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GROWTH OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENT WITHIN THE  
DURBAN METROPOLITAN AREA: 1966-1979  
SOME PRELIMINARY RESULTS

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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

This brief factual report is the precursor of a more comprehensive analysis of informal housing in the region of Greater Durban, currently being prepared for publication by H and H Publications and the Centre for Applied Social Sciences. The analysis will be based on comprehensive aerial survey research, sponsored by H and H, and also on additional material produced by the author, Errol Haarhoff.

The publishers have produced this interim statement of the position in regard to informal housing because of the urgent and growing need for a reassessment of the approach to housing and community developments in Natal and other areas of the country. This urgency was highlighted recently by the outbreak of Typhoid Fever in one of the areas surveyed in this report, a problem which was due to the lack of clean water supplies.

Mr. Haarhoff draws attention to the need for policy changes. This need, which is abundantly evident in the data, raises at least two very broad issues. Firstly, one dare not look upon the growth of informal housing as a problem in itself. The informal so-called "squatters" in fact have produced a solution to the housing problems of nearly half a million people at no cost to the state. The real problem is the conditions under which they have had to accomplish this solution. This initiative must be facilitated, assisted and channelled in such a way that attendant problems, like water shortages, health problems and, in the few places where it occurs, exploitation by landlords can be avoided. The conventional alternative of standardised, state-provided township housing would cost over R400,000,000 for the larger area surveyed, including the costs of site services but excluding growth and ignoring over-crowding in existing townships.

The second issue it raises is one concerning the interaction between the areas of KwaZulu, Natal and within them the Durban Metropolitan Area. The development surveyed is the result of the growth of the Metropolitan economy of Durban; the settlement is a dormitory for an important part of the labour supply for this economy. Yet no planning and administrative body directly responsive to the needs of both that economy and the people concerned exists. Some of the area is South African Bantu Trust land controlled by Pretoria, other land is controlled by the KwaZulu Government and a third category is under the formal jurisdiction of non-black local authorities. Very

recently, an initiative has been taken to plan an emergency resettlement of people who have no water in one of the areas, Inanda; a joint operation involving central government agencies and the Urban Foundation. This programme is necessary and welcome for many of the people involved and will proceed with consultation. The fact remains, however, that the areas fall between three stools, being marginal to and neglected by all formal administrations.

As the economy enters the expected boom, as land-densities in KwaZulu mount under the impact of natural increase, resettlement and agricultural rationalisation and as the impact of this year's severe drought makes itself felt, the number of informal settlers in Greater Durban will increase. We predict that future growth will be more dramatic than that reflected in the fact paper for the past decade-and-a-half. This will perhaps be the most powerful ecological trend of the future. It is only right that so important an interest group as these so-called "squatters" should enjoy a dispensation which includes legitimate representation on decision-making bodies concerned with their whole reason for existence, the urban economy of Natal. No solution will be enduring until this is achieved. This is perhaps one indication why the Buthelezi Commission into the Future of Natal and Kwa-Zulu is so urgently required.

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The problem of squatting, and the issue of informal settlement in urban areas, has become a concern for housing authorities, and a focus for research activity, in recent years. In the Durban Region these settlements have become a prominent feature, and are providing accommodation for a substantial proportion of the city's population. The extent to which this represents a problem for the inhabitants and the authorities under whose control they fall, is however, far from clear-cut. This is the subject of a research study being undertaken at present.<sup>1)</sup> Of special interest in the case of Durban is the fact that informal settlement occurs not merely on an urban periphery, but at the interface between two sets of administrative authorities, one of which is the KwaZulu Government. This fact paper provides some preliminary results from this study.

