Post-carbon, Post-capitalist Development in South Africa: 
Starting from Where the Movements Already Are

By Patrick Bond

Abstract
South Durban is perhaps the most important site in South Africa to assess how the society might move towards post-carbon, post-capitalist development. The country’s biggest single location-specific investment project ($25 billion – the cost estimated prior to what could become a typical 50-300 percent price escalation) is the proposed eight-fold expansion of South Durban’s port-petrochemical complex over the next three decades. The doubling of the petroleum pipeline capacity from Durban to Johannesburg recently cost $2.3 billion alone. The notorious refineries owned by BP, Shell and the Malaysian firm Engen present major health threats to neighbouring residential areas. These neighbourhoods have been occupied by black South Africans for generations – the ‘Indian’ areas of Merebank and Clairwood and ‘coloured’ Wentworth – but have become slightly desegregated since the end of apartheid, mainly through the influx of low-income African shackdwellers. Jobs for a vast unemployed labour reserve are desperately needed, and government planners claim the expansion of world shipping, from the ‘Panamax’ 5000-container ships to super post-Panamax ships more than three times larger, will raise annual container traffic from 2.5 million to 20 million units processed annually in Durban by 2040. However, local residents’ organisations – united as the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) – offer multiple overlapping critiques of this project, including the flawed participatory process; the destruction of small-scale farming and long-standing neighbourhoods (with tens of thousands of expected displacements; major ecological problems in the estuarine bay; climate-change causes and effects; and irrational economies fuelled by overly generous state subsidies but still resulting in an unaffordable harbour. The framing of the campaign is of great importance not simply because the state and allied businesses promise tens of thousands of ‘jobs’ (in an increasingly capital-intensive sector) but because an alternative vision has been established by SDCEA based on an ecologically-sensitive, labour-intensive economic and social strategy for the South Durban Basin. To achieve victory will require a major shift in the balance of forces, one which campaigners argue can be enhanced by financial sanctions against the project and its parastatal corporate sponsor, Transnet. This is a site-specific project but one with more general lessons for grassroots contestation of industrial mal-development, in part because so many issue areas are up for contestation.

1. This research was made possible only through the activist-sourced knowledge accomplished by repeated contestations against both Eskom and Transnet by tireless colleagues at the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, groundWork and the Centre for Civil Society.
Introduction

Micropolitical ecology is dedicated to unearthing adverse localised conditions faced by society and environment that in turn generate social contestations which can shape capital accumulation in sometimes vital ways. Global contradictions are often amplified at lower scales, especially when intensified metabolisms of capitalist commerce and energy threaten widespread displacement, pollution and community unrest. The ‘spatial fix’ to overaccumulation crisis is witnessed in the ongoing restructuring of world shipping, while externalities such as greenhouse gas emissions represent ‘accumulation by dispossession,’ as capital takes further control of non-capitalist territories, consistent with theories of imperialism and crisis displacement pioneered by Rosa Luxemburg. What can be done, in the current world context of economic and ecological catastrophe, to bring forward a post-carbon, post-capitalist development strategy?

This paper answers by drawing upon a detailed South African case study sometimes termed Africa’s ‘armpit’ (for its noxious smell), the expansion of the Durban port and petrochemical complex. The project, envisaged to last through 2040, will potentially cost $25 billion. The main site-specific ‘Strategic Investment Project’ within the state’s National Development Plan, South Durban is the second highest-priority mega-project (after the Waterberg-Richards Bay coal infrastructure expansion). The investments will expand what is already Sub-Saharan Africa’s largest port (in North Africa, only Alexandria is bigger) to a capacity large enough to handle 20 million (6-meter long) containers annually, up from early 2000s annual volumes averaging 2.5 million. Raising the vast funds required will be the most critical challenge, given that the leading local civil society network, the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), has announced will in 2014 begin a ‘financial sanctions’ campaign against the project. The first phase of the work, costing approximately $4 billion, was pre-funded by the South African government and allied financiers, but the major contestations ahead are over the much greater needs entailed in a new ‘Dig Out Port’ to be built in 2016 on the site of the city’s old airport.

Transnet’s investment strategy

Medium-term South Durban Dig-Out Port

In March 2013, during the Durban summit of the heads of state of Brazil, Russia, India, China and SA (BRICS), a Chinese bank lent $5 billion to the parastatal corporation responsible for the port expansion, Transnet. This was mainly for the purpose of extending rail infrastructure further into the northern and eastern coal fields for subsequent coal exports mainly to India and China. But the funds also provided resources for the purchase of locomotives (mainly from Chinese producers, mainly for the Waterberg-Richards Bay route) and for Durban’s harbour expansion, since such funding is essentially fungible. In addition to increasing the speed and magnitude of freight to the world’s largest coal export terminal, at Richards Bay, Transnet has also been planning a fully-privatized port management model for the $10 billion Dig Out Port in South Durban. This will complement the $2.3 billion doubling of Transnet’s Durban-Johannesburg oil pipeline capacity, a project commissioned at a third of that cost in 2007 and due for completion in late 2014.

Durban is also now a site of offshore oil prospecting, not far from the point where Africa’s largest refinery complex stands in hyper-toxic South Durban. There, near-universal community opposition has emerged to Transnet’s plans, including on grounds of climate damage. Transnet’s Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) consultants made a contentious statement in 2013 – that larger ships in the new port will allegedly result in lower emissions per container carried – because they failed to consider the alternative of not increasing shipping by the extreme eight-fold multiple.

**The South Durban Basin from the main harbor to the proposed Dig Out Port site**

![Image](attachment:image1)

**2014-2040 components of Durban’s port expansion**

![Image](attachment:image2)

However, in one encouraging sign, the SA government’s Department of Environmental Affairs decided in October 2013 that the Transnet EIA for the expansion of the old harbour’s berths – so as to service the much larger post-Panamax ships (the term is used for ships carrying more than 5000 containers, too big for the pre-expansion...
Panama Canal) – was unconvincing. The EIA was temporarily rejected in large part because of Transnet’s climate denialism, as well as the port expansion’s impact on bird and fish life dependent upon a vulnerable sandbank.

Using internal resources, Transnet was the main investor in the earliest projects: a $20 million bridge (2006-10) linking the port more directly to Durban’s highway system and a $2.4 billion oil pipeline (2007-14). The bulk of investment will occur in both petrochemical expansion (so as to double pipeline-transport capacity) and a new ‘dig out port’ (estimated to cost $10 billion) that will begin in 2016. Hence the 2014-16 period is the crucial window in which financing will be assembled. That funding will also pay for a dramatic increase in existing port capacity, so that the 5000+ container ‘post-Panamax’ ships can be accommodated in the current harbor (stages 1-3). In 2016, the dig-out port at the old airport site will be excavated, with an anticipated first berthing in 2020 (stage 4). The final growth of the existing port will include an extensive dig-out of the area currently under Transnet railroad siding property (stages 5-6). With liberalization of transport in the early 1990s and the move of freight to road-based trucking, this land is mostly unused. The latter stages of the project are in close proximity to the predominantly Indian areas of Isipingo and Merebank in the south and Clairwood in the north, as well as the African township of Umlazi and the coloured Wentworth area.

**Racial composition of South Durban neighborhoods**

![Map of South Durban neighborhoods](image-url)

*Provisional data from Census 2011 Small Area Layer. © 2001 Stilebloks South Africa (http://www.stilebloks.gov.za). Roads and railways from OpenStreetMap (http://www.openstreetmap.org). © OpenStreetMap contributors. Maps available under the Open Database License (http://opendatacommons.org/licenses/odbl/). Map © 2013 Adrian Frith. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/). Inspired by Will Rosamilia’s “District Boundaries” (http://www.racialcartography.net/index.html#districts).*
Transnet’s most critical challenge will be finding the money for an estimated $25 billion worth of other mega-projects, especially given the scale of the project and how many aspects are being contested. The Chinese bank loan apparently comes without conditions (and with terms not publicly disclosed.), and subsequently, there were also several bond offerings of several hundred million dollars, including in the London markets in November 2013 where Transnet paid an enormous premium paid on its Rand-denominated bonds: 9.5 percent. But the longer-term threat to South Durban and other communities is that the promised BRICS Bank will seek projects like this one, as exemplars of export-oriented infrastructure.

In July 2013, a high-profile meeting of the Durban Transport Forum heard Transnet’s port expansion director Marc Descoins update his team’s planning: ‘The fatal flaws analysis yielded many risks but no show-stoppers.’ Descoins had not, at that time, factored in resident and labour opposition to the mega-project, its vast environmental implications, or rising disgust about construction-driven White Elephants. Tracing several of the problems with the port-petrochem expansion in South Durban sheds light on the interconnections between social and environmental grievances, as well as a growing debate about SA’s vulnerability to the world economy.

**A bridge unveils corrupt, incompetent planning**

The first part of the port expansion, the Khangela Bridge was intended to address rising frustration trucking companies with the delays encountered moving freight from ships in the existing port to the highway system through South Durban. Originally announced as a $7 million expenditure, the project costs ballooned by a factor of nearly three by the time the bridge was complete in 2010. One reason was rampant corruption involving three major construction companies. According to the government Competition Commission’s investigation of price fixing on the bridge,

The R200 ($20) million contract for the Bayhead Road extension and Khangela Bridge was awarded to Basil Read in a joint venture with Stefanutti who reached an agreement with Group Five, in September 2006, according to the report. ‘They agreed Group Five should submit a cover price in respect of the Bayhead Road Extension Khangela Bridge project to ensure the joint venture between Basil Read and Stefanutti was awarded the tender.’ The firms agreed that Group Five would share the profit. To implement the profit-sharing agreement, the Basil Read/Stefanutti joint venture sub-contracted a portion of the project to Group Five.

The collusion was part of a conspiracy between the country’s main construction firms, involving $4 billion in recent projects, including World Cup stadiums and Durban’s convention centre (the continent’s largest). Yet these are the same firms that will be

---

hired for future project work. They paid only $140 million in penalties once the
Competition Commission uncovered the collusion in 2009.

The Khangela Bridge did not sufficiently reduce congestion by 2013 to please the
conservative pro-expansion city councilor from the mostly-white Bluff, Duncan DuBois:
‘In fact the bridge is a white elephant.’ But even if the goal of speeding up traffic by
diverting it through the desegregating Umbilo neighbourhood was not achieved, the
damage done to the local residents was recorded by the Umbilo Action Group in
December 2012:

Recently a child was killed at the top of Francois Road despite residents
campaigning for over four years for the installation of traffic calming measures
to check the rampant speeding and excessive heavy-duty transport use of this
route as a thoroughfare to the Khangela Bridge entrance to the harbour. Carlos
Esteves of the eThekwini Traffic Authority recently refused to consider further
community pleas while the Department of Transport, Community Safety & Liaison stated, they are ‘aware of the problem’. Indeed, they should be given the
number of councillors living in the area and the Transport MEC himself being an
Umbilo resident.

Truck related deaths and injuries are a weekly occurrence across the
Bluff, Clairwood, Jacobs and Wentworth. Years of lobbying local government has
yielded nothing for beleaguered communities. The proposed link roads, part of
the Port Expansion Project, are not anticipated to alleviate this problem, in fact
will likely worsen the situation with at least EIGHT TIMES the number of trucks
expected to pour into what remains of our suburbs if this development goes
ahead, increasing exhaust fume and noise pollution by a corresponding amount.
If the municipality cannot police the problem now, how will they address an
eight-fold escalation in traffic contraventions?

Given the anticipated economic outlay for the port development, a viable,
community-inclusive strategy is easily justifiable to address the longstanding
trucking problem. The effects of climate change also urgently need to be factored
into the port expansion proposals, as can be seen by recent flooding which have
resulted in a number of deaths, the effects of the projected increased rainfall in
the eastern part of SA are already starting to bite. It is clear local and national
government have abandoned their constituents in the scramble to stay aboard
the gravy train while service delivery and meaningful community participation
have become irritating distractions.

The doubling of oil pipeline capacity

The second stage was Transnet’s Durban-Johannesburg oil pipeline construction
project, lasting from 2007-14. The mega-project, known as the ‘new multi-product
pipeline’, cost $2.34 billion, a dramatic cost escalation in part because the pipeline was
diverted hundreds of kilometers from the traditional route west along the N3 highway.
That route ran through mostly-white Durban suburbs (Mariannhill, Hillcrest,
Shongweni and Camperdown), and now the pipeline moves double the pre-existing oil
volume through (mostly-black) South Durban, Umbumbulu and other former KwaZulu

bantustan areas. According to Durban's leading environmental journalist, Tony Carnie, 'The $600 million petrol, diesel and jet fuel pipeline will replace the existing Durban-to-Johannesburg pipeline which was built in 1965. The existing pipeline is believed to have rust defects and cannot cope with the future demand in fuel growth in Gauteng.' By moving the project southwards before turning west, the cost estimate rose by more than 50 percent. But there were many other cost increases, with the total reaching $2.34 billion by 2013, in part because of apparent construction company collusion on tendering by one of the main pipeline construction companies, Group Five Civil Engineering.

