

THE OFS GOLDFIELDS: CINDERELLA METROPOLIS

PROF WALLACE VAN ZYL
University of the Orange Free State

Until now the unique problems of the OFS Goldfields have not received due attention in terms of regional planning. Selected development problems are analysed as often being exaggerated by outside actors. There is also a critique

of physical planning as embodied in the draft Guide Plan. It is concluded that real devolution of decision-making and greater accountability by the gold mines will unlock the full socio-economic potential of this multi-racial metropolis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The OFS Goldfields is one of the eight *de facto* major metropolitan areas in South Africa which is growing rapidly and which until now has not received due attention in regard to regional planning. However, the Department of Development Planning in Pretoria and the OFS Provincial Administration in Bloemfontein are currently working on a draft Guide Plan for the area. Since the region contains a microcosm of all the explosive urbanisation problems likely to be encountered in the rest of South Africa, it makes good sense to respond to the opportunity to comment on the Guide Plan, and to suggest positive alternatives.

To set the stage for this brief examination of regional development in the Goldfields, some selected aspects including inter alia; demography, economy, housing, mining land, commerce and transport are covered. However, the importance of three related concepts in judging the Guide Planning process will first be highlighted, namely the public interest, priorities and alternatives.

One test of just planning is the way in which basic needs like food, shelter and health are balanced against available resources. In a period of rapid urbanisation resources tend to become scarce, and it is difficult to satisfy all basic needs at one time e.g. low-income housing, health and education. At the outset, it is necessary to set planning priorities and to raise the related questions of how, when, where and by whom? For example are only government or the private sector involved or should the public and local residents also help to set priorities?

Closely related to priorities in balancing needs and resources is the question of developing alternative plans or policies. There is seldom if ever only one solution to a problem or the "best" plan for a region, and independent bodies like the Urban Foundation and the Development Bank of Southern Africa have the expertise to explore alternatives on behalf of disadvantaged groups like the urban poor. In this way democratic choices might be proposed in the public interest and with a more just distribution of resources in view.

Short comments will be made on two vital methodological aspects in this regional study namely data and interviews. Firstly, it was fortunate that the Urban Foundation presented a two-day workshop on Development in Region C at the University of the Orange Free State in November 1988, where some useful population and economic data emerged. Some of these data will be referred to in this study. Secondly, indepth-interviews were conducted with individuals at their workplaces in different towns to establish their perceptions of planning problems on the Goldfields.

2. STUDY AREA

When one examines a diagram of the regional location of the Goldfields the importance of outside influences and linkages becomes very clear. On the one hand, Qwaqwa (East) and Botshabelo (South) are commuter destinations, satisfying the Goldfields' labour supply and allowing for the maintenance of family ties. On the other hand, the PWV complex is the seat of central government where corporate headquarters and major suppliers make important decisions. (Figure 1). The Gold-

fields then tends to function like a "branch plant" operation, which is quite ironic for the largest gold producer in SA.

The location of the Provincial Capital, Bloemfontein, 160km to the south, is far enough to cause physical inconvenience, but what is more significant is the ideological gap in outlook between the two metropolitan areas. Bloemfontein is a government town (tertiary sector) and the Goldfields is the home of private enterprise (primary sector). Each would prefer to ignore the other, but the Goldfields is tied to Bloemfontein by red tape.

A rather strange omission from discussions of the regional context of the Goldfields is the administrative and agricultural centre of Kroonstad, which functions as an outpost to both Bloemfontein and Pretoria. Once again the Goldfields and Kroonstad tend to ignore each other, but interviews conducted by the author uncovered some unexpected linkages, common interests and problems. By some strange logic, both Kroonstad and Welkom are classified as "main towns" in Region 30, but one cannot overlook Kroonstad's superior road and rail connections compared to the Goldfields.

During fieldwork and interviews, it became apparent that the Goldfields region has until now, been narrowly delimited on the simplistic assumption of the dominance of Welkom. It is maintained that, because a number of towns on the periphery of the Goldfields exert a sphere of influence, these should also be included: e.g. Bothaville, Kroonstad, Ventersburg and Wesselsbron. At the moment the region has been delimited in at least four conflicting ways: for

