



UNIVERSITY OF NATAL DURBAN

**DEVELOPMENT PLANNING  
IN THE TRANSKEI-  
THE RURAL SERVICE CENTRE  
APPROACH**

**JULIAN MAY**

**DEVELOPMENT STUDIES UNIT**

**Centre for Applied Social Sciences**

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**Development Planning in Transkei -  
The Rural Service Centre Approach**

**by**

**Julian May**

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#### DEVELOPMENT STUDIES UNIT

The Development Studies Unit is a multi-disciplinary unit within the Centre for Applied Social Sciences at the University of Natal in Durban. The Development Studies Unit was established at the beginning of 1982 with the purpose of providing a focus for research into the problems of developing areas, with a view to assisting the University to play a meaningful role in the upgrading of the quality of life in the poorer areas surrounding it.

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**Development Planning in the Transkei -  
The Rural Service Centre Approach**

Can a chimera, swinging in the void,  
swallow second intentions? (Rabelais)

**Section 1. Introduction**

During the last decade there has been a considerable expansion of effort and revenue upon development planning in the South African region. Much of this 'development drive' has been undertaken by the various bantustan governments and within their related para-statal organisations. To some extent, it must be acknowledged that this process to establish some basis for co-ordinated medium and long-term project development has been prompted by the desire of the bantustan governments to assert themselves as autonomous bodies, independent of the South African state, a process which South Africa has encouraged through financial aid transfers. As a result, such planning could be, and is, viewed as little more than a legitimisation exercise (Bienart, 1982, Innes and O'Heara, 1976; Southall, 1982).

Nonetheless, it is equally true that the guidelines for fiscal expenditure that are laid down as a result of such planning, represent movement of considerable funds as well as directives for the use of existing capital stock. In addition, a variety of agricultural and industrial enterprises are already being undertaken by existing organisations such as the Transkei Development Corporation, as well as

by a number of smaller development agencies.<sup>1</sup>

For these reasons, it is suggested that the type of strategy that is proposed by planning committees, such as that in the Transkei, should be evaluated to determine the extent to which such projects could improve the standard of living of the rural population.

This paper will outline one of the more central strategies for rural development that has been proposed for the Transkei, that is, the construction of a hierarchy of Rural Service Centres. Thereafter, the theoretical underpinnings of this strategy will be discussed in order to make an evaluation of the strategy as an abstract concept. Finally, some empirical evidence will be presented, indicating the nature of the Transkei rural economy and the needs of the population. It is hoped that this will permit some conclusions to be drawn regarding the outcome of development planning in the Transkei.

## **Section 2. Strategies for Rural Development in the Transkei**

The development drive in the Transkei has been ostensibly focused upon the formulation of a Five Year Development Plan. Although a single document has yet to be put forward as "The Plan", a review of available planning documents suggests that these can be placed into two groups. Firstly, there are a number of government White Papers

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1. For example, in Transkei : the Transkei Agricultural Corporation, Transkei Tea Corporation, Transkei Appropriate Technology Unit, Small Business Development Corporation, Mcora Irrigation Scheme, amongst others.

which outline broad objectives that should be pursued by the various state departments and para-statal (Republic of Transkei, 1981; 1983). Secondly, there are reports, compiled by outside consultants, which primarily attempt to establish a data base for Transkei (Hawkins Associates, 1980; Osmond Lange, et al, 1982, 1983; Southey, 1981). Most of these have argued that as the Transkei's population is predominantly rural, and as rural people are the poorest and most deprived group, an appropriate development plan should emphasize strategies which will attempt to up-grade the living conditions of the rural poor.

Clearly, the development strategies of any of the "independent" national states, are the subject of some controversy, and the Transkei is no exception. For example Southall (1982) argues that such strategies are;

... too late and too limited to stimulate self-sustaining growth, and are in any case largely designed to soak up black population surplus to the needs of the white economy (Southall, 1982, p.284).

whereas the government of the Transkei intends that;

The overall objective of the Five Year Plan is to give direction to the development of the country, aiming at accelerating economic growth and eradicating absolute poverty (Republic of Transkei, 1981, p.8).

and further, that the primary objectives of the plan are;

1. To improve the standards of living and the quality of life of all Transkeians;
2. To increase agricultural output;
3. To create more employment. (Republic of Transkei, 1981, p.8.)

However, statements of this kind can be found in many "Development Plans" and Southall notes that hitherto projects to develop the agricultural sector in the Transkei have been limited, both geographically, and in their impact on the lives of the rural population. In addition, he claims that attitudes towards the low productivity of subsistence agriculture appear to have barely changed since the Tomlinson Commission in 1955. As a result, agricultural change is still assumed to require a change in the 'traditional' attitudes of peasant farmers, and assistance has tended to be directed towards the 'more progressive' farmers. The Qamata and Malenga irrigation schemes, in Emigrant - Tembuland and the Umzimkulu district, are cited as evidence for this claim (Southall, 1982 pp.227-229).