In his own 2012 review of the cost overruns, without considering construction company collusion, Public Enterprises Minister Malusi Gigaba uncovered 'systemic failings that compromised the intended outcomes' and he admitted that his project managers 'lacked sufficient capacity and depth of experience for the client overview of a megaproject of this complexity,' 'especially related to 'analysis of risks.' Nor were EIAs or water and wetland permits 'pursued with sufficient foresight and vigour.' Well before this became public knowledge (Group Five only stepped forward to confess its role in industry collusion in 2009), SDCEA offered several critiques of the pipeline, including the racially-biased routing; inadequate public participation; dubious motivations for the pipeline; government's failure to prevent, detect or manage pipeline leaks; and climate change. According to SDCEA, the race and class bias were crucial reasons to reject Transnet’s re-routing strategy, because 'The pipeline threatens people with potentially severe environmental safety and health problems (well known to refinery victims in South Durban), in a manner that is discriminatory along class and racial lines.' The local ecology itself was already saturated with toxins, SDCEA alleged in 2008:

Durban Bay, in which the harbour is situated, is struggling to cope with the pollution loads from harbour and associated activities, contaminated riverine and storm-water inflows. The expansion will require further removal of aspects of the Bay’s ecosystem, which will in turn further reduce the assimilative capacity of this threatened and fragile estuary. There have been major incidents affecting the harbour, including the September 2007 fire at Island View Storage. Reducing the amount of hazardous material being stored, handled and transported in the harbour is a crucial first step to reducing the risk to people living, traveling and working in the area. Yet the pipeline proposal will do the opposite. The routing of the pipeline south, directly through low-income black residential areas instead of through areas including farming lands owned by wealthy white South Africans, is suspiciously reminiscent of the environmental racism we in South Durban have become familiar

---

12. South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, 'Comments on the Transnet Multi Product Pipeline Proposal,' Durban, 7 July 2008. SDCEA suggested: ‘Refurbishing the existing pipeline in an incremental manner (instead of doubling capacity), as maintenance is required, replacing the sections with a larger pipeline, using the existing route and servitudes, and installing additional pump stations, as and when required. Accelerating the upgrade of railways and public transport in Gauteng, so as to get more people and product off the roads to minimise transport-related congestion, fuel burning, emissions and associated health effects, by establishing urban transport networks to enable safe and affordable rail transport, linked to park and ride centres with connections to bus and taxi routes.’
with... The leaks that have occurred in existing petroleum pipelines have been devastating to South Durban, including the 1.3 million liters that spilled from Sapref lines in 2001, that were not detected until residents complained. According to present practices, only a leak of more than 1% will be detected. Incidents leading to a loss of product which is not detectable by the system may continue to pollute the soil and groundwater for a long time. During this period, many people, fauna and flora may be affected by the consequences of the pollution and not understand the cause until it is too late. In this case, the costs will not be borne by the polluter, as our legal framework requires.13

Many of the same complaints arose again four years later, in mid-2012, when the next stage of the port-petrochem complex reached fruition: the proposal for a new dig-out port and expansion of the old port. The most heart-felt of the critiques levelled was against displacement because, for many Indian and African residents of South Durban, their earlier neighbours during apartheid were moved to South Durban from Cato Manor, a well-located residential area. This was part of the white government’s racial displacement strategy. Now the same appeared imminent, though this time for class reasons.

**Displacement and the trucking threat**

SDCEA, the Wentworth Development Forum and Merebank Residents Association and the Clairwood Residents and Ratepayers Association are justifiably convinced that the port-petrochem project will generate not just traffic chaos, but residential displacement on a very substantial scale. From the north, the old harbour’s expansion creep will displace residents by the thousands from the culture-rich, 150 year old Indian and African community of Clairwood. That area’s African shackdwellers and long-time Indian residents are already under threat from reckless trucking companies, who are beneficiaries of the rezoning – or simply failure to enforce existing zoning – that facilitates Back-of-Ports creep.

In the process of liberalized zoning and lack of residential area zoning enforcement by the municipality, ten Clairwood and nearby Bluff suburb residents were killed in the decade 2003-13 by truck accidents. Mostly carrying freight, these drivers killed 70 people in the course of 7000 accidents in Durban in 2012 alone. The worst single case occurred in September 2013, when 23 people were killed by a runaway freight truck on the Field’s Hill section of the alternative (non-tolled) highway from Johannesburg. That accident was revealing, for one of the world’s three largest shipping companies, Evergreen, hired a local informal truck company which allegedly instructed its driver to avoid tolls to save $4. Police cracked down after the accident and found several of the company’s trucks operating under unsafe conditions. The one that hit two commuter taxis was driven by an unqualified, underpaid immigrant driver; the truck’s brakes failed on one of the steepest highways in the country. A few weeks later, government proposed restricting that particular hill to only 5 tonne trucks, banning 16 tonne trucks. But the broader problem of rising accidents was not addressed.

13. *Ibid.* On the climate, according to SDCEA, ‘the rise of CO2 emissions that will be facilitated by the pipeline is immense, and is only referred to in the Draft Scoping Report as a potential legal problem, with no details provided.’
Local ecological degradation

Opposition from local communities will grow even more intense once the largest part of the port expansion begins, in 2016. The proposed dig out port is where the old airport stood, on the southern border of the Merebank neighbourhood. To dig a 1.5 kilometre length of soil 20 meters deep is dangerous, given how many toxic chemicals have come to rest there over the years. Even Descoinds conceded, ‘We have to look at contamination issues. Hydrocarbons have been pumped around this area for decades and we know there have been some leaks.’ That soil, water and air pollution will exacerbate the five-year dust cover under which the dig-out port’s construction will suffocate Merebank and Wentworth, the mainly Indian and coloured communities of South Durban. These neighbourhoods are already coated with regular oil-related sulfur and soot showers from the oil refining complex, as witnessed in their world-leading asthma rates.

In addition to damage to human health, BirdLife SA observed that, since Durban has one of just three estuarine bays in SA, its ‘ecosystem services’ value of goods and services is vast: as a heat sink and carbon sink, for biodiversity, as a fish nursery, for waste disposal, and for storm protection. Moreover, the Bonn Convention’s protections for bird migration should make estuaries and wetlands, such as South Durban’s, immune from more cementing. In May 2013, Gigaba dismissed the worries over ‘frogs and chameleons’.14 In contrast, the ecological damage implied in this stage of Transnet’s

expansion was so extreme that the Department of Environmental Affairs rejected the first version of the EIA in October 2013, which described the impacts of the build-out of Berths 203-205 – then able to handle ships of no more than 12 meters depth – so as to accommodate super-post-Panamax ships of 15 000 containers or more. One of the two reasons was Transnet’s failure to do more than ‘monitor’ the damage caused to the major sandbank in the middle of the estuarine bay, which hosts so many reproductive processes for fish and birdlife.15 Transnet was due to re-submit its EIA statement in early February 2014 but tellingly, failed to do so, as further reports emerged that the economic logic behind even the port’s first major widening and deepening was profoundly flawed. As SA’s leading maritime journalist Terry Hutson remarked at the time:

In Durban there is little likelihood of any big growth in volumes in the near future. A few years ago, the port went backwards in the number of containers it handled, dropping something like 200 000 TEU in a year and there has been little growth since... So the questions remain: Does Durban need the deeper berths and aren’t the bigger ships premature?16

The existing and future harbour: Berths 203-205 (foreground) and expansion plan

Global ecological implications and local climate adaptation

The other reason Transnet suffered an early rejection of its EIA was due to the most important environmental problem of all, climate change. The firm’s consultants simply did not consider the impact of rising sea levels or extreme storms.17 As oceans warm up, cyclones and hurricanes intensify, with resulting sea-level rise. ‘The volume of Arctic sea ice has been reduced by 75 percent in just 30 years,’ reported the world’s most respected climate scientist, James Hansen in 2012: ‘There is a danger that the ice sheets will begin to collapse and we could get several meters of rising sea levels in one year.’18 At that rate, big parts of central Durban would sink, along with other cities where coastal sprawl has left millions in low-lying danger: Mumbai (2.8 million inhabitants exposed as sea waters rise), Shanghai (2.4 million), Miami (2 million), Alexandria (1.3 million) and Tokyo (1.1 million).

17. Ibid.
Durban recently suffered early indications of extreme weather events and associated damage. In March 2007, in one storm exacerbated by unusual tidal activity akin to a tsunami, Durban’s main municipal official reported ‘wave run-up heights’ which ‘peaked at 10.57 meters above Mean Sea Level.’ The bulk of the beach sand was washed away along the coast and nearly a billion dollars’ worth of coast infrastructure was destroyed. In June 2008, a storm submerged much of the South Durban Basin’s main valley, cutting off the Bluff and Wentworth from the main access highway. In November 2011, the day before the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP17) summit began in Durban, a rainstorm wreaked such havoc that a dozen people died when their poorly-constructed publicly-funded houses collapsed.

In August 2012, the same Durban port berths (203-205) proposed for expansion were severely damaged during heavy winds which bumped a ship up against cranes, resulting in a two week-long closure, and the Engen oil refinery was largely submerged by flooding.

Just as important, what of the mitigation challenge associated with the port-petrochem complex? According to the Academy of Science of SA’s 2011 book, Durban: Towards a Low Carbon City, ‘The transport sector is pivotal to the transition to a low carbon city... The top priority was identified as the need to reduce the vehicle kilometers travelled in the road freight sector as this provided the greatest opportunity to simultaneously reduce emissions of GreenHouse Gases and traditional air pollutants.’ The port-petrochem expansion will do the opposite, in part because for decades, Transnet sabotaged its own rail freight capacity, allowing road trucking of container traffic to surge from 20 to 80 percent.

Yet in addressing the obviously adverse ecological implications of their project, Transnet hired Nemai Consulting, an EIA specialist with no apparent climate consciousness. They in turn hired a sub-contractor, an official of the SA Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, whose 2011 report, ‘Modelling of potential environmental change in the port marine environment’, also completely ignored climate change. Follow-up with officials of Nemai in 2012 generated this reply: ‘The project will decrease the ship waiting and turnaround times which will have a lower carbon impact’. The consultants did not factor in the dynamic aspects of the shipping system, meaning

---

that if there is an increase in efficiency by reducing the ships’ offshore wait, the result is to speed up the system as a whole, thus increasing carbon impact.\textsuperscript{20}

The same carefree attitude to climate was evident in the doubling of oil pipeline capacity from Durban to Johannesburg. According to a SDCEA EIA critique that was ignored by officials,

The proposed pipeline will make a vast contribution to the climate crisis, yet the EIA only speaks in two areas, very briefly, of this problem. The Draft Scoping Report notes that the current Durban International Airport site is within the 1:100 year flood plain, and that the Island View site is ‘potentially affected by sea level rise in the future as a result of climate change’. The Scoping Report promises to consider this in the future EIA. In addition, the Draft Scoping Report summary notes in ‘TABLE 5-1: Summary of legal requirements that apply to the project and the EIA process’ that the Kyoto Protocol is relevant, as it ‘Commits a country to quantified emissions limitations and reductions’.

In the first instance, SDCEA does not believe the Draft Scoping Report has begun to grapple properly with location of the pipeline along the South Coast. As our appendix of photographs of 2007-08 storm damage shows, even concrete structures came under severe attack from the elements and were found wanting, as a result of locations in low-lying coastal areas, including The Bluff, Wentworth and Merebank, through which the new pipeline will run. Other areas of Amanzimtoti and the South Coast were demolished in June 2008.

The Draft Scoping Report treats these dangers casually, in spite of the record of public infrastructural decay noted above, in which a variety of pipeline maintenance crises have arisen, causing enormous ecological despoilation. Second, the rise of CO2 emissions that will be facilitated by the pipeline is immense, and is only referred to in the Draft Scoping Report as a potential legal problem, with no details provided. Since Minister of Environment and Tourism Marthinus van Schalkwyk has committed South Africa to substantive emissions cuts which will be formalised at the 2009 Copenhagen Conference of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, a huge effort by all state agencies, including Transnet, will be required to reduce emissions in all areas. The proposed pipeline does the opposite, just as South Africa enters the 21\textsuperscript{st} century with emissions that are 42% of the entire African continent’s output, and 20 times higher per unit of per capita GDP than even the USA’s emissions.\textsuperscript{21}

**Economic irrationality**

Ironically, in spite of all the socio-economic controversies, financing for the port-petrochem project may ultimately be threatened most by the project’s inefficiency and lack of economic feasibility. The argument in favour of the port is mainly that jobs will be created and SA will have world-class infrastructure for export-led growth. But rising capital intensity at Transnet along with trade-related deindustrialization may result in fewer manufactured exports as well as net employment loss. This has been the norm since 1994 when democracy also ushered in economic liberalization after SA joined the

\textsuperscript{20} Patrick Bond correspondence with the Nemai consulting company, May 2012-November 2013.
\textsuperscript{21} South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, ‘Comments on the Transnet Multi Product Pipeline Proposal,’ Durban, 7 July 2008.
World Trade Organisation. Subsequent port expansion and Transnet restructuring did not create new jobs, but destroyed employment.

The project only makes financial sense if South Africa’s economic development mentality is locked into national boundaries established in Berlin during the colonial ‘Scramble for Africa’ in 1885, the point at which borders were determined by white men representing imperial interests. As the region’s main port-rail link to the largest market, Gauteng – and from there to the rest of the subcontinent – Durban is facing stiff competition from Maputo in Mozambique for shipments to Johannesburg, because it is a more direct, shorter and much less mountainous journey. In addition, there is general container-handling competition from other ports along the coast attempting to set up regional freight hubs and export processing zones, including a vast state-subsidised complex, Coega, in the Eastern Cape near Port Elizabeth.

