

Regional Planning and Sustainability: Limits and Potentials of South Africa's Integrated Development Plans

Paper for inclusion in Dialogues in Urban and Regional Planning 2, presented at the World Planning Schools Congress, 11th -16th July 2006, Mexico City, Mexico

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ABSTRACT *This paper considers whether South Africa's Integrated Development Plans provide an adequate framework for achieving sustainable regional development, particularly for peripheral regions of developing countries. It examines the case of Integrated Development Planning in the Ugu District Municipality, which has been acclaimed for its emphasis on incorporating principles of sustainable development into its planning processes. While the emphasis on integration and the multi-sectoral approach are strengths, greater attention needs to be given to environmental aspects, and the form of planning needs to be adapted to the context, and its social, economic and political dynamics.*

Introduction

The past decade has seen a growing interest in linking regional planning to concerns about sustainability (Hardy & Lloyd, 1994; Roberts, 1994). This emphasis is not entirely new (Campbell, 1991; Roberts & Colwell, 2001), and in some senses represents a return to the origins of regional planning, with its focus on natural resource management, and territorial planning for 'place-work-folk'. Although the initial writings on 'bottom-up' regional development in the 1980s (Friedman & Weaver, 1979; Stohr & Taylor, 1981) were not explicitly cast in the language of sustainable development, many authors later argued that regional planning offered an important vehicle for the promotion of sustainability (Dabholkar, 2001; Roberts, 1994; Glasson, 1995). Nevertheless, environmental concerns are not routinely part of regional plans, nor do regional plans necessarily represent an integrated approach to addressing regional economic, social and environmental issues. Hence various initiatives have attempted to promote sustainable regional development, particularly in the EU context (Clement & Hansen, 2001; Counsell & Bruff, 2001; Benneworth *et al.*, 2002).

South Africa's Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) can be seen as a new form of regional planning that aims to achieve integrated territorial development. While IDPs are strategic plans for district and local government, they can be viewed as versions of regional planning due to the scale and complexity of municipalities, which since the re-demarcation of local government in 2000, cover huge land areas and populations, and include both rural and urban areas. The concept of integrated development planning has developed from a variety of influences (Harrison, 2001), including recent strands of regional planning, with its interest in developing territorial strategies that respond to intersecting environmental, economic and social conditions. IDPs are intended to be holistic multi-sectoral plans, which guide the future development of the locality, giving direction to both the municipality and other spheres of government operating in the area. These plans include a spatial development framework, but also contain expenditure priorities and projects for implementation over a five-year period. Both legislation and guide material on

IDPs suggest that they should contribute to sustainable development, and Coetzec (2002) argues that IDPs can be seen as South Africa's version of Local Agenda 21 (LA21). Nevertheless, sustainability principles are not widely reflected in IDPs, and environmental aspects are usually weakly developed (Sowman, 2002).

The objective of this paper is to consider whether South Africa's Integrated Development Plans provide an adequate framework for achieving sustainable regional development. Although IDPs are South African plans, they bear similarities to forms of regional development planning being promoted in other developing countries (Bornstein, 2000; Stremplat-Platte, 2001). Hence the study has relevance beyond the South African context, although the discussion does reflect South African conditions.

The paper focuses on the case study of Integrated Development Planning in the Ugu District Municipality (Ugu), which has been acclaimed for its emphasis on incorporating principles of sustainable development into its planning processes. Ugu is one of the 10 district municipalities within the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province (Figure 1). It covers an area of some 5866 km², with a population of 688 000, some 70% in rural areas. The case of Ugu exemplifies some of the prospects and potentials inherent in IDPs, but also some of the difficulties and contradictions facing these processes.

The paper begins with a discussion of sustainable regional development, and develops a framework for analysis of sustainability in the Ugu IDP process. It outlines the methodology used to investigate the case study, and then provides a background on IDPs in South Africa, and the Ugu region. Ugu's 2001-2 IDP process is then assessed, and the paper analyses the extent to which it moved the municipality towards sustainability. The paper concludes by considering whether South Africa's Integrated Development Plans can be seen as an appropriate way of advancing sustainable regional development planning in peripheral regions within developing countries. Although the Ugu case study is a relatively isolated one, findings are located within more generic discussions of IDPs in South Africa and conditions in developing countries.