However, in a recent government White Paper on development priorities, the Transkei state acknowledges the importance of the subsistence agriculture sector, and refers to the creation of work opportunities in this sector (Republic of Transkei, 1983, p.8). Indeed, Clark, a former economic advisor, goes so far as to suggest that, contrary to the recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission, agriculture and forestry could employ more people than it does at present (Clark, 1979). Finally, and most importantly for this discussion, the White Paper states;

If the people working on the land are to earn their living from the land, they will need markets in which to sell their output. This will be one of the primary functions of smaller towns. If the agricultural population is to produce enough food to feed the required three to four times its number it will need inputs from larger centres than those where the farmers now live. To achieve this aim Transkei requires an effective policy instrument and it is proposed that a Service Centre approach be implemented. this



should result in the establishment of a hierarchial network of physical bases from which to deliver public services; agricultural support services to increase productivity with a view to transforming subsistence into market orientated farming; the provision of basic infrastructure, ie. feed roads and water for domestic use; stimulate rural land, industries. These inputs require commitments in terms of capital and investment - the location and spatial arrangement of which is important. Rationally they should be located in centres that are accessible to the local population. In this way a system of rural towns, or service centres, can be established on a hierarchy of functions. The resulting network will provide the channels for encouraging development in rural area. (Republic of Transkei, 1983, p.8).

Thus, one of the central themes of rural development planning in the Transkei is the strategy of Service Centres. The remainder of this paper will evaluate this strategy theoretically, and then in the light of a village study from rural Transkei, examine whether the policy statements of the Transkeian state are mere development rhetoric, or do contain some substance.

### **Section 3 Growth Poles and Service Centres**

As the vast majority of the population in bantustans live in rural areas, in which the basic needs and services are not adequately met, the provision of essential services, or basic needs would seem to be entirely appropriate for any improvement in the quality of life. However, the concept of service centre has undergone a number of important theoretical changes which have particular implications for the population who are to be served. Consequently, the origins of the concept and its application in Southern Africa should first be discussed.

The use of Rural Service Centres to promote rural development has its roots in the Growth Pole concept originally conceived of by the French

economist Perroux (1955). Perroux argued that economies tended to be treated as if they existed as self-contained entities and in an attempt to "delocalize" neo-Keynesian growth economics, he identified a "domination effect". This he defined as an irreversible or partly irreversible influence which is exerted by an economic unit upon another economic unit (Gore, 1984, p.85). In order to analyse how growth occurs in a world economy which is characterised by such domination effects, Perroux, drawing on the work of Schumpeter, introduced the concept of the "propulsive unit". This refers to an economic unit which induces growth in other economic units when it grows or innovates. In Perrouxian analysis, the economy in which such domination effects occur should be viewed as a field of forces, and thereby propulsive units which are located within this field can be described as poles of growth (Gore, 1984, p.86). In other words, a growth pole is a propulsive unit coupled with the surrounding economic environment.

This concept, originally developed as a means whereby abstract economic space could be analysed, rapidly becomes incorporated into the field of regional development (Boudeville, 1966; Lausen, 1969; Nichols, 1969). In Gore's words,

...what began as a growing economic unit, a firm or an industry has become a growing spatial unit, a city. And the analysis of the way in which a propulsive industry may induce growth in other parts of an economy has become an analysis of how the growth of a place may induce growth in other places (Gore, 1984, p.89).

In this spatial form, growth poles have been related to the deductive

theories of the urban hierarchy (Christaller, 1966) as well as to the concepts of spread/trickle - down and backwash/polarization effects (Myrdal, 1957; Hirschman, 1958), with the result that these theories, originally directed towards completely different research questions, have tended to become synonymous with growth poles.

Although the growth pole approach to development has been criticised from within the dualist paradigm (Gilbert, 1975, Robinson and Salih, 1971; Stohr and Todtling, 1979) on the grounds that there is no empirical evidence that any growth centre has induced growth or development on their hinterlands, as well as from within the dependency paradigm (Frank, 1967; Kabwegyere, 1979; Slater, 1974, 1975) on the grounds that the relationship between centre and hinterlands is essentially exploitative, the approach has been remarkably persistent. In particular, growth pole theory underwent an important transformation at the hands of Johnson (1970). Adopting what Kitching (1982) has described as a neo-populist approach to development,<sup>1</sup> Johnson argues that development policy should create a network of small market towns which will integrate villages into the wider economy (Johnson, 1970, p.219). Such centres should provide necessary service institutions, such as those for education, health and social security; financial institutions, such as markets, banks and credit unions; processing institutions, such as those for milling

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1. By this, Kitching is referring to development theorists in the 1970's who challenged the growth orthodoxy of the 1960's. These theorists stressed the incapacity of large-scale capital intensive industrialization to provide sufficient or sufficiently remunerative employment, and instead sought to direct industrialisation into new forms and channels, to maximise employment and to increase equality (Kitching, 1982, pp.99-101).

and storage, as well as being part of a broader infrastructural investment in roads, water, electricity and so on. Finally Johnson notes that suitable incentives should be provided in order to encourage small scale manufacturing activities. In this way, Johnson expects that these market towns will stimulate greater agricultural production, improve the quality and range of farm produce, as well as induce a larger marketable surplus (Johnson, 1970, p.223).

