Overview of Clayfield – Cluster of ward 48 Ethekwini Municipality

Introduction

This report outlines some of the most important factors to consider in building an understanding of the area of Clayfield. It draws significantly from information from interviews, observations and the researcher's understanding of Ethekwini Municipality and its historical background. The report also gives a contextual framework for understanding the responses from various interviewees.

Clayfield is situated in the Northwest of Durban. It is a historically and predominantly Indian township. According to Census 2001 demographic data, Clayfield consisted of just about over 5000 Indians, 600 Africans, 60 Coloureds and 16 Whites. During this period there were about 616 unemployed people which equal 11% of the total population. The findings indicate relatively minor changes in demographic composition and socio-economic status of Clayfield.

History and background

The Group Areas Act set the law for racial segregation that was to be spatially implemented. This entailed the development of separate social facilities and residential areas for different social groups. The Act prohibited any form of racial mixing or integration. Natal was one of the forerunners in implementing this law. Indians, Africans, and coloureds were segregated spatially, socially, economically and politically. Other than the Group Areas Act there were other by-laws implemented by the City Council at the time. These by-laws were designed to control the movement of non-whites in and out of Durban.

Sugarcane farms around Natal, the habour and the railway station placed Durban strategically for economic trade within the Republic of South Africa and Southern Africa. Durban became predominantly a centre of trade and transportation within the region. It directly supported the gold industry boom in Johannesburg. The position of Durban in the transportation of raw materials and finished products necessitated cheap labour. In realization that the influx control laws were hindering access to cheap labour, the apartheid government initiated the development of hostels and townships around the periphery of the city. It is indeed arguable whether the development of townships was necessitated by the need to control the availability of [cheap] African labour or it was a reaction to rapid uncontrollable urbanization. In any case, Indian and coloured townships preceded the black townships. The former were better serviced and had access to reasonably better infrastructure while the latter had extremely substandard infrastructure and services. Generally, Indians and coloureds were better catered for by the then Durban council.

Buffer strips were used to physically segregate Indian townships from black townships. Physical segregation contributed largely to social, economic and political segregation. However this type of segregation was not absolute. There was some level of interaction between Indians and Africans. It often occurred at the workplace and sometimes at a household level. Significant tension between Indians and blacks manifested in the 1949 Inanda riots. During the riots Africans invaded what was an Indian settlement in Inanda called Bhambayi. Physical attacks on Indians, particularly women, outraged the entire Indian population. In the midst of these riots some argued was the white government's attempt to perpetuate racial division between Indians and Africans. If there was any truth in this assumption it indeed worked as from then the relationship between Africans and Indians changed for the worse. Suspicion and resentment

became a characterization of the relationship between the groups, although this was unable to accommodate the high levels of cooperation that no doubt existed across racial lines.

Clayfield, the study site of this project, is part of Phoenix, Durban's first Indian township. It is difficult to talk about Clayfield as independent of Phoenix. Most of the interviewees also struggled to separate the two. Phoenix Township has a very rich history of political and social activism. It was established in 1904. A number of prominent Indian political leaders and activists hail from Phoenix. The first Clayfield residents were Indians relocated by the 1987 floods in Springfield Park. Clayfield Council Flats were built by the then government under the House of Delegates. A number of council flats were built and rented out to the victims of Springfield floods. The majority of Clayfield residents were working class Indians and generally poor. The need for better services and infrastructure necessitated that the community be politically and socially active. They continuously fought for better services and infrastructure. Lack of adequate basic service delivery and unemployment problems create social problems for the community. As a result there were a number of civil organizations that were formed to assist the community in dealing with these challenges. Phoenix Working Committee (PWC), Phoenix Child and Family Welfare Society were two dominant non-political organizations that were actively involved in the development of the area.

Civic organizations mobilized the community against unsatisfactory service delivery under the apartheid government. Protests and demonstrations were organized and executed by PWC particularly. According to some respondents, the community was supportive and active in issues that concerned them. Many people participated in the initiatives of civic organizations.