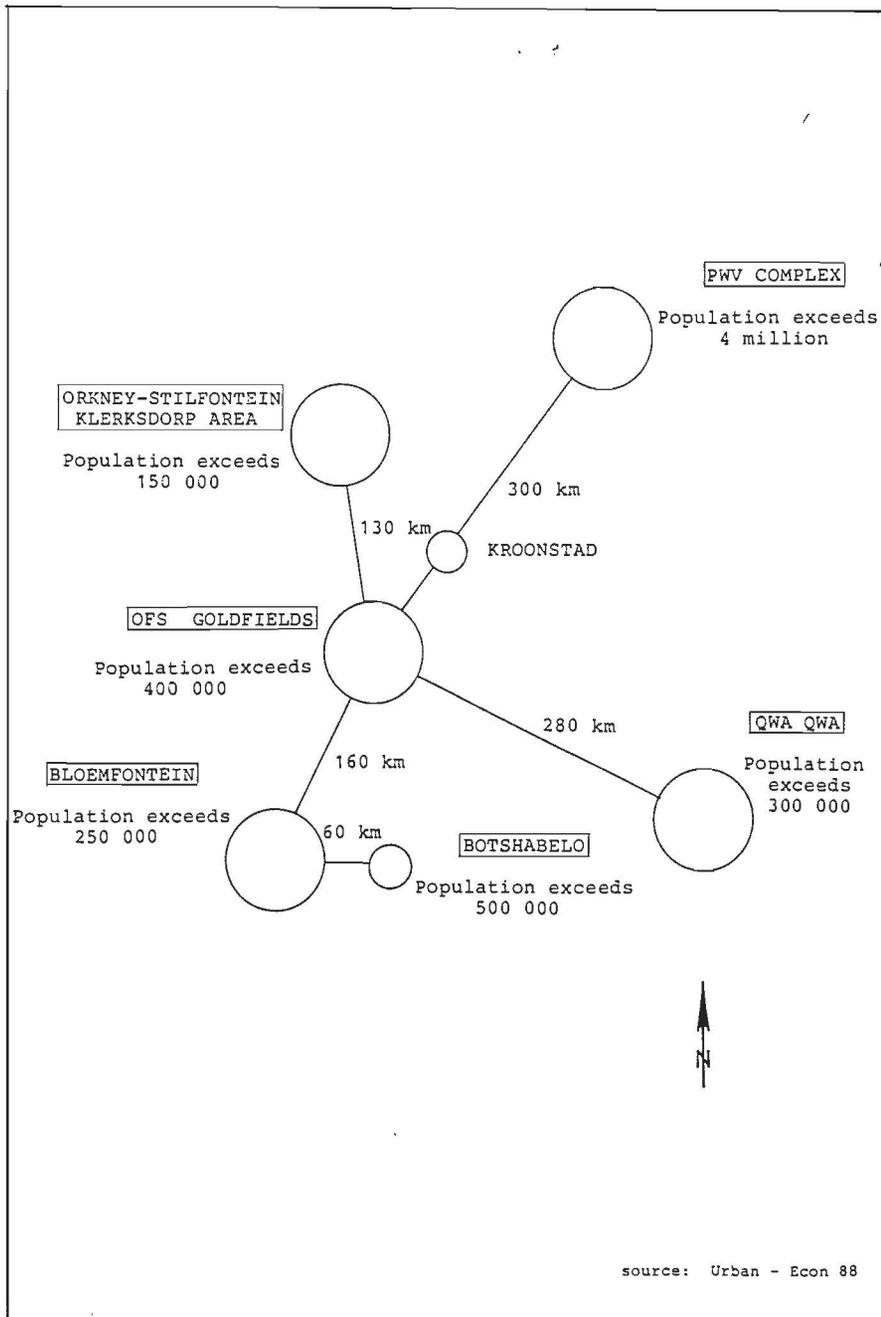


FIGURE 1 REGIONAL LOCATION OF OFS-GOLDFIELDS

example one way for a transportation plan, another for the mines, a third way for the proposed Regional Service Council and a fourth for the Guide Plan. This paper argues that the use of magisterial districts as a whole would form the most practical planning data base, rather than artificially excluding their rural areas for the sake of "ideological" population counts.

3. URBANISATION

In South Africa, a critical question is the permanence or mobility of Blacks in urban areas. To put the question another way: How easily will Blacks uproot themselves from one place to settle in another? Kok and Gelderblom

(1988) point to a fluidity and flexibility found in the composition of Black households perhaps learned from bitter experience. Often households are found to be distributed in both urban and rural areas, and the rotation of family members takes place between the two areas. In similar fashion, households can shrink or expand according to their prospects. Should a household experience difficulty in surviving, part of it can be transferred to another. From this it follows that permanent urbanisation could stretch over a period of a generation, based on such an "extended family" system.