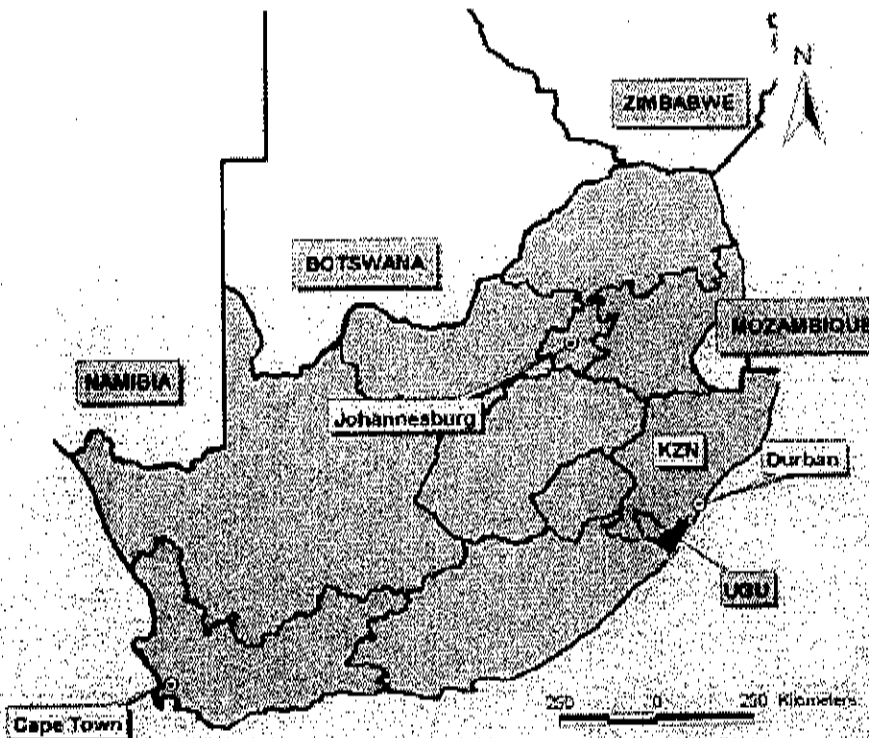


Figure 1. The location of Ugu

Sustainable Regional Development

The resurgence of 'bottom-up' regional planning from the 1980s, coupled with initiatives towards decentralization, have highlighted the potentials that regional planning, with its emphasis on contextually specific development strategies that bring together economic, social and ecological concerns, seems to offer for promoting sustainable development (Hardy & Lloyd, 1994; Clement & Hansen, 2001). Balancing interests between economic and environmental aspects of development have long been the core of regional planning. Nevertheless, economic concerns have tended to dominate over ecological or social interests (Campbell, 1991), and the incorporation of environmental concerns in regional planning has been weaker than expected.

In response, several special initiatives have attempted to ensure that these concerns are taken up in regional planning. In the EU, the Structural Funds since 1994 have required an appraisal of the regional environmental situation, an evaluation of the environmental impact of strategies, and the involvement of environmental authorities in preparing regional plans and programmes. Sustainable development is also a principle for all Structural Funds (Clement & Hansen, 2001). Some countries have sent out guidelines on addressing sustainability within regional planning.

While the initial policy approach was to add on environmental concerns, there is a shift towards a more integrated approach to policy co-ordination (Clement & Hansen, 2001). Integrated planning encapsulates environmental, social and economic factors as cross-cutting concerns in policy. Within this context, space rather than sectors becomes significant, and the role of regional planning comes to the fore. Roberts & Colwell (2001, p. 435) argue that the growth in competence at a regional level will assist in the creation of a planning model based on a single regional programme that brings together "various sectoral actions into a sustainable integrated spatial development process". The important role of the region in achieving sustainable development was highlighted by the 1998 Graz Charter, written by the European Network on Sustainable Regional Development, a network of researchers and research institutions. The Charter developed a vision of sustainable regional development, defining it as "a local, informed and participatory process, which seeks a balance between economic, ecological and social sustainability" (Graz Charter, in Clement & Hansen, 2001, p. 115). Despite the emphasis on the region, there is recognition of appropriate vertical linkages, and the impossibility of 'islands of sustainability'.

There are echoes of these ideas in the type of regional planning being promoted in several developing country contexts, although the focus here is more on integrated development as an effective form of governance, linked to initiatives towards administrative decentralization (Work, 2001), rather than on sustainability. Edgington & Fernandez (2001) argue that regional planning is being seen as a multi-sectoral and multi-level activity incorporating local government and other actors, a process for integrating various dimensions of development and the actions of sectoral agencies. Territorial integrated development planning is seen as a way of addressing poverty, environmental issues, economic and social development (Dabholkar, 2001). The model is one of flexible adaptive management, based on participation towards consensus building. South Africa's IDPs bear similarities to these models of regional planning, but there are questions as to whether they can be seen as providing a form of planning in which sustainability can be advanced.

Perspectives on sustainable regional development in part reflect broader debates on the concept of sustainability, and its evolution. The shift from a predominant concern with resource limits and the impact of economic growth on environment in the 1970s to a recognition of the need to respond as well to demands for intra-generational social equity, as embodied in the 1987 Brundtland Commission (and thus to marry economic, social and ecological concerns), are mirrored in changing emphases within regional planning. While Jackson & Roberts (1997) argue that social dimensions are frequently neglected, they have received more attention in literature on planning for sustainability in developing countries, where the need to address poverty and to ensure the provision of basic needs looms large (e.g. see Harday *et al.*, 2001). The growing emphasis on participation and partnerships within the regional sustainability literature also reflects broader discourses on sustainability, in particular, within the definition of sustainability adopted by Local Agenda 21 (LA21), a programme of action for

the local level which emerged following the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Within the sustainability literature there are key debates over whether the pursuit of economic development can be sustainable, and the extent to which economic and social transformation is required. 'Weak' versions of sustainability assume that there is a high level of substitutability between human and natural capital, so that while environmental concerns assume greater priority, continued reliance on the market and the status quo means that there is limited transformation of patterns of economic development. By contrast, 'strong' sustainability advocates argue that economic activity cannot be allowed to induce continued environmental decline, and strong intervention as well as greater social, institutional and economic transformation is required (Gibbs *et al.*, 1998). In the literature on sustainable regional development, approaches espousing a shift towards regional subsistence and self-sufficiency and a radical reconsideration of economic strategies could be seen as versions of 'strong' sustainability. The ecological modernization perspective is another approach to the debate, which assumes that "it is possible to integrate the goals of economic development, social welfare and environmental protection, and that through this reconciliation synergies will be generated which can be harnessed and put to good use" (Roberts & Colwell, 2001, p. 424). However, there are often tensions in reconciling these goals, and in achieving the desired 'win-win-win' effect (Gibbs *et al.*, 1998; Houghton & Counsell, 2004).

