

EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL TERRITORIES AND CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE PORT SHEPSTONE AREA (KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa)¹

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present the evolution of the Port Shepstone Area in terms of political territories from the apartheid era to 2001. The Port Shepstone area can be defined as one transect from the coast (mainly urban white - indian, high income orientated) to the hinterland (mainly rural black, low income orientated). Port Shepstone is also linked to the urban coastal network from the Hibiscus Coast (from Hibberdene to Port Edward). Changes in the political territories in this area are complex: an apartheid situation with the coexistence between many different segregated authorities, a transition era with an effort of amalgamation of the white-indian area (Port Shepstone TLC) but still a rural tribal area inland, and the beginning of a new territorial time: 2000 and the new demarcation with an integrated local municipality for the whole Port Shepstone Area (Hibiscus Coast Municipality) and the proclamation of the new Ugu District Council with potential conflicts between the different levels including the traditional leadership issue. We will take the example of a possible marina development to show the contradictions related to the localised development of Port Shepstone.

Key words

Territorial changes – Demarcation – Conflicts- Development- Contradictions

Introduction

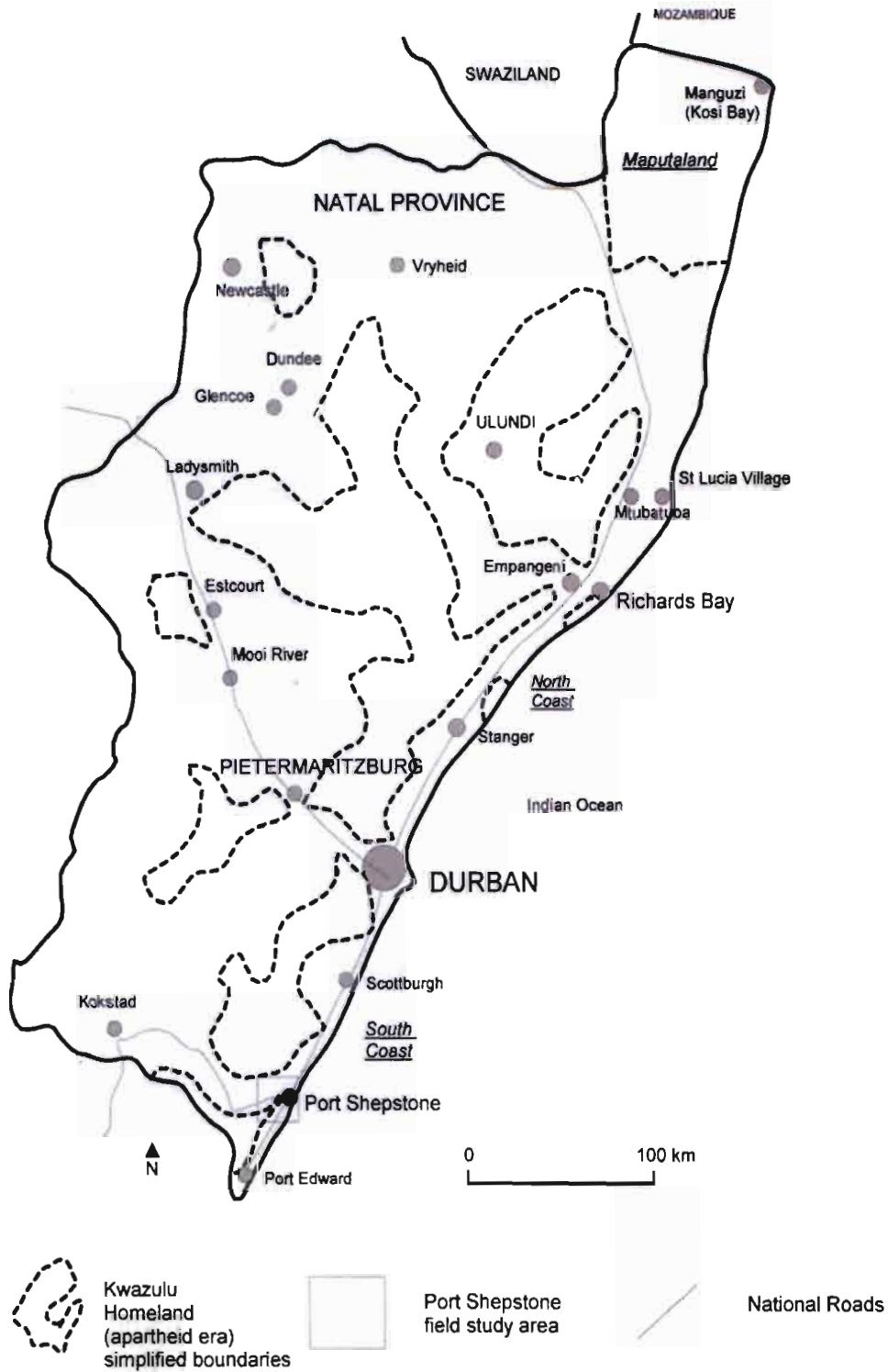
Port Shepstone is located on the South Coast of Kwazulu-Natal, 120 km south of Durban (figure 1). It is a small industrial coastal town with approximately 15 000 inhabitants. Its main functions are to be the administrative and magisterial capital for the entire Hibiscus Coast region. With the inland indian and african areas, Port Shepstone has a functional area of more than 70 000 inhabitants. This territory is determined, as elsewhere in South Africa, by the legacy of the apartheid era, seen here essentially by inequality of development between the suburbs. Port Shepstone is original in having no formal african township but only very populated black areas mixing periurban, informal urban and rural categories. Port Shepstone is the only small industrial town of the Hibiscus Coast which is characterised by a line of dynamic coastal resorts (Margate, Ramsgate...). The local priorities take place at the intersection of an *integrated development diffusion* and the renovation of a dusty-declining city. Post-apartheid territorial policies amalgamate all the categories between urban and rural areas in the same local municipalities. The management of these new territories can be perceived as a diffusion of the urban practices and behaviours to the rural areas. The urban management can be defined as the art of orchestrating the policies, programs, and projects which contribute to the regulation of the urban demand in infrastructures, services, housing and jobs with the clear objective to improve the urban productivity (DAVEY, 1993²). Therefore “*the*

