fires within the plantations).

The number of sawmills in the area has considerably diminished. The only remaining major sawmill can be found in Stutterheim and provides employment to communities from as far as the Keiskammahoek district. A private sawmill has been set up in the Mpopo district.

2.8. Nature reserves and game reserves

The development of tourist activities in this area is limited due to its remoteness and difficulty of access.

2.9. Parastatal land

The main issue revolves around the disposal and transfer of the former bantustans agricultural assets (from Ulimocor and Tracor). However, the process is not yet finalised and pressures from neighbouring communities around such state assets are mounting. The main assets are :

- the pineapple production farms in the Peddie district ;
- the irrigation schemes along the Fish and Keiskamma Rivers;
- the citrus farms along the Upper Kat Valley.

A political decision will have to be made in order to decide whether such assets should be transferred to whole communities or to private individuals. In the case for instance of citrus production, land invasions of productive farms are undermining the success of such ventures.

2.10. Land related problem areas

There are a number of areas where land-related issues were seen as the main problem. The issue is that of tenure and land ownership. Most of these areas are situated within what used to be “Released areas”, that is land that was retroceded to the homelands. Part of the land was turned into trust tenure to accommodate the displaced and former farm-workers, the rest of the land was either leased or sold mostly to wealthy individuals with connections within the bantustans administrations.

Therefore, land related tensions are very strong between the overpopulated villages and the absentee landlords. Land hungry communities are invading semi-abandoned prime agricultural land. A number of such communities are actually descending from farm-workers families and they therefore claim to have a very justified right over these farms.

2.11. Coastal areas

Due to its particular agro-ecological setting and the tourism potential, the coastal area stands apart as a given area. It can be roughly subdivided into two separate areas :

- the Western Coastal areas that stretches to the West of East London, towards Port Elizabeth along the R56. They include perishable production farms, holiday resorts (especially the Mpekweni Sun) and communal areas benefiting from employment in the tourism sector, income opportunities through the marketing of arts and craft and finally accessibility of urban centres through the presence of a coastal major road ;
- the Eastern Coastal area, stretching from East London through the Transkei Wild Coast. The main difference with the Western area is the absence of coastal road and poor accessibility. In the former Transkei area, tensions are rife between communities and private holiday resorts operators regarding the sharing of tourism benefits. Environmental degradation of the coastline is also a concern.

It is also quite surprising to witness the lack of utilisation of marine resources through fishing or related activities along the coastline, except in the form of casual leisure fishing.

3. An understanding of spatial dynamics and their impact on rural dynamics: the main explanatory variables

3.1. The legacy of apartheid and bantustan policies

Apartheid policies, which stopped only recently, left strong marks on the landscape and the organisation of space. Apartheid policies resulted mainly in :

- the differentiation of land tenure systems : freehold in commercial areas ; mixed and extremely complex tenure systems in communal areas , resulting from successive administrations and legislation thus creating many strata which, today, have given rise to numerous conflicts and claims. Furthermore, one finds tribal lands, communal lands, trust lands and private lands. In fact, the situation is much more complex than that. While this was the situation until the independence of Ciskei and Transkei, the bantustans' governments then set up assumed the right to own all land, while only land for collective use (through a headman) or land under lease were allowed;
- the appropriation of the natural resources which were most favourable to commercial agriculture (regular rainfall patterns, low and flat areas for mechanised agriculture, etc.) and setting up white commercial farms in the border region and the coastal area westward (former pineapple production basin). Of course, the characteristics of natural resources could not be used as the only explanation for ethnic spatial distribution. Even if there is an indirect link between them, Frontier wars and the fact that communities are closer to or further away from urban centres and major roads have also played an important role;
- population displacements : forced removals of black spots, villagers and private Xhosa farmers who resided in "white areas", in the border region or other regions of the country, but also white farmers whom were expropriated when Ciskei and Transkei became independent. The demographic pressure resulting from the displacements in former Ciskei and Transkei, reinforced by the attraction of generating extra-agricultural incomes via migration, especially since black agriculture was not in a position to compete with white commercial farmers for economic reasons, in so far as the attribution of subsidies was unequal. This pressure as well as the deregulation of the local mechanisms of the management of the commons, which results from population flows, could also be the cause of erosive phenomena that are ground for concern. Furthermore, a few black villages still exist in the border region. Conflicts with surrounding farm owners have developed since 1994, mainly due to an important wave of farmworkers' evictions ;
- the application of the betterment planning policy in many villages, a policy which radically modifies housing practices (grouping in residential areas), exploitation practices as well as practices of management of the environment (delimitation of areas suitable for cultivation on top of hills and by default, of grazing areas on the rest of the communal territory). This policy, among others, contributed to deregulating local mechanisms for the management of the commons. Betterment policies were applied more vigorously in former Ciskei than former Transkei.