In practice, the sustainability concept is often used in a diffuse or partial way in regional planning (Birkmann & Gleisenstein, 2002). Key global issues are frequently absent, and the focus is often sectoral, without a strong understanding of interactions and conflicts. The contextuality of definitions of sustainability, and the importance of regionally appropriate understandings of sustainable development, are stressed by recent European studies of initiatives towards sustainable regional development (Clement & Hansen, 2001). An EU study on Regional Pathways to Sustainable Development suggests that sustainability should be seen as a new development paradigm guiding movement towards a more integrated approach, rather than a static blueprint. In terms of this approach, the emphasis is on a gradual process of making change in locally appropriate directions, through learning and adaptation, building shared understandings and partnerships, and improving management towards sustainability (Clement & Hansen, 2001).

The evaluation of sustainability in Ugu in this study draws on several of these threads, which can be summarized in terms of three key dimensions.

Participation and partnerships. Most definitions of sustainable development include a strong emphasis on participatory processes and the development of partnerships between local government and civil society. The LA21 principles in particular stress the establishment of participatory structures which will continue to interface with local government over the longer term, and that are deeply rooted within communities (ICLEI, 1996). Selman (1998, p. 541) comments that: "Its importance is widely considered to lie in ways in which it extends genuine participation amongst stakeholders and the general public, both in setting priorities and taking decisions".

Social and economic sustainability. In a developing country context, the provision of basic needs, initiatives to address poverty, and to redress historical social injustices and inequities, becomes critical. Similarly, initiatives to promote local skills, talents and capacities are of significance. These principles are consistent

with LA21 principles, and with those espoused in the sustainable regional development literature (Clement & Hansen, 2001). Most versions of sustainability support patterns of economic development that do not exceed the ability of natural systems to sustain them, although the 'weak' versus 'strong' sustainability distinctions become significant here.

Environmental sustainability. Most versions of sustainability emphasize the conservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecological integrity. Links between local and global systems and processes, and a concern for the long-term ecological health of the planet are also key in programmes such as LA21. Sustainable development also implies a systemic approach, integrating social, economic and ecological dimensions, and recognizing intersections and interactions. Gibbs *et al.* (1998) note that the ideas of 'weak' versus 'strong' sustainability have also been used to distinguish the extent to which sustainability is marginal or integral to institutions. Jackson & Roberts (1997) adopt a four-level categorization to indicate how far organizations have gone in taking on sustainability:

- Environmental fragmentation*, in which efforts are fragmented and individual departments run their own initiatives.
- Embryonic environmental greening*, where corporate environmental initiatives are undertaken, but often on top of existing policies, and alongside fragmented initiatives.
- Corporate environmental greening*, where there is a corporate strategy that integrates environmental policies with other objectives.
- Strategic environmental greening*, characterized by "full-scale re-engineering designed to structure both the corporate objectives and their delivery around the concept of sustainable development" (Jackson & Roberts, 1997, p. 617).

These distinctions are useful in considering the Ugu case, and the extent to which the IDP process enabled a shift towards greater sustainability.

Methodology

The paper draws from two studies conducted by the author (Todes, 2002a, 2002b). The first study focused on assessing the Ugu IDP and the extent to which it was meeting the intentions of integrated development planning. This study examined the IDP process in the Ugu District Council and in two of the six local councils (Hibiscus Coast and Ezingoleni) within the Ugu District over a period from November 2001 to April 2002. The study focused on examining the participatory processes and the influence of the IDP on democratization; the institutional organization around the IDP and its location within the local government in order to assess its centrality to decision-making; the planning methodology used and its effectiveness; the potential impact of planning in terms of its links to local government budgets, and its influence on decisions of other spheres of government; and the incorporation of cross-cutting dimensions including sustainability, poverty, economic development, and gender. Although only a part of this study was directly concerned with sustainability, much of the research undertaken was of relevance to the question of the extent to which the IDP enabled a shift towards sustainability. It formed an essential background to the second study which directly assessed the Ugu IDP against a set of sustainability criteria drawn from LA21, and embodied in the framework developed above. Much of the research conducted in the first study could be used to answer questions posed in the second study. While the focus of reportage in this paper is on Ugu District Council, the studies of the local municipalities provided insight into the dynamics of the area, and the interrelationship of the district

council with the local councils in its area.

The first study was undertaken through a combination of the following activities: document analysis; field observation of major events in the IDP *South Africa's Integrated Development Plans* 849 process and some provincial meetings; a self-assessment of the IDP process with councillors and officials in Ugu, Eziqoleni and Hibiscus Coast; and interviews with councillors, planners and other officials in the municipalities; interviews with officials in the provincial Department of Traditional and Local Government (DTLGA) which oversaw the IDP process, and officials in other provincial departments. The self-assessment process was undertaken through a workshop which assessed the IDP process in terms of the adequacy of various dimensions under investigation.