One of the most important variables which determines the tempo of perman-

ent urbanisation is the availability of land. Land ownership provides an important form of security, especially when people are unemployed or near retirement. For example, some poor people have access to agricultural land in the rural areas by means of a communal land ownership system. The possession of agricultural land is not the only important point, but ownership of a place to live is. When the poor are also able to own land in the cities of the Goldfields this will contribute to a feeling of security and encourage a permanent population with roots in the community. Even transportation subsidies could affect the tempo of urbanisation in the following manner. When massive commuting subsidies are phased out, long-distance commuters will be compelled to settle closer to their work. This could have positive spinoffs like an increase in productivity, besides more humane settlement patterns.

Increasing urbanisation in South Africa does not necessarily mean that established patterns of movement or settlement will change overnight. While many of these patterns were created artificially, they have developed their own dynamics which may linger. For example, the decentralised growth points may originally have been planned in response to ideological considerations and social engineering, but in practice they created job expectations. This developed into an artificial pull factor which will take time and money to right. With the abolition of influx control, spontaneous Black urbanisation may now become a more dominant process than channelled Black urbanisation. This may result in the growth of rural Black towns, which could become "stepping stones", or a type of halfway house on the trek to the city.

4. DEMOGRAPHICS AND MANPOWER

Region C accommodates less than 8 per cent of South Africa's total population. It is composed of 83 per cent Blacks, 14 per cent Whites, a few Indians and only 3 per cent Coloureds, as against the population of South Africa which is composed of 75 per cent Blacks. It is however important to note that only 26 per cent of the Blacks in Region C live in "Black" areas as against the national average of 54 per cent. Thus

it is clear that Black urbanisation within Region C from White farms, which still accommodate more than 820 000 Blacks, will continue for a long time.

For population purposes Simkins (1988) has divided Region C into three main geographical districts, namely East, NorthWest and South. The Goldfields form the major metropolitan component of the North-West and the region has a stable share of the population as a whole, but with a discrepancy in the percentage of females. This may be explained by the employment of male migratory workers by the mines, with their families remaining in other areas. The lifting of influx control will in all probability cause an inflow of absent family members to this area, but one should not exaggerate these effects. While the urban plus rural share of the population in the rest of the OFS declined steadily and fairly sharply from 1960 to 1985, the share of the North-West dropped more slowly, with consequences for employment and the availability of labour on the Goldfields. The composition of the population by racial group in the Goldfields remained stable from 1970 to 1985 and compared to Bloemfontein, the White segment of the area is a much smaller percentage of the total (Beukes, 1988).

The OFS Goldfields is a primary catchment area for spontaneous Black urbanisation in Region C and more than 300 000 Blacks lived in this area during 1985. The rate of urbanisation may accelerate in this region as a result of mining companies declared policy to accommodate mine workers together

with their families. Although the Goldfields accommodated more workers during the period 1980 to 1988, the agricultural sector was still a major provider of job opportunities in Region C.

TABLE 1 shows the total population of the Goldfields and that for the regional sphere of influence for 1985 and 1988. Due to discrepancies between the 1985 census figures and the counts made by municipalities these totals tend to be on the low side, but they nevertheless indicate a trend. On the Goldfields themselves the three growing towns are Welkom, Virginia and Odendaalsrus in that order. Until now Henneman and Theunissen have lagged behind, but they may provide a cushion for future planned growth.

In the regional sphere of influence and just within daily commuting distance, one finds a steady growth in population around the larger centres of Kroonstad and Bothaville. The latter in particular will gain population should current drilling result in the opening of new mines in the district. The growth in related rural towns such as Wesselsbron, Ventersburg and Bultfontein is part of the first phase of "stepping stone" urbanisation of which a separate study is now being made (Van Zyl and Theron, 1989).

When one examines the projected urban Black population in the Goldfields up to the year 2000, it is noteworthy that the towns of Thabong and Kutlwanong have the highest growth, but it is also clear that unless Meloding runs out of suitable land then its pro-

jections are under-estimated. (Urban Econ, 1987) Urban Black housing demand tends to reinforce the "popularity" or dominance of the "big three" towns, but lower growth rates or fluctuation in the state of mining industry could also influence these figures. In a study of household incomes in Thabong, Pretorius (1988) found that only 12% of the inhabitants fell below the "minimum subsistence level.": as an indicator of the economic position of Blacks on the Goldfields, this is very surprising.