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² Cited in JAGLIN 1993

performances of urban management are narrowly determined by three categories of factors: the institutional and financial bodies, the political and economical environment and the people.” (JAGLIN 1993). This paper, after specifying the limits of the functional area of Port Shepstone will insist on two of these categories of factors: the institutional territorial bodies and their evolution since the end of apartheid and the local stakeholder perceptions in relation with one development strategy to rehabilitate the city image: the marina project.

FIGURE 1 - NATAL PROVINCE AND FORMER KWAZULU HOMELAND
LOCATION OF PORT SHEPSTONE AREA



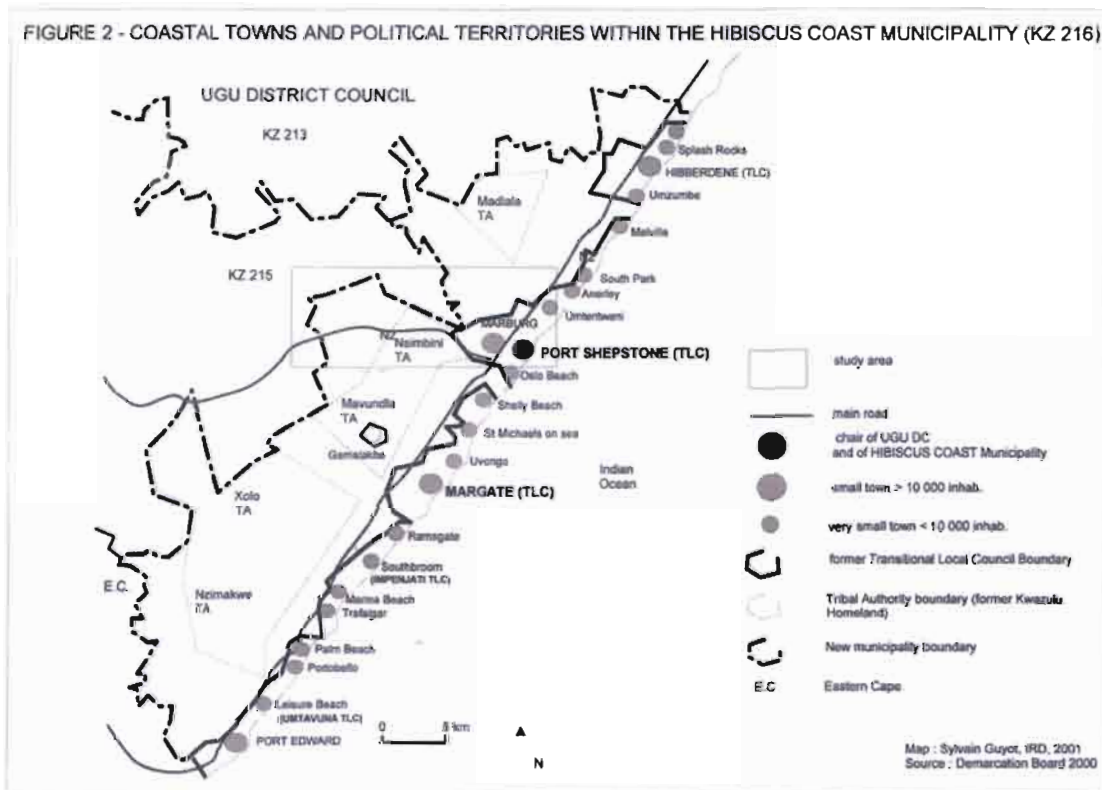
Sylvain GUYOT, IRD, 2001

The spatial definition of Port Shepstone

Two spatial logics define Port Shepstone. The first one is coastal. The second spatial logic is inland. We can describe a functional area for Port Shepstone in relation with these two parameters.

