

A TALE OF TWO CAPITALS: PIETERMARITZBURG VERSUS ULUNDI¹

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ABSTRACT

The political and social transformation of the 1990s required the bantustans, the minions of apartheid, to be spatially reintegrated into mainstream South Africa. There has been some academic and media speculation about the fate of capital cities in the former bantustans in post-apartheid South Africa. This paper critically assesses the different arguments presented to support location of the capital city in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). In KZN the debate about the location of the capital has been intense and emotional, sometimes threatening to upset the fragile political balance in the province. Since 1994 there were calls within the echelons of the IFP for the capital to be established at Ulundi. However, the ANC, other political parties and the business sector preferred Pietermaritzburg as capital. The old power struggle between the ANC and the IFP was seen to be at the heart of the disagreement. A major issue was the role of the capital in promoting growth and development, and whether its location should be centralised or decentralised. Based on the international experience the paper suggests that the new capital cities like Ulundi would not realise the great expectations for promoting growth and development for two reasons. Firstly, there were serious economic and financial constraints. Secondly, the commitment of many governments to stimulate growth and development often served as a smokescreen to conceal political motives to relocate capitals. Clearly, there is a role for Ulundi as a regional development node, with an agricultural/rural focus, for which the town is well located. However, politically this would be a consolation prize for the IFP.

Introduction

The bantustan policy was "pivotal to apartheid's spatiality and territorial control" (Jones, 2000:26). 'Independent' homelands complete with capital cities² (and the mandatory casino complex) were expected to exercise political and administrative autonomy, and economic independence. Some, like Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (the so-called TBVC states), were granted 'independence' which was only recognised by the apartheid government.

Although across the country there was a drawing of new boundaries in the 1990s in an attempt to merge the former bantustans into mainstream South Africa, in reality not much had changed. "In fact the Apartheid experience was accentuated in the 'new' nine region dispensation which earlier had constituted the spatial matrix for the administration of apartheid" (Narsiah and Maharaj, 1997:246). There has been some concern that since the new regions were the products of political trade-offs, they were unlikely to serve the needs of local communities:

The provinces are the product of political horse trading between various parties in the pre-1994 negotiations. Geographically and administratively, they are modelled on apartheid-era provincial administrations and homelands. They were also established to preserve power blocs of political parties. For example, KwaZulu-Natal exists today mainly to preserve the IFP's stranglehold on the former homeland, where it had absolute hegemony. It is important to note that none of these homeland and provincial administration structures was designed to deliver any services to ordinary people. They were designed to keep them in their ethnic ghettos. They were of no use as agencies of delivery. Neither are they now - they merely act as conveyor belts for national decisions (*Sunday Times*, 5/12/99).

In the province of Natal the KwaZulu homeland administered by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) enjoyed the trappings of power and privilege, but refused to accept formal independence and had self-governing status. The leader of the IFP, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, frequently argued that his party supported non-violent opposition to destroy apartheid, and one such option was participation in

the homeland system. This ambivalence is aptly summarised by Johnston (1993:25): Inkatha's ambiguous history has reflected both resistance to and collusion with white minority rule and its ideology is parked uneasily between tradition and modernity.'

The IFP's non-violent strategies were often contrasted to what was perceived to be the more radical and violent tactics of the African National Congress (ANC). The IFP had a traditional, rural support base compared to the more sophisticated urban constituency of the ANC. Since the early 1980s tensions between the ANC and IFP escalated to the level of a low intensity civil war, with thousands losing their lives (Mare and Hamilton, 1986; Taylor and Shaw, 1993; De Haas and Zulu, 1994; Jeffery, 1997). The capital of the KwaZulu homeland was Ulundi, and that of the province of Natal was Pietermaritzburg (figure 1).

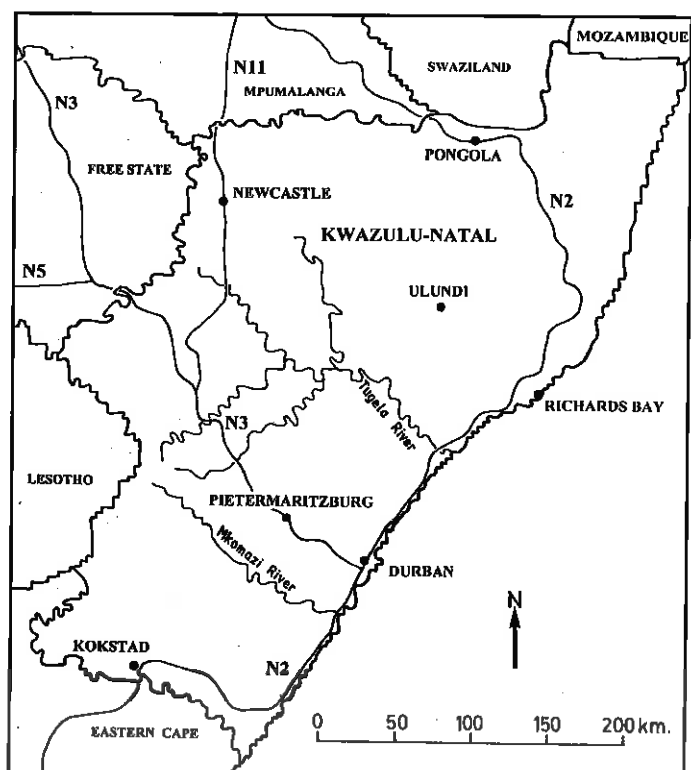


Figure 1: Location of Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi

After the 1994 democratic non-racial elections, the IFP emerged as the marginal majority ruling party (governing in coalition with the ANC), and the KwaZulu homeland merged with the Natal province which was then known as KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The location of the capital became a major issue in KZN after the elections.