There is a large store of low-level manpower available throughout the OFS but unemployment is on the increase. Although investment per job opportunity is low in Region C, labour pressure is still very high as a result of the abolition of influx control, the increase in Black urbanisation and the high net increase in population (Beukes, 1988A). Migratory labour is also connected to problems like shortage of manpower and unemployment. The system of migratory labour has apparently a negative effect on birth control and family planning. The disruption of the family and the lack of stability in their lives has also a negative effect on Black education. Other regional problems in terms of manpower are a shortage of trained personnel and training facilities.

It seems desirable to promote residential security and to improve motivation and productivity of Black migrant labourers. In addition the urbanisation of women may have a positive effect on family planning, education, commuting and housing (Botha, 1988). From this it follows that Black mine workers should preferably be accommodated with their families in the mining towns, and supporting infrastructure like schools, clinics, sporting and cultural facilities should be provided.

5. THE MINES

As part of an orderly process of urbanisation, there is the potential for much more collaboration between the mining industry and government bodies. For example in their housing policy, the mines have adopted the principle that employees should be given the opportunity to exercise housing choices in line with their personal desires and financial ability. Some mines see their role in the urbanisation process as supporting

TABLE 1
TOTAL POPULATION: OFS GOLDFIELDS AND SPHERE OF
INFLUENCE 1985 and 1988

	1985	1988
OFS GOLDFIELDS: A		
Henneman	17 998	23 100
Odendaalsrus	62 015	69 100
Theunissen	28 668	37 800
Virginia	73 701	78 000
Welkom	184 603	197 500
TOTAL (A)	366 985	404 500
SPHERE: B		
Wesselsbron	27 943	36 500
Ventersburg	14 132	17 200
Bultfontein	29 253	36 400
Bothaville	63 558	71 500
Kroonstad	122 060	127 000
TOTAL (B)	256 946	286 000
TOTAL A + B	623 931	690 500

Source; 1985 Census & Municipalities

proclaimed townships where choices would include schemes involving private contractors or self-help (de Sousa, 1988).

The provision of low-cost housing is difficult when land prices are subject to speculation and at a premium: here the financial acumen of the mines can assist the Goldfields townships. For example, Thabong required sufficient land to accommodate its rapid expansion in the years to come. To facilitate its acquisition Anglo-American acted as facilitator and financier. This allowed Thabong to negotiate successfully with existing farmers for the necessary land. On the other hand Kutlwanong was fortunate to have enough land reserves at its disposal to ensure future expansion (Cook, 1988).

The availability of long-term finance is important in the provision of bulk services required in urban expansion and township development. It is therefore pleasing to note the change in policy whereby the Development Bank of Southern Africa is allowed to finance such development. The mines should continue their role of extending bridging finance to local authorities where these are involved in the provision of large scale services: in this regard one may cite the case of the construction of the Kutlwanong sewerage works where work was able to proceed even while negotiations for longterm finance were taking place.

A simple statement such as "mining development is shaft-related" needs to be further investigated, since it could cause land use conflicts in the future of the OFS Goldfields. By mid-1988 there were in fact some 46 shafts on the Goldfields most of which were situated in the "heartland" between Odendaalsrus, Welkom and Virginia, thus creating "loose pieces" or gaps in the overall development pattern or 'jigsaw' of urbanisation (Figure 2).

For the purpose of the Draft Guide Plan (in preparation), the land uses in the Goldfields have been divided into three broad categories, namely proclaimed mining land, proclaimed townships and active mining areas. Of the total area covered by the Guide Plan (180 000 Ha) proclaimed mining land covers some 50 000 Ha or 28%. Areas with mining activity above ground amount to 25 000 Ha (14%) and urban areas only account for 7 000 Ha or 4%.