As it stands, Durban’s costs of processing freight are the highest in the world, at $1080 per container. What port advocates have not been able to do is explain how an additional $25 billion in investments (no doubt much more what with recent trends tripling original estimates) will cut operating and maintenance costs to competitive levels. Repaying the principle, interest on the capital, and all the additional costs will force much higher container handling charges, leaving the real prospect of another white elephant. In Durban, similar projects that were anticipated to earn profits – such as the airport, convention centre and marine entertainment complex – all have needed multi-million dollar annual taxpayer bailouts.

The ‘risk’ narrative

There are important debates about the ways to frame all of these issues. The next part of this paper addresses these debates through the notion of ‘risk’. In Durban, the risks associated with economic planning errors – especially the city’s growing herd of white elephant construction projects – combine with ecological dangers and social upheaval to generate a potentially explosive situation in coming years. Social activists have been establishing lines of argument that pick away at the edges of state-corporate investment logic. That logic has obvious flaws in terms of rising risk in the shipping industry (especially with the Agulhas Current continuing to capsize even extremely large vessels), externalization of costs, overcapacity, inefficiencies and national economic interests. Moreover, the years since 2008 have witnessed a process of ‘deglobalized’ flows of trade and investment, with South Africa increasingly uncompetitive what with recent credit ratings downgrading certain to lower the country’s currency value (hence deterring imports) and to raise interest rates, even on trade finance. In addition, to the extent that Environmental Impact Assessments now include concern about climate change, a project of this magnitude is both a victim and a villain when it comes to rising sea levels, extreme storms and ocean acidification. The risks associated with social unrest, especially as a result of displacement as the back-of-port operations encroach on poor people’s residences, are compounded by the likelihood of community activists (including this author) embarking upon ‘financial sanctions’ campaigning against corporations (such as Transnet) involved in the port-petrochemical expansion. Hence a full spectrum of risks now emerges in an era of frenetic mercantile and fossil fuel

activities, in what is already a politically-volatile Durban municipality, stretching eastwards out into the maritime-volatile but potentially oil-rich Agulhas Current.

If risk associated with maritime activity has so far been understood mainly in terms of geo-strategic positioning, fisheries and mitigation of naval attacks, then major new dimensions associated with port expansions and related infrastructure mega-projects may be important additions, and lead to new understandings of how to achieve post-carbon, post-capitalist development strategies. Vast new investment in maritime infrastructure capacity is terribly risky given the paucity of evidence that containerization can continue at the same rates as in the past, especially what with climate change and social unrest now rising as major considerations in energy, transport, production and consumption systems. Those systems have come to rely upon containers as the most efficient way of packaging commodities for long-distance transport. The historic shift of mercantile commerce towards shipping containers was also an outcome of risk management in the sense that war-time logistics offered the basis for what came to be world maritime commerce’s primary unit of measure, the Twentyfoot Equivalent Unit (TEU) metal box. As Deborah Cowen (2014) observes,

The standard shipping container, another US military innovation, has been repeatedly dubbed the single most important technological innovation underpinning the globalization of trade. While shipping containers have a long history of experimentation, the standardization of an intermodal container that could be transferred across different modes of transport was first experimented with during World War II as a means to reduce the time and labour involved in transporting military supplies to the front. It was not until the Vietnam War that the military use of the shipping container entrenched its standardized global form.

That war was lost by Washington because of a popular liberation movement’s courage. Although it would be invidious to compare, since there is nothing of the same intensity, resistance to the contemporary commercial transport system can be traced at several stages: petroleum extraction and refining, container shipping expansion, truck freight and warehousing and retail systems. To illustrate, one of the most extreme sites of the mercantile sector’s vulnerability is also targeted for one of Africa’s single largest infrastructure expansions. The largest project in Africa is on the Congo River: the $100 billion Inga Hydropower Project designed to generate more than 40 000 megaWatts of power, making it three times larger than the world’s next largest dam, China’s Three Gorges. But that project’s financing remains in doubt since the host Democratic Republic of the Congo is too unstable and the surrounding region too vulnerable for long-distance high-tension electricity power supply routes in the foreseeable future.

In contrast, in South Africa, two major projects are underway that will boost overall infrastructure spending by several tens of billions of dollars’ worth: the Strategic Investment Projects 1 and 2 run by the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC). Both involve extensive port expansions, and both are controversial because of the debatable economics, community displacement and ecological devastation – especially climate-related – associated with the state-subsidised projects. The first is the new rail line (plus $4.5 billion in locomotive purchases) that will bring coal from Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces to Richard’s Bay.
Strategic Investment Project 1: Coal exports through Richards Bay Port

Strategic Investment Project 2: the South Durban port-petrochemical expansion
Back of Port Local Area Plan – rezoning in particular: Clairwood to logistics, Clairwood race course to offices/logistics/recreation, Mobeni East to logistics, Mobeni West to logistics, Merewent to extend industry with office buffer.

Public comment period closing end September 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plans</th>
<th>Back of Port Local Area Plan – rezoning in particular: Clairwood to logistics, Clairwood race course to offices/logistics/recreation, Mobeni East to logistics, Mobeni West to logistics, Merewent to extend industry with office buffer.</th>
<th>Public comment period closing end September 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Port phases</td>
<td>Expanding Durban Container terminal</td>
<td>EIA for Berths 203-205 began Feb 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pier 1 expansion - Phase 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>By 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maydon Wharf redevelopment</td>
<td>By 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dig-out port at Reunion (old Durban International Airport site) - (16 container berths, new bulk liquid terminals, vehicle terminals)</td>
<td>Complete by 2019 - 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dig-out at Bayhead to extend harbour into the railway marshalling yard area</td>
<td>Complete by 2037 - 2050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freight routes</td>
<td>New freight route from harbour around Clairwood, through the uMhlatuzana river valley connecting to N2</td>
<td>2012 -17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>North-South truck freight roadway from airport dig-out on the M4, then through Mobeni to a junction at Clairwood</td>
<td>2014 - 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>East – West freight route from port via Mariannhill to Cato Ridge</td>
<td>2015 - 2023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marketing of the two largest SIPS

The second is the expansion of the South Durban Basin’s port and petrochemical complex. In both cases, the port municipality and parastatal agency Transnet have begun detailed planning, and both are being contested by environmentalists, with community activists also opposed to South Durban. To demonstrate the global and national priorities associated with South Africa’s port infrastructure expansion, consider the broad justification offered by President Jacob Zuma (2014) for the PICC projects:
At the close of the second decade of our democracy, it is clear that we need to change gear. All South Africans need to work together in a concerted effort to improve service delivery, bolster job creation and expedite economic transformation. In South Africa, joblessness is still unacceptably high even with recent growth in jobs numbers. Global economic prospects remain fragile. In response, the Government of the Republic of South Africa has taken a bold decision. We have chosen a path of counter-cyclical spending driven by catalytic infrastructure investment. We are striking a fine balance between protecting our sovereign integrity while leveraging the multiplier impact of fixed capital formation. Valuable lessons have been learned from our most recent build programmes, such as the 2010 World Cup stadiums, King Shaka International Airport, Medupi Power Station and Gautrain.

In the same spirit, Public Enterprise Minister Malusi Gigaba (2014) – who was in charge of Transnet from 2009-14 – made claims two weeks before the 7 May 2014 election that after its decisive win (which was nearly 63 percent of the vote), the ANC would implement “radical socioeconomic transformation” to make the economy “a more labour-absorbing one that is characterised by deracialised and widespread ownership.” Gigaba advocated “local beneficiation and value addition,” “inclusive and equitable growth” and “millions of sustenable and decent jobs. One of the levers we are using to restructure the South African economy is infrastructure investment” of $380 billion.

Likewise, the National Planning Commission’s (2011) Diagnostic report argued, “South Africa needs to move away from the unsustainable use of natural resources” and optimistically asserted, “South Africa can manage the transition to a low-carbon economy at a pace consistent with government’s public pledges, without harming jobs and competitiveness.” Yet the Commission’s (2012) National Development Plan endorsement of the PICC SIPs 1 and 2 would, in reality, amplify that very unsustainability and carbon-intensity. The Plan calls first for “The construction of a new coal line to unlock coal deposits in the Waterberg, extension of existing coal lines in the central basin,” and hence a rapid expansion of coal exports – mostly to India – from the world’s largest export coal terminal, Richards Bay. In past years, Durban had the honour of exporting the bulk of South African coal, a process which, shipping journalist Sidney Howard (1936) reported in the mid-1930s, “helped to make the port of Durban prosperous. The coal is shipped to East African and Red Sea ports, largely by Union Government vessels, as well as to other parts of the world... The capacity of the loading plant exceeds 1,000 tons an hour.”

By the mid-1970s, coal shipments began to be directed to the new deep-water port at Richards Bay, where the purpose-built Coal Terminal and mechanisation lifted the rate dramatically. By 2014, Transnet used Richards Bay to run 85 percent of its export capacity of 78 million tonnes per year. Still, when Botswana aimed to annually export more than 100 million tonnes of its vast coal reserves – an estimated 212 billion tonnes – by developing a rail link to Walvis Bay, in 2013 it began the process at its Debswana joint venture with DeBeers with Indian and Chinese buyers who loaded at the Durban port.

The odd exception like that aside, during the late 20th century, Durban became an
extremely expensive and inefficient port. By 2012 it was reportedly the world’s most costly harbour, with a tariff of $285,000 per average container ship, nearly five times higher than the world average. Along with Cape Town (just a bit less expensive), this price was nearly double the next highest, Melbourne (Dyer 2014). As a result, the second major PICC project would be its modernization: “the development of the Durban-Gauteng freight corridor, including the development of a new dug-out port on the site of the old Durban airport” (National Planning Commission, 2012). The prior work on doubling Transnet’s Durban-Johannesburg pipeline capacity (at a cost of more than $2 billion) and a few smaller projects were central to expanding the shipping, freight, and petrochemical industries, in spite of near universal South Durban community opposition. The vast damage done by coal and petroleum to local and global ecologies was not acknowledged in Planning Commission, Transnet or municipal documents, even when repeated Environmental Impact Assessment challenges were made in 2012-14 by the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) (2014), the University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society (Paton 2014) and other Durban environmentalists.

**Durban port’s inefficiency**

![Chart showing total port authority pricing (US$): container study - 01/04/2012](image)

Finally, this kind of port-centric infrastructure strategy was endorsed by SA Communist Party deputy general secretary Jeremy Cronin (2013), who enthused over

unlocking the northern mineral belt. Major mining houses have extensive mining licences in the Waterberg region of Limpopo, one of the poorest regions of our country. There are major coal, platinum, chrome and other mineral deposits there, but unlocking these resources for development has been severely restricted by water and energy shortages, and by the absence of an effective transport
infrastructure. Through our major parastatals (Eskom and Transnet), coordinated by the PICC, we are addressing the energy and logistics challenges, and through the Department of Water Affairs major dam and water pipe-line construction is underway. The funding for this public-sector driven infrastructure will be recouped through user-pay, off-take agreements with the mines. The mining houses bring investment and technology that government doesn’t have. Obviously the objective of the mining houses is profits, but in pursuing profits they create jobs.

As Cronin (2013) continued, “The rail infrastructure that is provided by Transnet needs to focus not just on maximising exports (which the mining houses want), but also on connecting coal mining, for instance, more effectively to beneficiation in the new generation power stations. The state-regulated pricing of water, electricity and logistics will also need to ensure that our strategic developmental objectives are leveraged. In particular, we need to ensure that the towns and cities that grow up around this development do not replicate old patterns, but are green and integrated.”

Even with sustainability rhetoric added, this ‘development’ narrative – from the President, Public Enterprise Minister, National Planning Commission and Communist Party – confirms South Africa’s ongoing control by what is termed the Minerals-Energy Complex (Fine and Rustomjee 1996). As one casualty, this means that no change to status quo climate destroying policies is on the cards (Bond 2012). Even a few weeks before Durban’s hosting of the United Nations November 2011 world climate summit, Pretoria’s Climate White Paper also refused to grapple with fossil fuel addiction. As the national Plan argued, the top priority for economic growth is to “raise exports, focusing on those areas where South Africa has the endowments and comparative advantage, such as mining.”

Though this status quo strategy is destructive to economy, society, polity and ecology, it was unsurprising to see Business Day editor Peter Bruce (2012) – for many, the leading organic intellectual of SA capital – make the same point without any distracting sustainability discourse, urging on the state’s promised $100 billion infrastructure spending in early 2012 with the mantra: “Mine more and faster and ship what we mine cheaper and faster.”

What is unique about the PICC’s plans for South Durban, is that although the Basin’s residents include many people (mostly black) with employment and other commercial links to shipping, freight and petrochemical industries, the extra pollution in this toxic-saturated ‘armpit of Africa’ has over the past decade catalyzed extraordinary resistance (Bond 2011, Desai 2002). The resistance is one of several resistance sites to consider when understanding project risk. Others relate to the character of maritime security and mega-ship construction in an era of extreme weather events and climate change’s impact on one of the world’s most volatile coasts. First, however, consider the risk associated with economic adjustments in South Africa and the world.

