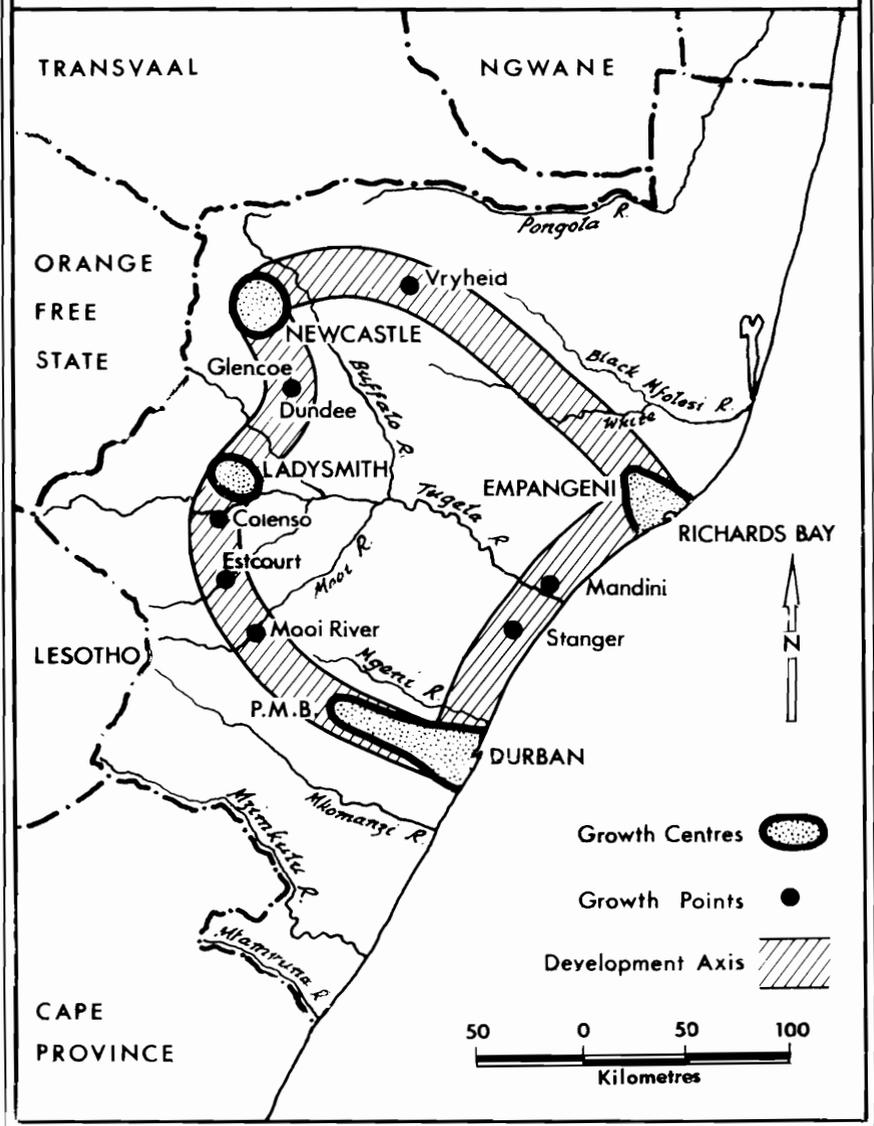


DEVELOPMENT IN NATAL



Town and Regional Planning in Natal

ABSTRACT

The Province of Natal has an organisation for physical planning which is unique in the Republic of South Africa. It is built around the Town and Regional Planning Commission, a statutory body which is responsible for advising the Administrator-in-Executive Committee of the Province on physical planning policy, and for guiding local authorities in the exercise of their town planning powers. This article sketches the physical background, administrative setting, problems and achievements of the Commission during its 21 year life as well as proposals for its future activities.

The Background to Development in Natal

Natal covers an area of 8 700 000 ha, making up seven per cent of the total area of the Republic. It stretches from the sea to the Drakensberg escarpment which rises to a height of 3 400 metres and forms the watershed between eastward and westward flowing rivers. Considerable variation in altitude and land-form in a comparatively small area results in a wide range of local climates ranging from sub-tropical to alpine and from humid to dry, and a correspondingly wide range of soils, vegetation and farming and forestry activities.

The port of Durban is the busiest in Africa. The city of Durban and its metropolitan hinterland have a population of 1 189 500 which makes it South Africa's third largest metropolitan area after Johannesburg and Cape Town.

The State, as part of its policy of industrial decentralisation has recently launched two new *growth points* of major significance in Natal. One is Richards Bay, where a bulk port is being established and an aluminium smelter is already in production. The next oil refinery will be built there and this will stimulate development of the Zululand hinterland.

The other is at Newcastle in the Tugela Basin where South Africa's third integrated steel works is being built at a cost of some R100 000 000 per year over the next ten years. This, together with ancillary, development, is likely to boost the town's population to 255 000 in 1990.