Rondinelli and Ruddle (1978) have extended Johnson's basic schema of market towns and have proposed a three-tier hierarchy of urban settlements in rural regions. This hierarchy includes rural service centres, small market towns, and a regional centre, and they argue that such a hierarchy will promote more equitable development by integrating communities and their productive ability into the national economy (Rondinelli and Ruddle, 1978, p.159). These centres are expected to perform both a welfare function, by providing basic services and facilities, as well as a growth function by stimulating farm and non-farm activities, and providing a market for any commodities which are produced (Rondinelli and Ruddle, 1978, p. 176-177). The neo-populist argument deflects many of the previous criticisms of growth poles as the overall objective of the Service Centre does not require that growth is achieved, but rather that standards of living are raised, and that greater equality occurs. It has been this view which has been promoted in a number of regions in Southern Africa, of which one of the first was Zimbabwe, with the report of the Whitsun Foundation (1980).

The Whitsun Foundation examined the availability of small business centres in Zimbabwe and concluded that there was a severe shortfall in the number of centres which would be needed to serve the rural population. For this reason, the report recommended that an urban system, such as the service centre concept, should be used as a principle tool in redressing this shortfall. This, it was argued, would promote a more equitable distribution of services, thereby improving the ability of the rural population to meet their essential day to day needs.

Broadly, the report takes as its initial premise the importance of the services which can be supplied by a town. For this purpose a town is taken to be a place with a concentration of people, most of whom live there, for the exchange of money, goods, services and information. In addition, a town cannot exist in isolation as it requires an urban field or catchment area which supports it, and to which it provides services. The major activities or functions of a town are, then, taken to include:

- |                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Commerce        | - | wholesale, retail, marketing                                 |
| Finance         | - | banking, borrowing, lending and investment of money.         |
| Industry        | - | the production of goods and services.                        |
| Administration  | - | both government and commercial.                              |
| Social Services | - | religion, health, education, entertainment.                  |
| Residence       | - | accommodating the people who live in the town.               |
| Infrastructure  | - | the provision of transport, water, power and waste disposal. |

Following conventional urban theory, as a town grows larger, so these activities become more specialised. Moreover they also tend to locate in specialised patterns of land-use within the town, such as industrial, commercial, recreational and residential areas. Although there are specialised centres such as, inter alia, industrial market and administrative towns, all centres have a mixture of the basic activities. Thus, to apply this approach to the Transkei, a small service centre might consist of a store, a mill and a primary school, encompassing commercial, industrial and social service functions. An example of such a centre would be Glengarry in the Umzimkulu district.

The reasons for the existence of towns, and the factors which influence their location, are large subjects beyond the scope of this study. However, in regard to the argument for Rural Service Centres, two relevant concepts of urban geography are emphasized:

- The advantages of the process of agglomeration, i.e. the grouping together of activities. This argument states that the functions offered in a centre will benefit from the association with each other, and that the customers will benefit from the competition and comparison that this enables. In this way, the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts, and a town, once it exists, develops its own pull or centrality.
- The spacing of service centres, given an even distribution of population and purchasing power, will tend to be regular. This

argument does allow for exceptions, for example, barriers such as rivers, or advantageous locations, such as bridging sites, or access to local resources, such as mineral deposits.

The underlying theory behind this second principle, known as 'Central Place Theory', has been developed by a number of geographers, notably Christaller. Johnson explains Christaller's hypothesis as follows:

In its simplest terms, Christaller's scheme proposed that towns with the lowest level of specialisation would be equally spaced and surrounded by hexagonal shaped hinterlands. For every six of these towns there would be a larger, more specialised city which, in turn, would be situated on equal distance from other cities with the same level of specialisation as itself. Such a city would also have a larger hexagonal service area for its own specialised services. Even more specialised settlements would also have their own hinterlands and be located at an equal distance from each other. According to Christaller the smallest centres were likely to be located 7 km apart. Centres of the next order of specialisation were thought to serve three times the area and three times the population (Johnson, 1967).

Central Place Theory thus attempts to explain in more precise terms the concept of a hierarchy of a few large places and many smaller ones. Whilst it should be noted that there are involved debates concerning the hierarchical ordering of centres, in simple terms, this hierarchy might be illustrated thus:

<u>No. and types of Central Place</u>	<u>Typical Activities</u>
1 City	Shops, doctors, university.
2 Towns	Shops, doctor.
80 Villages	Shops.