**Durban in a risky national and world economy**

The Durban port is an excellent case site in which to explore multifaceted risk-taking. As researcher Jack Dyer (2014) points out:
• it accounts for over 70 percent of trade passing through South Africa’s ports;
• over 5000 vessels calling per year;
• a total of 2.69 million 20 foot TEU units of container traffic growing at 1.2 percent in 2013;
• over 6800 containers handled per day, with 44,829,622 tons of general cargo;
• worth over $10 billion per year in terms of direct expenditure in the local maritime economy and value related activities;
• most significant port in the Southern Hemisphere and in Africa in terms of marine-related economic activity;
• comprises a significant part of not just Durban but the South African economy.

The national economic context is vital when considering the prospects for Durban’s increased container turnover traffic from around 2.5 million per annum in the 2009-13 period to what the National Planning Commission (2012) estimates will be 20 million by 2040. South Africa’s major economic problem remains the sustained overaccumulation of capital (Bond 2014). With its major corporations having the third highest profit rate in the world (IMF 2013) and also, according to a PricewaterhouseCoopers survey in early 2014, ranking first in the world in corporate fraud (Hosken 2014), South African capital is rapacious. The long history of corporate collusion with apartheid could not be erased overnight (Saul and Bond 2014), and as black liberation in 1994 ushered in a “Faustian Pact” (Kasrils 2013) between the new ruling party and capital, demands by a leading fraction of business for neoliberal reform were implemented (Bond 2014). This was economically unwise, for as exchange controls fell, for example, in 2007, an estimated 23 percent of GDP was taken offshore in the form of capital flight (Mohammed 2010).

South Africa was left extremely vulnerable to world economic twists and turns. As the global financial crisis unfolded in 2008-09, the Johannesburg Stock Exchange lost over half its value within weeks, and *The Economist*’s risk ranking of South Africa was worst of 17 emerging market peers, especially due to the current account deficit, itself driven not mainly by trade deficit but by the negative balance of payments, as profits and dividends flooded out to the new London financial headquarters of the country’s largest firms. The foreign debt then soared, from $25 billion in 1994 to $80 billion in late 2008 to $140 billion by 2014. One reason for this degree of vulnerability was a series of persistent currency crashes: by more than 15 percent within a month-long period on seven separate occasions, in 1996, 1998, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2013, the worst record over the last 15 years experienced in any medium or large country. Another reflection of vulnerability especially to rising interest rates in defense of the currency, was the excessive local consumer credit expansion, a large part of which was based upon mortgage bonds, given South Africa’s world-leading real estate bubble (389 percent larger in 2008 than in 1997, double the height of second place Ireland’s bubble). Internally, domestic state borrowing was kept under control, and although the decline in corporate tax revenue drove the budget deficit to a near-record 7.6 percent of GDP in 2009 and a bit less in 2010, South Africa was not pursuing a classical Keynesian strategy. The state was instead carrying through with massive and usually irrational mega-construction projects contracted years earlier, especially the World Cup stadiums and elite transport infrastructure such as the new Durban airport and the Gauteng fast train and highway e-toll upgrade (Bond 2014).
In this dismal macro-economic context, the most successful sectors were communications, construction and finance while labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, footwear, and gold-mining shrunk. Overall manufacturing also fell as a percentage of GDP, and there appeared no incentive to reach out to the growing black working class market, but instead to surrender cheap production of basic goods – clothing, textiles, appliances, electronics, etc – to East Asian imports, mostly through Durban’s port. The Gini coefficient measuring inequality rose after 1994, and this was racialised, as black households lost and whites won. One reason was the widespread casualisation of labour and the decline of labour’s share of the social surplus, while another was that total unemployment rose to a rate of around 40 percent at peak (if those who have given up looking for work are counted; otherwise around 25 percent, and just 6 percent for whites) (Bond 2014). Environmentally, the depletion of non-renewable resources was formidable, and so was pollution. The economists’ favourite measure of well-being, GDP, should be adjusted to account for these two factors (amongst others), because GDP only considers mining activity as a positive increase each year, instead of factoring in mineral depletion, i.e., a country’s decline in natural capital. If those corrections are made, South Africa would have a net negative per person rate of national wealth accumulation of US$245 per year (for 2005), according to the World Bank (2011). In other words, South Africans are growing poorer all the time, the more the country is stripped of minerals.

In Durban, aside from very strong ethnic links to the ruling faction of the African National Congress (ANC), the political rulers have little beyond tokenistic social grants to offer its 3.5 million residents, of whom more than a quarter live on the very margins of life, in shacks. ANC patronage to major and minor construction companies and other semi-privatised municipal tendering (home building, bus services, etc) has created a small wealthy elite whose performance has been subject to ridicule (the names Mpisanes, Jay Singh, Roy Moodley, Willy Govender, Vivien Reddy, Andrzej Kiepiela, Roy Moodley and Carver Media, for example, all reflect various scandals). The former mayor, Obed Mlaba, was named in an official Durban municipal corruption commission, the 2013 Manase Report, as having hijacked a $300 million tender for waste incineration, yet national ANC rulers soon named him the country’s High Commissioner to Britain. The city's ruling economic elites have just as dirty roots in apartheid profits, especially the sugar barons who land-grabbed the coast and abused indentured Indian labour, as well as shipping magnates and the tourism industry. But Durban never bragged of a strong organic manufacturing bourgeoisie, although there are several major production sites like Toyota automobiles, the petrochemical complex and a manganese smelter. The city's status in both manufacturing and the country's fastest-growing sectors, finance and communications, is merely as branch-plant town. As a result of these ruling-class characteristics, Durban would never be the kind of city that could shape its own future.

As a result, most municipal economic development efforts entailed crafting a marketing strategy based upon sports tourism and convention centre activity (Durban has Africa’s largest hall), as well as a strong patronage impulse within the ruling party, which together generated high-profile white elephant projects. These include a new $390 million stadium built next to a perfectly good stadium for the 2010 World Cup; high annual subsidies to that stadium, the convention centre and the uShaka Marine World entertainment site; and a new airport 40 kilometers north of the city that operates at a
fraction of its promised capacity, with unfulfilled fantasies of an “aerotropolis” development at the Dube Trade Port. It was no surprise for Toyota South Africa CEO Johan van Zyl to announce, “Durban as a brand is not strong enough to simply say ‘come and invest in Durban’. What it needs to attract investors are big projects. Durban needs to keep ahead of the competition. China is building ports they don’t even know when they will use. If return on investment is the line of thinking we may never see the infrastructure” (Naidoo 2012).

Yet there is great risk associated with reliance upon the maritime sector, tourism and commodity exports, as the globalised economy begins what may become known as a 1930s-style “deglobalisation” era. As The Economist (2013, 1) argued in October 2013 in its cover story entitled “The Gated Globe”,

Globalization has clearly paused. A simple measure of trade intensity, world exports as a share of world GDP, rose steadily from 1986 to 2008 but has been flat since. Global capital flows, which in 2007 topped $11 trillion, amounted to barely a third of that figure last year. Cross-border direct investment is also well down on its 2007 peak... hidden protectionism is flourishing, often under the guise of export promotion or industrial policy.

**Global flows of goods, services and finance: absolute $ (tn), share of GDP, 1980-2012**

Source: McKinsey (2014, 14)

The pause button will no doubt be lifted. Yet in what was otherwise a celebration of global flows, the consulting firm McKinsey Global Institute (2014, 5) also acknowledged that a peak had been reached in 2007 with $29.3 trillion worth of flows – 52 percent of world GDP – which then sunk substantially in relative terms over the subsequent five years, to just 36 percent: “This reflects the correction from the global credit bubble and deleveraging of the financial system. Financial flows have changed direction, too, with
outflows from emerging markets rising from 7 percent of the global total in 1990 to 38 percent in 2012.” Beginning in May 2013, investors roiled South Africa and four other major emerging markets when the US Federal Reserve’s Quantitative Easing began to be phased out (“tapered”). As a result of US interest rates slightly higher, outflows meant that four of the five “BRICS” – South Africa, India, Brazil and Russia (which suffered again in early 2014 from financial sanctions imposed after its Crimea invasion) – suffered substantial currency crashes that, in turn, would limit import capacity. Even China’s property bubble burst in the 44 largest cities by 19 percent in the year between April 2013 and 2014 (Wall Street Journal, 2014). Because of the turmoil in BRICS, Indonesia, Turkey and similar sites, it is wise to recall the United Nations (2013, 32) warning, that the world’s financial markets aim to shift “high-risk activities from more to less strictly regulated environments,” especially sites where massive state-subsidized and guaranteed infrastructure projects are envisaged. In these sites, including the BRICS, both borrower and lender are facing intense levels of desperation: to sink excess funds into new mega-projects on behalf of multinational capital. Durban’s port-petrochemical expansion is a fine example of the high degree of economic risk involved, in part given what awaits in the nearby waters.

Risks in riding and drilling the ‘remarkably stable’ (sic) Agulhas Current

Seeking to locate India in 1497, as had Christopher Columbus before being redirected westward five years earlier, Vasco da Gama arrived at what is now assumed to be the Durban harbour, and as it was Christmas, he named it Natal. Not even stopping to alight, he rapidly proceeded up the coast, but names are sticky. The area he glanced at in transit during those weeks fighting the Agulhas Current is today known as KwaZulu-Natal Province and the natural port he might have seen over the sandbar then blocking the entrance – dug out to take in large ships only in the 1880s – is Durban’s harbor. The city was named after a governor of the Cape Colony, William D’Urban, once white English-speaking settlers drove King Shaka’s forces off the land and established a borough in 1835; while the metropolitan area was renamed Ethekwini 160 years later, Durban is the core city.

The Waratua on its fatal journey
Although it was South Africa's leading port by the early 20th century as the sugar industry began exporting in earnest, Durban's waters were never easy to navigate. The Natal Pulse races down the Agulhas Current a half-dozen times each year, pushing 20km per day. It is the main reason Durban's coastline hosts more than 50 major ship carcasses. In 1909, one notable victim of mega-waves reaching 9 meters was the Waratah, which sunk 180 miles south of Durban (en route to Cape Town) on 27 July with 211 passengers and crew, leaving no survivors or sign of the wreck. The ship was one of the world’s largest at 142 meters in length and 16 000 gross tonnes.

The Agulhas Current

![Agulhas Current Diagram](image)

Indeed, the Pulse contributes to waves that have sunk 1000 more vessels off the Transkei Wild Coast. Susan Casey's (2010) book *The Wave: In Pursuit of the Oceans’ Greatest Furies* pays Agulhas this respect: “Crude, diesel, jet fuel, liquefied natural gas: oil in all its forms was heartbreaking, infuriating and all-too-common sight in the ocean. Supertankers, behemoths that couldn’t make it through the Suez Canal, swung down from the Middle East, took their chances hopping a ride in the Agulhas, and met their
share of disasters. Salvagers used every tool at their disposal to prevent the damaged tankers from gushing out their contents, especially in fragile near-shore environments, but sometimes the battle was lost.”

The near shore at South Durban is a critical site for not just shipping accidents but other oil spills. In 2004, just offshore South Durban's Cuttings Beach, there was a significant spill of five tons at the Single Buoy Mooring, the 50-meter deep intake pump that feeds the refineries with 80 percent of SA's crude oil imports. Onshore, corporate pollution standards are so lax that the South Durban refineries regularly spring disastrous leaks and explode, sometimes merely from lightning strikes. Daily, poisons are flared onto thousands of neighbouring residents. The Indian, coloured and African communities suffer the world's highest-ever recorded asthma rate in a school (52 percent of kids), as Settlers Primary sits next to the country's largest paper mill (Mondi) and between two refineries: one run by Engen, Chevron and Total; and the other, called Sapref, combines BP, Shell and Thebe Investments. Sapref's worst leak so far was 1.5 million liters into the Bluff Nature Reserve and adjoining residences in 2001. Together these refineries can process 300,000 barrels of oil a day, more than any other single site in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**South Durban oil refinery explosions**

![Source: South Durban Community Environmental Alliance photos of 2007 incidents](http://thepowerofthesea.com/images.html)

**The World Glory's inglorious end**

![Source: http://thepowerofthesea.com/images.html](http://thepowerofthesea.com/images.html)

But it is when extreme weather combines with destructive oil shipping that risk amplifies. As just one example of the rogue waves that periodically arise, a swell of more than 20 meters caused by a southwesterly gale sunk a major oil tanker, the World Glory, on 13 June 1968. That ship, heading from Kuwait to Spain, took the hit 65 miles east-northeast of Durban and after two hours had drifted 40 miles further through the Southeast current, eventually spilling its 334,043 barrels of crude oil. Two dozen of the 34 crew lost their lives. *Time* magazine (1954) reported that when launched in
February 1954, World Glory was the world’s largest tanker, “with a capacity of 16.5 million gallons, enough to fill 2,062 railroad tank cars.”

In recent years, major storms have worsened. Just offshore Durban on 26 July 2011, the 40-year old MT Phoenix oil tanker was hit by six-meter high waves. It lost its anchor mooring and drifted 25 km north in the main Agulhas eddy, landing on the rocky shoreline in Christmas Bay. The ship was wrecked at the heart of a beautiful – albeit class/race-segregated – tourist and retirement site on Durban’s North Coast. Two weeks earlier, a nearby beach was host to an Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) world competition, Mr Price Pro, which boasted some of the best waves ever seen in ASP history, contestants testified. The Agulhas Current is the second most volatile in the world, with a 5 knot speed at peak, but is most intense in the July-September months, to the delight of surfers who can find world-class tube waves in which to perform the barrels through which the highest scores are achieved.