Port Shepstone, a small town which commands an urban network of smaller coastal towns

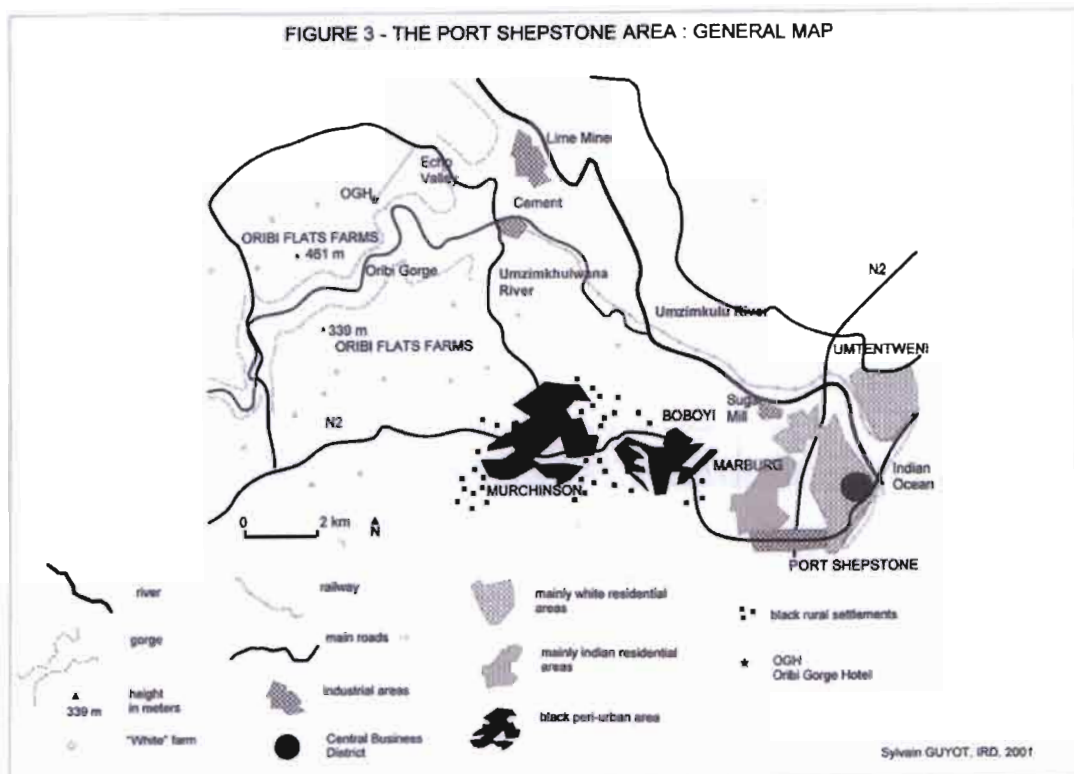
The Hibiscus Coast is a urban continuum from Hibberdene to Ramsgate then discontinued until Port Edward (figure 2) which is the border with the former Transkei (Eastern Cape). However the real influence of Port Shepstone is attenuating quickly to the south because of Margate. It is a major coastal resort and the tourist capital of the South Coast. To the north the little coastal towns of Umtentweni, Sea Park, Anerley and South Port have better links with Port Shepstone and are its white suburbs. It is quite difficult for Port Shepstone to dictate its industrial and arduous character in this network of white coastal resorts. Nevertheless Port Shepstone manages necessary the administrative, political and magisterial. On the other hand for the hinterland inhabitants, essentially african, Port Shepstone stays the area of potential jobs, the rest of the coastal tourism having been controlled by the white population.



Port Shepstone, a small town linked to an African hinterland densely populated: from periurban to rural landscapes.

Port Shepstone is the divergence of the N2 (the freeway coming from Durban) to the hinterland (Kokstad and then Umtata)³. The labour reservoirs of Port Shepstone have been located by the apartheid planners on the two sides of the N2. It is the case for the indian suburb of Marburg (figure 3) and for the black periurban an rural areas of Murchinson and Boboyi (figure 3) belonging to the Nsimbini Tribal Authority linked to the former Kwazulu homeland (figure 4). Then the hinterland, beyond this black enclave, is consisting of white tea and sugar farms (Oribi Flats) and of the tourist area of Oribi Gorge. There is also a lime mine working with a cement factory, directly linked to the economical and tourist logic of the Hibiscus Coast and using Port Shepstone as a business center.

From the coastline to the sugar farms from the hinterland, we can find all the types of areas: the urban administrative (CBD); the white urban residential (Umtentweni) and indian (Marburg); the informal urban residential (squatter camps at the exit of Marburg); the african periurban (Boboyi and Murchinson); the african rural (between the cement factory and Murchinson), and even the white rural (Oribi farms). All together these spaces make the functional area of Port Shepstone with regard to the criteria of *employment area* and the *pendulous migrations*. On the other hand Port Shepstone has less work relationships with the other coastal towns.