The development of rural space by the former bantustans government resulted in the production of scattered areas in which one can find :

- areas in which investments were consistent in the field of agriculture. These investments concerned the implementation of irrigation infrastructures and/or labour intensive farms. Everywhere, State services were always available and their disappearance, after 1994, have created serious land tenure as well as investment valorisation problems, transfer to private entrepreneurs, not to mention the fact that many civil servants have not been paid salaries;
- areas in which expropriation of commercial producers resulted in the relative abandonment of agricultural production. These areas are considerably encroached whereas in the neighbouring villages, pressure on the resources is considerable and agricultural abandonment is intense. Land tenure conflicts become accentuated as communities are invading those farms;
- maintaining commercial parastatal farms near the coast;
- the creation or maintenance of state forests, mainly in the highly uneven areas of Amatola mountain range for commercial or ecological purposes;
- the investment in urban and “rurban” areas (roads, electricity, water conveyance), which reinforces the attractiveness of towns and the intensity of the migration phenomena.

Concerning agricultural production, this policy resulted in the coexistence of areas in which problems are intensified since 1994, and of marginal areas in which agricultural abandonment is considerable. After the disappearance of bantustan governments, the ecological, economic and social results of their policies can be heavily felt.

In addition to the identification of the present diversity of the situations, the surveys made enabled the gathering of numerous information relating to the transformations in process. They also enabled the identification of evolution factors that might not be directly linked to the local or regional situations, as with the characteristics of the labour market, and in particular the relationships with the main urban and industrial centres of the country (Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

3.2. The impact of migration

Towns offer employment opportunities in the secondary and tertiary sectors and offer improved access to health, education and administrative services. Where one lives in relation to the city and to industrial sites, in relation to major roads and to transport systems strongly influence the spatial structuration.