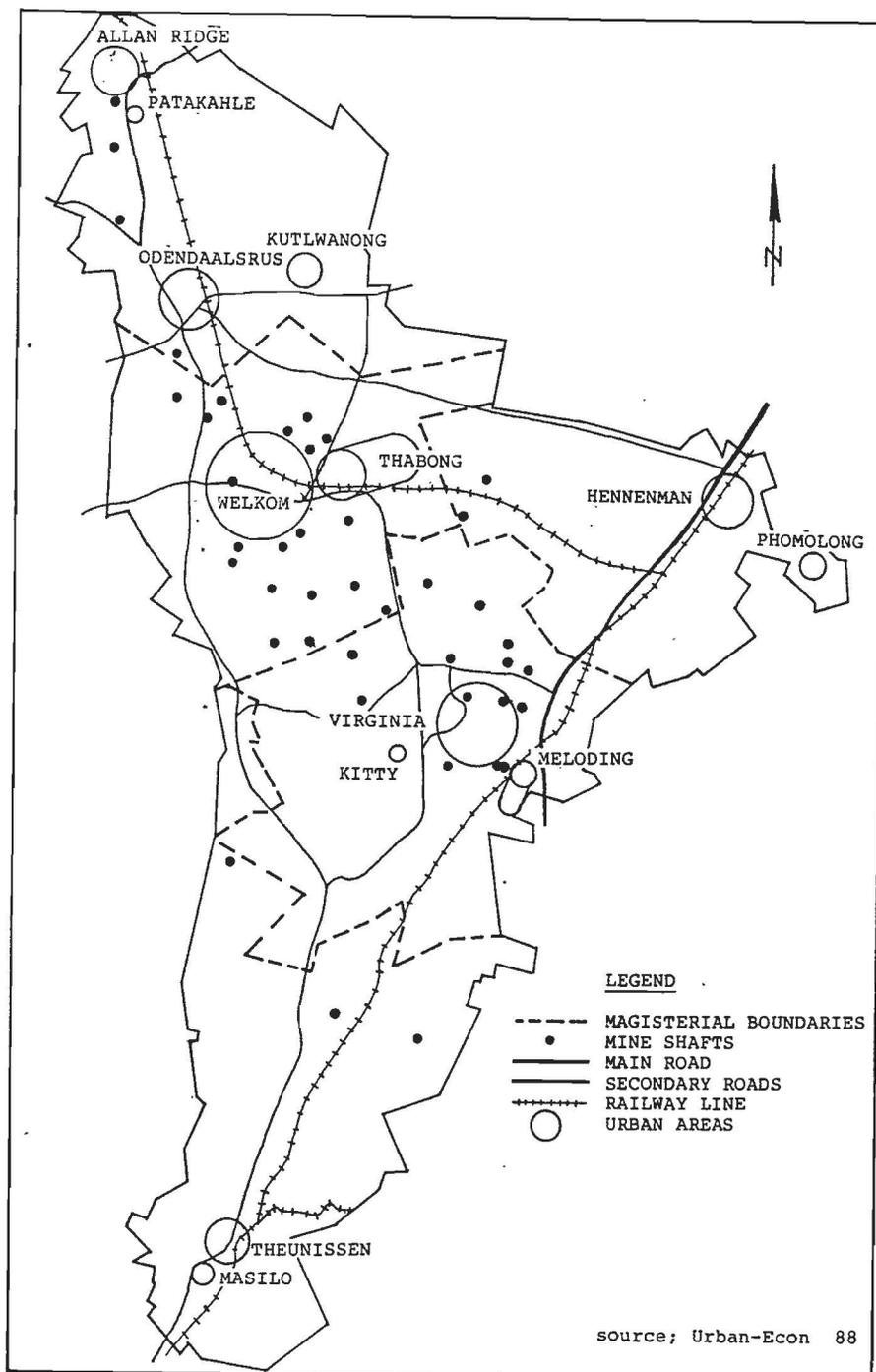


FIGURE 2 OFS-GOLDFIELDS

Land use above ground is controlled by permits, and it is possible to deproclaim areas which change their use. Depending on the depth of the reef and the extent of undermining, development above ground would be subject to certain restrictions (Urban Econ, 1987A). Unfortunately, spoil heaps and slimes dams are more extensive nowadays than before: paradoxically they sterilise many hectares of potentially valuable urban land, and yet a large body of knowledge exists on reclaiming mine land and on reducing negative environmental impacts.

Production from a mine or a shaft is not always an unbroken chain which describes a perfect life cycle. Indeed there may be factors like a lower gold price, poor yields of ore or labour unrest which cause an "uneconomic" mine to close. However, if one examines the age of the older mines in the Goldfields, one might conclude that some parts are nearing the end of their lives, e.g. Western Holdings, Welkom and St Helena. The mines are reluctant to issue any statements about specific shaft closings, but surrounding communities should monitor the situation very