The definition of a functional area for Port Shepstone

³ Nevertheless a toll road is continuing to the South (Margate, Ramsgate, Port Edward).

I define the functional space of Port Shepstone (figure 3) as a 20 km strip from the coastline of the Indian Ocean to the hinterland of Oribi Gorge. Table 1 shows the division of the different population groups. The total population can be estimated around 71 000 inhabitants.

TABLE 1: THE DIFFERENT POPULATION GROUPS IN THE PORT SHEPSTONE AREA

groups	% (100 = 71 000 inhabits.)
Black	73
White	11
Indian	14
Coloured	2

Source: Demarcation Board 2000

Table 2 shows the contrasted differences of socio-economic development between the different areas.

TABLE 2 : THE CONTRASTED SOCIO ECONOMIC LEVEL OF THE PORT SHEPSTONE AREA

	The “privileged” ⁴ Oslo Bay - Umtentweni	The “middle class” ⁵ Sheppie - Marburg	The “disadvantaged” ⁶ Boboyi- Murchinson	The “poorest” ⁷ Murchinson rural areas ⁸
Part of the total population of the PS Area [around 71 000 inhabits.]	13 500 (4747 Households) 19%	17 700 (4817 h) 25%	30 700 (5030 h) 44%	8900 (1400h) 12%
Number of people per household	2.9	3.7	6.1	6.4
Main group	White	Indian	Black	Black
% of Households - with less than 6000 R per year	19	21.5	38.9	37.0
- with more than 132,000 R per year	4.5	4.6	0.3	0.0
% of Households with running water at home ⁹	93	84	1.3 ¹⁰	0.5
% of Households with proper sanitation ¹¹	97	89	0.9 ¹²	0.5
% of Households with electricity ¹³	95	90	69.5	66

Source : Demarcation Board 2000

A lot of mistakes were found in this database per ward, so there is no guaranty for the accuracy of these data.

These areas do not have the same levels of priority of development and management. In fact they stayed apart for a long time because of apartheid. Thus, the principal challenge is the socio-spatial integration of

⁴ wards 16-18

⁵ wards 12-17

⁶ wards 21-22-23

⁷ ward 24

⁸ we excluded from the data the 200 white farmers from the area.

⁹ water dwelling

¹⁰ but high proportion of public taps.

¹¹ flush

¹² but high proportion of pit latrine

¹³ local electricity

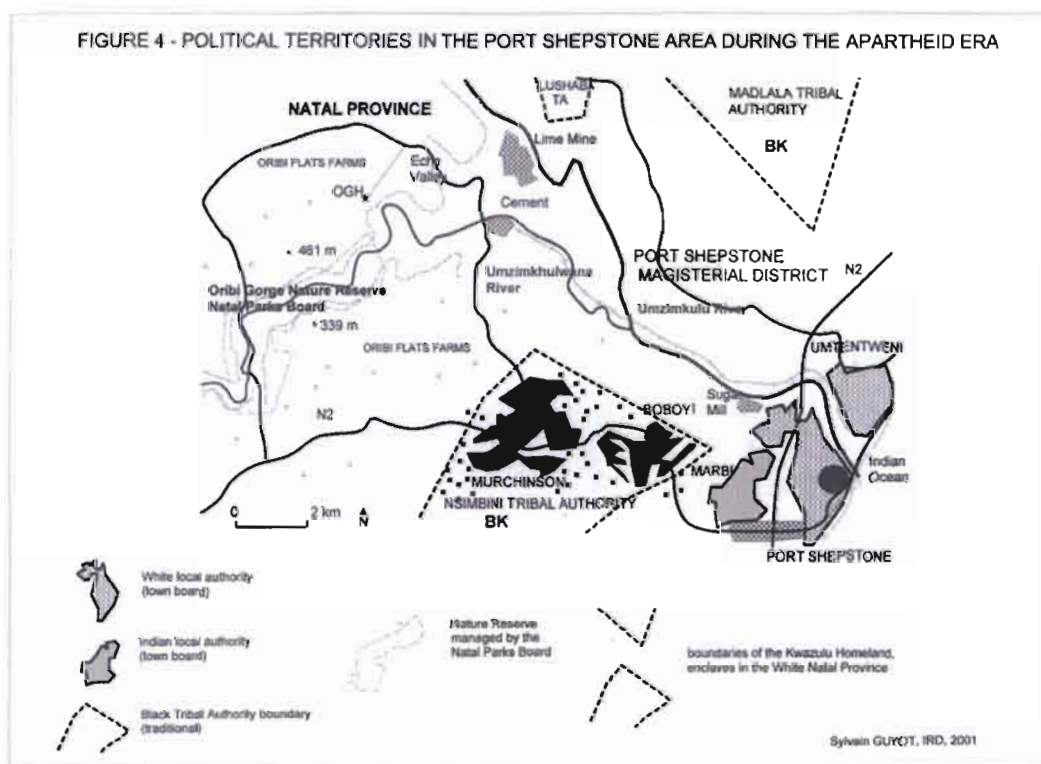
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these territories. Are the new demarcation and municipal functions decided in 2000 pertinent for the unified management of such a space ?