The study area covers some 3 000 square kilometres, and extends from Cato Ridge in the west, to Tongaat in the north and Kingsburgh in the south.<sup>2)</sup> Over 75 000 informal dwellings have been estimated for this region of which roughly 30 percent are kraals (umuze). In order to establish some measure of change that has occurred over time, these results have been compared with those obtained in a survey conducted by the Institute of Social Research (now the Centre for Applied Social Sciences) in 1966 - some thirteen years ago.<sup>3)</sup> Although this earlier study covered a much smaller area, it has established a fixed geographical unit for comparative purposes. It should be stressed that although the 1966 study area was described as the 'Durban Metropolitan Area', this can no longer be considered a valid delimitation. In fact, only thirty-four percent of all informal dwellings estimated for the larger region are located within the boundaries of the 1966 study area. Summary data for this smaller area is given in Table 1 below and graphically depicted in Figure 1.

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1. This research is being conducted for a doctoral dissertation by the author of this paper.
  2. Greater detail will be provided in future publications.
  3. Watts, H.L., Davies, R.J., Waters, G.H., *The Spatial Distribution of the Present and Future Residential Population of Metropolitan Durban*, Durban, Institute for Social Research, University of Natal, 1967.

TABLE 1.

Estimated number of informal dwelling units in the 'Metropolitan Area' defined in 1966, for 1966 and 1979.

|                       | 1966 SURVEY     |        |       | 1979 SURVEY     |        |       |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------|-------|-----------------|--------|-------|
|                       | informal houses | kraals | total | informal houses | kraals | total |
| Areas in KwaZulu*     | 1518            | 1227   | 2745  | 14069           | 1235   | 15304 |
| Areas outside KwaZulu | 8027            | 127    | 8154  | 10467           | 30     | 10497 |
| Totals                | 9545            | 1354   | 10899 | 24536           | 1265   | 25801 |

\* Includes S.A. Bantu Trust areas not yet administered by KwaZulu.

Table 1 shows that there has been a nett increase in the number of informal dwellings in the area concerned - from over 10 000 to almost 26 000 in 1979. There is a marginal reduction in the number of kraals, and the vast majority are located in KwaZulu.

The geographical distribution of informal settlement in this area is shown in Figure 1. It should be noted that this distribution is indicated by enumeration zones, i.e. the zone in which settlement occurs, and thus does not necessarily show actual geographical location. The cross-hatched areas indicate those zones where informal settlement has been constant, and occurs in 1966 and 1979. With the exception of the three zones indicated, there is an increase in the estimated number of informal dwellings in all zones. There are three broad geographical locations:

- a) The northern area that includes Clermont, portion of Inanda and Newlands.
- b) The southern area running from Dassenhoek through St. Wendolins to the area around Umlazi in the south.
- c) Sporadic development occurring on land behind the Durban North/Berea ridges and includes Clairwood.

Also indicated on Figure 1 are zones where informal dwellings have been demolished since 1966, an estimated total of 2 391 dwelling units. This figure excludes formal dwellings that may have been demolished during the same period. It is interesting to note that despite the significant increase in the number of informal dwellings, this increase does not extend into any new zones. To some extent this indicates the ability of authorities to contain the spread of settlements in the inner urban areas.

However more significant is the fact that despite the demolitions that are indicated, and the many thousands of new township houses that have been constructed during this thirteen year period, the absolute number of informal dwelling units in this area has increased by over 137 percent. Assuming a mean occupancy rate of between 6 and 8 persons gives a population of between 154 000 and 206 000 persons. More alarming is the fact that the most dramatic increases have occurred in areas of KwaZulu. Table 1 shows that whereas in 1966 these areas only had a total of 2745 informal dwellings, the estimate for 1979 is 15304, an increase of 458 percent.

In conclusion it can be noted that despite the somewhat optimistic views often promoted by housing authorities, these preliminary findings indicate that in the geographical area discussed, public housing programmes have neither reduced nor eliminated the stock of informal dwellings. This does not mean that the problem has been an inadequate supply of new houses - it is probable that more houses have been built during the thirteen years, than at any other period. What is indicated is that current approaches and policies are unable to cope with the rapid pace of urbanisation and population growth. In the case of Durban, this effect is most conspicuous in areas of KwaZulu that adjoin the urban core, and it is here that alternative housing policies become urgent if both the present and future needs and aspirations of people are to be fulfilled.