The second study occurred over the June–July period in 2002, after the IDP was complete. It included further interviews with councillors, planners and other officials in Ugu; an interview with a prominent local environmentalist and representative of a national environmental NGO; attendance at a community report back meeting; in addition to three stakeholder workshops designed to elicit comments and critical assessments of the IDP. The first workshop invited all participants in the Ugu IDP process to attend, and some 40 councillors, officials, local council representatives (councillors and officials), representatives of national and provincial departments, and a few NGOs attended. All known NGOs were invited to an NGO workshop, and six groupings attended, primarily in the welfare and development fields. In the discussion it emerged that the level of NGO organization in the area is limited, and that organizations are very stretched and find it difficult to participate in meetings. A third workshop was held with organized business in the area, attended by five organizations, including the overarching Chamber of Business. Further document analysis was undertaken. Table 1 provides details on the nature and volumes of research activities undertaken in the two studies.

South Africa's IDPs and the Ugu IDP

Integrated Development Planning in South Africa

South Africa's IDPs reflect an interest in multi-sectoral, integrated, bottom-up approaches to local and regional development, and with new forms of governance based on participatory approaches and high levels of decentralization. IDPs are intended to be holistic, integrated and participatory strategic plans guiding the work of the municipality. They are expected to give effect to notions of 'developmental local government', namely to align resources around the chosen development directions of the municipality, and to ensure both horizontal integration between sectors within local government, and vertical integration with other spheres of government. The IDP is a statutory requirement for all local authorities, and is expected to provide a basis for budgeting and for directing all their activities over a five-year period. While local government has only a small share of government funds, IDPs are intended to give direction to the actions of national and provincial government in their area, although there is as yet no mechanism to tie national and provincial expenditure to IDPs. IDPs are seen as prime vehicles for redressing poverty and inequality, and for restructuring urban and rural areas away from the apartheid legacy. The IDP includes a strategic component, a spatial framework, and a set of programmes and projects to be implemented over a five-year period.

While IDPs have been described in legislation since 1996, and forms of these

plans have been developed since then, it is only in the last three years that the

Table 1: Research Activities

Observation	<p>Hibiscus Coast Representative Forum (17/11/2001) Ezinqoleni Strategies meeting (10/12/2001) Ugu District Strategies/Projects workshop (28-29/1/2002) Ugu Project Task Teams/Localised Strategies (7-8/2/2002) Hibiscus Coast Representative Forum (16/2/2002) Provincial Service Providers Forum meeting (20/2/2002) Ugu Representative Forum (21/2/2002) Ugu Alignment workshop (11-12/3/2004) Hibiscus Coast Special Council meeting (28/3/2002) Provincial Multi-sectoral Assessment Forum (11/4/2002) Ugu Prioritisation workshop (22/4/2002) Community report back meeting (12/7/2002)</p>
Workshops	<p>Ezinqoleni self-assessment workshop (16/4/2002) Ugu self-assessment workshop (22/4/2002) Hibiscus Coast self-assessment workshop (24/4/2002) IDP participants workshop (11/7/2002) NGOs workshop (11/7/2002) Business workshop (12/7/2002)</p>
Interviews	<p>Ugu planner (11/12/2001; 16/12/2001; 21/2/2002) Ugu senior planner (30/1/2002; 28/3/2002) Ugu Consultants (18/1/2002; 28/3/2002) Head Water Services, Ugu (28/1/2002) Provincial planner in DTLGA providing support to Ugu (28/1/2002; 11/3/2002) Ugu Councillor – Chair Planning and Environment Committee, Ugu Chair IDP Committee (29/1/2002) Ugu Councillor – Exco (28/1/2002) Hibiscus Coast IDP Manager (30/1/2002; 16/4/2002; 24/4/2002) Hibiscus Coast Community Liaison Officer (30/1/2002) PFMMS Planners (30/1/2002) Chief Director Planning, DTLGA (14/2/2002) Officials in DTLGA (20/2/2002) Official in Premier's Office (20/2/2002) Official in Department of Economic Affairs and Tourism (21/2/2002) Ugu Mayor (28/2/2002) Head Coastal section, DTLGA (25/3/2002) Ugu Municipal Manager (28/3/2002) Ezinqoleni Municipal Manager (28/3/2002) Ezinqoleni councillor (16/4/2002) Hibiscus Coast consultant (16/4/2002) Hibiscus Coast Speaker (24/4/2002) Hibiscus Coast Municipal Manager (24/4/2002) Hibiscus Coast Head of Development and Planning Committee (24/4/2002) Environmentalist (11/7/2002) Ugu Planner (18/7/2002) Ugu Community Development Officer (18/7/2002) Ugu Water Department Official (18/7/2002)</p>
Documents	<p>Terms of Reference and minutes for Provincial Multi-Sectoral IDP Assessment Forum Ugu Interim IDP Ugu Process Plan Ugu Framework Plan Ugu Amalgamation Plan Ugu Situational Analysis Ugu Workshop Material, including Analysis Summaries, Preliminary Strategies, project lists and material for prioritisation workshop Ugu Agenda/Minutes for Representative Forum Ugu Draft IDP Ezinqoleni Interim IDP Ezinqoleni Process Plan Ezinqoleni Amalgamation Plan Ezinqoleni Draft Analysis Report Ezinqoleni Minutes of Representative Forum and IDP Steering Committee Hibiscus Coast Interim IDP Hibiscus Coast Process Plan Hibiscus Coast Analysis: current reality report Hibiscus Coast Minutes of Representative Forum and IDP Steering Committee Meetings Selected Minutes and Agenda of Hibiscus Coast council meetings Hibiscus Coast Priority issues; Issues/Objectives/Strategic Guidelines/Potential Projects Hibiscus Coast Draft IDP Hibiscus Coast Project lists</p>