Evolution of political territories since the beginning of the apartheid era

An original situation of apartheid town – 1948-1994 –

The apartheid political territory linked relative to Port Shepstone (figure 4¹⁴) is defined by five distinct parameters. The different areas are “racially” separated as mentioned by the Group Areas Act. Sheppie¹⁵ is classified “white” and manages its own Town Board. Each coastal small town has got its own Town Board and no united action in practice is going to be implemented to create integrated coastal planning. That explains some excess in terms of littoral urbanisation. Sheppie has got the same prerogatives as the other town for planning. The Indians, in their enclave of Marburg, have got also their Local Authority. Marburg was one of the four Indian proclaimed towns in Kwazulu-Natal. The Merlewood area was reserved for the settlement of 3000 Coloureds.



There is no township in Port Shepstone and the management of the black area is creating a problem because the Nsimbini Tribal Authority claims the extension of their territory on white land which was their in the past. The *Grand Apartheid* policies initiated in the 60’s is going to include the two “villages” of Boboyi and Murchinson in the Kwazulu homeland, managed directly by Ulundi with the assistance of

¹⁴ For the following maps look also at the key of the figure 3.

¹⁵ Sheppie is the name for the small town only.

the traditional leaders being paid with grants from Pretoria. The little homeland budget designated for development shows that there was very little service delivery in these area.

The surrounding white farms were on the territorial responsibility of the Natal Province. In 1950, the Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve was proclaimed by the Natal Parks Board after being proclaimed State Forest¹⁶.

Apartheid was maybe less strong in Port Shepstone¹⁷ due to the proximity of the different zones well linked by the N2. The end of apartheid is going, however, to impose a modification of the demarcation to integrate all these differently managed areas. A new territorial management body, the “Regional Service Councils” (RCS) is created in 1985. It divides the Province in regions to insure a spatially integrated management in terms of basic service delivery. This body in Natal started effectively in 1990 with the name “Kwazulu and Natal Joint Services Board”. Port Shepstone is the capital town for the Southern Natal region. It is the only common management structure (between homeland and white province) before the first democratic elections in 1994.

Transition era and conflicts with the traditional leaders – 1994-2000 –

Port Shepstone is designated by the Demarcation Board as head town of TLC (Transitional Local Council, figure 2). The aim is to link all the small coastal white authorities. However each main town of the Hibiscus Coast claims to be a TLC “head town”. Margate is also going to be a TLC, as for Hibberdene, Southbroom (Impenjati- Southbroom TLC) and Port Edward (Umtamvuna TLC). Port Shepstone comprises South Port, Anerley, Sea Park, Umtentweni, Sheppie and Oslo Beach. These new boundaries are also going to include the indian area of Marburg and coloured area of Merlewood. The Demarcation Board following precisely the objectives of spatial equity proposed by the RDP, asked also to include Boboyi and Murchinson in the TLC to provide development and access to basic services. The Nsimbini Tribal Authority disagreed with this proposal (HARRISON & NAIDOO, 2000). It knows pertinently that the ANC will have the majority in the local election and then lose its traditional power. However no local Authority was elected for rural areas in Kwazulu-Natal.

“In its Kwazulu-Natal *fief*, the IFP maintained that the areas of the Province under Traditional Jurisdiction, the Tribal Authority had to remain as the only local structure of power excluding the election of municipal councils.”(CROUZEL, 1999).

¹⁶ Umzimkulwana State Forest

¹⁷ The CBD has been all the time multiracial.

Other tools of management are found to give certain benefices of basic services for this very populated area. For example the Sibambene Development Board associates elected representatives from the new TLC, traditional leaders and other community representatives (HARRISON, NAIDOO, 2000). This new governance shaping the elective process is taking place to provide development for the people who need it the most ! The elected mayor of the TLC is effectively from the ANC: ‘DD’ Naidoo (the indian vote is ANC in Port Shepstone). The first priority of the Sibambene Development Board is to deliver drinking water and electricity.

The territorial level in charge of the development in rural areas is the Regional Council. The south part of Kwazulu-Natal is included in the Ugu Regional Council. Port Shepstone is choosing to be the head town. Ugu tried to link its action with the Sibambene Development Board especially for the poorest area. Finally the 2000 reform of the municipal demarcation attempts to create a level of integrated local government.

New demarcation, new implications: 2000 and after?