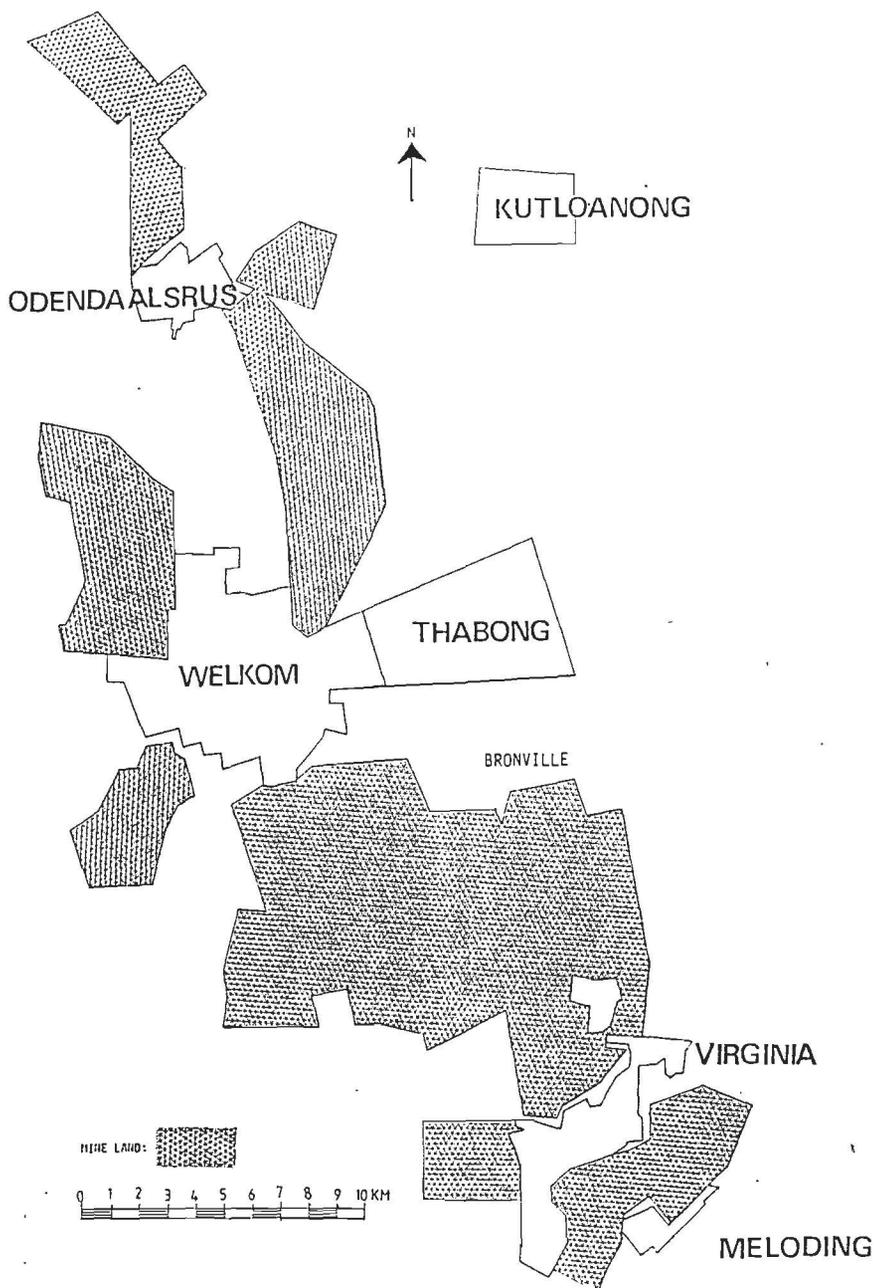


FIGURE 3 EXTENT OF MINING LAND IN THE URBAN HEARTLAND OF THE OFS GOLDFIELDS

closely from two points of view.

Firstly, it is sensible to examine how mining land and infrastructure can be used in future. By their own definition these are valuable assets for the mines, which cannot be simply sacrificed because of short-term economic interests. These assets could consist of several hundred housing units, parks and hostels for single employees, and housing is precisely that commodity which will remain in short supply on the Goldfields for some time to come.

Secondly, these assets may present a new answer to the problem of attracting service industry to the Goldfields as part of a strategy to reduce economic

dependence on mining. With some modification, the engineering hardware surrounding mine shafts (roads, rails and workshops) is ideal for industrial development, where existing facilities are used as "shells" to accommodate incubator industries. This might just assist small enterprises and even create a context for the stimulation of the informal sector.

If the mines sell their assets on the open market however, the timing and phasing of any such shaft-related operation should be seen as a part of a larger and more important overall plan for the Goldfields. Decisions should therefore not be arbitrary, unilateral or out of

phase with the general welfare of the region, including the urban poor.