There has been some academic and media speculation about the fate of capital cities in the former bantustans.³ For example, Siyongwana (1999) examined the impact of Umtata's loss of capital status. Bisho, capital of the former Ciskei, was said to be rapidly becoming a ghost town (Dickson, 1999). Capital cities in the former bantustans reflected the "pronounced spatial dislocation and racial polarisation imprinted on the urban landscape" (Jones, 2000:25).

Nationally, there has been some conjecture about whether there should be one capital, with Cape Town and Pretoria being the main contenders (Selfe, 1997). There has also been some contention about the choice of capital cities at the provincial levels. In the province of Mpumalanga, for example, there were five cities aspiring for capital status before Nelspruit was finally chosen (Hattingh, 1996).

In the province of KZN there have been fervent debates since 1994 about whether Pietermaritzburg or Ulundi should be the capital, as well as the financial and logistical ramifications of establishing a joint-capital. In the 1996 local government elections the ANC won a two-thirds majority in the Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi Transitional Local Council, and the IFP was the only party in the Ulundi Council.

There were calls within the echelons of the IFP for the capital to be established at Ulundi. However, the ANC, other political parties and the business sector preferred Pietermaritzburg as capital. The old power struggle between the ANC and the IFP was seen to be at the heart of the disagreement, "another chapter in a long and bloody history of struggle for ascendancy in this divided region" (*Daily News*, 15/6/94). A major issue was the role of the capital in promoting growth and development, and whether its location should be centralised or decentralised.

This paper critically assesses the different arguments presented to support location of the capital city in KZN. The paper is divided into six sections. The international experience in creating new capital cities is discussed in the first section. The second section presents an historical perspective to Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi. The role of capital cities in reconstruction and development is discussed in the third section. The fourth section compares the advantages and disadvantages of locating the capital in either city. The role of centralised and decentralised administrations is assessed in the fifth section. The findings of the capital survey are discussed in the final section. The main data sources for this paper were the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Interim Seat of the Legislature of the Province of KZN chaired by Advocate R. Cadman (hereafter referred to as the Commission), the post-election survey conducted by the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (IMPD), and newspaper reports. The debate to relocate the capital was not unique to KZN or South Africa.

"Created Capitals": The International Experience

Over the past 50 years a number of countries in the developing world (e.g. Mauritania, Botswana, Libya,

Malawi, Tanzania, Nigeria, Brazil and Pakistan) initiated plans to relocate capitals (Hamdan, 1964; Armstrong, 1985; Potts, 1985a). Stephenson (1970:330) has referred to this phenomenon as the 'created capital' which is "defined as a capital city which owes its origin and development to government policy and financial support". According to Stephenson (1970:317) 'created capitals' tend to be located in areas which do not have major commercial and economic interests, are primarily concerned with the affairs of government, and convey a "feeling of locational and functional neutrality". In addition to being unfunctional and small in size, 'created capitals' have been viewed by governments as "small administrative centres rather than as large metropolitan centres capable of becoming primate cities or major regional cores" (Stephenson, 1970:317).

Common factors in the decision to relocate include: the colonial origins of the existent capital; the marginal location of the capital; and the necessity to diffuse regional development, appease regional or ethnic conflicts, and afford a focus for nationalism and loyalty (Potts, 1985a; Pfaff, 1988). In many of these projects there was a strong emphasis on urban decentralisation and an "underlying regional development objective aimed at reducing excessive spatial imbalances" (Armstrong, 1985:73). This was linked to growth pole theories which argued that such new centres would reduce regional inequalities and promote further development (Gilbert, 1975; Potts, 1985a). However, "growth centres do not automatically induce rural and regional development and cannot operate effectively without direct efforts to improve agricultural and social conditions" (Gilbert, 1975:331-332).

Generally, the new capital cities have not realised the great expectations for promoting growth and development, and the record in this regard has been disappointing (Armstrong, 1985; Potts, 1985b). This failure is attributed to the fact that the primary motivation for relocation has been political, although this has generally been couched in development terms:

This appears to reflect the division between the overriding political imperatives, which form the 'true' motivations for building new capital cities, and the need to disguise these by emphasising aspects of the new city's development which will help to justify the project (Potts, 1985a:194).

Even though governments may be determined to support and promote the growth centre status of the new capitals, this goal is often not realised because of numerous problems (Potts, 1985a). Introduced capitals have been viewed as unproductive schemes which consume scarce resources which could be utilised more profitably to promote development elsewhere. Another concern was that the new capitals would "not be strong enough to lure new industries away from the existing primate cities" and may end up as "administrative white elephants" (Pfaff, 1988:195).

Any decision to relocate such towns is likely to be controversial because they embody 'centres of fixed capital', and transfer would be very costly (Christopher, 1985; Potts, 1985a). The lessons of the Brasilia experience is particularly instructive from an economic and financial perspective: "less than a decade into its construction, the Brasilia project had monopolised the national budget, undermined the monetary system and threatened the entire economy" (Armstrong, 1985:74). Brasilia did not stimulate growth

and development in its surrounding hinterland, and it merely functions as an administrative city (Stephenson, 1970; Potts, 1985a). The Malawian experience has demonstrated that the economic attractions of the old capital is often overwhelming, and is likely to eclipse progress and expansion in the new capital (Potts, 1985a). The next section examines the historical development of capital cities in KZN.