The Demarcation Board presided by Dr Michael Sutcliffe was formed in 1998 to set-up the new municipal boundaries at municipal and district levels. Port Shepstone is now incorporated in the municipality KZ 216 (Hibiscus Coast, figure 2). All the coastal towns from Hibberdene to Port Edward are part of it, and also the surrounding black hinterland. The hibiscus coast Municipality is populated by 200 000 inhabitants (78% are blacks, 14% whites, 7% indians and 1% coloured). It is a huge municipality and administrations of the five former TLC have to work together within a single structure to integrate areas formerly managed directly by the traditional leaders or co-operative development boards. Murchinson and Boboyi are now integrated in this municipality (figure 5 et 6) but stay also on the custody of the traditional leaders. The later do not know exactly what role they can play in the new local government. The Oribi Flats area with the farms, the mine and the cement factory fall under the jurisdiction of the Inzingolweni Municipality (KZ 215) without having presently any single formal offices. This choice was motivated by the principle of economic equity in favour of a very poor rural area.

FIGURE 5 - POLITICAL TERRITORIES IN THE PORT SHEPSTONE AREA DURING THE TRANSITION ERA

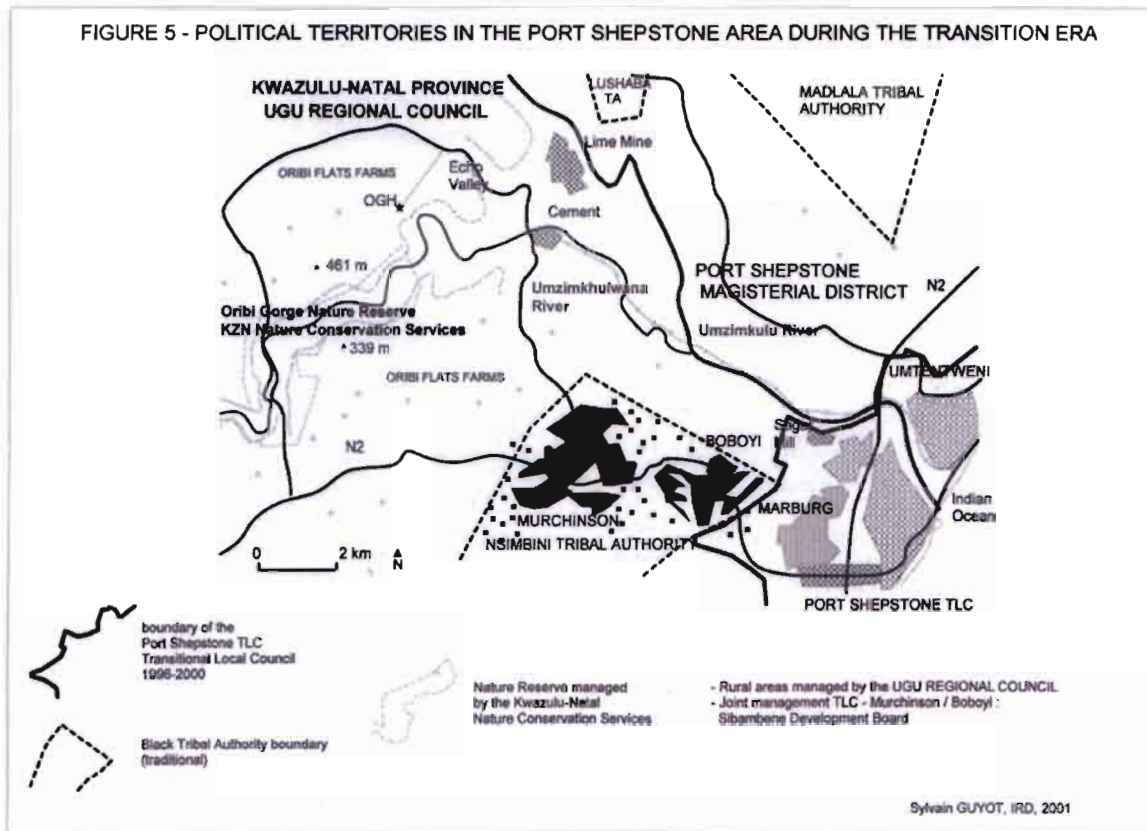
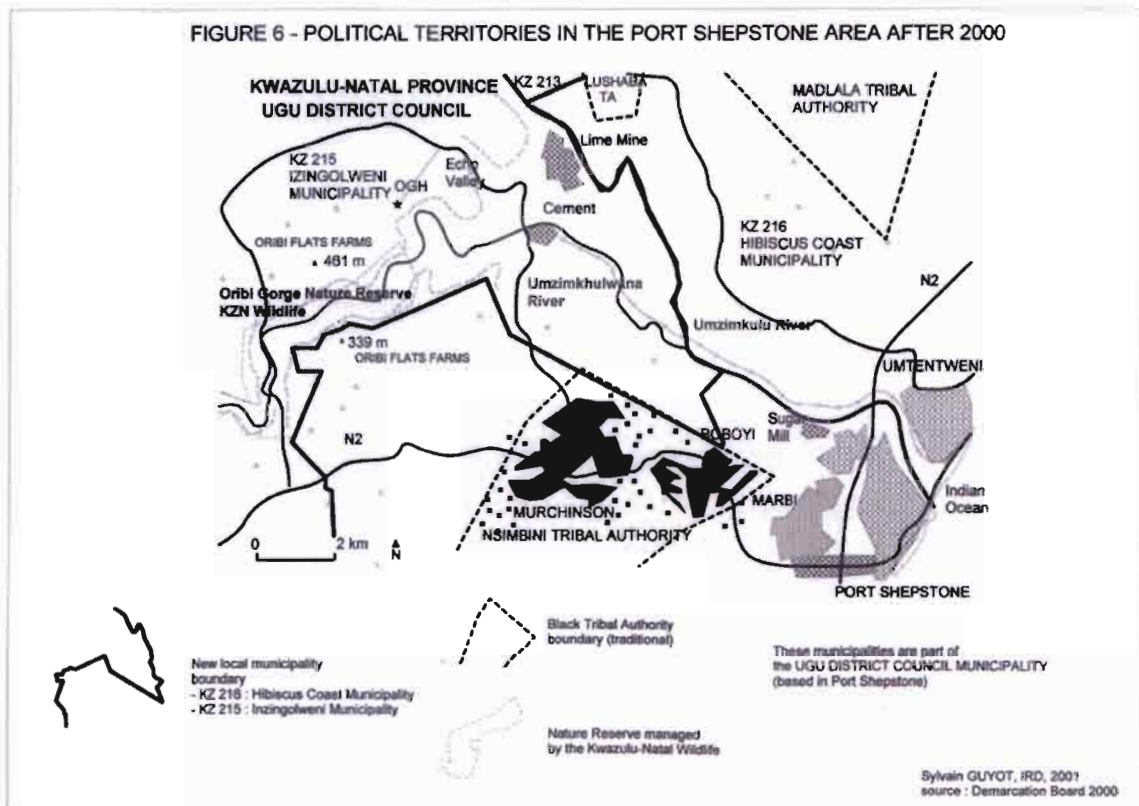