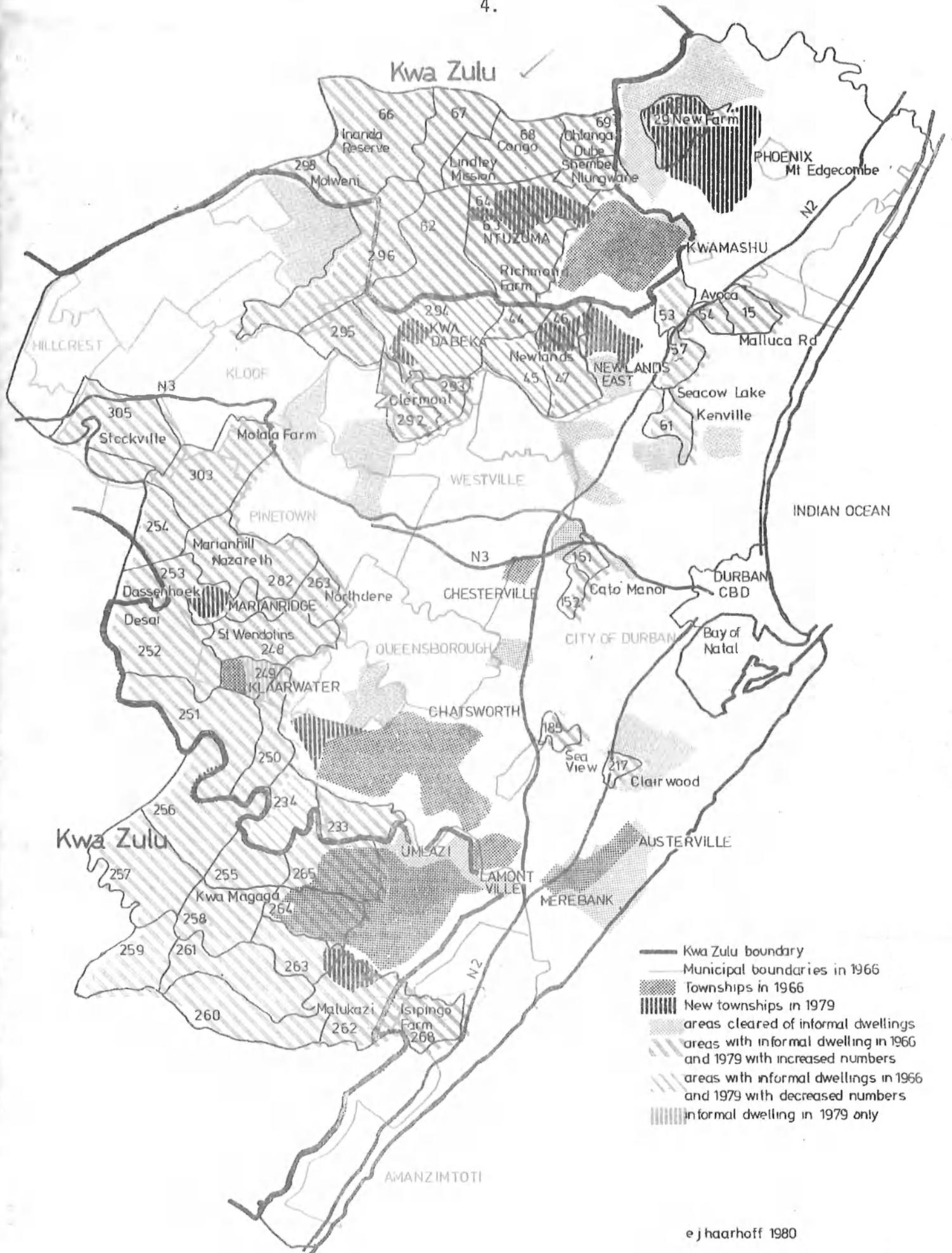


Figure 1  
INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN DURBAN : 1966-1979



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