Capital Cities in KZN: An Historical Perspective

Both Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi had previously enjoyed capital status, and each had a legislative complex which had housed a legislature. The Colonial Parliament had been housed in Pietermaritzburg until 1910. Between 1910 and 1986 Pietermaritzburg was the capital of the Natal Provincial Council. Pietermaritzburg lost its legislature to Cape Town between 1986 to 1994 (Cadman, 1995). However, many of the administrative functions relating to the governance of the province remained in Pietermaritzburg (e.g. local government, education, agriculture, transport).

Ulundi had housed the legislature of the KwaZulu government between 1984 and April 1994. Prior to 1984 the KwaZulu Territorial Authority operated from Nongoma, seat of the Zulu Kingdom. When the issue of a capital emerged, the KwaZulu authorities initially supported Nongoma. However, the apartheid government wanted an alternative site and appointed an independent consultant to recommend a suitable location. The consultant recommended that Ulundi should be the capital. The KwaZulu authorities, however, did not trust the central government and appointed an economist to undertake an independent assessment who recommended that "Ulundi was the most suitable since there was a big river here for water supply, there was already electricity ... and the terrain was such that a big city could grow from here" (Buthelezi, 1996:1). This initiated an acrimonious debate about whether the capital should be Nongoma or Ulundi. The KwaZulu Legislature unanimously resolved that the capital should be Ulundi. The historical and cultural heritage associated with Ulundi was emphasised by Chief Buthelezi:

In the valley of Ulundi there was nothing more than open and undeveloped bush and the ever present memory of a battle which our ancestors fought to defend the freedom and liberty of the Kingdom of KwaZulu and their right to exist and prosper in this region. When we decided to establish the capital of KwaZulu in Ulundi on the very ground which received the ultimate sacrifice of those who died fighting for the freedom of the people of this region, we knew that we were also making a historical statement which would project itself far into the future, and beyond the transient changes of politics and government. Our will to succeed was not tamed by the battle of Ulundi which was fought on these plains on the fourth day of July 1879, and our decision to establish the capital of KwaZulu here, was mindful of the fact that the untameable will of the Zulu Nation to succeed and survive still springs eternal out of the soil of Ulundi which was drenched with the blood of those great warriors who were fighting here so gallantly for king and country (Buthelezi, 1996:2).

Immediately after the democratic elections of April 1994, a political and public debate emerged around the issue of the location of the capital of the province of KZN. The national organiser of the Inkatha Youth Brigade stated

that Pietermaritzburg was a symbol of colonial oppression (*Mercury*, 26/5/94). The ANC responded that Ulundi was similarly a heritage of the apartheid era - "the capital of a bantustan that was foisted onto the people of this province" (*Mercury*, 15/6/94). The IFP leadership was clearly in favour of Ulundi, while the ANC, National Party (NP), Democratic Party (DP) as well as big business were in favour of Pietermaritzburg. Five KZN ministers from the IFP, including Premier Frank Mdlalose, had established their headquarters at Ulundi

Nevertheless, given the political sensitivities associated with the issue, the KZN provincial cabinet resolved in June 1994 that a referendum will decide the future of capital. However, the referendum would only be held after two years because a new voters roll would have to be prepared (*Mercury*, 22/6/94). Meanwhile, a Commission of Inquiry into the Interim Seat of the Legislature of the Province of KZN was established on 22 September 1994. It was estimated that the cost of the referendum and the Commission would be R50 million (*Mercury*, 20/10/94). In welcoming the appointment of the Commission, the *Mercury* (11/10/94) suggested that objective analysis of all the relevant factors would resolve the controversy about the location of the capital. Furthermore, open public debate was needed to ensure that all opinions were expressed, as well as acceptance of the final decision.

The Commission held public hearings in different parts of KZN between 17 October 1994 and 23 January 1995. In addition, it also received a number of written submissions. Although the Commission was focusing on an interim seat, it was concerned that it had received a number of submissions "aimed at identifying a proper site for the establishment of a capital" (Cadman, 1995:12). However, a submission from the Natal Law Society emphasised that the concern about an interim seat should not be separated from the general issue of the provincial capital (Cadman, 1995:10). The Commission conceded that the choice of the interim seat should facilitate and influence the decision relating to a permanent capital.

In deciding the factors which should be considered in selecting the capital the Commission referred approvingly to the work of Hattingh (1994; 1996). Hattingh (1996:3) described the functions and purposes of a capital city as follows:

A capital is normally the seat of the government (centre of control), contains the official residence of the head of government (executive or ceremonial), the legislature and higher echelons of the executive departments of government, usually the heads of the judiciary, a variety of institutions that find it necessary to have speedy and frequent contact with government agencies, and official and non-official bodies involved in the welfare of the state/province.

Over and above the "centralisation of political authority and related phenomena", Hattingh (1994:33) emphasised that "capitals are frequently prominent in the iconography of the state/province, and expressive of the national/provincial capacity and feeling".

The Commission contended that the above was an ideal position, but that it was unlikely to apply to KZN because of local specificities and contingencies. It referred to the difference of opinion between supporters of Pietermar-

itzburg and Ulundi, and the lack of consensus and broad acceptability of either location (Cadman, 1995). One of the reasons for the lack of consensus was different interpretations of the role of capital cities in implementing the reconstruction and development programme (RDP).

Reconstruction, Development and Planning

There were two opposing philosophical views relating to the location of the capital and its impact on development. The first view was that the capital should not be located in an area which already has significant economic development. The second view contended that the capital should be located in a developed area to ensure that development is spread throughout the province.