Politics

The community was very politically active around issues concerning governance, services and infrastructure development. The historically dominant political organization was the Natal Indian Congress (NIC). The NIC, as it was called, represented the interest of the Indian minority. It mobilized the Indian community around political issues that affected them. Some of the members of the NIC during the late 1980s argued that NIC undertook mandates from the then banned ANC. They fought against apartheid laws under their banner. Some of the anti-apartheid campaigns included the 'No vote' campaign. As much as the Indians inexplicitly fought against the apartheid regime they were relatively better off than Africans as far as the apartheid system was concerned. From 1984 onwards the Indian representation in the Tri-cameral Parliament indicated one such benefit. In terms of infrastructure and services Indians were better catered for compared to their African counterparts as earlier mentioned.

Even though the NIC represented the interest of the Indian people, some Indians voted for the Nationalist Party before 1994. The NIC was disbanded during the early 1990s leaving a gap for the National Party (NP), ANC and Minority Front to compete for the Indian vote. Interestingly the Indian vote continued to favour the NP even after 1994. Habib (2006) argues that this trend was influenced by racial and ethnic card played by these organizations. Indians and coloureds were promised that their interests would be looked after in what was a predominantly black dominated government. During the 1994 elections the majority voted for National Party. They have progressively voted the National Party in 1994 and then in 1999 the New National Party and currently the Democratic Alliance (DA). Political organizations like Minority Front, African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom party have been unable to make inroads in Clayfield and at a larger scale in Phoenix.

Currently, there is political apathy amongst the community in Clayfield. According to one respondent, political activism has died out. The respondent further suggests that grass-root leadership has vanished. Many interviewees believe that community mobilization around political issues was only needs driven. Now that most basic needs have been met, the community sees no value in being politically active, argued some of the interviewees. They also blame the lack of grassroots leadership as one of the reasons why the community is not mobilizing anymore. The current political setting is comprised of the DA Councilor, and Public Relations (PR) Councilor of the ANC, and the ward committee. Interestingly, the ward committee is comprised of approximately 80% ANC representation and only 20% DA. This has been the strategy of the ANC in all wards they do not control. The reported impact of this in Clayfield has been the irregular convening of ward committee meetings and high levels of apathy. Under the assumption that ward committees are drivers of local development in Clayfield, this could have a potentially negative impact on service delivery in the area.

One respondent defined the relationship between the DA and ANC leadership in the area as '*diplomatically hostile'*. There were no signs of cooperation and understanding between the two. As we interviewed representatives of both the ANC and DA, each largely spoke in negative terms about other parties. Arguably, this is a common phenomenon in South African local politics. This observable fact has, to a certain degree, disturbed the function of democratic institutions. Parties allied to both the ANC and DA did implicitly agree that their lack of cooperation and engagement hindered service delivery. One may also argue that the relationship between the ANC and the DA has a negative influence on efforts of racial integration. This assumption is informed by the fact that DA commands large Indian constituency support while the ANC depends on a small African vote in the area. Non-engagement at a leadership level is

likely to influence what happens within the grassroots as far as integration is concerned. Such are the dangers of racially defined politics. Clayfield is by no means an anomaly in this sense as party politics in South Africa is largely defined along racial lines.

Racial Integration

Racial integration in South Africa is a contentious issue. What has made it even more difficult is the lack of commonly agreed definition of what integration is and what it entails. The government, in particular, has defined integration very vaguely. Apartheid segregation was clearly defined in terms of race. Laws and policies to achieve this were immaculately defined and imposed. Post-apartheid integration efforts are not clearly defined in practical terms. Often, they are explained within the circles of political rhetoric. Neither are they supported by explicit laws and policies.

A very thin difference between apartheid segregation and post-apartheid integration is that the former imposed laws and policies to segregate while the latter uses soft measures and efforts to integrate. There were two different kinds of opinions on the nature of integration – one arguing that it was superficial and another that it was substantial. One interviewee referred to the government's integration efforts as 'social engineering'. Referring to the Clayfield, the same interviewee stated that integration in Clayfield is 'false integration'. He further argued that the racial changes were nothing more than just racial mixing. There were no clear signs that integration was taking place. Social institutions, infrastructure and services had done very little to integrate Indians and Africans in Clayfield.

