

THE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE WESTERN CAPE

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This article gives readers a preview of a document which will be published in the next few weeks by the Department of Environmental Planning and Energy setting out Government policy as regards the spatial development of the Western Cape.

This development strategy was announced by the Minister of Environmental Planning and Energy on 6 June 1979 by means of a press statement in which the main considerations in determining the guide lines for the physical development of the Western Cape were set out.

To understand the spatial development strategy for the Western Cape it is necessary to keep in mind that a metropolitan area that does not plan for growth is doomed to suffer. This, and the well known fact that the Western Cape is at present experiencing serious economic problems, are some of the main reasons why the Government has decided to take a closer look at the future spatial development of the area.

With a view to the population growth and the problem of uncontrolled crowding of people and economic activities in some cities of the Republic, the then Department of Planning and the Environment, released the well-known National Physical Development Plan (NPDP) in 1975 in which a physical framework was laid down for the orderly and more balanced development of the country.

According to this plan the country is, for development purposes, divided into 42 planning regions of which 4 are metropolitan areas. As the metropolitan areas - the Pretoria/Witwatersrand/Vereeniging complex (PWV), the Durban/Pinetown/Pietermaritzburg complex, the Cape metropolitan area and the Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage complex, are naturally the areas which are affected most by centralisation, their orderly development is considered as a first priority by the Planning Advisory Council of the Prime Minister.

In order to bring into effect the policy of the spatial development of the land as set out in the NPDP, it is necessary that more detailed development guide lines be laid down for priority areas. The Cape Peninsula as a metropolitan area falls in the first order of such areas. The next logical step in refining the National Physical Development Plan was therefore to lay down a spatial development strategy for the Western Cape which can serve as a basis for further guide plan and development actions.

This development strategy for the Western Cape is in itself not a new one. It has been spelled out in the past by decisions taken at various stages on government level

and the final document which was compiled by the Department of Environmental Planning and Energy is thus in effect only a summary and further elaboration of governmental decisions taken in the past.

The Cape Metropolitan Area (region 39 according to the NPDP) and its hinterland which falls in the metropolitan sphere of influence, that is regions, 3, 4 and 5, can be rightly referred to as the Western Cape. The metropolitan area can further be subdivided into two parts. These are the Peninsula which consists of the magisterial districts of the Cape, Wynberg, Simonstown, Bellville, Goodwood and Kuils River, and the fringe area which consists of the magisterial districts of Wellington, Paarl, Stellenbosch, Somerset West and the Strand.

To create a framework in which future development can take place in an orderly way, it is essential that the problems, limitations and potential of the area be considered carefully. If the Western Cape is compared with the remainder of the Republic, the shortage of natural resources, especially in the field of mining, is very noticeable. The lack of minerals is, however, compensated for to some extent by the good agricultural land and the natural environment.

A comparison of the Gross Geographic Product of the Cape Metropolitan Area (Region 39) with that of the RSA between 1955 and 1975 indicates that this area maintained its position vis-a-vis the RSA up to about 1970. Thereafter the Western Cape started losing its position and began to fall behind growth in the RSA. One of the main reasons for this is the Western Cape's shortage of resources. As a result of this, the Western Cape is far more dependent on other factors for growth, such as the manufacturing industry and the wholesale and retail trade as well as financing and the other service sectors. The distance from the PWV-markets and consequently the transportation costs, the high cost of electricity and the unbalanced economic structure of the area, are further limiting factors.

The development potential and, in particular, the potential for physical expansion of the Western Cape are mainly determined by two factors, namely :

1. Form-giving decisions taken by the Government in the past, and
2. Limiting physical factors.

The major form-giving Government-decisions which are already being implemented include the following :

- (a) The restriction of Coloured residential development on the Cape Flats which means that for the time being only existing Coloured group areas, including Mitchell's

Plain, Macassar and Kleinvlei, will be developed fully. The estimated optimum population is in the region of one million.

- (b) The development of a new growth point at Atlantis where the Government considered it to be in the national interest that industrial development in the Western Cape, especially in respect of Coloured labour, should take place, in order to relieve the pressure on the Peninsula.

This city which is already being developed, will in due course also have to absorb the excess population of the Cape Flats. In this way growth is diverted along a balanced development axis.

In the NPDP the long-term development of the Western Cape is seen in the form of an axis which will link the Cape Peninsula northwards via Saldanha, Upington and Sishen, with the PWV complex. Eastwards a development axis is envisaged stretching from the Cape Peninsula past Worcester to the George-Knysna-Mossel Bay complex. The strongest trend at the moment is an axis from the Cape Peninsula via Atlantis and Darling towards Saldanha.