**Ballito’s barrel at the Mr Price Pro surf competition, July 2011**

The winter swells arose just when MT Phoenix was being towed into Durban harbour for confiscation, having lost its engines a few hundred miles down the coast. According to Cathleen Jacka (2011) of the maritimematters.net website, the incident confounded the South African Maritime Safety Authority (Samsa), what “with hints at a deliberate beaching; the possibility of a mystery stowaway still hiding onboard; uncertainty as to the true identity of the owners and even that the vessel was scrapped in India last year.” A Samsa official observed that the 15-member crew “seemed inexperienced in the basic actions required to stabilise the vessel’s position” and remarked, “It would not be the first time that an unscrupulous ship owner was prepared to sacrifice a vessel in attempting to realise the insured value”. There was apparently no insurance for the MT Phoenix, since Lloyds had removed it from the books the year before and allegedly it was on its final trip, from West Africa to India’s ship-breaking graveyard. The owner, Suhair Khan of Dubai, stopped taking calls, leaving South Africans to bear the risk of 400 tons of oil spilling if the ship broke on the rocks. Estimates of the heroic rescue operation’s cost to the taxpayer easily run into the millions of dollars, but at least the crew was saved and oil was laboriously pumped ashore (Jacka 2011).
The MT Phoenix beached near Ballito, August 2011
Just weeks before, in May 2011, the Petroleum Agency of SA (PetroSA) began authorizing seismic oil surveying in the same area. The initial applicant, followed by Sasol and ExxonMobil, was Silver Wave Energy, a Singapore-registered company whose owner is Burmese businessman Min Min Aung, a close associate of the junta that still rules Myanmar. The Burmese connection is important, in part because exploitation of oil and gas in the Andaman Sea has long been controversial. When Unocal – now Chevron – built a pipeline to Thailand, it did such enormous damage to people and the environment that local villagers, supported by Earthrights International, successfully sued the firm for $30 million. Since 2007 the Arakan islands on Burma’s Bay of Bengal coast have been the main site of intense conflict, as Jockai Khaing from Arakan Oil Watch has revealed, and again Aung is a key player. Silver Wave has also been exploring dubious extraction projects in Russia, Sudan, Guinea-Conakry, Indonesia and Iraq, but in spite of sanctions against Burma at the time, Aung received PetroSA’s endorsement to explore 8000 square km stretching from Durban to Richards Bay. Silver Wave’s permission extends from 30 meters out into the ocean, to depths of 2 kilometers, while ExxonMobil’s goes as deep as 3.5 kilometers. By comparison, BP’s Deepwater Horizon platform in the much calmer Gulf of Mexico drilled 1.5 km down to the seafloor surface.

Sasol’s oil drilling is also contentious; it is the former state-owned company (privatized in 1979 and subsequently co-listed on the New York Stock Exchange) repeatedly fined for pollution, with a Secunda synthetic fuel (coal/gas-to-oil) operation that is considered the single largest point-source of CO2 emissions in the world.

As if to demonstrate that a company like Silver Wave (2011) is a high risk, its own Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) filing to explore for oil includes this prose: “Compared to other western boundary currents the Agulhas Current adjacent to southern Africa’s East Coast exhibits a remarkable stability.” Still today, large ships continue to founder off the KwaZulu-Natal coastline. One winter day, 19 August 2013, the China-bound MV Smart tried to exit the port of Richards Bay in ten-meter waves with a load of nearly 150 000 tons of coal and 1 800 tons of oil. The huge vessel split after grounding on a sandbank at the entrance to the world’s largest coal export terminal. Three tugboats failed to dislodge the boat (Rawlins 2013), after “the slamming of the vessel’s stern on the seabed while encountering exceptional swell,” according to Greek owner NG Moundreas (van der Sandt, 2013). Environmentalists accused the captain and harbor master of negligence for allowing the ship to sail under those conditions; the impact of an oil spill of that magnitude could have been devastating to the fragile ecosystem around Richards Bay. Once the oil was pumped safely off, local port officials agreed to Moundreas’ dumping of nearly all the coal into the Richards Bay harbor, so as to tow the broken-backed Panama-registered ship 70km out to sea for sinking. The project was of great concern to the Department of Environmental Affairs, whose spokesperson Zolile Nqayi warned that “the vessel may break up eventually, sink there, and we will have to close off the port. That may be devastating for the area” (Lancaster 2013), including sensitive nearby estuary sites such as the uMfolozi, uMlalazi and the uMlhathuze Sanctuary.

Although in that case, the sinking didn’t occur within Richards Bay, the local shipping industry appeared ill-prepared for extreme weather and “monster waves”. This is a global problem, as insurance expert Sven Gerhard of Allianz Global Corporate and Specialty explained in 2014: “The claims arising out of maritime emergencies of these ‘mega ships’ can be huge,” in part because – as MV Smart showed – there is “risk of such
vessels blocking port and terminal accesses”; as well as enormous costs of “salvage operations to recover ship and cargo when accidents occurred” (Fairplay 2014).

The largest of the mega-ships are container vessels which now regularly carry more than 10 000 TEUs. In 2013 alone, the Danish firm Maersk commissioned seven ships, each 400 meters long and 60 meters wide and 16 meters deep below the waterline, that can carry 17 000 containers. In 2015, China Shipping and United Arab Shipping Company will begin sailing 480-meter long Hyundai ships that carry 18 400 containers. And there will be more built with 24 000 container capacity by 2016, mainly in South Korea. These are known as “super post-Panamax”, because the Panama Canal’s limits allow 5 000. The $5.5 billion dig to deepen and widen the canal by 2015 will not deter a $40 billion Chinese-funded competitor in nearby Nicaragua. Most harbours are following suit.

The severe economic risk associated with these ships, however, is akin to many aspects of capitalist overproduction; overcapacity is associated with larger ships on the East-West route, then cascading to smaller ports through hand-me-down post-Panamax ships of only 12 000 TEU capacity. According to Andrew Penfold of Ocean Shipping Consultants, “Ports and terminals, especially in the north-south trades, are being asked to handle ships which would have appeared to be totally out of scale with the demands of the trade – that’s not because the shipping lines are being careful with where they put their ships, but because they’ve got so many of them, there’s nothing else they can do with them” (Martin 2011).

Economies of scale in the shift from ships carrying 16 000 TEUs to 24 000 TEUs saves 17 percent per container ($10 per unit per day at sea is the target). According to Penfold, “Despite the wounds of overcapacity, further ordering off even larger vessels seems inevitable” (International Shipping News 2014). Other savings come in the form of labour; Walmart’s 2011 purchase of the Maersk 18 000 TEU capacity ships for its trans-Pacific route (four days from China to California full, and the ship returns empty to reload) allows it to hire merely 13 to 19 crew (Martin 2011).

Under the pressures of globalization, containerization and mechanization, ports like Durban will then be compelled to install new gantry cranes to unload containers four at a time. But as Transnet’s 2013 installation of seven Chinese cranes costing $65 million showed, design specifications are critical because these now lift not four but only two at a time. Ports are also being pressured to service much larger boats by dredging their harbour entrances deeper; by 2013 the 12 500 TEU boats could only enter and exit Durban at high tide and half-full, even after a major widening and deepening operation. Other requirements are the expanded size of berths to accommodate longer ships, and longer (and stronger) quay walls. The expansion of Durban’s Berths 203-205 reflects these additional requirements, Transnet claims. But South Africa’s leading maritime journalist, Terry Hutson (2014), disagrees, and questioned Transnet’s economic logic in early 2014: “In Durban there is little likelihood of any big growth in volumes in the near future. A few years ago, the port went backwards in the number of containers it handled, dropping something like 200 000 TEU in a year and there has been little growth since... So the questions remain: Does Durban need the deeper berths and aren’t the bigger ships premature?”
**Climate risk when Transnet is both victim and villain**

One factor persistently eluded Transnet in its port expansion advocacy and planning: climate change. As shown in a 2012-14 debate between community critics and Transnet’s environmental consultants – initially adjudicated in the former’s favour by the national government regulator – the extreme weather and rising sea levels that can be expected in coming decades allow a new climate narrative to emerge as part of resisting the port-petrochemical expansion. Disputes date to the first recent stage of major Transnet spending, the oil pipeline’s doubled capacity starting in 2006. By 2008, SDCEA had utilized the climate narrative vigorously, both to highlight damage done to South Durban by climate change, and to consider the damage to the earth done by South Durban industries. That pipeline, originally estimated to cost $600 million, increased to $2.34 billion by 2014. Collusion in the tendering process by major construction companies was one reason (Venter 2013). But there were other telling reasons, too, as the main politician then responsible for Transnet, Public Enterprises Minister Malusi Gigaba (2012), concluded after a review. Amongst “systemic failings that compromising the intended outcomes” were project managers who “lacked sufficient capacity and depth of experience.” He pointed out that “analysis of risks” was weak and that EIAs and water and wetland permits were not “pursued with sufficient foresight and vigour.”

The critique by SDCEA (2008) of the oil pipeline EIA reflected concerns about local environmental injustices and the race-class combination of biases associated with rerouting the pipeline to black areas from wealth white areas. But in addition, SDCEA observed that there was relevance in the Kyoto Protocol, which as Transnet put it, “commits a country to quantified emissions limitations and reductions.” As SDCEA (2008) claimed, “the rise of CO2 emissions that will be facilitated by the pipeline is immense, and is only referred to in the Draft Scoping Report as a potential legal problem, with no details provided.” And SDCEA (2008) pointed out many other aspects of pipeline and refinery mismanagement in South Durban, including the health of the port itself: “Durban Bay, in which the harbour is situated, is struggling to cope with the pollution loads from harbour and associated activities, contaminated riverine and storm-water inflows. The expansion will require further removal of aspects of the Bay’s ecosystem, which will in turn further reduce the assimilative capacity of this threatened and fragile estuary.”

These objections neither changed Transnet’s mind nor slowed the EIA process, even though a risk warning was provided on 19 March 2007. According to marine expert Andrew Mather (2007), a massive storm hit Durban that day: “wave run-up heights were measured at twelve beaches along the Durban and Ballito coastline and these peaked at 10.57 meters above Mean Sea Level.” But having successfully ignored ecological problems caused by the pipeline, the next stage for Transnet was downplaying climate change associated with the first stage of the port’s expansion, in a 2012-14 EIA process. Yet by then, even the Ethekwini metro municipality’s (2009) own Municipal Adaptation Plan had identified a series of vulnerabilities for the harbour:

- cyclones are projected to track further south down the Mozambique Channel increasing the likelihood that severe storms will occur in the Durban region...
- roads, bridges, railway lines, storm water and sewerage pipes as well as beachfront property could be washed away...
- Disruption to serves at the Port of...
Durban (e.g. damaged cranes and ships) could have short to medium term impact on a wide range of businesses, organisations and activities. High winds disrupt the entry of ships to the Durban harbor and prevent the operation of port-side cranes.

The climate report done by Transnet (2012) via its consultants ZAA was revealing, with Transnet in both a victim and villain role. As for the latter, Transnet’s failure to incorporate trends in global climate negotiations meant that even the official statement from the 2011 United Nations climate summit – the ‘Durban Platform’ – was ignored, insofar as that process will erase differences between Annex 1 and 2 countries, hence drawing South Africa into formal obligations at the 2015 Paris climate summit. Those obligations will probably include emissions cuts in shipping and bunker fuel consumption, just as airline emissions cuts began to be mandated by the European Union in 2012. The South African government’s (2010) own climate green paper noted the growing “reluctance to trade in goods with a high carbon footprint.” The carbon tax announced in 2013 would inevitably apply to shipping, given current trends to incorporate maritime activities – but again was ignored by Transnet (2013). In addition, when it came to mitigation, Transnet (2013) made another revealing argument: the vast expansion in shipping that the capacity expansion will facilitate could lead to lower CO2e emissions. Transnet’s (2012) Nemai consultants claimed that the economies of scale associated with post-Panamax shipping would be decisive: “The project will decrease the ship waiting and turnaround times which will have a lower carbon impact” – not realizing that if efficiency is increased by reducing the ships’ offshore wait, this increases their ability to load, unload and hence raise emissions.

As for Transnet as victim, the desire to build the $380 million first stage of the project as quickly as possible, thereby raising annual container processing capacity from around 2.8 million to 5 million, led to an apparent case of climate denialism. One government researcher – the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research’s Roy Van Ballegooyen (Transnet 2012) – working for Transnet entirely ignored climate in his “Modelling of potential environmental change in the port marine environment” report. After being repeatedly challenged on climate, Transnet’s (2013) formal EIA then resorted to using 2008-and-earlier information, especially about the impact of sea level rise (SLR):

The probability of sudden large rises in sea level (possibly several metres) due to catastrophic failure of large iceshelves is considered unlikely this century… In 2008, the UN’s expert scientific body on climate change projected that the sea level around the world could rise from anywhere between 180 mm and 580 mm by the end of this century as result of rising ocean temperatures and the melting of glaciers, snow and ice in polar regions.