Contrary to the views mentioned above a local school representative argued that integration was indeed taking place in his school. He mentions that his was the only school in Phoenix to have

achieved an average of 50% Indians to 50% African pupils. He also proudly stated that his school offered IsiZulu as a language option. Other interviewees also noted this perceived positive transformation. Not disregarding this seemingly positive progress towards integration, one needs to highlight some of the elements influencing these racial demographic changes in this particular school. The changes may not necessarily be translated to mean integration in Clayfield. Firstly, the majority of the learners were commuting from neighboring former black townships; Inanda, Intuzuma and KwaMashu. One of the reasons for African learners to commute to former Indian schools or any non-black schools is the standard and quality of education. The apartheid system had, for many years, subjected African learners to substandard and poor quality education system. Referred to as 'Bantu Education' at the time the system offered very narrow options in a way of subjects and career paths for African learners. Sadly, transition to democracy has not done much in radically changing the status quo. Township schools are, arguably, as bad as they used to be. As more African parents had the freedom to choose where to educate their children in the mid 1990s, they started moving their children to better schools. The better serviced former Indian, white and coloured schools are considered to be better schools than township schools. This obviously explains the huge influx of African learners to former Indian schools in this area. It is important to note that this is a phenomenon not unique to Clayfield.

Secondly, IsiZulu as a language option does not necessarily mean that Indian learners are taking it as a subject. The school representative acknowledged this fact. According to him, only IsiZulu first language speakers took IsiZulu as a language option and not Indian learners. He did highlight the challenges leading to Indian learners not considering IsiZulu as an option even though it was offered as a second language subject. Most Indian parents have a better command of Afrikaans, which is one of the language options. Therefore the learners feel that it is easy to

get language assistance from their parents when taking Afrikaans compared to when they take IsiZulu.

Furthermore, the general feeling amongst the respondents was that the quality of interaction between Indians and Africans is rather characterized and informed by individual experiences. To be precise, there are mixed views on the quality of racial interaction based on what experiences each person has with another race. Religious sectors seemed to be more optimistic about the quality of interaction. One religious leader was adamant that Indians and Africans interacted at a harmonious level with love and respect for one another within the congregation. Respondents from the education sector echoed a similar sentiment. Civil society had rather mixed feelings towards interaction. Some felt that interaction of the low quality and others felt that things were progressively getting better. The political sector highlighted that there was still hidden animosity between Indians and Africans. Indians still viewed Africans with suspicion and mistrust. More specifically, Africans were viewed as perpetrators of crime. Despite this perception, a police representative had criminal records showing that both Indians and Africans were involved in criminal activities in the area.

Infrastructure and Services

In most instances access to infrastructure and services is seen as a measure of the level of development. Arguably, one thing that separated the former black townships from white, Indian or coloured areas was the level of services and infrastructure.

Clayfield benefited from infrastructure and services investment made by the apartheid government into the non-white areas. This was mainly informed and driven by the political environment. The Indian population had an important role in the Durban City council and overall

politics of the city. It was important to keep 'them' (Indians) relatively happy. At its current state, Clayfield has relatively good infrastructure and services. There are tar roads connecting the area to surrounding areas and the city. Social infrastructure is also of a relatively good standard. In terms of basic services such as water, sanitation, and electricity, the area is well served. Having said this, many of the interviewees were concerned about the level of maintenance. One interviewee argued that although Clayfield had better basic services they were deteriorating and the level of maintenance was getting worse when compared to the 1980s. Another interviewee stated that the road infrastructure was about 30 years old and it was beginning to deteriorate. Again, maintenance seemed to be the main concern raised by the interviewees. However, comparatively the interviewees admitted that Clayfield had better services and infrastructure than the neighboring African townships.

There are no new developments taking place in the area since 1996 as far as infrastructure and service are concerned. Some of the respondents argued that the ANC government has ignored them and focused more on African townships. Other problems raised concerned the ability to pay for basic services. Many households are poor and thus unable to afford paying for their basic services such as water and electricity. Some of the interviewees argued that policies such as affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) were marginalizing Indians and benefiting Africans only. One respondent accused the ANC government of engaging in 'reverse apartheid' techniques, referring to affirmative action and BEE. These policies were seen as hindering Indians from getting any descent jobs. The interviewees further argued that Indians in Clayfield were becoming poorer and many were unemployed as opportunities were only open to Africans.

Social infrastructure was considered to be of the acceptable standards. There were complains of overcrowding in hospitals. Mahatma Gandhi Hospital is the only public hospital in the area. The influx into Gandhi hospital from the surrounding areas, such as Inanda and KwaMashu, is seen to have created a negative effect on the effectiveness of service.