- (c) The erection of the Koeberg nuclear power station where intensive urban development should preferably not take place within a 5 km radius of the power station.
- (d) The building of an iron ore export harbour at Saldanha and the possible erection of a steel foundry for the manufacture of SEMIS as well as the identification of Vredenburg-Saldanha as a future metropolitan area in the National Physical Development Plan.
- (e) The building of a new national road (N7) which will run in a northerly direction as well as the proposed railway line which will link Cape Town with Atlantis, with the possibility of being extended to Saldanha.
- (f) The reservation of the Philippi area for the exploitation of silica and for agricultural purposes.
- (g) The demarcation of the guide plan areas for Atlantis (which has already been completed) and for the Greater Cape Peninsula (which is in the process of preparation). Both these boundaries are based on the agricultural potential of the land and especially in the latter case the boundary implies an absolute restriction of urban development beyond it.

As far as limiting physical factors are concerned, the high agricultural potential of the area, the natural areas with a high potential for tourism and recreation and the existing land-uses are the most important.

Whereas growth in the Peninsula in the past took place mainly along well-developed growth axes, the danger now arises that the spaces between these axes will soon become built up if an alternative long term growth strategy is not followed. This of course amounts to urban sprawl with all its attendant disadvantages. It is therefore desirable that the present system be protected at a more local level, the existing open spaces be retained as far as possible

and that an acceptable solution be sought on a regional scale.

Arising from these factors, which have been carefully analysed, the only logical form of development in the long run is a development axis which will stretch northwards from Cape Town and in which provision can be made for employment opportunities and residential areas in close proximity to each other and with adequate expansion possibilities. Such an axis represents not only a strong local identity but also gives form to the metropolitan area and fits in with regional and national development trends.

In order to give a better balance to the industrial basis of the Western Cape, it is necessary to diversify in the field of metal processing in respect of which there is a marked dearth in the area. The axial development in the direction of the Saldanha Bay area will therefore have to be strengthened in order to achieve this, since Saldanha is the obvious link with the rich mineral sources of the Northern Cape.

This concept is supported by the development which is already taking place at Duynfontein and Atlantis and as there is no clash with agricultural land, the axial development should be strengthened further by means of decentralisation aid. What is more, Atlantis should perform very well as a deconcentration centre as it is well-situated as such in relation to the developed metropolitan area.

Enterprises which will be located at Atlantis will still be dependent on the Peninsula in respect of specialised services and in this way the central services sector of the Cape will also be strengthened. These undertakings will be in the sphere of influence of the Peninsula and will therefore be free of the social and economic disadvantages suffered by remote decentralisation centres.

It must, however, be borne in mind that primary industrial activities will not easily locate in the Western Cape without special incentives and that the necessary favourable climate has to be created for such undertakings to settle here. There are, however, signs that the situation is changing. If this process continues, and all efforts are at present being made to achieve this, it will in due course result in processing industries settling along the West Coast and specifically at Vredenburg-Saldanha which will result in a south-bound development axis from which the whole of the Western Cape will eventually benefit.

One important reason why the Cape could not attract these industries in the past was the lack of space to accommodate them due to their size and the pollution problem which it would create in the Peninsula and on the Cape Flats. Development along the West Coast lends itself admirably to the settlement of such industries. As in the case of the diesel plant, the Western Cape will in this way become economically better integrated with the remainder of the country.

The spatial development in the Western Cape is at present

constrained by two main problems namely that of size and structure.

As far as size is concerned, the problem is accentuated by the fact that apart from the natural population increase, a major migration to the Western Cape of especially Coloured people is also taking place. This creates serious problems such as unemployment and a lack of proper housing. These problems are further accentuated by the fact that there is relatively little land available in the metropolitan area where suitable housing and work opportunities can be provided in the long run without posing a serious threat to the other natural assets of the area. These people must be provided with work and to try and do so in remote centres is extremely difficult, as has already been proven elsewhere in South Africa. Employment opportunities must necessarily be provided in the sphere of influence of the metropolitan area in order to accommodate this growth in such a way that it will be to the benefit of the area as a whole and its inhabitants. This does not imply that the policy of decentralisation is now being abandoned, but use should be made of experience gained in the past, namely that the decentralised centres which were most successful, were those which developed in the spheres of influence of the metropolitan areas. Rosslyn, Brits, Babelegi and Hammersdale are examples. These areas were, strictly speaking, deconcentration centres and not decentralisation centres in the true sense of the word. (Deconcentration implies the distribution of employment opportunities in a metropolitan context, whereas decentralisation is aimed at the national distribution of employment opportunities away from metropolitan areas).

In the Western Cape, the ideal area to create these employment opportunities at present is the urban fringe, that is in those towns that already possess the necessary infrastructure to be able to accommodate this growth but only where it will not be a threat to valuable agricultural land. In fact, from the figures that were studied, it appears that the fringe area already fulfills this function to a certain extent.

The creation of additional employment opportunities in this area, and especially in the industrial sector, draws migrants and has the effect of increasing the population. This again will result in residential and other demands being made on agricultural land in the area, which poses a threat to the fringe area where valuable agricultural land is the major resource.