current version of IDPs has been formulated, and that the statutory requirements for an IDP have been spelt out. The passing of the Municipal Systems Act and the second local government demarcation in 2000 laid the basis for the present round of IDPs. For the first time, wall-to-wall local government was introduced. Outside of the six metropolitan areas, all of which have single local authorities, a two-tier system of district and local municipalities pertains. There are now some 47 district and 231 local municipalities, most of which are large, spanning both rural and urban areas. District councillors are a combination of local municipal representatives and directly elected councillors. The division of functions between district and local councils vary, but the role of the district council is also to support weak local authorities, to link to provincial and national government, and to act as co-ordinator. While each local authority conducts its own participatory process, and produces its own IDP, this is done in interaction with the production of the district IDP, which is intended to produce a common overall strategy for the district, and to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of IDPs in the district.

IDPs are produced by local government, sometimes with the assistance of consultants. However, the IDP process is overseen by the provincial planning department, which also checks that the plan meets legal requirements. Plan approval remains at local level. The form of IDPs is presently influenced by a set of Guide Packs (published from 2001) produced by the national Department of Provincial and Local Government. These offer detailed guidance on the intentions of IDPs, and the processes that can be followed.

Coetzee (2002), argues that:

Integrated development planning can be viewed as the South African planning and development response to LA21. According to the White Paper on Local Government (1998), these plans 'will assist municipalities to focus on the environmental sustainability of their delivery and development strategies' and defines sustainable development as 'development that delivers basic social and economic services to all, without threatening the viability of the ecological and community systems upon which these services depend'. (p. 11)

She argues that the principles of the Earth Charter are compatible with those guiding local government in the White Paper. Similarly, she suggests that the IDP process is consistent with LA21 processes, and gives effect to these ideas. Areas of congruence include (Coetzee, 2002):

- the integration of social, economic and environmental issues
- the multi-sectoral focus
- linking local issues to global impacts
- concern for the future, through the development of long-term visions
- recognizing and working through resource limits
- local municipalities working in partnership with civil society through the highly participatory process adopted
- Equity and social justice through the emphasis on addressing social imbalances.

While IDPs might provide a broad framework in which sustainable development can be pursued, they are not primarily about sustainability. Although

sustainability and environment are seen as cross-cutting issues in the Guides, and suggestions are made as to how they might be incorporated in various phases of the IDP, treatment of these issues is weak (DEAT, 2003). The Guides emphasized process more than content (Harrison, 2001), and lacked specific guidance on the type of environmental issues which the IDP should address. A recent document (DEAT, 2003) makes up some of the deficit.

Despite the limitations of the guideline material, some municipalities have attempted to incorporate principles of sustainable development in their IDPs. The following section discusses the case of the Ugu District Municipality, which attempted to put LA21 principles at the core of their planning.

The Ugu District

Ugu is one of the new district municipalities created under the demarcation of local government in 2000. In addition to its role as co-ordinator, it has direct responsibility for water and sanitation, and assists four poorly resourced rural municipalities. It has a staff of 418 and an operating budget of R118 million, most of which is devoted to water and sanitation, reflecting its history as a water services authority in the area.

Ugu covers a large, complex area, with many of the divisions that characterize regions created under apartheid. It includes a narrow coastal strip of 112 km oriented to tourist development, where services and infrastructure are well provided; a commercial agricultural belt (largely sugar and timber), and inland areas where some 70% of the population resides. Most of these inland areas once fell under the KwaZulu homeland, and were reserved for African occupation. Land is still controlled by tribal authorities. Rising unemployment in the post-apartheid era, and the slow pace of land reform have meant that the majority of the African population has remained in these areas, dependent largely on migrant remittances, commuting to work within the region, pensions and a level of subsistence agriculture or harvesting of natural resources. Levels of poverty and unemployment are high. In contrast to coastal areas, there are extensive backlogs in all forms of infrastructure, including water and sanitation.

The economy of the region is centred largely on agriculture, tourism and commerce, but there is an important agro-industrial component. The environmental resources and attributes of the area have been the basis for much of the development of the area, but tourism, residential development and agro-industry have often occurred in ways which have degraded these resources, undermining the economic base of the area over the long-term. Environmentally inappropriate development has occurred along large parts of the coast and around many estuaries, although a number of conservation areas have been maintained. Livelihood strategies in a context of poverty and a lack of local alternatives, together with current patterns of land ownership have contributed to environmental degradation in rural areas under tribal control. Problems include overgrazing, illegal harvesting of marine resources and *muthi* (medicine) plants, and depletion of indigenous forests.

The Ugu IDP Planning Process

The Ugu plan was built on previous planning in the area, namely an Interim IDP prepared following amalgamation, and previous regional council plans in the area. In contrast to many local authorities where plans are produced by consultants, the 2002 plan was developed by the two planners in the council, under the auspices of the municipal manager, the Ugu Planning and Environment Committee,

and the Ugu Executive Committee. They interacted closely with top officials. Following suggestions in the IDP Guides, a monthly IDP Representative Forum meeting was held as a way of engaging with the diversity of interests in the region, including: provincial and national government; parastatals; Ugu's Exco and Planning Committee; the mayors and municipal managers of the local authorities; tribal leaders; regionally organized private sector organizations; and NGOs. Some 11 community meetings attended by 648 people were held across the region in order to assess needs and priorities, but planners also engaged with the more extensive participatory processes that were organized for the local IDPs, and with their planning processes, in order to understand local issues.