In addition, there are some characteristics of service centres which are taken by the proponents of rural service centres to be of particular importance in Southern Africa. These are:

- The size of a service area is closely related to the activities of the service centre, larger centres have larger service areas. Although population size is a commonly-used measure of importance, in areas with low population densities, such as Transkei, this is thought to be a poor measure of the real importance and activities of a centre. The size of a service centres, has therefore been measured by counting the number of activities it performs and the number of separate functional units (shops, offices etc.) in which they are carried out (Hawkins Associates, 1980).
- Each activity or function requires a minimum population or spending power to support it and to enable it to survive. This is known as the threshold. The more specialised a function, the higher its threshold and consequently the larger its service area. For example, 1 000 people may be sufficient to support a general trading store, but 50 000 are needed to support a specialised shop selling televisions.
- Each item or service is also assumed to have a measurable range, which reflects the distance that people are prepared to go to get it, or pay to have it delivered. The range depends on the value of the item, the frequency of purchase, and the strength of demand. Everyday convenience items such as newspapers or bread,



have a very short range, but specialised high order goods such as furniture, have a far greater range. As a result the size of service area of a centre can be said to depend largely on the functions it provides, as this comprises the over-lapping service areas of each individual function.

The size of service areas is also affected by the density and buying power of the population, by the means they have available for travelling to the centre, and by the existence of competing centres. Small service centres and their service areas nest within the service areas of larger centres.

Elaborating the strategy of Rural Service Centres further, the Whitsun Report outlines a number of rural regional development projects in which an urban system, such as the service centre concept, is used as the principle tool. Most relevant of these is the promotion of small service centres in the rural areas as foci for development effort, for example the "agrovilles" of Pakistan. These smaller centres are intended to provide agricultural markets and processing facilities, farm inputs, repair facilities and various government services. This strategy, therefore, aims directly at promoting agricultural growth in the rural areas through a dispersed development effort. By including this approach, the service centre concept that has evolved in Southern Africa still retains elements of the growth pole approach.

The Report of the Whitsun Foundation proposed on the basis of this theoretical background that some 300 Rural Service Centres (RSC)

should be created in Zimbabwe, located approximately fifteen to twenty kilometres apart. Each service centre, in addition to meeting the needs of the population, would also provide employment for between forty and forty-five people and would thereby generate opportunities for local employment (Whitsun Foundation, 1980, p.40).

However, the Whitsun Report emphasized that each country faces a very different position, and therefore, that specific data studies should be made of the country's, or region's, particular problems, existing services, and urban hierarchy. As a result, the collection of a data base appears to have become an accepted prerequisite of the adoption of a service centre approach. Thus, for example in the Transkei, outside consultants were commissioned by the Transkei Government to establish the "physical and spatial basis" of a rural service centre approach. It was again recommended by the resultant report that the adoption of a service centre strategy could solve the problem of an inadequate infrastructure in the Transkei from which development could be generated (Hawkins Associates, 1980). In addition, the approach was to be firmly grounded on a more detailed data base to be gathered on a regional basis, in order to make allowance for different levels of existing infrastructure. This would allow the identification of regional and local targets, as well as an assessment as to which services are in short supply, and the specific nature of the services themselves.

Working within this brief, consultants were again employed to establish such regional data bases, and on the basis of their findings, concluded that a number of existing centres should be

findings, concluded that a number of existing centres should be upgraded to form market towns (Osmond Lange and Associates, 1982, 1983). Further to this, the introduction of rural service centres which would act as village nodes for the delivery of needed development services to the local communities was again advocated, and a number of possible sites were proposed. Similar studies were repeated in each of the other two regions in Transkei, and finally the service centre approach has been incorporated into government planning documents with an envisaged 90 rural 'nodes' to be developed over a period of 20 years (Republic of Transkei, 1983).

The remainder of this paper will examine data from a Transkeian rural study and will attempt to assess whether the strategy of Rural Service Centres as outlined above, is little more than the pursuit of a vain or foolish fancy.

#### **Section 4. A Village Study from the Transkei**

##### **4.1 Introduction**

The success or otherwise of the development strategies that have been suggested for the Transkei is ultimately dependent upon existing conditions in the rural economy. In the case of a growth pole approach, successful implementation requires at least that there is some potential for improvements in agricultural production. In the case of service centres, successful implementation requires that the centre be able to meet the needs which are given priority by the catchment population, and that these services are not already being

met by an existing centre. In addition this approach still maintains that urban 'nodes' can in some way stimulate rural development, for example by providing easy access to innovations, credit, markets and extension agents.

Each of these aspects will be examined in turn, and the data that is used for this purpose is based upon a survey of 255 households conducted in the Umzimkulu district of the Transkei in 1982. One fifth of the total number of households in three administrative areas were interviewed. The sample was a structured random sample, with the starting household in each of fourteen "Betterment" villages selected randomly, and every fifth household thereafter surveyed.

#### **4.2 Income generating activities in the Village**

Income generating activities undertaken by the household that are related to subsistence production, are subject to the constraints of the environment, land holdings, labour availability, access to farm implements and other such inputs and the availability of capital.