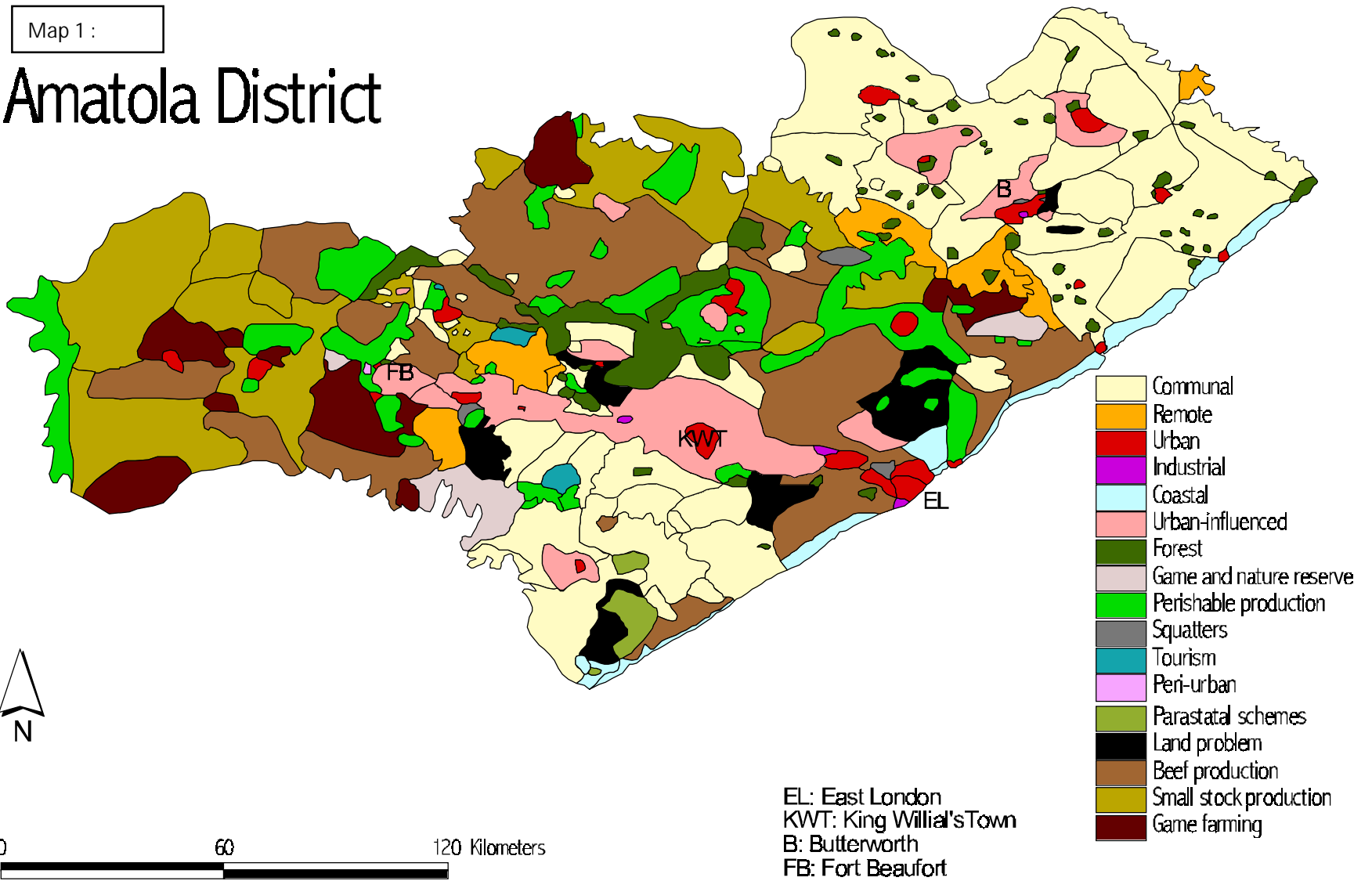
The spatial distribution of the population is very irregular. The distribution concentrates essentially in the central territorial continuum of the urban and “rurban” areas (East London-King William’s Town) and, to a lesser extent, around Butterworth. This situation results, firstly, from the forced removal of the populations mentioned above, and secondly, from the tax assistance policy to industries in former bantustans and from the migration phenomena, which can be categorised in the following way :

- pendular migration towards neighbouring urban and industrial areas to go to work;
- step by step migrations : a young family member from a remote communal area migrates at first towards the “rurban” area, then towards a township, thus progressively coming closer to the labour market. Family members are thus scattered. Even while it is no longer inhabited, the house of the native village, in the communal area, is being kept (it is the concept of multiple homestead households, DE WET);
- migrations from remote communal areas to distant urban and industrial centres. Migrants usually send a portion of their income to their family. However, miners returning to the village after they have been made redundant has been a frequent occurrence during the last years and there appears to be a shift from distant migrations to regional migrations.

Depending on where one lives in relation to towns or to small rural towns, and depending on the transport conditions to reach them, we can distinguish various concentric areas around employment centres and major roads: the “rurban” ring which is, in some way, the dormitory rural area for the urban labour, the peri-urban ring and the remote communal areas. In each case, the demographic characteristics, the migration flux, the structure of the incomes, the functions attributed to agricultural production and the work force it employs, are specific and inter-dependent.

Map 1 :

Amatola District



3.3. The impact of natural resources

Due to its influence on the amount of rainfall, proximity to the coast helped define spatial distribution under apartheid as well as the agricultural utilisation of the land. But this factor is also affected by transport conditions, due to the position of major roads, urban employment and the development of economic sites and activities.