That EIA report was rejected by the Department of Environmental Affairs as inadequate on two counts: the Durban harbour’s sensitive sandbank would be partially destroyed, nor was climate properly considered (Paton 2014). But in its mid-2014 update, Transnet (2014) and its consultants demonstrated an unwillingness to change, misreading a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2013) to still maintain a maximum 0.58 meters of SLR within 45 years, the berth upgrade’s lifespan. As SDCEA (2014) pointed out in great detail in their EIA critique, this is a disturbing underestimate of the problem as it will affect Durban. There are two reasons:
the IPCC actually estimated a higher SLR figure than the Transnet consultants identified; and in any case the IPCC is persistently too optimistic about climate impacts (typically by 60 percent), and hence more updated scientific literature was required. Columbia University’s Earth Institute (2013) projected in 2013 “sea-level rise of as much as six feet (1.83m) globally instead of two to three feet” by 2100, with higher amounts (3m) possible if more giant ice sheets crack. In May 2014, weeks before Transnet’s (2014) updated filing, scientists calculated the West Antarctic ice sheet’s more rapid submersion and generated much higher SLR estimates.

In addition to SLR and ocean acidification, at least four basic concerns remain, which Transnet failed to answer in its EIA statements:

- by expanding the shipping capacity of Durban harbour to super post-Panamax scale container vessels, will Transnet take up excessive amounts of South Africa’s carbon budget and therefore ruin the government’s pledge to peak and then decrease emissions after 2020?;
- expanding the shipping capacity also requires expanding the freight capacity, the danger is that more emissions, congestion, and trucking-related accidents will occur in an area demonstrably unsuitable given lack of road transport and inadequate shifting of freight to rail, so it is critical to know the amount of the new freight capacity being built to handle the much larger shipping capacity – i.e., what proportion of this is being anticipated for freight haulage by rail and by trucking respectively?
- has the recommendation by the Academy of Sciences of South Africa, in its 2011 book Towards a Low Carbon City, commissioned by the city, been incorporated? “The transport sector is pivotal to the transition to a low carbon city… The top priority was identified as the need to reduce the vehicle kilometers travelled in the road freight sector as this provided the greatest opportunity to simultaneously reduce emissions of GreenHouse Gases and traditional air pollutants.”
- how much additional CO2 will be emitted by the bunker fuel that is consumed by ships en route to and from Durban as a result of the vast new capacity associated with super post-Panamax ships soon capable of entering the Durban harbor, and how much additional CO2 will be emitted by the trucks that will haul the new freight, assuming this expansion is the crucial link in raising capacity to 5 million containers annually?

**Conclusion: The risks of activists connecting the dots**

Few if any of the risks discussed in this paper can provide any genuine, lasting deterrent without social agency. Vast parastatal corporations and the for-profit corporations they serve can easily turn their backs on even the most glaring contradictions, as Transnet demonstrated in repeated EIAs when faced with climate-related objections to the South Durban port-petrochemical expansion. The threat climate change represents to our future survival was, for Transnet and its consultants, merely an opportunity to file repeated arguments representing denialism.

The greatest risk to Durban’s proposed port-petrochemical complex expansion is the repertoire of mandatory tools in any activist’s toolbox: popular education, democratic decision-making, mass-based organization, linkages of people across interest areas
leading to new alliances, unity of purpose, an ability to transcend divisions, powerful
analysis, fluidity and pragmatism combined with a profound commitment to eco-social
justice principles, and effective strategies and tactics.

There is not sufficient space to do more than reveal some of the discourses being
developed in 2011-14 in South Durban by SDCEA activists and their allies. One risk that
Transnet and major oil companies – even ExxonMobil – face is that the critical narrative
catches on in the broader society, and affects the way we think about infrastructure
priorities. The timing is propitious, because for at least two decades, South Africa has
witnessed what are probably the most prolific protests in the world dedicated to
improved “service delivery” – i.e. demonstrations against lack of (or excessively
expensive) water and sanitation, electricity, housing, clinics, schools, roads and the like).
These have occurred in South Durban, but as ever, the challenge is linking people’s
immediate concerns to wider matters, i.e. to connect the dots between local and global
and back again, and between economic, social and ecological matters.

SDCEA’s activists were motivated by a variety of minor victories against polluting
industries. In two cases, substantial landfills that were used as toxic dumps by unethical
waste companies were shut down. SDCEA leaders of those campaigns, Bobby Peek and
Desmond D’Sa, were successful in 1996 (Umlazi) and 2012 (Chatsworth), respectfully,
and in each case they won the Goldman Environmental Prize for Africa two years later
as a result. SDCEA recorded other victories, notably against the Engen and Sapref
refineries which are collectively the largest refinery zone in Africa. Because of SDCEA
lobbying, they both installed SO2 scrubbers so South Durban is not nearly as thick with
airborne pollution and the sickly-sweet smells of chemical emissions.

SDCEA’s own strength ebbs and flows, as does any civil society institution fighting
injustices where the adverse balance of forces is so glaring. In an earlier stage of
opposition to the port-petrochemical expansion, in 2004-05, SDCEA gathered thousands
of residents to halt a major link road planned from the city’s main southern freeway to
the port. In 2006 SDCEA began campaigning against the doubling of the oil pipeline
capacity and its rerouting through South Durban. In 2008, SDCEA used the EIA to
challenge the climate implications of a major project for the first time. But at that stage,
neither protests nor allegations (quite valid) of environmental racism nor EIA
interventions slowed Transnet; Gigaba (2012) openly admitted the roughshod way
Transnet treated such contestation led to numerous problems in the pipeline’s
implementation.

In 2011, Durban municipal City Manager Mike Sutcliffe – perhaps the city’s most
controversial leader in history (Bond 2011) – drew up a secret plan, estimated to cost
the equivalent of $25 billion, for the entire South Durban Basin. The plan reflected many
decades of official ambition to re-engineer the Basin, in the wake of the 1940s-60s
attacks on black residents which turned South Durban communities into racial enclaves.
Racial settlement patterns existed nearly entirely unchanged into the second decade of
democracy, with the exception of Clairwood’s desegregation by shack settlers as urban
blighting began in the 1990s. Sutcliffe’s master plan was only unveiled to the public in
mid-2012 at which point a half-dozen community meetings called by the city under the
rubric of public participation were taken over by SDCEA activists, led by D’Sa. A near
unanimous sentiment was expressed in meeting after meeting: close down the event
and refuse to have it declared a form of tick-off participation. The main planner, consultant Graham Muller, was repeatedly frustrated.

The narrative in the August 2012 pamphlet, “ACT NOW! EXPANDING PORT, POLLUTION AND FREIGHT THREATEN SOUTH DURBAN” is worthy of even brief consideration because, like a poster for a March 2014 SDCEA protest at Durban’s City Hall, it helps reveal activist attempts to link issues and constituencies. The first of eight SDCEA critiques in the pamphlet was that “We need one planning process. The municipality refuses to discuss the port expansion projects, which are spear-headed by Transnet.” The city’s strategy was to join Transnet in fragmenting the long 2014-2040 process of approval, construction and operation so that the vast implications for the entire project are not collected in any single moment of opposition. In reply, SDCEA demanded “a single participation process with all spheres of government, developers and communities to chart a sustainable and common way forward. Otherwise we will be arguing one puzzle piece at a time and will never change the overall picture.”

The second critique was “Cost vs. Benefit... Proponents boast 130 000 permanent jobs will be created – is this accurate? If correct this means a high capital investment of $190 000/job created. What other ways could this money be invested to create sustainable livelihoods without the terrible social and environmental impacts? Are the full costs – including community destruction, adverse health effects, and our greater contribution to climate change – being considered?” Activists suspected the jobs calculation was far out of touch with reality given, as noted earlier, that even the largest container ships are designed to have crew numbering less than two dozen (13 in the case of Walmart’s 15 500-TEU China-California shuttle).

The third critique also questioned the planners’ understanding of global shipping demand: “Is the expansion justified? Transnet are arguing expansion based on projections for the growth in container handling. At an 8 percent growth rate their projections show that a capacity of only 12 million containers will be needed by 2040 – yet they are building capacity for 20 million. Is this growth rate attainable given competition from other ports, growing resource constraints, carbon taxes on shipping, and global economic collapse?” Activists pointed out that harbour efficiency was appalling and that Durban’s notorious status of world’s highest-cost port would not be changed by adding $25 billion in capital costs given high interest rates affecting repayment of loans plus high operating and maintenance costs.

The fourth critique was that “Increased containers mean increased impacts,” and that this would translate into “8x the traffic, pollution and noise... There will also be an increase in Port related illegal activity including smuggling, drug trafficking, prostitution and shebeens” (informal pubs).

The fifth was of the “wrong fossil fuel development model. Port expansion will serve increased imports of consumer goods (60 percent of container cargo are imports to Gauteng), expansion of petro-chemical industries & fuel storage and the automotive industry (Toyota). This does not take into account dwindling resources, especially oil, and the need to stop climate change.”
The sixth was the environmental risk: “In addition to increasing climate change, port expansion will increase large water areas within the south Durban flood plain while removing the last natural wetlands. Toxic industry is also expanding in the basin. This increases the potential for flooding and hazardous chemical spills as extreme weather events increase.” Moreover, “the Bay’s estuarine ecosystem has been compromised to the point that it has lost resilience... The Bay provides a critical breeding ground for reef associated and migratory marine fish. 132 species of birds are found here and 62 species of endangered, migratory birds rest and feed here.” The sandbank’s destruction in the first phase would wreck any remaining chance of restoring the harbour’s ecological integrity.

The seventh was the resulting “Community upheaval... Clairwood is earmarked for rezoning to logistics with some light industry. 6000+ people will be forced to relocate through market pressure, and with no active community present will inevitably result in the degeneration of historic cultural sites in the area. The port expansion requires 878 hectares of land for containers!”

The eighth critique was to ask, “Freight – rail or road? The documents make reference to rail and interchange nodes. However, the documents refer to ‘freight routes’ which on some plans are shown as rail but more recently as roads.” Just over a year later, on the Field’s Hill slope through the main mountain pass towards Durban, 24 people were killed by a runaway truck carrying a container belonging to Taiwanese-based shipping behemoth Evergreen. It was being freighted from Johannesburg by a small Durban truck transport agency, which skimmed on paying toll fees (staying on the main highway with its more gradual slope would have cost $4 more), hired as a driver a low-paid Swazi national with an illegitimate license, and failed to have its faulty brakes repaired before the fatal trip. The SDCEA ‘truck off’ protest of 500 residents on the freight area’s main thoroughway (Solomon Mhlangu Drive) in March 2012 had forewarned of this kind of risk, given that there were 7000 accidents in Durban in 2010 involving trucks, leaving more than 70 fatalities. In Clairwood alone, trucking companies invading the residential area with illegally zoned truck yards, and accidents there and on nearby Bluff roads had killed nine residents in the prior five years. The Clairwood community leader who opposed trucks the most vigorously, Ahmed Osman, was assassinated in April 2009, shot dead on his front porch in one of many unsolved crimes involving the deaths of Durban activists (Bond 2011).

In spite of such dangers (D’Sa himself was a target of a nighttime firebombing in his working-class flat in December 2007), the rhythm of street protest is also revealing. As the municipality and Transnet began public consultations in 2012, SDCEA activists were able to use the mass meetings as rallying points. For example, in September 2012, Clairwood’s established Indian residents most immediately threatened by the existing harbour’s expansion invited then Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan – who thirty years earlier was a community organiser against apartheid housing in those very streets – to make a presentation defending Transnet and the city. He attempted to do so, using the standard neoliberal narrative of international competition, and specifically the threat that Maputo would get ahead in port traffic to Johannesburg (itself a reasonable proposition given that it is a shorter route without the Durban-Johannesburg mountainous terrain to cross). Tellingly, however, Gordhan also hinted that a divide-and-conquer strategy lay ahead against SDCEA activists, because Clairwood is also a site
of several thousand black African shackdwellers barely surviving in informal settlements, backyard slums and even large tents. Fires regularly ravage these residents’ shacks, destroying their belongings and often injuring (and even occasionally killing) people, including one night-time blaze that wrecked a double-yard settlement of 500 shacks in mid-2013. The mainly middle-class audience of traditional homeowners of Indian ethnic origin were reminded by Gordhan that the ANC’s ability to mobilise in a relatively desegregated Clairwood could haunt a coming political showdown, in which those with the most to lose were Indians in Clairwood and Merebank, followed by those in the mainly Coloured area of Wentworth (which suffers the most pollution) and the traditionally white Bluff area.

Still, three months later, in December 2012, several hundred people heeded SDCEA’s call to block the back port entrance, leaving a three kilometer long queue of trucks. Protests slowed in 2013 as the port EIA process and other high-profile debates with Transnet and municipal politicians took priority. But by March 2014, when SDCEA held a march to City Hall of 800 residents, new issues and constituencies were added to the coalition, including farmers on the old airport land who are to be displaced as the Dug-Out Port is built, and subsistence fisherfolk whose access to the existing harbour was contested from the time of the 9/11 bombings – thus generating US paranoia over port security – until in 2013 they were permitted back into their traditional fishing area. The challenge for connecting dots and adding issue areas would arise in subsequent years, as the Umlazi Unemployed People’s Movement (UPM) joined the anti-port coalition, for their ambition is to have the old airport land turned into low-income housing and labour-intensive industrial cooperatives. There is also potential for the country’s largest trade union, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), to concretise its ambitions of a United Front linking workers, residents, environmentalists, women and youth. If Numsa succeeds in taking over the organization and representation of Durban port workers – as they were doing down the coast at the Coega container terminal – and evoking genuine eco-socialist politics, if the UPM leads land invasions at the airport before the 2016 digging is due to begin, and if Clairwood shackdwellers and nearby worker-hostel residents in Umbilo and Jacobs are fully organized, then the threat of racial divisions would fade.