FIGURE 6 - POLITICAL TERRITORIES IN THE PORT SHEPSTONE AREA AFTER 2000



The Port Shepstone functional area is shared into 9 wards, one of them falls with the Inzingolweni Municipality (IFP mayor), the eight others with the Hibiscus Coast municipality (ANC mayor for 2 ½ years, IFP/DA¹⁸ mayor for 2 ½ years¹⁹).

At a district level these two municipalities are part of the UGU District Municipality. Local and district municipalities have different functions and powers which need to be well known to avoid duplication. For Port Shepstone itself, the challenge is to know if it will stay for ever this little administrative head town - industry orientated - between african pockets of poverty and numerous fancy white beach resorts.

¹⁸ Locally there is an IFP /DA alliance

¹⁹ Each side has 29 seats on the Council

Stakeholders and strategies of development for Port Shepstone: one marina to change a negative image ?

The stakeholders of the town are hesitating between curing surrounding poverty and spending a lot of money in prestigious projects which can make of Port Shepstone a “real first world secondary town”.

Hesitations about the image of Port Shepstone

The fact is that Port Shepstone suffers a very negative image, as Richards Bay suffers in the north coast. A part of the stakeholders we met think that it will be long and costly to change such an image, as L.S., deputy mayor (DA) of the UGU District Municipality, and also ward councillor in Margate (interview, 30-05-2001).

« For a place to be the capital, you don’t have to have a holiday place that is beautiful or whatever. Port Shepstone is an industrial town, and that’s how it will develop. I don’t see Port Shepstone as a premier holiday destination. Even if they spend all that money on a marina it will only attract a certain field of people that likes yachts and that sort of thing. You can’t compare it with Margate beach. It’s there; you can’t wish it away. Industrial development, that is the future of Port Shepstone. »

Others think that Port Shepstone has a tourist future similar to the other coastal resorts of the Hibiscus Coast. There is no consensus on this debate but the politic personalities currently governing (ANC), are quite favourable to transform Port Shepstone into a fancy little town, like R.P., ANC speaker of the Hibiscus Coast Municipality (interview, 23-03-2001).

« Tourism and agriculture are the two mainstays of our local economy. The industrial sector is third or fourth in the order of things. Tourism obviously must be promoted. »

The people are also demanding improvements of buildings and general aesthetics . The beachfront is one of the most significant example to describe the image deficit that Port Shepstone suffers (plate 1).



Plate 1: The view on the Port Shepstone beachfront (Author)

An important potential does exist but at present not being used. The “railway station” and the decrepit beach infrastructures are not “tourist-friendly”. Still local residents and politicians have tried to change this for a long time...

The development projects for a changing image

The renaissance projects for the beachfront are quite an old story. Articles in the South Coast Herald local newspaper from the beginning of the 80’s²⁰ titles the necessity to remove the railway station. More recently, in 1997, a joint-venture development Company, *Port Shepstone Development Company*, was created. Its aim was to promote three big development projects for Port Shepstone: one marina – small craft harbour at the Umzimkulu River Mouth, one luxury hotel near the lighthouse and the revitalisation of the beachfront. These project were evaluated each around 560 millions of Rands, 66 millions and 150 millions respectively, quite extravagant amounts for a little TLC like this. This Company was formed to elaborate the projects, collect the public grants and make impact studies realised by expensive private consultants. The marina project was seen as non feasible because of the huge costs of the estuary dredging. The same reason forced the port to close in the beginning of the 20th century. C.K.²¹ opposed it heavily more for its non financial than its huge impact on the natural environment (interview 4-06-2001).