In the remote communal areas, the characteristics of the natural resources play an important role, especially since, locally, agriculture often represents the only productive activity. This is the case for the remote valleys of former Ciskei and large tracts of former Transkei, in which some form of peasant systems have remained.

The situations encountered on the coastal area are quite specific : importance of private initiative, domestic employment and employment in the tourist sector, major communication roads in the Western part of the district. However, the Eastern part suffers from its inaccessibility.

4. *A spatial model of the Amatola District*

We are now going to elaborate a spatial model of the Amatola District. We are therefore introducing the concept of territorial systems. A territorial system is a portion of space characterised by a given situation and organised as a whole entity. This organisation of the entity relies on a network of relationships between spatial units and actors that create specific spatial relationship, in a given environment.

Our hypothesis is that the Amatola District can be broken into three separate territorial systems :

- an urban biased sub-system revolving around East London,
- an agriculture based sub-system in the commercial areas (Border Region, Fort Beaufort, Adelaide and Bedford districts),
- a rural sub-system revolving around Butterworth in the western part of former Transkei.

4.1. The East London magnet

The highly urbanised network of towns and townships spanning from East London to King William's Town along the N2 stretches its influence to most rural areas of the former Ciskei.

The whole system relies on two fragile pillars:

- the industrial and services activities of the East London-King William's Town area ;
- the huge provincial administration providing civil servants jobs and economic opportunities through various tenders.

The relative wealth of this area acts as a very strong magnet for the whole region as people thrive to reap a little benefit and income from this pole of activity. This obviously has a strong impact on migration patterns as people leave the rural areas to seek a better life in urban centres.

Rural areas of the former Ciskei do not generate any agricultural surpluses. A consumption orientated and income transfer (welfare payouts, civil servants salaries and remittances) based economy runs most of these areas. The productive base of such rural areas (mainly agriculture) has mostly disappeared. The little income generating activities, apart from a few fragile agricultural success stories (stock farming and citrus farming), are centred around the channelling of funds coming from outside (services and trade) and the transport (taxi) industry an essential component for the smooth running of the whole economic system (assisting migration patterns and the provision of consumption goods).

4.2. The crisis in commercial areas

The loose network of rural towns and their rural hinterland in what used to be the former Republic of South Africa is showing clear signs of a mounting crisis. Most of these towns are suffering from a degradation of town services.

Numerous businesses are leaving such towns or downsizing their activities. Most of these towns used to benefit from the thriving surrounding rural activities. Money earned on the commercial farms would be reinvested in such urban centres before. New priorities (upgrading of townships) and limited funding have put such towns in a state of jeopardy.

Surrounding commercial farms are suffering from:

- the restructuring of the agricultural sector (marketing boards and co-operatives) which makes profits harder to come by as marketing related risk is increased;
- the downsizing of State support services (especially the maintenance of by-roads leading to the farms);
- increased insecurity in the form of stock theft and farm attacks.

A lot of such farms are now very hard to sell, especially those bordering the former bantustans. Most farmers are attempting to diversify production in numerous ways:

- most are abandoning small stock production due to stock theft;
- those neighbouring the former bantustans are engaging in vegetable farming (cabbages, potatoes...) to cater for the huge markets that those densely populated areas represent;
- a number of them are attempting to start up game farming ventures.

4.3. The building of a rural network in Transkei

Although Transkei is often referred to as a crisis area, the recent dynamics highlighted during the project show a trend in endogenous development triggered by the upgrading of infrastructures. It would appear that the Eastern part of Transkei is undergoing a more spatially balanced development than, for instance, the East London area.

The trading business is thriving and major businesses from Butterworth are now opening branches in the neighbouring towns. The trade and marketing sectors are thriving with the recent development of improved transport infrastructure.

Compared to the former Ciskei's rural areas, it appears clearly that agricultural activities are still playing an essential role in the region's livelihoods. We can also witness embryos of commodity chains being developed, especially around the wool growing areas.