Those who supported the former approach were in favour of Ulundi which serviced the north-eastern part of the province, and which had been neglected for decades. This would be in keeping with the RDP principles as state resources would then be invested in an area that needed development, and "there would thus be a saving of RDP funds for additional development purposes" (Cadman, 1995:19). Others argued that the capital city would automatically act as a magnet for economic development. The argument was that Pietermaritzburg had developed because it had been a capital city for 150 years: "where people who controlled the purse strings of the state congregate, whether to govern or to legislate, you were bound to get economic development" (Cadman, 1995:19). The IFP strongly supported this viewpoint, and this was emphasised by Chief Buthelezi:

The time has come for those who are sitting pretty in Pietermaritzburg advocating that their city should become the capital of the province because of its established business and commercial infrastructure and its excellent road network, to begin realising that unless development is brought to the northern part of KZN their present prosperity will not be long lasting. Unless we build social and economic opportunities in this region the prosperity of urban areas such as Pietermaritzburg will start to crumble under the pressure of the massive exodus of people who are already emigrating from rural areas to join an urban economy which can neither absorb nor accommodate them (Buthelezi, 1996:4).

This perspective was subsequently reinforced by KZN Premier Lionel Mtshali:

The issue of the capital is a long term planning issue, with a long-term perspective, which takes into account the development of a Richards Bay-Maputo corridor. The existing balance of infrastructural development of our province and the related needs of government administration may be sharply shifted. The capital of our province must be able to provide administration where the needs of our people are the greatest and where its location generates the greatest value for development and social justice ... in the interests of the success of all segments of KZN (Mercury, 27/9/99).

The Ulundi Town Council made a similar submission, arguing that the Durban, Pinetown, Pietermaritzburg region had a high level of development compared to the area to the north of the Tugela River. It argued that if the goals of the RDP are to be realised then state investment should be redi-

rected from developed areas to those that are deprived and destitute (Mercury, 26/8/94).

However, this concern for the upliftment of the rural poor only appeared to be relevant at the level of political rhetoric:

Evidence is that much of what is happening in the province has very little to do with the delivery of services, especially to the poor. What we are witnessing is political posturing and a struggle for power among the political elite and both have nothing to do with the daily lives of the poor ... There has been no shift in the indicators of health and poverty, and one has still to witness a single RDP project (Zulu, 1995:6).

This was disconcerting, especially since research conducted by the Development Bank of Southern Africa (1995:63) revealed that the "population of KZN experiences low levels of human development, and the province has the third lowest human development index (HDI)".⁴ This was compounded by the fact that 43,2 percent of the economically active population in KZN was unemployed (Mercury, 24/2/00).

The ANC maintained that relocation of the capital to Ulundi was likely to cost in excess of R300 million and this would undermine the RDP. It warned that the government could not afford to inherit the extravagances of the bantustans "whose main achievements have been the construction of glossy buildings towering over children dying from malnutrition".⁵

The provincial secretary of the ANC, Senzo Mchunu, attributed the lack of development around Ulundi's hinterland to the IFP's bantustan legacy.⁶ Although the IFP had governed the area for 20 years without opposition, it had failed to generate development in the area (Louw, 1995). According to the ANC the IFP was trapped in its historical culture of brinkmanship and forcing its views on others. It argued that Inkatha needed to discard its 'laager mentality' and interact with communities outside Ulundi: "Being the majority party in the province, it must learn to act and think beyond the confines of the IFP and the KwaZulu bantustan" (Mercury, 15/6/94). John Pampallis of the University of Natal contended that in Ulundi the IFP was away from the critical attention of the media and "insulated from the hostile urban masses where its main opposition is situated. Here, it feels, it will be at a political advantage over its opponents" (Sunday Tribune, 19/6/94).

The President of the Natal Agricultural Union, Williams Mullins, maintained that it was illogical and costly to even consider Ulundi as capital which he referred to as an "economic backwater" (Mercury, 24/5/94). The Ulundi Town Council responded that referring to it as remote or peripheral was racist and ludicrous:

To suggest that Ulundi is remote is laughable. How do holders of the view define remote ... how is a place with an adequately equipped airport called remote ... how is a place which is only a five hour drive from the PWV axis called remote? How is a place which is only a two hour drive from Durban and one hour drive from Richards Bay, and a place through which passes the main railway line between the PWV and Richards Bay, remote? (Mercury, 26/8/94).⁷

Even those who were opposed to the relocation of the capital conceded that Ulundi had a role to play as a regional administrative centre serving a rural hinterland. The South African National Civic Organisation (Sanco) suggested that Ulundi's bid for capital status should not be obscured with the need for development in the town and its surrounding poverty-stricken communities. It agreed that there was an urgent need for a development plan for the region, but this did not require that Ulundi become the provincial capital (*Daily News*, 20/10/94). Economists from the University of Natal questioned whether it was financially viable for the province to promote growth in Ulundi "beyond its natural economic tendencies by way of state subsidy, similar to the old National Party government's decentralisation programme" (*Sunday Tribune*, 19/6/94).

In further substantiating its support for Ulundi, the IFP referred to the USA and Canada where state capitals were "strategically located away from the major commercial hubs specifically to bring further development to economically depressed areas" (Buthelezi, 1996:4). The IFP referred to similar trends in other parts of the world:

We all know that Brasilia was carved out of a jungle to become Brazil's capital, and the same can be mentioned with respect to Canberra in Australia and not Sydney, Lilongwe in Malawi where the largest and most economically active city is Blantyre. Abuja is the capital of Nigeria whose largest city is Lagos, while Dodoma is the capital of Tanzania whose largest city is Dar-es-Salaam. Similarly, in Botswana the capital was established in Gaborone and not Francistown ... There are precedents here, all motivated by a desire to balance development, which have nothing to do with political considerations (Buthelezi, 1996:4).