6. HOUSING

According to Brink (1988) population densities in the Goldfields vary between 11 persons per erf to as high as 18 persons per erf, with an average size of 240m². From a planning standpoint it is desirable to aim at a density of 6 persons per erf. It appears that from 16 to 20% of all employees would be interested in obtaining their own house on the Goldfields. If the figure of 20% is used, this means that about 38 000 of the total of 190 000 workers would like to occupy their own house and one could expect some families to join them on a permanent basis. Assuming a family size of 5.5 persons, this means an inflow of about 170 000 people: ie in addition to the 38 000 already living there.

A recent study by Urban Econ (1988) shows that about 75 000 houses will be needed by the end of this century, an average of 6 000 units per annum for the next twelve years. Brink (1988) expects a target population of 592 000 Blacks on the OFS Goldfields by the year 2000 which will require about 77 000 houses. If this demand is converted into land (say) at a density of 16 units per hectare, then this means that about 5 000 Ha will be required for Black housing alone on the OFS Goldfields.

In view of these alarming figures one must hope that housing will not continue to be used as a tool for social engineering or as an instrument to pursue outmoded political ideologies and that it will play a more normal role in future urbanisation of the Goldfields. However, the State still exerts a double control in the provision of Black urban housing, firstly by controlling the erection of the building and secondly, by regulating availability of land. State control of both the location and quantity of land for housing is very much part of the government policy of orderly urbanisation (Cape Town, 1987).

New mines like Oryx and Joel are now coming on stream as part of massive development south of the Sand River, which will in consequence require new housing for management. In terms of their location the new mines are equidistant from both Virginia and Theu-

nissen, so one could expect both towns to get an equal share of housing, however it appears that the mining groups in collaboration with landowners and the municipality have come to an understanding which favours Virginia. In consequence Virginia has been chosen as the location for the construction of 400 units of managerial housing: as an example of this development one may cite the case of the new suburb of Kitty, which is being built on high-quality agricultural land south of Virginia. Clearly pressures and conflicts are being generated by mining and urbanisation in what once was an predominantly agricultural area.

7. COMMERCE AND THE COMBI-TAXI

Planning for retailing and commerce encounters special problems on the Goldfields. For example, after completion of the analysis phase, consultants often see their second action as the building up of an urban system within a broader metropolitan context, where commercial functions play an important role. While one cannot fault the general goal of building up an urban system, commercial functions should not be tacked onto it as the only planning vehicle. It is just as important to identify social needs and resources. Upon closer examination however, the planning vehicle has two aims; firstly to establish a Western-type hierarchy of major activity nodes (first, second and third order) and secondly to create future shopping centres. As a justification for this traditional bias, planners and developers often quote surveys of changing Black consumer behaviour which point to greater prosperity and an accent on quality and luxury goods.

In the Goldfields this may be tantamount to market creation and wishful thinking which does not relate to the economic circumstances of the majority of township inhabitants. Further examination reveals a more compelling socio-economic fact of life in townships, namely that only a fraction of purchasing power is spent locally, and hence a major portion leaks out to White centres. For example, of the estimated purchasing power of Mangaung in 1985, three-quarters was spent in nearby Bloemfontein (Van Zyl, 1987). For some time, studies in Black South African communities have stressed the

need to staunch the "leakage" of purchasing power and skills out of the townships by creating major community nodes or centres of mixed use. For example, instead of duplicating one more "parasitic" Western-type Central Business District at a cost of R50 million, there are good social, symbolic and functional arguments for creating a major community node in the centre of Thabong where the informal sector could also be encouraged to operate, with its combi-taxis and street markets (Lombard & Thiar, 1987).

For a large part of the population, especially the poor, traditional retailing and commerce will no longer need to be done in established Western-style Central Business Districts like Virginia, Odendaalsrus or Welkom. Organised commerce and consultants must therefore adapt to new realities and take cognizance of emerging new patterns which reflect dynamic change.

In urbanization, mobility is both a blessing and a curse: the separation of living areas of the poor and work areas has given rise to massive commuting and cost problems in South Africa. There are two major types of commuting, namely "daily" with a maximum legal radius of 50 km and "weekly" with a maximum radius of 250 km. For example, some employees run two homes, for example one in Qwaqwa and the other Thabong. During the week they work in Thabong, but return home over the weekend. It is quite amazing how these two different markets are successfully catered for, with combi-taxis available to most destinations "on demand".

The flexibility of the combi-taxi has in some cases put bus companies out of business, e.g. in Kutlwanong alone there are over 250 of these combi-taxis of which about 70% commute between here and Welkom. This is a highly organised and flexible form of transport with routes carefully chosen and newcomers finding it extremely difficult to break into the closed-shop type of organization. Enterprise is not always so free when the competition gets tough.