4.4. The relationships between systems

There are strong linkages between the commercial farming areas (especially Cathcart, Stutterheim and Komga magisterial districts) and the former Transkei. Transkei is proving to be a very lucrative markets for cash crops (especially cabbages) being grown on the commercial farms. The marketing can take place in the following ways :

- either the farmer travels to Butterworth to deliver the goods,
- or traders from Transkei travel to the farms to collect the fresh produce.

Animal production is also a sector where exchanges are strong, during drought periods (especially winter), commercial farmers will drive up to Transkei to purchase cattle from the communal areas at low prices and then raise them on their excess grazing camps. Likewise, traders from Transkei will come and buy cattle and small stock from the commercial farmers.

The commercial farming areas are also very much focused towards the urban centres of East London and King William's Town. There is a weekly agricultural market in King William's Town and a number of agro-industries in East London (dairy, tomato packing factory...) that provide a number of marketing opportunities for fresh produce. Animal production is either geared towards the monopolistic butcheries of East London or are sold live to farmers of Free State. A number of livestock farmers double themselves as agents who buy and sell stock, this sideline is proving to be a very lucrative activity.

Migration and flows of population are obviously key elements in the relationships between the three systems. Migration patterns have been described in part 2.

5. Some widespread issues

5.1. The development of squatter camps, land invasions

The mushrooming of squatter camps around former bantustans towns is a widespread phenomenon. It leads to an increase pressure on local councils to deliver services to such areas and to tensions between TLC and TRC, both refusing to take responsibility and jurisdiction over such areas.

Land invasions are also occurring within what is generally described as “State Land”. Former bantustan’s State or leased farms are being the target of land invasions. This phenomenon is going to make the redistribution of State assets a very difficult business.

5.2. The insecurity on commercial farms and in communal areas

The commercial farms are increasingly facing a security problem, farm murders often make the headlines but theft is far more common and prevalent. This has forced a number of farmers to switch production systems. There is a tendency to switch livestock farming practices from small stock (goats and sheep) to large stock (cattle), especially in vulnerable areas, near urban centres, main roads and former bantustans areas. The rapid development of game farms can also be partly linked to the increase in stock theft (although poaching then becomes a concern).

However, theft is not only an issue for commercial farmers. Stock and crop theft is also widespread in communal areas and is often seen as a limiting factor to the development of agricultural enterprises. The theft of fences from grazing areas to fence off residential areas and gardens is also a problem.

5.3. Tensions between local authorities and the issue of Administrative boundaries

Tension and conflict between TRC and traditional authorities is more of a rule than an exception. It was reported to be a major issue in most districts of the former Transkei as chiefs are battling with TRC over the issue of land allocation and land use planning. However, in the former Ciskei, the “civil” society seems to have taken over local politics and its bases are very much entrenched. Traditional leaders in the former Ciskei have now accepted their limited consultative role.

In some instances, local authorities are battling over the inclusion or exclusion of certain areas in their Magisterial district. Such conflicts are depleting precious resources within local authorities.

In terms of administrative boundaries, one should not be afraid to question the existing boundaries between magisterial district, especially on a practical basis. Such boundaries are mostly the result of a very ancient administrative system inherited from British rule. They are sometimes no longer adapted to the current situation (for instance, people living within the Southern part of the Keiskammahoek district are intimately linked, in economic terms, to the town of Middledrift; in a similar manner, people from the Southern part of the King William’s Town district have a far easier access through the R56 to East London).

5.4. The breakdown of State support services

Two services are mainly incriminated: extension services and public works. The reintegration of bantustans within the New South Africa has meant a decline of State support services, which were deemed uneconomic.

The disbanding of the bantustans agricultural corporations has left a vacuum that has created a decline in most productive areas that used to be run by parastatals (irrigation schemes, dairy schemes, pineapple schemes, citrus schemes and maize schemes...). Most of these badly managed schemes are now being semi-abandoned with a costly degradation of related infrastructure.

The closure of state supported tractor ploughing services is also often stated as a major reason for the agricultural decline in communal areas.

Most rural areas are also complaining about the quasi absence of extension services. There is clearly a lack of motivation on behalf of extension officers. Most are now stationed in small urban centres and are lacking direction and transport to operate in a suitable manner.