Although, according to the definition, Atlantis is not part of this fringe area, it forms geographically part thereof, with the additional advantage that it lies on a development axis of high potential and does not pose any threat to agriculture. It is therefore ideally situated to accommodate this growth on the principle of deconcentration. It is further important to keep in mind that growth will not and should not be arrested in the Western Cape, but a serious effort must be made to guide growth in such a way that it will be most beneficial to the Western Cape in the long run. It is therefore essential that, with the exception of Atlantis, as little additio-

nal industrial land as possible should be made available in the remainder of the Western Cape and as few work opportunities as possible should be created at Mitchell's Plain. This should not be to the detriment of the Western Cape since less than 60% of the available industrially zoned land in the area is at present developed.

In this way competition with development on the West Coast axis will be limited. Although many arguments can be advanced against this policy such as high transportation costs, the balance of communities and existing development axes in the Peninsula itself, the future of the metropolitan area as a whole and therefore also of the Western Cape must always be kept in mind.

As far as structure is concerned, the problems of the Western Cape manifest themselves primarily in the Peninsula and a solution which is found for the Peninsula, will also be a partial solution for the Western Cape. The problem experienced by the Peninsula is that it is gradually being satiated and unless something drastic is done at this stage to channel off growth, the pressure on prime agricultural land and valuable open spaces will become intolerable and the area will deteriorate into a formless and ever spreading metropolis. Meaningful growth axes which have developed in the Peninsula will disappear in an amorphous city.

The development of a regional axis along the West Coast is an effort to overcome the structural problem in both the Peninsula and the Western Cape. This structure is a long term one which must be planned and developed at present. Without this, urban sprawl will only create bigger problems in the metropolitan area. The basic concept of linearity contains a magnitude of advantages which are generally accepted and which will not be discussed any further.

The new city at Atlantis, as the cornerstone on this development axis between Cape Town and Vredenburg-Saldanha, is a comprehensive unit which will in due course have at its disposal all the services of a balanced community. The more sophisticated functions which on account of their national and regional character will not locate there but in close proximity to other similar functions, will settle in the central area of Cape Town. This is also desirable in order to ensure the future of the city centre of the metropolitan area.

Mitchell's Plain which was established on the Cape Flats, has at the most a housing function and must in no way develop into a comprehensive self-supporting unit. The object with Mitchell's Plain is to alleviate the existing housing shortage in the metropolitan area and for it to serve as a residential component for the development which has already taken place in the Cape, especially on the axis between Cape Town and Kuils River and to serve the vast industrially zoned area which lies to the north thereof. This will also alleviate the pressure on the existing overpopulated parts of Cape Town and its environs.

A further aspect which favours the development of a West Coast axis in preference to the comprehensive development of Mitchell's Plain is that Atlantis and the area up to Saldanha

offers settlement benefits which do not exist on the Cape Flats, such as communication routes to the resources of the interior, supply routes, easy access to the sea and more than enough space for expansion in the long-term. In due course a stable labour pool will also be established at Atlantis.

Although the development of an axis along the West Coast component of the Western Cape has been given priority, it does not imply that growth in the remainder of the area must come to a standstill. There are a number of centres in the fringe area and in the hinterland that will, and must, experience further growth due to their inherent growth potential and advantageous location. These towns include Wellington, Paarl, Stellenbosch, Somerset West and the Strand as well as some of the larger towns in the hinterland.

It is, however, desirable that only one of these towns be stimulated at this stage by the Government to accommodate further growth in order to ensure that such growth will take place within the context of concentrated development. This will imply that migration would be channelled mainly to Atlantis. At this stage it is suggested that Worcester, which already receives certain decentralisation benefits and lies in a strategic situation, be the only town in respect of which this action be continued, as long as it does not take place to the detriment of the development at Atlantis. The other centres in the fringe area must fulfil their normal functions which may in some cases amount to growth and in other cases not. The qualitative rather than the quantitative aspect thereof should be stressed. It should, however, be borne in mind that industries which are located in the fringe area will

not qualify for decentralisation benefits if they should decide to relocate at Atlantis. The reason for this is to prevent such town from languishing.

It should also be kept in mind that no growth should take place in any of the said towns or in the Peninsula at the cost of development at Atlantis or of good agricultural land.

No restriction must be placed on the development of Atlantis. To prevent it from becoming only a dormitory town, the provision of housing has to be brought in line with the provision of employment. This implies that the industrial action at Atlantis must be stimulated as strongly as possible and, with the exception of Worcester, industrial concessions be granted with the greatest circumspection to other towns in the Western Cape. Growth at Vredenburg-Saldanha must for the present only be selectively stimulated in cases where the processing of minerals from the Northern Cape is concerned and the expansion of existing undertakings. It will, however, still be recognised as a decentralisation centre.

The policy put forward in the Spatial Development Strategy for the Western Cape is not entirely new; it is merely an elaboration of governmental decisions taken in the past. No constraint, whatsoever, will be put on industrial development in the Peninsula, but the Government considers the development at Atlantis, as key piece in the West Coast development axis, of crucial importance, which should serve to stimulate further industrial and economic development in the area as a whole.