Generally the performance of subsistence production, in terms of its ability to meet the needs of the rural population, was found to be poor. This can be deduced from the following summary and from the more detailed discussion in the sections which follow;

1. if one assumes that 2,5 bags of maize per person is the minimum quantity needed to sustain an acceptable level of physical

health,<sup>1</sup> then less than 14 percent of the households surveyed were capable of producing sufficient maize to meet their needs;<sup>2</sup>

2. given that the average yield in the area surveyed was 2,7 bags per hectare,<sup>3</sup> and that the mean average family size was 5 permanently resident members, to be self sufficient an average household would require access to a minimum of 4,6 hectare of arable land;<sup>4</sup>
3. as 48 percent of the sample were landless,<sup>5</sup> and amongst those who had land, the average plot size was only 3 hectares, only 2,5 percent of the landholders had access to sufficient land to have any hope of meeting the requirement for self-sufficiency in terms of the staple crop, maize, with the existing levels of productivity and technology or agriculture;
4. given that at least 4 oxen are required for effective ploughing, only 23 percent of the sample had the potential to be able to

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1. Estimate taken from : Energy and Protein Requirements, F.A.O. Nutritional meetings Report Series No. 52.

2. Calculated as follows:

Total household output

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No. of h/h members permanently in Transkei =  
number of bags of maize per member.

3. As shown in Table 3.
4. Calculated as follows:  
Minimum requirements of maize productivity of household x number of household members permanently in the Transkei.
5. This is well above the figure found by Muller and Tapscott (1984) for two villages in the South West region of Transkei (23,3 and 28,6 percent of a sample of 202 and 161 households respectively).

meet their own traction requirements. Further, as 60 percent of the sample did not own any cattle whatsoever, pooling of oxen by households was also very unlikely. Consequently landowners in general were heavily dependent upon traction from sources outside their immediate production units;

5. finally, extension participation in the migrant labour system has resulted in a high male absentee rate, with almost half the sampled households (49,4 percent) having no adult man living in the area. Thus it seems probable that there would be shortage in the availability of adult male labour for farming, even if all the limitations noted above were eased.

#### **4.3 Landholding**

In terms of its overall contribution to household income, the production of food crops from fields is the most important element in subsistence production. All three administrative areas surveyed had undergone 'Betterment Planning', with the resettlement occurring in 1964, 1970 and 1975 for Zintwala, Sihleza and Gugweni respectively. In all areas, field plots were planned and the sizes were set at one hectare in Sihleza, three hectare in Zintwala and two hectare in Gugweni. However, the actual number of agricultural plots to be allocated was not determined at the time. This appears to have led to the partial and uncoordinated re-allocation of land on resettlement, which in turn resulted in both a high incidence of landlessness, and a

skewed distribution of landholdings.

Table 1 shows the distribution of households in terms of their relative landholdings in the three administrative areas. As can be seen, the extent of landlessness is greatest in Sihleza with 74 percent of the households still without fields at the time of the survey. As resettlement was planned to have been completed over thirteen years earlier, the present landlessness implies that for the majority, subsistence production had not been an alternative source of income for more than a decade. In contrast to this, in Gugweni, land was not allocated according to proposed Betterment planning and, as a result, 47 percent of landholders had access to agricultural plots greater than the planned two hectares.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1**  
**Landholding by Administration Area**  
**Percentage of Households with Landholdings of:**

Hectares	Gugweni	Sihleza	Total Zintwala	Sample
None	38,3	74,0	37,5	48,1
0,5 - 1	14,8	1,4	0	7,9
2 - 3	40,3	17,8	59,4	37,5
4 - 6	6,7	6,8	3,1	6,4

n = 245

1. With regard to the determinants of access to land, chi square tests, using access to land as the dependent variable, and age of head, sex of head and village as independent variables, were employed. Only when the sample was segmented according to the village in which a household lived, was there a significant difference between the sub-samples with respect to access to land ( $\chi^2 = 105,6$ ;  $df=13$ ,  $\alpha=0,0001$ ).

On the basis of the data obtained, it seems then that the 'Betterment schemes', far from improving the lot of the people in the villages surveyed, actually made the situation considerably worse for a large proportion of the households affected. It was not apparent whether this was due to inefficiency, incompetence or deliberate mismanagement.

Other than in fields, households could also plant in garden patches. These refer to small tracts of land immediately adjacent to the homestead, as well as to community garden plots. As only one of the fourteen residential areas had a community garden, and the residential plot size allocated in all three administrative areas are 46 x 46 metres, it is likely that the potential contribution of garden cultivation to household sustenance will necessarily be small. Nonetheless, given the extent to which landlessness occurs in the surveyed areas, the relative importance of gardens is far greater than their absolute size suggests, as many families are forced to rely solely upon their garden plot for crop production. However, Table 2 shows that even when gardens are included in landholdings, 18 percent of the sample were still landless as they owned neither fields nor gardens.

A further 19 percent of the sample did not own gardens, but did own fields. The lack of a garden may be the result of unfavourable terrain, infertile or stony soil, the overcrowding of residential areas, as well as the lack of funds to fence a garden in order to protect it from marauding goats and sheep.



**Table 2**

**Field and Garden Ownership**

Landholding	Frequency
Garden and Field	33,5
Garden only	29,4
Fields only	19,1
Neither	18,0

n = 254

**4.4 Agricultural Productivity**

Table 3 presents data indicating the variations in land productivity measured in terms of output per hectare. As can be seen, the yield per hectare was on average low with an average output of 2,7 bags per hectare, i.e. hardly above the minimum per head requirement of maize of 2,5 bags per year.