The end of tax relief for Border industries has also led to the closure of numerous factories and has exacerbated the unemployment crisis within the region.

Public works are mainly incriminated in commercial farming areas. There has been a probably welcome shift in priorities in terms of transport infrastructure upgrading and maintenance. Whereas former bantustan areas are seeing new roads being built or upgraded, isolated commercial farms are complaining about the poor maintenance of access roads that is jeopardising their already difficult situation.

6. Conclusion

A survey of such a diverse region raises a number of questions regarding:

- the institutions required to foster the economic development of such a diverse of region and to redress the inequalities of the past;
- the economic bases that could be supported to assist the objective of regional development;
- the type of research work that should be encouraged to further the understanding and the development of the Amatola region.

The sheer diversity of situations within the jurisdiction of the Amatola District Council and the three spatial systems highlighted question the relevance of having a single entity dealing with development issues in the region. Setting up priorities for different areas characterised by totally different and sometimes conflicting development problems is no easy task. However the concept of an holistic institution governing over this diversity will certainly facilitate the lessening of spatial and development imbalances as long as the specific problems are clearly stated and understood. At a more local level, one can also question the need to separate the institutions governing urban and rural areas. Town and country are proving to be so closely linked that it might be relevant to implement a single political institution with jurisdiction over both urban and rural areas. This could enable a rebalancing of the attractiveness of both town and country

The productive base of the whole regions lies within the commercial farming areas and a few large urban centres such as East London. The economy basically revolves around the transfer of people, goods and financial resources from such productive areas to the rural hinterland where little surplus is produced. In a traditional economic model, urban centres would stimulate the development of activities within the rural hinterland to satisfy the needs of such centres. The very strong socio-economic engineering of apartheid policies has only stimulated production within the white farming areas and the urban centres. Whole tracts of space, namely the former bantustans, have been deliberately left on the fringes of the mainstream economy fulfilling the single purpose of labour reservoirs for the system. The little productive activities taking place within such areas were mainly encouraged in order to ensure the reproduction of such labour (subsistence farming). However, the disbanding of previous policies has not yet given fruit. The recent exposure to the globalised economy has shaken the traditional economic activities of commercial farms and urban centres and has not yet offered any benefits to the communal areas. In fact, the disbanding of previous policies, linked with the relative withdrawal of State intervention, appears to have reinforced the previous system of negative interaction between town and country (one must however take into account the very small timeframe, a mere five years, since the transformation of South African politics). Such a harsh statement can, in fact questioned by the current dynamics taking place in Transkei where signs of endogenous development are visible, mainly through the explosion of the informal economy. It is therefore essential to assist this form of endogenous development and to stimulate its appearance in other parts of communal areas, namely the former Ciskei.

Local production of wealth within rural areas is limited mainly to agricultural production in a broad sense (forestry, agro-transformation...) and to the development of tourism. Although local productive activities would stimulate other activities (services, transport, trade), they currently mainly rely on the arrival of outside wealth (pensions, salaries, remittances...). It is therefore essential to be able to understand and to build up models, at the very local level :

- the flows of incoming money ;
- how this money is being distributed amongst the community;
- what proportion of this money is being invested locally in productive ventures;
- where does this money flows back to and how it could be retained locally to foster local economic development;
- how outside goods and services being bought could be produced locally.

Encouraging local economic development also requires, in communal areas, to understand the local management systems of resources that could be channelled into productive activities and to identify the bottlenecks hampering the development of such activities.

Looking back at the regional level, it is essential to identify the various marketing channels and economic activities ensuring the smooth running of this wealth transfer system in order to envisage how they could be influenced into assisting local economic development.

The key challenge is likely to be how to gear public intervention to foster a more spatially balanced development of the district. The “ public actor ” (namely the Provincial legislature, the District Council and the TRCs) can be positioned as a facilitator between the three systems and their complex and diversified networks of local actors. How can this “ public actor ” develop and implement policy in order to channel the existing flows, to modify existing networks, to create new networks and eventually to lead to the creation of a new spatial organisation ?

7. References

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