However, these examples are recognised as failed attempts to counter uneven regional development. In South Africa the apartheid policy of bantustan border development as a strategy to address regional inequalities actually accentuated uneven development. Also, while there was a perception that the undermining of growth in Pietermaritzburg would be compensated by an expansion of economic development in Ulundi, this was not necessarily so. The international experience suggests that Ulundi is more likely to reflect the experience of Canberra and Brasilia, where the state bureaucracy was the major generator of employment opportunities and economic activities.

Those who supported Pietermaritzburg argued that it was false to assume that the seat of government or a legislature would automatically be a catalyst for development. Rather, economic development took place in localities where a host of favourable factors promoted growth and advancement, regardless of where the seat of government maybe located. There was little private sector interest in the economic development of Ulundi (*Sunday Tribune*, 6/6/99). Furthermore, "artificially stimulated development was costly ... and seldom succeeded" (Cadman, 1995:20).

According to Professor Jeff McCarthy of the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Durban-Westville, the historical record in Africa and other parts of the world had demonstrated that artificially relocating capital cities failed as a strategy to promote development, and the Ulundi experiment was unlikely to be any different (*Daily News*, 26/10/94).

The Greater Pietermaritzburg Economic Forum questioned the merits of the claim that relocation of the capital to Ulundi would diffuse development to an impoverished area. Rather, it was "more important to consider the impact of the decision on the economic development of the entire KZN region" (*Daily News*, 27/10/94). A submission by Messrs Oldham and Hickson of the Department of Economics, University of Natal, warned about the repercussions for Pietermaritzburg and the province if the capital was relocated, especially the loss of business confidence. They also referred to the dangers of pandering to the whims of political parties, as well as the potential for violence and instability:

One danger is that a different political party will win the next election and might wish to reverse the move. The province will have thus incurred massive costs. Another danger is that such a decision might lead to renewed or increased political violence. The uncertainty generated will scare off potential investors in the province (Cadman, 1995:9).

The Commission of Enquiry focused particular attention on comparing the relative merits of Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi, and maintained that the decision to locate the capital must be seen to have been based on "sensible, rational, economically sound and cost effective grounds" (Cadman, 1995:29).

Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi Compared

A key factor influencing the location of the capital would be accessibility. The Commission assessed the issue of accessibility from four different approaches: "geographical accessibility; practical accessibility; political accessibility and perceived accessibility" (Cadman, 1995:30).

While it was argued that Pietermaritzburg was the geographical centre of the province, the Commission was of the view that this was only so in the case of southern KZN. The Tugela River was seen as geographical centre of the province, and Ulundi would be the centre of northern KZN. However, if population distribution is considered then about 70 percent of the people live south of the Tugela and are concentrated on the Durban / Pietermaritzburg / Ladysmith / Newcastle axis. Hence, Pietermaritzburg was closer to the geographical centre of the province than Ulundi. According to the Commission the distance factor went against Ulundi because the capital should be located close to the majority of citizens as well as in proximity to the industrial, commercial, political and cultural hub of the province (namely the Durban/Pietermaritzburg axis) (Cadman, 1995:33). Ulundi had poor telecommunications, did not have a passenger train service, and concern was also expressed about the poor quality of the roads linking the town with other parts of KZN. It was pointed out that for these reasons those supporting Ulundi were unlikely to win favour among the electorate (*Mercury*, 20/7/94).

The IFP's staunch support for free market forces had won it many supporters in the private sector, nationally and internationally. However, its demands for moving the legislature to Ulundi would be seen by the business sector as an irrational distortion of market forces which would deter investment (*Mercury*, 26/10/94). The Director of the Durban Regional Chamber of Business, Barry Poulsem, warned that moving the KZN capital to Ulundi would "entail duplicating services which, as was proved during the apartheid era, was neither practical nor cost effective"

(*Sunday Tribune*, 22/5/94). In an editorial the *Daily News* (3/6/94) cautioned that the IFP was sending a 'disturbing signal':

The IFP needs to consider what kind of signal it is sending out with the insistence of certain individuals and party formations that Ulundi should be the provincial capital. Does it intend linking up with other communities in this province - the business sector especially - to build the future? Or does it intend a surly, obscurantist retreat into its own shell? ... The IFP has to accept that many in KZN do not see Ulundi as the centre of the Universe. Also that, in the quest for investment and a building of economic self-sufficiency, a government which refused to accept the fruits of electoral victory and retreated instead to a rural backwater would find itself not taken seriously. The IFP espouses federalist principles. It needs to address federalist realities.

In a democratic context the legislature represented an interface between the electorate and the MPs. Hence, the capital must be located where it would be convenient for MPs and voters to interact.⁸ The ANC was concerned that Ulundi was hostile to the IFP's political opponents. It referred to the murder of ANC members in Ulundi before the 1994 elections in a blatant political attack. A number of submissions to the Commission indicated that Ulundi was widely seen as an IFP stronghold where those who belonged to other political parties were not welcome. There was a great deal of hostility to "organisations not acceptable to the mind set of the predominantly Inkatha oriented residents" (Cadman, 1995:37).