However, it must be conceded, finally, that SDCEA remained weak when it came to an alternative approach to the South Durban Basin’s development. As SDCEA’s 2012 pamphlet reported, “We must urgently invest in a post-fossil fuel development path including renewable technologies and resilience to climate impacts. Are we giving up our land and community to facilitate imports feeding rampant consumerism?” That stark choice lay ahead not only for SDCEA, South Durban residents and the broader city – but for the country and world as a whole. With the capitalist “development model” representing by far the greatest risk to the continuation of a decent life on a climate-constrained planet, and with inequality and political degradation out of control in South Africa and across the globe, then the showdown over South Durban’s future would, in microcosm, signal whether disparate forces can find unity in opposition, and use that unity to plan a future based on less risky ways of arranging economy, society and nature.
Is an alternative to this flawed economic development strategy possible? A very different Strategic Investment Project would recognize the urgent need to detox South Durban and reboot the local economy towards more labour-intensive, low-polluting industry, and add much more public transport, renewable energy, organic agriculture not reliant upon pesticides, a ‘zero-waste’ philosophy and a new ethos of consumption. The South Durban activists and the national Million Climate Jobs campaign want society to adopt this approach, but they remain on a collision course with Transnet, its financiers, the Treasury and Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission, as well as the municipality. Unlike the Medupi campaign from February to April 2010, there is far more time for mobilization of advocacy pressure to halt Transnet’s access to external financing, and hence the project itself.

In October 2012, at a Presidential Infrastructure Investment Conference in Johannesburg, Deputy Public Works Minister Jeremy Cronin confessed what is patently obvious in the neo-colonial SA economy: ‘Too much of our development has been plantation to port, mine to port.’ Instead, we need ‘social infrastructure, such as water, hospitals, schools, and housing, in order to prevent the kind of protests witnessed recently in the mining sector.’23 Cronin’s influence notwithstanding, this rhetoric is probably just a case of ‘talk-left, invest-right’: in mega-projects like Medupi and South Durban’s port sprawl, against the interests of people and planet, and instead on behalf of corporate profits. In these respects, there was more continuity than change in the pre-1994 and post-1994 eras. For many years, such mega-projects have dominated corporate investment, and these have always entailed very generous state-supported subsidies, usually associated with mining (Free State Goldfields), smelters (Alusaf, Columbus), airports and ports (Richards Bay, Saldanha, Coega), mega-dams (Gariep, Lesotho), coal-fired powerplants and other energy projects (Mossgas, Sasol oil-from-coal) and special projects (sports stadiums and the Gautrain).

Investment in South African mega-projects, 1946-2012

![Investment Graph]

Source: SA Reserve Bank

What this means is that there remains a formidable lobby for fossil-fuel based infrastructure investment in SA, ranging from mining houses to the construction industry. The elite mandate is to ‘mine more and faster and ship what we mine cheaper and faster’, as Business Day editor Peter Bruce ordained just as Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan was finalizing his $100 billion infrastructure budget in February 2012.24 Thanks to this philosophy, South African ecological problems have become far worse, according to the government’s 2006 Environmental Outlook research report, which noted ‘a general decline in the state of the environment’.25 By 2012, SA’s ‘Environmental Performance Index’ slipped to 5th worst of 133 countries surveyed by Columbia and Yale University researchers.26 For example, Gauteng, the country’s main megalopolis, experienced water scarcity and water table pollution, when the first two Lesotho mega-dams were built during the late 1990s with World Bank financing. There were not only destructive environmental consequences downstream, but the extremely costly cross-catchment water transfer to Johannesburg raised water prices, thus, deterring consumption by poor people in low-income townships.

SDCEA’s 4 December 2012 protest blocking the port’s southern truck exit

With this level of degradation, it is no surprise that there is such intense labour, social and environmentalist resistance. The 2012 and 2013 World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report placed SA in the world-leading position for adverse employee-
employer relations out of the 144 countries surveyed. And typically 10,000 protests are recorded by police each year; in 2012-13, for example, the minister of police reported that of 12,400 protests, ‘10,517 were peaceful and 1,882 were violent public protests, with a total of 693 criminal cases reported.’

South Durban’s experience so far corresponds to more general conclusions about community contestations of industrial activity as a result of global-local rescaling processes sometimes termed ‘glocalisation. In the face of the widespread yet elusive power of transnational corporations, civil society nonetheless continually pressures companies to reduce environmental and social impacts from their activities,’ as Leah Horowitz explains:

Protestors may use direct action, such as violent attacks, or discursive action, including court battles as well as attempts to tarnish the companies’ reputations, which are increasingly important in a globalized world. All these costs contribute to ‘the internalization of externalities’. Beyond direct costs to corporations, these actions influence the financial sector as investors realize that companies pass financial and reputational risks on to the institutions that support them, and that a company’s management of environmental and social issues may provide an indication of its ability to tackle other management problems. These concerns have prompted investors to screen potential funding recipients, through mechanisms such as the FTSE4Good Index Series, and have inspired powerful funding agencies such as the World Bank to impose directives upon clients.

Attempts to change South Africa’s carbon-intensive, export-oriented economic policy have failed, thus far, and one harbinger of the coming conflict was in January 2014 when in Parliament, SDCEA was prevented from testifying about the port-petrochem complex during hearings on a fast-track Infrastructure Development Bill which passed a few weeks later, and which will reduce to a maximum of one year the approval processes for EIAs and other permits. As a result, the only obvious pressure point will be for SDCEA to attack Transnet’s financing.

What is at stake in South Durban, as in so many other similar sites of micropolitical-ecological struggle, is whether common sense prevails over profits. That calculus has to be swung in the favour of the former, by reducing the latter, perhaps through non-violent civil disobedience of the sort pioneered in Durban in 1913 by Mahatma Gandhi; i.e., of the sort international anti-apartheid activists used to assist in ending apartheid. The most powerful weapon was financial sanctions. And whether the World Bank and other international lenders – including China and the coming BRICS Bank – can be compelled to avoid new Transnet financing, is a matter of organizing prowess.

And from there, from where the movements already are, we might discern a future for South Durban. That future must be post-carbon and post-capitalist, in order to turn risks into genuine opportunities for both social progress and socio-ecological survival.
Protest against port expansion on 29 March 2014

**Calling all Durban Communities...**

- Unite Against

**The Durban Port Expansion Project**

**This Project Will...**

- Put more than 2 000 MORE trucks PER HOUR on our roads;
- Cause a housing crisis as unbearable living conditions displace communities & increase social decay & crime;
- Convert Clairwood Racecourse, South Durban’s only green area, into a container & trucking depot;
- Aggravate Clairwood community's decay, caused by wilful historic failure to control the invasion of illegal businesses into a residential zone;
- Deny fishermen access to the Beachfront & North Piers;
- Disposses the Airport Farmers & cause food prices to soar;
- Divert R250 BILLION from vital services such as housing, education & health;
- Increase petrochemical industry pollution-related illnesses, cancer & asthma;
- Force small businesses to close - this unemployment will outweigh any jobs created by this project;
- Put a further burden on taxpayers in addition to existing white elephants;
- Worsen climate change;
- Create more opportunities for corruption;
- Profit a few at the expense of hundreds of thousands of Durban residents.

**DATE:** SAT 29 MARCH 2014  
**TIME:** 8:00am - 12:00pm  
**START:** KING DINIZULU  
(Botha’s Gardens) Kwa Pixley Ka Seme (West) St

For more information on this protest call:  
Desmond D’Sa: 083 982 8939 - Megan Lewis: 083 450 5541  
Vanessa Burger: 082 847 7766 - Mthombeni Thusi: 081 021 8608

**IT'S NOW OR NEVER!! RAISE YOUR VOICE!!**
Appendix: Memorandum presented to Municipality and Transnet, 29 March 2014

To:
Councillor James Nxumalo, His Worship The Ethekwini Mayor
Mr Sibusiso Sithole, EThekwni Municipality Manager
Mr SenzoMchunu, Premier
Mr ThamiNtshilinga, The Port Manager
Mr Malusi Gigaba, Minister Of Public Enterprise

From:
South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), groundWork, Earthlife Africa (Dbn), Umlazi
Unemployment Movement, Concerned people of Merebank, Concerned people of ‘Merewent, Diakonia
(Council of Churches), Heavenly Treasures, Green Squad Alliance, Mephawu, KwaZulu Natal Subsistence
Farmers, KwaZulu Natal Subsistence Fishermen Forum, RIGHT2KNOW, Socialist Youth Movement,
UbunyeBamaHostel,Centre for Civil Society (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Newlands, Kwamakutha, Folweni,
Umlazi, and Broader Durban areas.

Date: 29th March 2014

Re: Durban Communities Express Concern about the Port Development

The residents in South Durban and surrounding neighbourhoods have failed to understand government’s
planning for the expansion of destructive port shipping, petrochemical production and other industrial
activities. This long-standing problem has become acute. In December 2012, Minister Gigaba promised that
there will be meaningful participation regarding South Durban’s future planning. We have an audio
recording of this commitment. Despite this, there has been no one coherent process to engage with all the
people of South Durban on the proposed port and petrochemical expansions. Each incremental attack on
South Durban has been opposed by our communities, most recently the doubling of Durban-
Johannesburg oil pipeline capacity, the Berths 203-05 expansion and the Clairwood Racecourse’s conversion to a truck
logistics facility. We are forced to oppose each initiative of the state and big business one at a time, which is
an inefficient way of addressing our residential conditions and the potential for the detoxed, labour-
intensive, economic development strategy that we all need, given pollution-saturation and unemployment.
Instead, we are consistently presented with toxic, capital-intensive projects that cost billions – and whose
costs consistently soar beyond estimates – resulting in more pollution and higher unemployment.

We use the medium of this memorandum to highlight our calls for a democratic process to define the type of
development needed in South Durban. At the outset we want to highlight some general issues.

• Our Concerns:

• The poor and working people of Durban lack reasonably-priced, pollution-free housing and services, and
the investment in the proposed expanded and dig-out port and related industries will divert vast sums – we
have seen estimates of R250 billion – from more appropriate infrastructure and basic services to destructive
activities that benefit the wealthy and the global elite.

• Residents consider the expansion and dig-out port projects to be unsustainable since they are not meeting
the needs of poor South Africans, but rather support a dependence on exports and imports that suppress
balanced development of our local economies.

• The port will affect community social life, cause loss of income and livelihoods of subsistence farmers and
fisher folk, pollute our community and especially the vulnerable residents who are disproportionately black
and women, reduce our area’s biodiversity and hasten environmental degradation.

• We still lack a public participation If the port and petrochemical expansions are carried out, these
projects will negatively process for the residents in South Durban who will be most affected by the port
expansion.
There has been a consistent call by South Durban organisations and residents for grounded and comprehensive public participation regarding long-term planning in our neighbourhoods. The eThekwini Municipality, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial government, Transnet and national government continue to meet behind closed doors with major industries planning the port and petrochemical expansion. This has gone on since the early 2000s without wider public consultation. At that point, for example, the R6 billion Durban-Johannesburg oil pipelines was meant to go through Hillcrest and Aloe– but after resistance by wealthier residents, it was re-directed through black communities in South Durban and Umbumbulu. The cost escalated to R23 billion.

We are already worried about the economic impact of the port expansion, in part because of a $5 billion loan made to Transnet a year go by the Chinese government, together with last month’s R50 billion tenders to Chinese and other multinational companies, which together will force South Africa into a more vulnerable and indebted status, compelling more exports of coal into a world market whose price has been crashing, while amplifying the climate crisis. Looking more locally, the Wema and Jacobs hostels, together with Wentworth Hospital, are set to become ‘human buffers’ between a hugely expanded toxic industrial area and the growing trucking and container parks. The Dalton (Umbilo) and Glebelands (Umlazi) Hostels will also suffer the impact of a major increase in heavy-duty transport fumes. For hostel communities already suffering a high rate of TB and HIV/AIDS, worsening air quality will have a considerable impact on residents’ health and well-being.

The suburbs of Clairwood, Merebank, Wentworth, Mobeni West, Lower Glenwood and Umbilo will be rezoned for industries, and properties may be expropriated. Informal settlements, shack dwellers and transit camps in these areas, according to government, do not officially exist, and no provision for housing these thousands of our area’s residents has been made. Similarly, hostel dwellers remain excluded from the planning process, and continue to be treated only as sources of cheap captive labour – nothing has changed since apartheid. The massive construction projects will also make living conditions unbearable – years of dusty (potentially toxic) air around Merebank can be expected from the dig-out port’s construction – and people will be forced from their homes. This is expected to lead to large-scale homelessness, social upheaval and major social problems. Durban has an 80-year housing backlog. Homelessness resulting from the Port Expansion will greatly worsen this crisis.