**Table 3**

**Yield per Hectare**

Bags Per Hectare	Percentage Landholding Households
0,0 - 0,5 bag	21,7
0,5 - 1,5 bags	19,2
1,5 - 2,5 bags	15,7
2,5 - 4,0 bags	20,5
5,0 - 16 bags	22,9
Mean	2,7 bags
Median	2,1 bags

n = 114

Yields were uneven and 23 percent of the land holding households were able to produce between 5 and 16 bags of maize per hectare.

It is not surprising then, taking the distribution of land and low productivity into account, that almost on third of the population do not contribute towards their daily sustenance through subsistence production (29 percent). Using a subsistence requirement of 2,5 bags of maize per person per year, the data presented in Table 4 shows that a further 33 percent were able to produce no more than 10 percent of their subsistence diet. Indeed only 15 percent of the household in the sample were able to grow sufficient maize to meet the minimum subsistence requirement and to produce some surplus beyond this point.

**Table 4**  
**Percentage of Subsistence Achieved**

Percentage of Subsistence Requirement Achieved	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
0 -	28,6	
1 - 10	32,6	61,2
11 - 20	5,9	67,1
21 - 50	7,8	74,9
51 - 99	10,2	85,1
100 - 199	11,4	96,5
200 +	3,5	100,0

n = 255

Finally, to compare the yields found in the surveyed areas with those in the rest of the Transkei, Table 5 suggests that productivity levels in the survey are particularly depressed.

Table 5

Maize Output per Hectare in the Regions of the Transkei

Region	Output Per Hectare (bag)
Transkei (High estimate)	4,2
Transkei (Low estimate)	3,6
N E Region	6,8
Umzimkulu	7,5
Sample	2,71

Note : Osmond Lange Report, 1982, p.20

Although Umzimkulu as a whole compares very favourably with the rest of the North East Region, the sample area within Umzimkulu show a lower yield per hectare than the lowest estimate for the Transkei. This may be in part attributed to the size of agriculture plots, as well as the poverty of the sample. However, productivity data such as that contained in Table 5, have a number of implicit limitations. For example, as is the case with the sample, the figures may drastically understate the actual productivity levels, as they do not account for maize that is consumed whilst it is still green.<sup>1</sup> If the maize

1. This refers to maize that is eaten during the 'green' or 'soft dough' stage from mid-December until harvest. As this is a period of approximately four months, Merle Lipton has estimated that green maize consumption accounts for at least one third of the total product (Lipton 1977). This estimate is based on the assumption that subsistence production is adequate for self-sufficiency in maize. Where self-sufficiency does not occur, then the supply of green maize might account for a higher proportion of total output.

estimated to have been consumed during the green stages is added into the mean output per hectare as found in this survey, this increases the mean from 2,7 bags to 4,1 bags per hectare. Other problems with productivity data includes; the difficulty of accurately measuring field sizes, different methods of harvesting and measurements which do not specify whether the maize is shelled or unshelled.

#### 4.5 Livestock

The second major factor of production in subsistence production are cattle. These can be utilised in three ways which need not be mutually exclusive.

1. as draft animals used to fulfill traction requirements in agriculture.
2. for meat and milk production; milk may be consumed fresh, soured, or combined with maize meal to make a sour-milk porridge.
3. for the production of other cattle as a source of saving or wealth accumulation which can be sold, if needed, or utilized in inter-household wealth redistribution, as in the case of lobola.<sup>1</sup>

Although the utilisation of cattle purely as a form of saving does not assist in the production of subsistence requirements, it should be

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1. Bride wealth - the payment of dowries for marriage to the family of prospective wife.

noted that cattle ownership does increase the economic security of a rural household, especially in times of crisis. A household with cattle is able to sell these in times of hardship, to purchase food and other basic needs, and is also able to benefit from the meat that results from slaughtering or death by natural causes, as well as from milk during the lactation period.

Table 6 presents data showing both cattle ownership and ownership of small stock, that is, goats, sheep and pigs.

**Table 6**  
**Cattle and Small Stock Ownership**

Number of cattle/small stock owned	Percentage of household owning	
	Cattle	Small Stock
None	55,0	63,1
1 - 3	18,8	23,4
4 - 9	18,7	11,1
10 - 14	5,8	1,2
15 - 24	1,7	1,2

n = 250

From this table it is apparent that 55 percent of the households sampled own no cattle. Sixty one percent of this group also had no land and therefore, virtually no potential for subsistence production. The remaining 39 percent who owned land but no cattle, could be constrained in their ability to farm by a lack of traction power. These people do, however, have the following alternatives for fulfilling their ploughing requirements:

1. to plough by hand;
2. to hire in traction power for cash, either in the form of oxen a tractor;
3. to use reciprocal exchange relationships, and perform services or provide goods or labour to other households, or offer a share of the crop in exchange for having their land ploughed;
4. to lease out their land to a household with cattle in exchange for part of the crop or for a cash rental.