The Planning Set-up in Natal

Ultimate authority over physical planning in Natal rests in the Administrator-in-Executive Committee, but in order to assist it a statutory body known as the Town and Regional Planning Commission was created by the Town Planning Ordinance (Natal) No. 27 of 1949.

The Commission meets monthly, and consists of up to eleven members appointed by the Administrator. They are prominent laymen, selected from various walks of life and from as wide a geographical range over the province as possible. The Commission is provided with office accommodation and its work is *performed at the cost of the Natal Provincial Administration but under the*

direction and control of the Commission, by officers and servants appointed by the Administrator in terms of and subject to the laws governing the public service of the Republic. Apart from its running expenses, the Commission is provided with an annual grant voted by the Provincial Council, currently amounting to some R178 500 which it spends mainly on sponsored research by outside agencies, and on publication of this research and its own reports.

The Commission advises the Administrator on all questions of policy affecting physical planning and land subdivision. It is responsible for advising local authorities on town planning. It may itself prepare town planning schemes for areas outside local authority control. The Commission is responsible for conducting regional surveys and preparing regional plans. It may enter into contracts with any persons or organisations for the performance of its functions.

A body, known as the Private Township Board is responsible for advising the Administrator on technical details of applications for permission to subdivide land. The Board consists mainly of officials and is served by its own staff, but the staff of the Commission advise it on the planning implications of any applications to subdivide land.

Finally, completing the picture, there is a special Town Planning Appeals Board to which individual citizens may appeal if they are aggrieved by a decision of a local authority to grant or refuse permission to develop or use land of a town planning scheme. The Commission's representative attends the hearing of all appeals.

At first sight, this organisational set-up may appear to be unnecessarily complicated, but it works well — at any rate in the local conditions in Natal. The main reason may be that it brings into the planning process a finely balanced amalgam of politician and layman, professional planner and allied technologist, civil servant and informed private citizen, without allowing any one group to dominate the process. It certainly creates a stimulating and challenging environment for the professional planner.

Regional Planning

The Commission's activities in the regional planning field have been devoted to the following main objectives:

- (a) Liaison — to maintain contact with and interchange information with authorities, institutions and individuals on planning matters.
- (b) Environmental Preservation — to sponsor surveys and research aimed at discovering what natural, unpolluted and undisturbed conditions are in rivers, sea, air, soil and plant communities and what steps may be taken to rehabilitate disturbed areas and prevent future degradation.
- (c) Planning of regions — to survey resources, measure development potential and prepare regional, sub-regional and metropolitan plans to guide future development of those areas into the most satisfactory pattern.
- (d) Provincial Administration — to advise the Administrator on physical planning policy.
- (e) Information — to maintain an information bank in connection with its functions.

The Commission's past work is summarised in the list of publications which appears at the end of this article.

For many years efforts were concentrated particularly on the Tugela Basin, a

promising but undeveloped region covering about a third of Natal. The potential of this region has now been recognised with the decision to establish a steelworks at Newcastle and to stimulate the development of several points. Apart from making an analysis of the region's development potential, the Commission's main concern has been to plead for comprehensive planning and development, taking full account of ecological factors.

A study of the 80km stretch of coastline north of Durban was published in 1962. Its main objective was to establish development criteria for this, at that time little developed resort area and to lay down a policy to guide decisions on development applications. The report has had a strong influence on thinking about coastal resort development and has enabled provincial authorities to maintain firm and consistent control.

The accent has now shifted to rounding off many years of planning work on the highly urbanised Pietermaritzburg - Durban region. An outline regional plan and a first report on a metropolitan plan for Greater Durban are being produced. These plans will do no more than set out principles and propose a general development pattern, but if they are approved they will form a firm base for the preparation of more detailed plans.

A report with similar aims is being prepared on the planning of the South Coast, but the problems are different. This stretch of coastline has a tremendous natural potential which was all but wrecked by a speculative land subdivision spree in the late 1940s which left a ribbon of over 20 000 small plots in ghost townships along the sea shore. Strict control over land subdivision and development is now exercised by provincial authority, based on a requirement that a would-be developer must prove *necessity for development purposes and desirability in the public interest*, but along the South Coast positive rehabilitation will be needed.

A study has recently been published which outlines the concept of a *green belt* system to the north of Pietermaritzburg. This embraces special features such as Midmar and Albert Falls Lakes, Otto's Bluff, the Voortrekker routes and the northern tree-clad escarpment. It is hoped to encourage public authorities and private individuals to co-operate in conserving these historical and natural amenities which fringe the city's intensive urban development.

There is an exploding interest in recreation in Natal which boasts a seaboard of 480km, 34 wild life parks and nature reserves and the spectacular Drakensberg. Research and planning are being undertaken to introduce the public to these recreation, natural and historically interesting areas while still preserving wilderness areas.

In the remaining areas of Natal basic resource surveys and data collection proceed as staff and financial resources permit.