Both the UN Office on Drugs & Crime (UNODC) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), have, in their most recent world reports, flagged South Africa as one of the leading narcotics transit points worldwide. As our continent’s largest port, we are implicated. Dr Lucan Naidoo of the INCB specifically cited the Durban port expansion as cause for major concern with regard to the rise in the trade, and even more so, the use, of heroin. Security at Durban harbour is notoriously poor. According to Metro Police a large number of stowaways arrive at the port, some already addicted to heroin. These factors have led to Whoonga Park, (near the junction of the M4, Che Guevara Rd and Albert Park) where up to 600 people have gathered in an informal settlement, purely to smoke and deal in whoonga. Narcotics are also being smuggled through the underground storm water tunnels below Glenwood and Umbilo. The ready availability of illegal drugs combined with a high rate of unemployment (+75% at Dalton Hostel) is ravaging our youth, leading to xenophobic tensions and a worrying rise in human rights abuses perpetrated by law enforcement agencies. Drug-related crime statistics have risen 17.3% over the past year, with more than 400 drug-related crimes reported daily. This will increase significantly with the increased opportunities presented by a vastly expanded port. Currently, only 1% of containers passing through Durban Harbour are properly screened. In addition to narcotics, independent research has shown a dramatic rise in the smuggling of diamonds, vehicles, cigarettes and other contraband flowing through the port. This, together with lax law enforcement, has led to a considerable increase in the activities of major international organised crime syndicates such as the Triads and Serbian Mafia. This has also been noted in the most recent UNODC report. As communities surrounding the port already suffer high crime levels, poverty, and socioeconomic challenges, the potential for increased serious criminal activity will be magnified by the increased opportunities presented by an expanded port and cause further social decay.

SA ranks within the top ten countries in terms of human trafficking. In 2012, the DPCI (Hawks) listed Umbilo as having one of the country’s highest incidences of human trafficking and the highest in KZN. It is no coincidence that Umbilo adjoins the Durban harbour. Most trafficked women are used for the sex trade, for which Glenwood is becoming increasingly notorious. Current human rights abuses, vigilantism and racial tension between sex workers and community members will be fuelled by the increased human trafficking trade we anticipate will be caused by the port expansion with potentially explosive results. Umbilo has
recorded a 14.9% increase in truck hijacking for 2013-14 compared to 2012-13, ranking 7th highest in South Africa - this will spiral as more trucks invade the area to service the port.

- Mega-infrastructure developments have repeatedly been linked with major state and private sector fraud and corruption, as was revealed at the Dube Trade Centre at King Shaka International Airport. Price fixing and other forms of collusion have also been widely recorded, particularly amongst the giants of the construction industry. Recent PriceWaterhouseCooper research has revealed South Africa as the world leader in money laundering, bribery, corruption and procurement fraud. In 20 years we have lost R700 billion to corruption, of which R30 billion was lost through the tendering system. The state has proved unable and unwilling to curb this form of corruption, and both eThekwini municipality and Transnet have been ready facilitators, as proven by the Competition Commission. Projects meant to assist the poor frequently fail because of misappropriation of funds, as shown by the Manase Report. We believe port expansion infrastructure development will be no different; it will merely divert much needed funds from upliftment projects and social needs, to the pockets of well-connected, well-heeled tenderpreneurs.

- We also believe that the new Infrastructure Development legislation that just passed through Parliament is highly dangerous because it will fast-track the environmental and social considerations that must be incorporated in mega-projects. The need for meaningful consultation on large projects is vital, in a context in which South African community protest rates are amongst the highest in the world. The new law will negatively affect our residents, and will only benefit the elite maldevelopment paradigm, supporting economic growth for a few over the poverty of the masses.

Noting:

- Public engagement processes to date have not been meaningfully carried out due to the fact that government officials and their consultants continue to fragment South Durban planning, and in spite of there has been no clearly articulated process for this participation that would allow inclusivity.

- Documents distributed in the community were inadequately translated to lay language, densely worded, and full of technical jargon.

- It is much preferable for South Durban residents’ responses to be heard verbally by decision makers, rather than through written documents filtered by unreliable consultants.

- The South Durban Basin is one of the most industrialised and toxic areas in Africa and also has suffered considerable environmental degradation. The cumulative impacts of pollutants from various industries are not being considered, and the doubling of the oil pipeline and the proposed refining components of the dig-out port foretell a vast increase in high-pollution petro-chemical industries. Existing pollution monitoring is inadequate and only assesses a limited range of chemicals, and the enforcement and monitoring capacity of the eThekwini Municipality has been dismantled and is no longer effective.

- The biological importance of existing habitats – such as the sandbank in the existing port and the old airport land – to populations of endangered species including birds, chameleons and frogs were not thoroughly considered. The cumulative impact on the natural environment of the various port developments is ignored and shows a lack of understanding of ecosystem functioning and how dependent humans and the economy are on a healthy ecosystem.

- The history of South Durban is replete with displacement and pollution. Thousands of black people have suffered forced removals to make way for petrochemical and industrial activities, through spatial engineering on the basis of race. We are concerned that this suffering will be repeated as the port expansion plans include the high possibility of mass relocation of residents, resulting in unwanted social fragmentation and untold economic hardship to the people of South Durban.

Specifically concerns can be presented as follows:

- The re-zoning of the Clairwood racecourse into a logistics park will put more than 2000 more trucks per hour on the roads, creating major traffic congestion and chaos, resulting in an increase in the number of accidents. This is a major concern since trucks have been the major cause of deaths on our roads, and there are thousands of accidents involving trucks in eThekwini, and not even the Field’s Hill massacre seems to
have served to catalyse reform. The new Transnet locomotives will not be sufficient to move freight from road to rail, since they are mainly allocated to increasing coal exports. With increased local container-truck traffic comes worse air and noise pollution, which has become unbearable especially in South Durban. The safety and well-being of our children and families who commute on these roads on a daily basis will be compromised. The prostitution due to overnight truckers parked off, substance abuse such as drugs and alcohol as well as human trafficking are all social ills that will intensify. The degradation of our roads will continue.

- The proposed port expansion is a driver of climate change, especially combined with the doubling of the Durban-Johannesburg oil pipeline. With the present warming facing the planet, Transnet has not addressed climate change and its impacts; such as severe wet and dry seasons, sea level rise, extreme storms that will affect the port, more floods and droughts, heat stress affecting agricultural produce, and extreme weather otherwise affecting the lives of people and other species. Along with climate scientists and the national and provincial environmental authorities, we disagree with Transnet’s climate denials, and we call attention to climate as the biggest challenge facing our planet and an issue which will severely affect South Durban as sea levels rise.

- The port and petrochemical expansion will lead to a loss of biodiversity, in terms of Government Notice No. 546 (18/06/2010). For example the Clairwood Racecourse site falls within a habitat known as North Coast Grassland. The greater part of the vegetative cover is indigenous vegetation. Complete destruction of the biodiversity there will negatively affect the area’s wetland function. In addition, there will be certain loss of habitat which includes countless bird and butterfly species, and Red Hot Poker (Kniphofiapauciflora), a rare and indigenous African lily that is being threatened with extinction known as the ‘Racecourse Lily’. The port expansion threatens critically endangered chameleons and the pickersgrill reed frogs, several reptile species including rare water turtles, and a vast number of indigenous trees, as well as mangroves and sandbanks. Many of these will be removed or destroyed either directly or indirectly to accommodate the port’s expansion. Durban Bay is one of few such habitats on the sub-tropical east coast of Africa and one of only three such habitats on the South-Eastern African coast.

- The eviction of residents as the area deteriorates will cause a housing crisis, as unbearable living conditions displace communities and increase social decay and crime.

- Intensified petro-chemical industry activity will increase pollution levels and lead to more illnesses including cancer, respiratory problems and asthma.

- This project will place a huge burden on the national fiscus and our municipal budget. Based upon recent infrastructure mega-projects such as the Moses Mabhida Stadium, the International Convention Centre expansion and King Shaka Airport (all requiring huge subsidies due to failure of planners to properly estimate take-up capacity), it is fair to ask whether the port expansion will be a ‘white elephant’. Where is South Africa going to get the finances for such a huge investment? If Durban is already the world’s most expensive port, costing more than US$1000 per container to process, how will shipping firms and imports and exporters afford to pay principal, interest and operating/maintenance costs on more than R100 billion more worth of port-related infrastructure? How will demand for the estimated 20 million containers (according to the National Development Plan) be generated – and if there is such a high level of imports, how will this extent of competition affect our local industries?

- Local livelihoods are in jeopardy in any case, as the dig-out port will evict the airport farmers and further threaten local food security, especially for hundreds of farm workers. These farmers grow crops to feed their families and sell part of their produce at affordable price to supermarkets.

- Small labour intensive businesses are already and will continue to be forced out of areas close to the port expansion, including Clairwood and Jacobs, which will increase unemployment and outweigh any job creation by this project. The estimates of permanent jobs that will be created are entirely unrealistic, because of the rapid mechanisation of the shipping industry. The biggest Walmart ships that cross from China to the United States have 15 000 containers and only 13 crew, to illustrate. Currently these businesses are being replaced by container parks, that offer very few jobs and only bring social & economic degradation. With the loss of these businesses local residents and business have to travel further afield to source services and products, which further undermines the economic viability of the area.
In another case of livelihoods threatened, fisherfolk are experiencing problems such as being denied access to the beachfront piers and north pier, harassment by South African Police Services and a denial of what had been promised permits and harbour fishing access.

Our Demands

We insist that decision-makers hear our concerns and hold public hearings in South Durban community halls so that they can hear these demands first hand and in the very words of the project’s potential victims. We articulate these as demands because to date we have not witnessed Batho Pele. We have not had meaningful responses to our previous memoranda, making us believe that government does not see the South Durban community as a valuable cog in our democracy, but rather an obstacle to be ignored or removed. Thus we:

- demand a moratorium on all projects associated with the port and petrochemical expansion, which include: the rezoning of the Clairwood Racecourse to cater for Logistics Park, the current port’s expansion at Berths 203-205, the proposed dig-out port at the ex-Durban international airport site at Reunion, the expansion of oil pipelines through our neighbourhoods, the establishment of freight routes and any other form of link roads, and the rezoning of residential space area in Clairwood with the forced removal of numerous informal settlements and transit camps where people have remained without resettlement for several years. In particular we note the unacceptable and inhumane conditions of families separated according to sex in tented transit camps.

- demand the reversal of industrial/logistics zoning in Clairwood and the eviction of people from residential areas through the current process of malign neglect and the creep of logistics, warehousing and industry.

- demand the urgent establishment of a resourced stakeholder forum for affected community organizations, as promised by the Mayor in 2013, with representatives from all three tiers of government and Transnet, to enable communities to make informed and comprehensive inputs.

- demand resources to adequately participate in a democratised development process and to access the support of own expertise to input into decision-making and to understand the impacts better.

- demand translation of important documentation into isiZulu and isiXhosa, with distribution of information through channels and in form appropriate to affected communities should be granted.

- demand that all information developed since 1994 by Transnet, government and its consultants about the port and related South Durban Basin planning be given to community representatives, along with any other relevant information that we are unaware of presently that informs the government’s decisions on these developments.

- demand the holding of public hearings lead by impartial legal representatives (e.g. retired commissioners/judges) in the affected communities to hear the issues affecting communities and their real concerns about these developments.

- demand that planning related to the port expansions and all areas that may be affected be brought into a single public participation process with all spheres of government, developers and communities, whereby the merits of different development strategies and projects can be honestly interrogated, before detailed area and project planning commences. The Municipality should facilitate this process with Transnet, the community, and the provincial and national planning commissions.

- demand that laws such as the new Infrastructure Development legislation not be implemented if it fast-tracks South Durban’s residential demise, for if not, we will have to challenge the constitutionality of this legislation.

We reject the eThekwini Municipalities budgetary need to increase electricity, water, rates, sewage and refuse removal. We demand that these increases be nullified with immediate effect.

KZN Subsistence Fishermen’s Forum demand the following:
• That TNPA opens access to the remaining traditional fishing areas within the Durban Bay.

• Remove all the no-fishing signage on the North Pier.

• Continue the issuing of fishing access permits.

• Stop dumping at the entrance of the Durban Bay at South Breakwater and immediately remove the matter that has already been dumped.

• Arrange with your service providers to remove all the excess building material that was dumped into the water next to the South Break Water.

• From Ethekwini Municipality, we demand that Umdloti Beach is opened to fishing with immediate effect.

• We demand the immediate opening of all the beach front piers to fishing.

• We demand the immediate removal of all shark nets.

Received by
Mr Joe Nene, Mayor’s office
Mr Ernest Ndwandwe, Transnet
References


Cowen, D. (2014), 'Logistics', Unpublished manuscript, University of Toronto Department of Geography.


Gigaba, M. (2012), 'Where the Transnet pipeline project went wrong,' Statement by Public Enterprises Minister Malusi Gigaba, Pretoria, 2 December.

Gigaba, M. (2014), 'Radical economic change should be the focus of this election,' 23 April, *Mail&Guardian*, http://mg.co.za/article/2014-04-23-soapbox-radical-economic-change-should-be-the-focus-of-this-election


Rawlins, L. (2013), ‘Fears for habitat as ship left stranded,’ The Mercury, 20 August.


Silver Wave (2011), ‘Environmental Impact Assessment’, DETAILS TO BE PROVIDED.

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (2008), ‘Comments on the Transnet Multi Product Pipeline Proposal,’ Durban, 7 July.

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (2012), ‘ACT NOW! EXPANDING PORT, POLLUTION AND FREIGHT THREATEN SOUTH DURBAN’, Pamphlet, Durban, 12 August.