“They’re trying to build a marina on the Umzimkulu River, at the mouth there, and I’m fighting that tooth and nail, because of the flood plain, and they want to put a marina there. (...) It’s going to cost 28 million per year to dredge the river so you can keep it deep enough for the boats to come in. The currents are bad, history has shown there’s been 19 flood events on there, the bridges have come down. In last weeks paper they were looking at the

²⁰ **Rail and station must move inland** : South Coast Herald 5-06-1981, **Railways supports town’s beach plan**, Daily News 19-01-1982, **Station must move** : South Coast Herald 28-09-1984.

²¹ The Kwazulu-Natal Wildlife ecologist

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currents and saying it can happen. It’s the wrong thing, it’s in conflict with the coastal management policy on sustainable utilisation”

Since then the *Port Shepstone Development Company* collapsed because of funds misappropriation²². Many of these projects required a lot of very expensive feasibility studies.

So far, the beachfront project is still in the pipeline, and in 2001 there is some reminiscence about the marina project with the creation of the *Port Shepstone Harbour Development Company* (PSHDC). They published their proposal in a local newspaper (plate 2).



Plate 2: The proposal of a marina development in Port Shepstone (PSHDC)

Recently the national government (Department of Trade and Industry) announced the possible choice of granting directly the development of the marina project to boost the local depressed economy. The residents, personally (interviews, 13/15-11-2001) or collectively (ward 12²³, ward committee meeting) support the project but in a critical way.

“S. L : this is a good idea. But as an unemployed resident in Port Shepstone I doubt if one will get employed because nepotism is booming in this town. Either you belong to a certain political party or you have a relative working in the municipality...”

R. R: I think it is excellent. Stuff like this attract tourists and cause your economy to prosper.

K. M: very good idea but who is going to pay? The tax payers of Port Shepstone.

J. S: It could certainly be an attraction, but please, this project has been on the cards since 1947 and still nothing has happened!”

²² Information given by Ravi Pillay, ANC speaker of the municipality. An action in court on this matter is currently taking place.

²³ That is the ward including the marina development site.

We show all the stakeholders categories with their views and arguments on this project in table 3. There is no unanimity as far as the investment is still lacking.

TABLE 3: STAKEHOLDERS AND MARINA PROJECT IN PORT SHEPSTONE

Level of power	Stakeholder	Financial ability	Legitimacy	Arguments
National	Department of Trade and Industry	High: possible sponsoring of different development projects to boost coastal depressed economies	ANC Government democratically elected	Port Shepstone is selected as an investment place. Link with a local ANC municipality ?
	Development agency (Port Shepstone Harbour Development Company)	High if proper investment attraction	Low legitimacy due to the collapse of the previous development company	Very costly development, hardly sustainable (dredging cost...) but feasible if proper investment
Provincial	Department of Environmental Affairs	Medium Few staff dedicated in development projects regulation	Low acknowledgement from various stakeholders	Lack of regulation because lack of funds
	KZNW regional ecologist: C. K.	Low	No democratic legitimacy but high respect of the legitimacy of the existing environmental law	Against the project because of no financial sustainability and environmental degradation
Regional	UGU - District Council – IFP-DA	Medium, no direct involvement in the project	Democratic legitimacy	Positive about the project because of potential levies collection
Local	Hibiscus Coast Municipality ANC/ IFP-DA	Medium. Initiative of the project.	Democratic legitimacy	Good project to change the image of the town
	Traditional leaders	Low	Subject of debate	Job creation is needed in their areas
	Local tourism sector	Low	The first job provider of the Hibiscus Coast	Strong oppositions to the project because the coast is already tourist-friendly in 95% of the areas
Infra-local	Residents (including ward 12)	Low	The people who are voting, waiting for jobs or paying rates	They support the project with critics

Source: author.

One must wait to see what is going to happen and what will be the real benefices for the locals. One of the crucial priorities in Port Shepstone remains to provide houses for the poorest.

Conclusion

After the amalgamation of the previously segregated territories of Port Shepstone, the big challenge is to manage in the same time two types of development. One is to improve the quality of life of the previously disadvantaged communities by providing service delivery. The other one is to change the negative image of a small town to attract investment and job creation.

Development is a real challenge. It is an object of power and its appropriation seems to be important. Development went hand in hand with corruption and misappropriation of funds. In addition it tries to improve the standard of life of the majority of the population. Most of the time it oscillated between very few or no changes. Development is certainly a question of time and patience.

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Guyot Sylvain (2003)

Evolution of political territories and challenges of development of the Port Shepstone area (KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa)

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