Town Planning

The Town Planning Ordinance authorises local authorities to prepare and enforce town planning schemes, which have largely taken the form of use-zoning plans, reservation of land needed for public purposes and the preservation of basic amenity.

Public opinion and that of specialist departments appear to be ripe for a step forward into more positive master plans and development programmes in which local authorities, provincial and government financing and executive depart-

ments are drawn more closely into the physical planning process. A pilot study is being carried out in Estcourt to develop a procedure for the systematic collection of town planning data. The application of this procedure to other local authorities will materially assist in making this wider integration possible.

Durban and Pietermaritzburg employ their own planning staff. Almost all the smaller towns and villages employ consultants or have been *lent* the services of the staff of the Director, Town and Regional Planning, for which they pay a proportion of the actual cost ranging from twenty-five per cent to the full amount depending on their financial strength. This latter arrangement is popular and 69 local authorities receive professional advice in the preparation of their town planning schemes and their implementation.

The Commission is conducting pioneering work into formulating policy statements to guide local authorities in accommodating new types of development. A report on *cluster housing* is to be issued which will set out guide lines to be followed in permitting this form of medium density development which falls between the customary *single dwelling house on its own lot* and the *block of flats*. A similar report is being prepared on the planning, density and controls to be considered if a local authority wishes to allow *mobile home parks* within its boundaries.

The Commission has the responsibility of ensuring that all local planning authorities make use of their planning powers to best advantage. No town planning scheme in the Province may be adopted or amended without reference to the Commission which thereby keeps a *watching brief* on local authorities. This it has always done without fear or favour, and its obvious objectivity and concern for the public welfare have given the Commission an excellent public image.

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NATAL TOWN AND REGIONAL PLANNING REPORTS

Volume 1	<i>The Tugela Basin</i> . First Interim Report. 1953.	R3,50
Volume 2	<i>Pietermaritzburg Central Area Survey</i> . 1960.	R4,00
Volume 3	<i>Industry in Greater Durban, Part I</i> . 1961.	R4,90
Volume 4	<i>Industry in Greater Durban, Part II</i> . 1959.	R2,25
Volume 5	<i>Towards a Plan for the Tugela Basin</i> . Second Interim Report. 1960.	R3,00
Volume 6	<i>The Population and Labour Resources of Natal</i> . 1961.	R4,50
Volume 7	<i>Water Resources and Water Requirements within the Umgeni Catchment</i> . (out of print). 1961.	
Volume 8	<i>Natal North Coast Survey</i> . 1962.	R4,00
Volume 9	<i>Railway Rates and the Location of Industry in Natal</i> . 1966.	R4,00
Volume 10	<i>Plant Ecology of the Tugela Basin</i> . 1967.	R4,00
	Set of 6 map-sheets in full colour.	R1,30
	Separate sheets each.	R0,22

<i>Town and regional planning in Natal</i>	31
Volume 11 <i>The Possibility of Integrated Forestry Industry in the Tugela Basin.</i> 1965	R0,85
Volume 12 <i>The Water Resources of the Illovo River.</i> 1965.	R0,60
Volume 13 <i>Water Quality and Abatement of Pollution in Natal Rivers.</i> Part I. Objectives of river surveys. Description of methods used and discussion of water quality criteria. 1968.	R3,40
Part II. A survey of the 'Three Rivers Region' of Natal, the region between the Tugela and Umkomaas rivers. 1968.	R7,15
Part III. A survey of the Tugela river and its tributaries. 1968.	R2,80
Part IV. A survey of the rivers of Northern Natal and Zululand 1969.	R2,00
Part V. A survey of the rivers of Southern Natal.	—
Part VI. Factors Affecting Water Quality in the Sugar Growing Areas of Natal.	R6,40
Volume 14 <i>The Disposal of Effluents into the Sea off the Natal Coast.</i> 1969.	R7,20
Volume 15 <i>Soils of the Tugela Basin.</i> 1969 with 13 map sheets in full colour.	R9,50
Maps per sheet	R0,50
Volume 16 <i>Diversion of Water to the Upper Region of the Tugela Basin.</i> 1969.	R0,45
Volume 17 <i>The Water Resources of the Coastal Areas of Northern Natal and Zululand.</i> 1971.	R3,50
Volume 18 <i>The Water Resources of the Natal South Coast.</i> 1971.	R7,00
Volume 19 <i>The Agricultural and Related Development of the Tugela Basin and its Influent Surrounds.</i> 1972.	R20,00
Volume 20 <i>Town and Regional Planning Study Tour, October-November, 1971. Chairman's Report 1972.</i>	R1,00
Volume 21 <i>Town and Regional Planning in Natal.</i> A Study of the Commission's activities in its Twenty-first year. 1972.	R1,00
Volume 22 <i>Storage of Water on the Zululand Coastal Plains.</i>	R1,20
Volume 23 <i>A Survey of the Upper Umgeni River Catchment.</i>	R1,00