The first of these strategies imposes an enormous burden upon the women who are required to hoe. It has been estimated by Derman and Poultney (1983, p.7) that ploughing by this method requires an average of 74 labour days per hectare and, consequently, effectively excludes the possibility of completing the subsequent hoeing needed for weeding. In addition, using this method means that the ploughing is completed later than it should be, which is likely to lead to lower yields.

If a household decides to hire oxen, or to rely upon reciprocal relationships, it is probable that their land will be ploughed only after the cattle owners have ploughed their own land. Thus this approach will also result in late ploughing and prejudice yields.

Finally, in order to hire a tractor, a household must have the necessary funds available. The ability to any household to do this will be determined by the cash resources which are available. This, in turn, is likely to depend upon the size and frequency of migrant remittances. Although subsidised ploughing does occur in Transkei,

none of the areas surveyed had received any assistance in 1981.

In addition to those families who had no cattle at all, a further 19 percent of the sample owned insufficient numbers of cattle to be able to form a span of four cattle. Sixty four percent of this group owned land, and are in a similar position to those who owned no cattle at all. This group did however, have the additional option open to them of joining herds with those of other families in order to plough their land. This would reduce the cost of ploughing both in real terms and in terms of dependence upon other households. These families are therefore in a better position than those households which do not own cattle at all.

Finally, with regard to small stock, only 37 percent of the sample owned pigs, goats or sheep. Of these, goats were most frequently owned, with 63 percent of the stockholding households possessing one or more. It can be argued that all small stock can contribute towards a household's subsistence through the consumption or sale of meat after natural death or slaughter. In particular, a number of households indicated that they owned pigs for the purpose of slaughter and sale at pension day markets. Nonetheless, as small livestock were less frequently owned than large they can be said to play only a limited role in subsistence production.

#### **4.6 Non-Farm Income Generating Activities**

Non-farm employment opportunities in Umzimkulu were almost exclusively limited to participation in the informal sector. Only 6 percent of

households had a family member working nearby the area and this employment was diverse, ranging from school teaching and nursing to forestry work and temporary farm labour. By contrast, 55 percent of the households were engaged in some form of informal sector employment.

These income-earning activities centred around handicraft work, which was carried out by 36 percent of those engaged in informal employment. It is probable that this activity is popular as it can be carried out between chores of women, and requires low cost inputs. Indeed, the cash cost of an activity appeared to be the most limiting factor in informal production and 64 percentage of the activities required only a labour input. It seems then that informal sector activities offered little more than a means to supplement incomes.

#### **4.7 Summary of the Case Study**

To summarise the above, at present, subsistence agriculture within Umzimkulu appears to be restricted to the minority of rural households. One third of the total population surveyed owned neither cattle nor land and two thirds of the landholding population did not own sufficient cattle to ensure that they were able to plough their land. This suggests that wage labour is, by far, the most important means whereby households meet their day to day needs.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, 63 percent of the sampled households were receiving a remittance on a

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1. This view is held by Spiegel (1979) amongst others who argues that economic activities in the village provide only a small supplement to the income which accrues from migrant labour.



regular basis, and those who were not in receipt of such an income did not constitute a self-sufficient group of farmers, but instead were the most poverty-stricken.<sup>1</sup>

It is suggested therefore, that within the existing social and economic structures subsistence production within the rural economy is not a viable alternative form of income generation. This, in turn, means that it is unlikely that the agricultural development implied by the growth pole approach will take place as there is no real basis upon which improvement can be made. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, such an approach can only affect those households that have access to land. Secondly, even in these cases, it may be unable to assist those households who, although they have land, have an input shortage of some kind which is a binding constraint on agricultural production.

In Umzimkulu, this means that only approximately one fifth of the total household population could potentially benefit from an agricultural strategy. It appears then, that the growth aspect of Rural Service Centres has little to offer, to a rural economy that has been effectively stripped of a viable agricultural base.

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1. A number of rural studies have found a similar result. For example, Bekker and de Wet (1982) concluded in a study of living standards in the Amatola River Basin in Ciskei, found that only 15 percent of the average family's income come from agricultural or informal sector activities. Moreover, the Institute of Planning Research at the University of Port Elizabeth placed the locally generated content of the average household income in the rural areas of Bopuhuthatswana, KwaZulu, Transkei and Ciskei, at only 10 percent (Potgieter, 1982).

## Section 5. Access to Services

Using the data collected in Umzimkulu, this section will identify deprivations most frequently given by the sampled population. This permits some assessment of the welfare aspect of Service Centres.

It has been noted that the central role to be played by Rural Service Centres in Transkei, is to act as a focal point in which a range of services can be obtained (Republic of Transkei, 1983, p.19).<sup>1</sup> Further the more general goal of rural development planning has been given as the improvement of the standard of living of the rural poor. Clearly then, using these criteria, to be successful Rural Service Centres in the Transkei should meet the needs of the majority of the rural population.

To evaluate the needs of a rural community, households in Umzimkulu were interviewed, at length, as to the extent to which they were able to meet their essential needs. In consultation with local community leaders, the staff of existing service facilities, and a pilot sample of twenty households, a list of 14 basic needs was drawn up. These were discussed with the surveyed households in an open-ended section of the interview schedule in which it was established whether the household experienced difficulties in meeting the need in question, what type of problem was encountered, and finally priority for improvements were discussed.