The combi-taxis can be seen in groups at accessible locations outside mine gates, at crossroads where there is an informal market and in the more formal parking lots of the central business districts. In general the combi-taxi is to

be welcomed (in spite of crowded roads) but then it must be catered for and planned for as a fully-fledged tool in community building. The critical relationship in land use lies in the distance between minibus terminals or bus stops and the location of magnets and attractions like mines, markets or soccer stadia. At the macro scale accessibility of location to and within the region is required, while at the micro level, clean and neat taxi ranks should be planned, with a fee charged for the hire of a rank.

In some Goldfields communities such as Odendaalsrus, Virginia and Welkom, fully-fledged bus stations have been built where a change of mode or transfer is made from pedestrian to combi-taxi or long-distance bus. Therefore the location and planning of bus stations is critical, and should not only facilitate the formal mechanical act of changing modes, but also create a framework for informal social activity. The implications are mixed land use and commercial spinoffs when the informal sector can operate its street markets. By maximising the interface between pedestrian flows and transportation a rich mixture is created in which the poor can also flourish. The role and needs of the pedestrian are greatly underestimated by South African transportation planners and decision makers, and this short section concludes with the accent on pedestrian perceptions.

The city street is used by low-income groups, particularly Blacks, in a manner which differs from that of the average White South African. The street is not only perceived by Blacks, as a functional transport route or 'carpark', but is also treated as an urban catalyst for social contact, recreation and informal selling. With a few exceptions, the climate in South African cities presents great potential for practising the art of "street life". However, surveys confirm that White South Africans tend to have a more reserved temperament and different customs, which colour their attitude towards street life: perhaps Whites feel that there is something sinful about enjoying oneself in public, or being perceived as wasting time or being idle (Van Zyl, 1988).

A better explanation of South African perceptions of streetlife is to be found in the complex social mixture of different races and cultures at different stages of development, which are all

encountered in our cities. Thus there are widely divergent cultural usages and modes of thinking which come into play when considering behaviour in public spaces. For example, there is a difference between public and personal space for different races and cultures. There are different attitudes towards time, work or business pressures, so planners and decision-makers must be more sensitive and sympathetic, without imposing their own middle-class values on others (Van Zyl, 1988).

8. CONCLUSIONS & PROPOSALS

Since it can be contended that the intention of the policy shift in the White Paper on Urbanisation was to move South Africa away from racial discrimination towards a socio-economically rational approach, and as the Guide Plan process plays an important part in the implementation of urbanisation policies, this article has attempted to test Guide Plan proposals within the context of this policy shift.

In a volatile and growing region like the Goldfields, development also requires short-term planning of a type which can keep pace with constant change. It was not surprising therefore, that during several interviews (1988), local officials expressed their concern and impatience with the long timelag and the array of departments which need to be consulted in the revision of a Statutory Guide Plan. It was found that transportation routes often pre-empt land use planning in the region. In one case a major road threatened to divide a new township into two parts, but there was no short-term planning mechanism to protect the local authority and thus the road was bulldozed through by the higher authority. The reasons given were lack of time and an escalation in costs; in the process social and environmental factors were ignored.

The present Guide Plan process incorporates a narrow spectrum of participants. Key actors in urban development like the unions, the mining sector and urban community leadership, should join together with the public sector, in formulating plans for the metropolitan area. The membership of the Guide Plan Committee requires the broadest possible base and it is essential to overcome lack of Black participation in the process (Private Sector Council, 1986).

Apart from officials involved, few interviewees knew of any plans for the Goldfields. There is obviously a communications gap and lack of involvement and participation with regard to vital future decisions: a matter of some concern in any democratic community.

Among major proposals would be the following:

- * Government should reassess the rigidity of statutory Guide Plans as an effective planning tool in a rapidly changing and urbanising society. In the case of the Goldfields consideration should even be given to "suspending" the Guide Plan and converting it to an *advisory* document.
- * Where possible older mines should be identified as soon as possible. Shaft closing in the near future, may allow land in the middle of the region to be utilized more effectively. Existing shaft-related infrastructure and housing should be examined as possible "shared facilities" or be recycled for small industry.
- * The planning potential of the new Regional Services Council should be realised.
- * The unique problems of the Goldfields should mainly be solved *locally* and not in Bloemfontein or the PWV. The untrue and unhealthy perception of a "branch plant" economy must be speedily rooted out.

In short, the Cinderella Metropolis must be allowed to rescue herself, if the "prince" won't do so.

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