In spite of submissions to the contrary by violence monitor, Mary De Haas, the Commission concluded that the "security situation in Ulundi is neither better nor worse than is the security situation in Pietermaritzburg" (Cadman, 1995:49). However, concerns about security at Ulundi were realised when a mob invaded the legislature on 9 May 1995 when the KZN's finance and health committee, comprising members from all political parties and department officials were reviewing the province's health budget. *The Mercury* (10/5/95) reported on the incident as follows:

About 200 angry Inkatha militia stormed the KZN parliament in Ulundi yesterday, taking provincial MPs hostage and causing Parliament to be closed for the day. The incident has left a massive question mark over security facilities at Ulundi's legislative complex and raised doubts about the town's bid to become provincial capital ... At least two ANC representatives at the meeting, including the finance committee chairman, Dumisani Makhaye, were reportedly threatened ... Shocked MPs described yesterday's invasion as a serious breach of parliamentary security and 'civility' and said it made them wonder how safe they were in Ulundi.

Pietermaritzburg was seen to be far more hospitable to political diversity. The major political parties hold rallies and meetings in the city with ease. All political parties have offices in Pietermaritzburg, and this is not so in the case of Ulundi. In addition to the 'political intolerance', a Gallup Poll conducted by Data Research Africa revealed that the majority of the residents of KZN perceived that Ulundi was less accessible than Pietermaritzburg (Cadman, 1995). According to urban geographer Rob Haswell,⁹ the issue of accessibility and openness to democratic activity were the

most important factors to be considered in deciding the location of the capital:

Ulundi by virtue of its peripheral, if not remote, location is very inaccessible and because of its political history equally remote from democratic activity. Pietermaritzburg has been the capital for more than 150 years with an incredible record of being open to normal democratic activity and which has seen just about every political party, the university, ratepayers and even the farming community marching through the streets (*Sunday Tribune*, 30/10/94).

While acknowledging that Ulundi was an important Zulu historical and cultural centre as well as a significant eco-tourism resource, Mr Dave Gush, consultant to the city of Pietermaritzburg, warned against political expediency and especially party political considerations influencing the siting of the legislature (*Daily News*, 26/10/94). This was because of the high level of political intolerance in the region as well as the political diversity of the region.

At many public meetings the leadership of the IFP emphasised that Ulundi would be the capital of KZN. Chief Buthelezi argued that the ANC's "opposition to Ulundi as capital was rooted more in political anger and resentment than in rational and sound political argument" (*Sunday Tribune*, 19/6/94). He argued that the majority of people wanted Ulundi to be the capital of KZN for 'self-evident' reasons:

It is primarily a matter of bringing development to an area which needs it most. We have been criticised because as a Party we want to bring the seat of government to an area which currently is not the hub of commercial enterprise, transportation and social activities of the province. Let us take it as a challenge to us as descendants of all those whose bones are here and who died for King and country to create peace and stability here by creating employment for those who have been oppressed up to 1994 (Buthelezi, 1996:4).

There was some debate about the advantages of centralised and decentralised administrations.

Centralisation, Decentralisation and Dual Capitals

As mentioned earlier, for historical reasons the government administration of KZN was divided between Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi, with four departments operating from the former and five from the latter. There are approximately 4000 civil servants living and working permanently in both cities. This raised the interesting question about whether there should be centralisation of all facets of government, or whether there should be a decentralised administration.

A centralised administration was seen to be more efficient and cost effective in the long term, and this was eloquently argued by the Democratic Party:

The premier and his ministers have to interact with the provincial legislature, with business, with investors, with NGOs and the public and for this reason alone it would be quite inappropriate if departments were sited in far flung corners of the province. In most cases, Pietermaritzburg would once again be the obvious and correct choice (*Natal Witness*, 7/7/99).

However, according to the Commission this would be exorbitant in the short term because of the cost of relocating thousands of civil servants and their families, as well as providing additional services and facilities. A decentralised administration would leave the bulk of the civil servants in their present locations, and avoid the disruption and associated costs. The Commission was mindful of the fact that the economy of Ulundi depended on government functions to a significant extent. However, decentralisation was likely to be inefficient and also increase running costs because of the distance from the seat of government (Cadman, 1995).

According to the Commission the "de facto situation is that there is a substantial degree of decentralisation already existing in KZN between Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi" (Cadman, 1995:62). There were many advantages associated with such decentralisation. A decentralised administration brings the government closer to the people because some of the departments will be located in southern KZN while others will be located north of the Tugela River. This was significant in a province that covered a vast area, and in which the Tugela River presented a natural central partition. The existing infrastructure in Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi would favour decentralisation. If the centralised option was considered in either location, then this would have major cost implications (Cadman, 1995).

Taking the above factors into consideration, the Commission suggested that "it is possible that a decision that seeks to make use of such advantages as both Ulundi and Pietermaritzburg have, is ultimately taken" (Cadman, 1995:63). Between 5 September 1994 and 8 March 1995 the KZN Parliament had sat alternately in Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi as a temporary arrangement until the interim seat was selected. According to the Commission this was a successful experiment with a number of benefits. Both legislative centres were used, and politicians and government officials were visible in the two towns. Hence, they were in a better position to make a final decision about the capital. Inhabitants of each town believed that they had retained their capital status, hence creating a 'win-win' situation (Cadman, 1995).

The Commission therefore recommended that in the interim the status quo should be maintained. Parliament should continue to sit alternately between Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi, except that the opening ceremony should take place in Ulundi and the Budget session in Pietermaritzburg. In favouring this middle path, the Commission was hopeful that it would "draw a broad measure of acceptance and consequently contribute towards a climate of lowered emotions and tension on this subject" (Cadman, 1995:63).