The IDP was organized in terms of several phases suggested in the Guides, namely: preparation, in which the process was planned, and a framework for local authority IDPs was developed; situational analysis, based on both community participation and technical analysis; development strategies; projects; integrated sectors and dimensions; and approval. As was the case in many IDPs, the process was contracted into a far shorter period than the intended nine months. Workshops involving members of the Representative Forum, all of the local authorities, and additional groups which had not attended the Representative Forum, were held to devise strategies, and to align local with district strategies, projects and priorities. In practice, however, workshops provided only broad agreement and a common understanding, and the details were left to a smaller grouping. Joint district-local task teams of officials were held to detail strategies and projects in several local authorities. Projects were prioritized using a set of criteria derived from the IDP. A vision was developed and discussed at several forums throughout the process. The draft plan was advertised for comment, but final decisions of prioritized projects by council occurred after this process. A five-year action plan, presenting prioritized projects for R900 million, was developed. Since only R113 million will be available from municipal sources, the remainder will have to be derived from other spheres of government, and non-governmental sources.

Assessing Sustainability in the Ugu IDP

Incorporating Sustainability into the IDP Process

Ugu is one of the few municipalities that put sustainability principles at the core of its plan from the start. In the analysis phase, planners used non-elite tools such as photographs to engage communities and stakeholders in discussion about sustainability from the perspective of issues of importance to them. This proved effective in identifying challenges for planning, including socially sensitive issues, such as the need to move away from traditional burial practices, which, with rising AIDS related deaths has resulted in pollution of groundwater and wetlands. It enabled poor communities to move beyond perceptions that sustainability was about 'green' issues of little concern to them. The photographs formed the basis for discussion of the causes of problems, and of the interrelationship between social, economic and environmental dimensions. This work was summarized in several issue sheets, which were used to develop strategies.

Both the integrated approach, and the emphasis on sustainability were taken through in later phases of the plan. The concept of sustainable development was incorporated in the vision, and was set up as a criterion for the assessment of strategies and for project prioritization. Strategic sustainability guidelines were developed, and a sustainability framework, integrating the various strategic directions, guidelines and projects into programmes, formed the core of the plan.

Participation and Partnerships

The Ugu IDP went some way towards the establishment of participatory processes, improving previous practices. Despite a history of deep conflict between the African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) political parties, there was little evident inter-party conflict around the IDP, reflecting the extent to which both political processes prior to the plan, and the plan itself, attempted to bring various groups together into a consensual process. Nevertheless, several problems remained. The dominance of tribal authorities in rural areas made it difficult for independent organizations to emerge. Further, interviews with NGOs suggested that accountability by councillors to local communities was lacking. Some argued that money was not reaching the grassroots, that gatekeeping occurred around projects in some areas, and that it was difficult for people to speak out in rural areas.

The Representative Forum did not prove to be an effective model for participation since it built on a previous Service Providers Forum, which was based on information exchange between municipalities, government and parastatals. Attendance of representatives from beyond the previous Forum was weak, and even government officials found it difficult to keep up with the demand to participate in several IDPs simultaneously. Often staff who were too junior to make decisions attended. As in many municipalities, participation of business was poor, partly due to the diffuse focus. The few NGOs participated unevenly in the IDP. Some lacked capacity to do so, while others had not heard about the IDP.

Partnerships only developed to a limited extent around the Ugu IDP. Some partnerships are developing with national and provincial departments around special funding programmes that are designed to link to IDPs. Others have developed through the IDP process, but there is still no guarantee that provincial and national departments will comply with the plan.

Very little attention is given to the role of districts and district-local relationships in the Guides. While a partnership based on local needs and capacities is expected to develop, it is overlaid by past histories and political tensions. In Ugu, reasonable working relationships were created with the rural municipalities, although there were concerns about its dominance. Relationships were tense with the larger (and politically different) coastal authorities, some of which were bigger and with better resources than Ugu. Co-ordination was difficult to achieve, although plans are broadly aligned.

While the Ugu IDP has improved levels of participation, it is not the 'deep' participation anticipated by EA21 principles. Similarly, the development of partnerships is still limited, outside of inter-governmental linkages, and even these remain to be resolved.

Social and Economic Sustainability

Although it might be argued that the key sustainability issue in Ugu was the way in which patterns of economic development were downgrading the resources on which they depend, this was not the predominant analysis that emerged in the plan. While some reference was made to these points, the dominant theme centred on the marginalization of rural areas in terms of both economic development and service delivery. Inadequate and inappropriately delivered services and poverty in rural areas were seen as a major sustainability

challenge. The IDP thus focused on addressing these issues, and on developing small business and local skills. Thus some 58% of the budget for the next five years was devoted to new water and sanitation projects, and an additional 8% to the supply of free basic water. Other projects responded to deficits in basic rural infrastructure, and to health and housing conditions in the area, including programmes around HIV/AIDS, orphans and abused children. Land reform, support to previously disadvantaged small farmers and small business, sustainable livelihoods programmes, crime prevention, skills development and programmes for street traders were also proposed. As an established practice within Ugu, preference is given to firms using local labour, and to joint ventures which build small business capacity. These programmes address important aspects of social and economic sustainability.