Schools were considered to be sufficient. Clayfield alone has 2 high schools and two primary schools. There are more schools in the surrounding areas accessible to the Clayfield community. Clayfield does not have its own library. However, there is one in adjacent Stonebridge. The perceived challenge with this library is that it is under-resourced. As far as recreational facilities are concerned, many of the respondents thought there were not enough. Sports facilities were considered pathetic. Many considered sports to be a vehicle for integration. As a result they felt that the lack of good sport facilities had hindered integration efforts.

Crime was identified as one of the major challenges in Clayfield, and was seen to have increased recently. It is reported that this is due mainly to unemployment and drug and alcohol abuse. This perception of crime was also blamed on the existence of Transnet housing. [The significance of Transnet housing will be explained under the section on housing.] There were cases of murder, robbery, and housebreaking reported by a representative of the police. The councilor had also reported that he had been a victim of crime. A common complaint by respondents was that police response was slow. Many argued that there weren't enough police officers serving the area. There was also a general lack of police visibility in the area. There is no police station in Clayfield itself but the area is served by the Phoenix police station. The argument was that Phoenix police station was overwhelmed because the area of Phoenix is too big.

Housing

Clayfield has a variety of housing types. There are flats, detached houses, and semi-detached houses. The flats are former council flats built under apartheid regime of the Tri-cameral Parliament. Indians were eligible for housing under the House of Delegates. Many in Clayfield benefited from this government subsidy. The council flats have since been transferred to beneficiaries. Many now own their flats and only pay the levy to the Phoenix Body Corporate.

 Semi-detached houses were also part of the apartheid government subsidy given to poor Indian families. The eThekwini municipality has recently been giving beneficiaries of these semi-detached houses renovation subsidies grants. There are few detached houses. Many of these are in the Transnet Housing. According to the interviewees, the Transnet Housing was developed by Transnet around 1996 for its railway workers- the majority of whom are Africans. Consequently, there is a large African population in the Transnet housing. It is arguably this part of Clayfield which gives the impression in the census data that Clayfield is racially mixed. It is only in this area that a significant African population can be located within Clayfield. However, one respondent boldly declared that integration in Clayfield was nothing but 'false integration' or just merely mixing.

Even more interesting is the fact that Transnet residents themselves do not consider themselves to be part of Clayfield. Respondents noted that the community in Transnet housing has continuously requested their own social services amid the ones provided in the larger Clayfield area. This is seen to have isolated the Transnet housing from Clayfield and further hindered integration. One respondent argued that the residents of Transnet were able to attract attention because they formed a significant constituency for the ANC in Clayfield. One of the ANC

branches is located in the Transnet area. The community of Transnet is very active and organized politically.

Economic Development

In as far as economic development is concerned, not much has taken place. Both social and economic development have been stagnant according to respondents. Existing economic infrastructure such as retail industry, factories and so forth were all built before 1994. There was a minor mention of a temporary existence of a Sugarmill Casino details of which were unclear. However, a few respondents indicated that its departure might have impacted on unemployment in the area. On the other hand, the relatively slow development of formal industry after 1994 has lead to significant rise in informal businesses such as salons, taverns/shebeens, tuck-shops etc. Based on the respondents' data, another reason why informal businesses have thrived is the low economic status of the population and high levels of unemployment. Symbolic of low economic development is the high unemployment levels and the number of people who commute to neighboring areas for work. The majority of the working population commutes to neighboring areas such as Pinetown, CBD, Umhlanga and Mt Edgecombe Plaza. It was generally argued that the Phoenix Industrial Park does not offer significant job opportunities for the people in the area. Exponential levels of unemployment and lack of skills are significant contributors to perpetuated poverty in the area. Some also argued that this has contributed to the increase in crime and the use of drugs.

Conclusion

Until the repeal of the Group Areas Act, Clayfield was designated for Indian occupation. Despite the changes that have taken place since transition, there are no visible or rather tangible

integration patterns that have emerged. As argued earlier, the Transnet Housing is the only element of Clayfield that might suggest that any form of integration has occurred. That will also highly depend on the definition of integration. A couple of interviews did suggest that integration has not occurred in any significant proportion. Interactions between Indians and Africans have indeed taken place but one will be very skeptical to term this integration. Even mixing has, it can be argued, not significantly taken place, notably within schools.

References:

http://www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/ad3_2006/habib.pdf

Photos of Clayfield