The decision was basically a politically expedient compromise which was unlikely to appease supporters of either town as well as those with different ideological orientations. In an editorial the *Daily News* (20/3/97) argued that strategies to extend Ulundi's capital status "would amount to an attempted perpetuation of skewed bantustan thinking". The compromise was also very costly as it was very expensive to maintain offices and staff in both towns. University of Natal economists, George Oldham and Mike Hickson, submitted that "any decision should be made from an economically based decision making process that was sufficiently inclusive to convince and bind the major political parties and interest groups in the province" (*Mercury*, 26/10/94). Nevertheless, the controversy over the capital abated. The much vaunted referendum did not take place because of a

shortage of funds. However, it has been just as costly to maintain offices in Ulundi and Pietermaritzburg, and to pay for travel and accommodation expenses.¹⁰

Neither the IFP nor the ANC had an overall majority in KZN. The IFP received 50,3 percent of the vote in 1994, and 44,5 percent in the 1996 municipal elections. The IFP's own market research revealed that it was losing the support of conservative whites, while continuous migration from rural areas to cities was reducing its constituency and strengthening the urban power base of the ANC. Over and above this, the ANC and IFP were engaged in dialogue and were participating voluntarily in a provincial government of unity. As a result political conflict and violence had declined in the province (Wiltshire-Robbins, 1997). Controversy over the capital flared up again in 1999 with the appointment of a new premier in the Province and it became an issue in the June elections.

The Capital Survey

In February 1999 Dr Ben Ngubane was redeployed by the IFP to the national government and was replaced by Mr Lionel Mtshali as Premier of KZN. Dr Ngubane was known to be urbane and pragmatic, and he was functionally based in Durban, using Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi as satellite offices. Mr Mtshali was seen to be more of a conservative traditionalist and IFP hard-liner, and within a week of his appointment announced his intention to move his office from Durban to Ulundi. His views on Ulundi were very clear:

I regard Ulundi as the very heart of the IFP. Ulundi has been the place of resistance against both the apartheid regime and the ANC's attempt to thwart the IFP. Ulundi therefore must lead the way for that new path and brighter future for the peoples of South Africa (Mtshali, 1999:2).

The capital debate became an issue in the June 1999 election campaigns. In its election manifesto the ANC argued that if it won the majority of votes in KZN then it would declare Pietermaritzburg the capital city (ANC, 1999). The IFP down played the capital issue in its campaign. Reverend Musa Zondi, IFP spokesperson, argued that it was an contentious issue and that no unilateral decision would be made even if his party emerged victorious in the elections (*Daily News*, 4/6/99). The IFP won a marginal majority of the votes in the June 1999 elections.¹¹

As part of its post election survey conducted in July and August 1999, the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (IMPD) included a question on the choice of the KZN capital. The overwhelming majority were in favour of one city as capital, with 55 percent supporting Pietermaritzburg, 20 percent Ulundi, 11 percent Durban, and 11 percent preferring a shared capital between Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi. Significantly, 62 percent of ANC supporters and 44 percent of IFP supporters favoured Pietermaritzburg as capital. Furthermore, only 28 percent of the IFP supporters were in favour of Ulundi as capital. Overall, 54 percent of African respondents were in favour of Pietermaritzburg and 13 percent supported Ulundi (IMPD, 1999). This goes against Chief Buthelezi's assertion that the majority of black people wanted Ulundi to be the capital of KZN (Buthelezi, 1996).

According to Robin Richards, research co-ordinator of the IMPD, while the IFP would benefit politically if the capital was relocated to Ulundi, this was not the best option

from "cost, efficiency and safety point of view" (*Mercury*, 23/9/99). The IMPD called for the prompt resolution of the capital debate as the issue was divisive and could "threaten the fragile coalition government of KZN and impede the development of the province and its people" (IMPD, 1999:1). There were immediate calls for the issue to be settled firmly so that the costly charade of maintaining two capitals would be stopped:

In the face of convincing evidence on why Pietermaritzburg should be made the provincial capital, the political pussyfooting over the issue is becoming somewhat absurd. The question is - and the electorate deserves an answer - whether the decision makers in Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi have the will to finally put to rest a debacle that is draining the resources of the provincial exchequer (*Herald*, 26/9/99).

The IFP response to the results of the survey was predictable. Premier Mtshali commented as follows: "I am tempted to discard this survey because I witness time and again how surveys dealing with sensitive political issues of KZN have been exorbitantly wrong" (*Mercury*, 27/9/99). Notwithstanding the public outcry over the costly duplication of services, the IFP was keen on extending the extravagant status quo of joint capitals, as was evident from the following rhetoric by Premier Mtshali:

We must decide the issue of the capital once those who have entered this debate can honestly say that they have the interest of the whole province and the interest of social justice truly at heart. We must also settle this debate once we have reached political and social agreement on what we wish our province to look like half a century down the road (*Mercury*, 27/9/99).

After the June 1999 elections the ANC's response to the capital issue was remarkably restrained. Ina Cronje, ANC whip in the provincial parliament, said that the ANC was part of a coalition government and therefore could not "force through a decision on a matter as sensitive as the capital" (*Natal Witness*, 28/6/99). It was clear that the IFP-ANC coalition had decided that the capital issue would not receive priority attention, rather, the focus would be on concerns of commonality rather than divisive issues. According to Premier Mtshali, the "ANC-IFP coalition government has decided that the issues of development should be given priority" (*Natal Witness*, 22/6/99). Meanwhile, millions of rands which could be profitably used to address issues of poverty and development in KZN would continue to be wasted.