However, as a consequence of the marginality of small rural economic activities, and the dependence of the local economy on existing patterns of economic activity, dominant patterns of economic development were not challenged in the planning process. The economic strategy was built on regional strengths, but represented a combination of 'business as usual', with projects targeting the established tourism interests and the maintenance or improvement of existing infrastructure, combined with the support of existing and potential small business, particularly the extension of tourism and agriculture to peripheral rural areas, and projects aimed at the very poor. In the *post hoc* evaluation, NGOs criticized the support of large tourism projects from a social and environmental perspective, but these voices were not strongly present in the plan itself.

Environmental Sustainability

Planners made a concerted effort to incorporate environmental dimensions in the IDP. They drew on an existing coastal management plan for the area, and commissioned a Strategic Environmental Assessment in the Analysis phase. Projects likely to require Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management Plans are listed, and the importance of conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological integrity was addressed through a sustainability programme. The analysis highlighted the problematic way in which formal developments have historically ignored natural processes, and undermined biodiversity, particularly along the coast and around rivers. It proposed a revision of the land use management system, which is not sensitive to environmental issues, but detailed decision making will be up to local municipalities, even if Ugu's IDP has to be considered.

Several other areas of environmental consideration were included, and the plan proposed a conservation and rehabilitation programme, a popular education programme around environmental aspects of the plan, and addressed ecological sustainability within several programmes. A sustainable livelihoods programme was developed to respond to poverty driven over-use of natural resources. An environmental audit and state of environment assessment was suggested to monitor the plan. However, no explicit attention was given to the linkage between local and global dimensions, although it does consider some global environmental issues of concern such as deforestation.

Compared to European approaches, the approach to environmental sustainability is somewhat general and rather uneven. Questions can also be raised about the extent to which such issues are likely to be addressed. The level of support for addressing environmental issues outside of poverty alleviation is weak, as reflected in the relatively small budget (2%) accorded to the sustainability programme, compared to areas such as tourism (8%). For Ugu councillors,

the 'green' issues embodied in the sustainability framework were still seen as less important than projects that would directly create jobs and alleviate poverty. Further, while the sustainability framework contained projects addressing these issues, they were new and untested, and thus less likely to attract significant funds from the beginning. By contrast, considerable funds were perceived to be available for tourism projects both from the provincial government and the private sector.

The Contribution of Ugu's IDP Process to Sustainability

Ugu's IDP process can be seen as a step forward for the promotion of sustainability within the region in several respects. A systemic approach was adopted, the plan itself was highly integrated, with good attention to linkages between social, economic and ecological sustainability, and strong connections were made between poverty, rural development and sustainability. This has improved the acceptability of sustainability ideas amongst councillors and communities, and has moved beyond the past situation where environmental interest and development for the poor were seen as competing and contradictory. There has also been an acceptance that the principles developed in the plan should guide decision making, in contrast to the past where competition between politicians for projects in their areas had been common, resulting in poorly conceived, badly located and unsustainable projects. The Ugu IDP was an important learning process, potentially the beginning of a path towards greater sustainability. In several areas, processes are being put in place to strengthen the plan, including a participation and communication plan, various environmental assessment tools, a training programme on environmental sustainability for municipal employees, and further exploration of economic development. The plan in its own right meets several criteria in terms of promoting social sustainability (basic needs, equity, social justice), and to a degree in promoting weak forms of economic sustainability (development of local skills, talents, capacities). The criteria for environmental sustainability in a weak sense are met in terms of the programmes promoted in the plan.

Yet the Ugu IDP and its process remains limited in several respects. The focus on future projects in the plan meant that little attention was paid to ongoing practice within the municipality, yet sustainability principles are not routinely considered within projects. The over-emphasis on projects versus practice is a common problem in IDPs (Gwagwa, 2002; Meiklejohn & Coetzee, 2003).

The participatory process fell short of the type of deep participation anticipated in LA21, in part due to time constraints, but also because it is seen as more of a consultative process. However, even within these terms, the model of participation did not fit well with the weakness of civil society in the region, and the fracturing of power within 'communities'. The concept of partnerships is not well developed in relation to IDPs, and there is a tendency to operate on a state-centred approach in which government (at all levels) is responsible for delivery. Even within these terms, however, the IDP process did not provide an adequate mechanism for linking spheres of government. The problem of unresolved mechanisms of inter-governmental relations, and the disjuncture between subsidiarity in plan-making, while decisions on funding are held more centrally, has been noted as a key problem in commentaries on IDPs in South Africa (e.g. Harrison, 2002).

A key weakness of the Ugu IDP was that it did not challenge the patterns of economic development underpinning sustainability problems. Nor did it

move towards regional self-reliance or challenge the highly inequitable distribution of wealth and ownership. Its approach to economic development can at best be seen as a form of weak sustainability. This outcome needs to be understood in part as the result of the way sustainability was linked to basic needs, poverty alleviation and service delivery, and as a consequence of the marginality of alternative economic activities. In addition, it reflects a weakness common to IDPs (Harrison, 2002; Adams & Oranje, 2002), that economic strategies are not taken as central to the plan, and that the focus tends to be on the organization of service delivery.