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1. It should be emphasized that this implies the movement of people to the service centre to collect services, and not the delivery of services to or nearby people's homes.

Table 7 lists the basic needs which were given as being inadequately supplied. These are ranked in order of the frequency with which they occurred. The percentile scores reflect the number of interviewees in the total sample who were experiencing a problem with that need.

**Table 7**  
**Basic Need Perceived by the Community**  
**as Problem in Ranked Order**

Range of Community Basic Needs	% of Total Sample who perceived a problem with a Basic Need
1. Building Materials	94.9
2. Fuel	92.1
3. Roads	80.0
4. Transport	75.8
5. Water	62.3
6. Medical	61.1
7. Farming	57.4
8. Livestock	51.0
9. Schools	49.8
10. Phone	47.8
11. Goods unavailable	41.0
12. Employment	33.6
13. Selling Goods	26.8
14. Post	24.4

n = 250

These data indicate that difficulties were encountered in the fulfilment of shelter, fuel, transport and water requirements by between 95 and 62 percent of the sample. Problems with services such as medical, farming assistance, education, shops and phones were encountered by between 60 and 40 percent of the sample. Thus, it would appear that difficulties in respect of fulfilling day to day

needs are more prevalent than those in respect to the higher order services. Moreover when asked to give priorities for development, fuel needs were most frequently given first priority, with 45 percent of the sample replying that attention should be immediately directed towards improved access to fuel wood. A further 16 percent of the sample felt that water improvements should receive highest priority, whilst 15 percent gave agriculture development priority.<sup>1</sup> When asked to identify a second need for priority, households gave the same list, with the addition of transport which was identified by 13 percent of the sample.

It would appear, therefore, that unless service centres are able to improve access to needs which are required on a daily basis, they will disregard community needs. Moreover, such improvements which could be made regarding these needs, cannot simply be delivered, and instead require an interactive process between the community and the service centre. For example, the joint management of woodlots, co-operative buying of building materials and hardware, road maintenance work-parties and spring protection/borehole projects. Such projects, however, rely more heavily upon local organisation than upon spatial planning, and indeed, may benefit little from the development of a hierarchy of service centres. Indeed, a spatial planning exercise in which success is measured in terms of whether the facility has been constructed or not, may actually obfuscate real issue in development, and be detrimental to more appropriate projects.

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1. Whilst this could be taken as support for services such as agricultural extension, marketing and ploughing, the problem for 77 percent of the group who were experiencing difficulties, was related to their lack of land or to inadequate plot size.

## Section 6. Conclusion

The Rural Service Centre approach is a key element of rural development planning in the Transkei. As considerable revenue and effort is envisaged to be outlaid as part of Transkei's "development drive", this approach have been examined in some detail in this paper, both in terms of its underlying concepts, as well as with respect to conditions within the Transkei.

The evaluation of the Rural Service Centre concept indicated that it does appear to have merit in an economy with a poorly developed infrastructure in which the majority of the poor live in rural areas where services are inadequately provided. For the same reason, a policy which could stimulate agricultural growth is particularly appropriate.

Moreover, the definition of a Rural Service Centre has been left sufficiently broad so as to encompass a small town, such as Umzimkulu, as well as a loose agglomeration of services, such as is found at Glengarry in the Umzimkulu district. This has the benefit of being sufficiently flexible to allow planners some manoeuvrability in an uncertain economic environment.

Thus, at an abstract level, it would appear that a viable strategy has been proposed for Transkei's development plan. However, when this strategy is located within the existing Transkei social-formation, the

'development drive' begins to take the appearance of a tilt at imaginary giants. A detailed examination of the rural economy in the Umzimkulu district indicated that there is little, if any, potential for significant agricultural improvements. Many households are landless or stockless or both, productivity levels are low and alternative forms of income generation, limited. Likewise, the reliance of rural households upon migrant remittances and pension payments belies any notion of an economic hinterland for rural service centres. Indeed, Tapscott, Haines and Wakelin (1984, p.11) have noted that existing small towns in the Transkei have undergone a steady decline over the past decade as a result of dependence upon the South African centres, and widespread poverty.

Moreover, when the expressed needs of the rural population were considered, it appeared that the type of deprivation in the Transkei is at such a basic level that needs could not simply be met at a service centre, but instead require a joint effort by local development agents and the rural community at the village or ward level. As a result, to the extent that the "Betterment" Villages surveyed in the Umzimkulu district are typical of other such villages in the Transkei, the construction of service centres could at best lead to the provision of services which do not actually improve daily living conditions in Transkei.

Nonetheless, it could still be argued that with an appropriate delivery system and package of services, the Rural Service Centre approach, with elements of growth pole strategy, might still achieve the goals expressed in the Transkeian planning documents. However,

the Transkei's political-economic status as a bantustan in Southern Africa, its population's extreme dependence upon migrant wage labour, and its government's reliance upon aid from South Africa, leads one to question whether such proposals are still not simply the second intentions of a chimera.

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