In a surprise move Premier Mtshali unilaterally decided in May 2000 to close his Pietermaritzburg and relocate his staff to Ulundi in order to address "problems of inefficiency, duplication and wastage of resources" (Mtshali, 2000:8). Outside the IFP circles, this move was viewed as a strategy to entrench Ulundi's bid for capital city status.

Conclusion

The political and social transformation of the 1990s required the bantustans, the minions of apartheid, to be spatially reintegrated into mainstream South Africa. This inevitably led to questions about the fate of the bantustan cities, especially the capitals, which were heavily dependent on state subsidised activities during the apartheid era.

Capital cities serve as "centres of administration and urban symbols of power and nationalism" (Potts, 1985a:182). It was therefore not surprising that the debate about the location of the capital of KZN has been intense and emotional, sometimes threatening to upset the fragile political balance in the province. It was an issue that has dominated politics in KZN since 1994, perhaps only to be upstaged by the controversy over the allocation of casino licences. Since 1994 there were calls within the echelons of the IFP for the capital to be established at Ulundi. However, the ANC, other political parties and the business sector preferred Pietermaritzburg as capital. The old power struggle between the ANC and the IFP was seen to be at the heart of the disagreement.

The appointment of the Cadman Commission was an attempt to depoliticise the issue. The Commission made a politically neutral, but costly recommendation that there should be alternate sittings of parliament between Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi. To the IFP's detractors Ulundi was a costly, absurd proposal. The ANC was forced to support this costly charade because of its coalition with the IFP in the governance of KZN. Also, the ANC was keen on reducing political violence in the province, which inevitably increased whenever there was major differences between itself and the IFP.

A major issue was the role of the capital in promoting growth and development, and whether its location should be centralised or decentralised. Based on the international experience, (Stephenson, 1970; Armstrong, 1985; Potts, 1985a) this paper suggests that the new capital cities like Ulundi would not realise the great expectations for promoting growth and development for two reasons. Firstly, there were serious economic and financial constraints. Secondly, the commitment of many governments to stimulate growth and development often served as a smokescreen to conceal political motives to relocate capitals.

The choice of Ulundi was linked to regional and ethnic loyalties, as well as historical and cultural dynamics. In this regard, Jones (2000:29) has emphasised the need to "consider the cultural, political, planning and spatial motivations" which influenced the development of bantustan capital cities. Ulundi was seen to be the heart of IFP territory, especially among supporters of Zulu nationalism. However, it was evident from the IMPD survey that even supporters of the IFP preferred Pietermaritzburg as capital. Clearly, there is a role for Ulundi as a regional development axis, with an agricultural/rural node, for which the town is well located. However, politically this would be a consolation prize for the IFP.

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Endnotes

- ¹ A version of this paper was presented at the Planning History Millennium Conference, University of Natal, Durban, May 2000. Critical comments from the Editors and Sagie Narsiah are gratefully acknowledged.
- ² The apartheid government had specific guidelines to establish new capitals in the bantustans: "These include the use of open, unused land for an entirely new city, a location away from areas of European influence, the absence of strong historic ties, centrality in terms of population and territory and evidence of actual or perceived economic development" (Christopher, 1985:55-56).
- ³ For an analysis of the origins of capital cities in the bantustans, see Best and Young (1972). Many other urban centres in the bantustans created during the apartheid are also in decline (see Tomlinson and Krige, 1997; Krige, 1998).
According to the United Nations Development Programme the HDI "uses people's life expectancy and adult literacy as an indication of their capacities, while income is used to symbolise their opportunities" (Development Bank of Southern Africa, 1995:17). There was little or no improvement in the lives of the poor in KZN because of the political tensions and divisions in the province. It was significant that by 1999 the IFP dominated government in KZN could not account for R100 million of RDP funds, and there were problems relating to R500 million of unauthorised spending.

³ Dr Blade Nzimande, ANC Midlands Spokesperson and a member of the National Assembly (*Mercury*, 15/6/94).

⁶ It is important to note that while the ANC was opposed to Ulundi as the capital, it recognised that the town had an important role as part of a tourism corridor: "The town has important historical sites which together with the Emakhosini Valley of Kings and Isibaya will be developed to attract cultural and historical tourism markets. The area will provide an essential link to the pristine beaches to the east, the game parks to the south, and the battlefields and Drakensberg to the west" (*Natal Witness*, 20/5/99).

⁴ Ms P Nxumalo, Director of Communication Services, Department of the Premier, similarly argued that Ulundi is "not a drab hell-hole, but an awakening, vibrant, future African city, with its origins in the proud heritage of the people of the soil, much unlike the colonialist towns" (*Mail and Guardian*, 14-20/1/00).

⁸ This was emphasised in a submission by the Pietermaritzburg Midlands Region Taxi Association to the Commission (Cadman, 1995:32).

⁹ Rob Haswell was an ANC Councillor who subsequently became the CEO of the Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi TLC.

¹⁰ For example, in 1997 the KZN province spent R11 million for an air service between Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi (*Daily News*, 22/10/99). Also, the distance between Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi is 300km each way, and civil servants can claim for travelling and accommodation allowances (*Natal Witness*, 28/6/99). According to forensic reports, the capital city impasse created opportunities for corrupt civil servants to abuse travel and subsistence claims to the tune of R14 million in 1999 (*Sunday Tribune*, 5 March 2000).

¹¹ In the June 1999 elections the IFP won 42,5 percent of the votes (34 seats out of a total of 80), and the ANC 40 percent (32 seats).

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