Similarly, the marginalization of 'green' issues in the way sustainability was defined and communicated to communities and councillors, itself a response to the way these issues were seen in the past, meant that while environmental sustainability is present in the plan, it receives less support in terms of budgets.

The plan therefore incorporated sustainability in several respects, and enabled planners, councillors and communities to become more aware of sustainability issues, but there were still significant limitations in terms of how sustainability was understood and taken up within the municipality, in addition to institutional constraints on how far Ugu itself could carry through sustainability ideas. These limitations reflect politics around the plan and within Ugu itself, the inability to enforce its development directions on provincial and national government, as well as contrary directions and tensions with local municipalities, particularly those in coastal areas, with which Ugu has historically had a more tense relationship. While the Ugu IDP constructs itself as a form of strategic environmental greening in terms of Jackson & Robert's (1997) categories, in that it attempts to "structure corporate objectives and their delivery around the concept of sustainable development" (p. 617), restructuring decision making "to make it more accessible to local communities", the real shift is much more limited, from fragmentation to the second stage of embryonic environmental greening.

Conclusion

Within the South African context, the practice of integrated development planning is strengthening, and supportive legislation is slowly being put in place. Assessments of recent rounds of IDPs (Harrison, 2002) suggest that a learning process is occurring, levels of participation are rising, there is greater support for IDPs, and the quality of plans is improving. Municipal budgets are now required to link to IDPs (Cartter, 2003). This is a distinct improvement on LA21 initiatives, which have often remained marginalized (Jorby, 2002). However, less attention has been given to sustainability, on the assumption that the IDP process itself will result in plans that reflect principles of sustainability. While the IDP does provide a useful vehicle for formulating plans based on these principles, stronger guidance is needed on environmental issues. Further, as the Ugu case study demonstrates, there are both political and institutional constraints that make it difficult to address sustainability. While the Ugu case is unique in the sense that it is one of the few municipalities that put sustainability at the core of its plan, the problems and limitations which were identified are much more commonly noted, in particular, the difficulties around inter-governmental linkages, limitations with regard to participation (Rauch, 2002), and the weak conceptualization of economic development in the plan. Since variations of IDPs are being promoted as forms of regional development planning in developing countries, it seems useful to conclude by considering whether it offers a way of promoting sustainable development in these contexts. The notion of integrated development planning, with its emphasis on

understanding development issues in a complex, multi-dimensional way, and on formulating territorially appropriate integrated, multi-sectoral strategies, is consistent with sustainability thinking. The link to budgets and to institutional organization is important in moving these concerns beyond the margins. However, it requires greater guidance on key areas of policy, particularly environment and economic development. It depends on planners who have the capacity to understand and draw together these various elements. It also requires a careful linking of environmental concerns to development issues that are meaningful within the region. However, there may be tensions over whether this goes far enough in addressing ecological issues in situations where environmental interests are not well organized. Whereas integrated development planning is based on a communicative approach to planning where consensus is forged and interests are balanced, environmental policy seems to require that environmental aspects are included and implemented, even where these are not necessarily popular (see Bouwer, 1994 on the Dutch case). In addition, it requires more systematic thinking on the implications for sustainability of economic development strategies, which has generally been lacking in the South African case.

Further, planning of this sort needs to be carefully adapted to specific contexts. There is a growing critique of the somewhat standardized approach to planning promoted in the Guides (Harrison, 2002; Tódes, 2002a). The South African version of IDPs is rather elaborate, and highly demanding in terms of time, capacity, and the extent of participation. It also assumes good vertical and horizontal linkages, seeing the IDP as driving or co-ordinating integration at the local level. All of these demands and assumptions have proved difficult in the South African context, but there does appear to be commitment to strengthening capacity, and improving both vertical and horizontal linkages, even if they remain rather unresolved. Whilst the thrust of the United Nations Development Programme and Habitat policies have been to encourage decentralization, and to extend the capacity of local government, outcomes have been uneven, with limited capacity, few resources, and little power at this level in many contexts (Stohr, 2001). Mwimba (2002) shows the implications of these conditions for District Development Planning in Zambia. He questions the feasibility of this sort of planning in Zambia, where there is no supportive legal, institutional or financial framework.

The question of participation is also a difficult one. Although the highly participatory approach suggested by both LA21, and to a lesser extent, IDPs, can be seen as positive in that they provide a base for the organization of civil society, and for improving accountability, both assume greater levels of organization, and more egalitarian and stable structures than might be the case in many areas (see also Watson, 2002). Appropriate forms of information dissemination and participation also require attention. Not only does the regional scale of these plans complicate the meaning of participation, but what might be termed 'institutional thinness'—limited organizations that are already stretched—does raise questions about the feasibility of suggested models of participation and notions of partnership. Even government agencies are unable to cope with levels of participation required in South Africa. Developing contextually appropriate forms of participation would thus seem to be critical.

Thus while the notion of integrated development planning is an important one for the promotion of sustainable regional development, the form that it takes should be considered in context, with consideration of prevalent social, economic and political dynamics, and with appropriate support at the level of content, and not only process.

Finally, these plans need to be seen as instruments for transforming governance --- for changing dominant practices, moving beyond a purely project driven approach.

Acknowledgements

The assistance of Ugu staff and councillors in this research is gratefully acknowledged. The paper benefited from discussions in the context of the earlier reports, particularly with Dr Merle Sowman, University of Cape Town, and David Madurai, UNDP. The referees are thanked for their detailed comments which were very helpful in revising the manuscript.

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