Integration and Transformation of Post-Apartheid South African City Fabric

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1 ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on attempts to reconfigure spaces in post-apartheid South African cities. The fusion of modernist planning ideologies with racial elaborations during the apartheid era up until the end of apartheid in the early 1990s in the planning of South African cities left them with dysfunctional and segregated spaces. Apartheid cities became synonymous to urban decay, low densities and spatial segregation of different racial groups and land uses with residential areas of poor city residents located at the urban periphery away from socio-economic opportunities. With the advent of democracy in South Africa there have been many serious minded attempts to reorganise and redefine spaces in post-apartheid South African cities with the aim of promoting regeneration, high densities, mixed land uses, spatial integration and hybridity. However, more than 15 years down the line since the inception of such initiatives, spatial segregation and dsyfunctionality still hounds South African cities. This paper critically analyses various initiatives aimed at reconfiguring spaces in the South African city of Durban with the aim of showing the forces and factors that promote the transformation of South African cities. A historical analysis of the city of Durban from colonial times to present is adopted to show how the present spaces of the cities in South Africa gradually evolved. The paper further presents the current approaches/methodologies in transforming the South African city including challenges and the impact of the various city projects.

2 INTRODUCTION

Modernist planning and apartheid segregationist ideologies left the city of Durban highly fragmented along racial lines with residential areas of the poor mainly blacks as in the case of Umlazi, Inanda and KwaMhashu townships situated in locations with limited socio-economic opportunities in their close vicinity. Furthermore, after the demise of apartheid segregationist legislation the inner city of Durban faced the problem of degeneration due to rapid inward migration of mainly poor people from rural areas and the simultaneous flight of the white middle class and most commercial services to sub-urban locations. In order to foster the integration and transformation of the Durban city fabric since the dawn of the democratic dispensation in 1994, the Durban Municipality embarked on a number of projects focusing on inner city neighborhood revitalisation projects, inner city redevelopment, creation of new mixed nodes for integration on buffer zones that separated different races during the apartheid era and the upgrading of town centres in townships with limited social and economic facilities. The paper critically evaluates the Umlazi Township Town centre upgrading project, the Bridge City project a new mixed node for integration located on a buffer zone that separated the four main races African, Indian, Coloured and Whites during the apartheid era, Florida Road Heritage Precinct project an inner city neighborhood revitalisation project and finally the Durban Point Water Front redevelopment project which is an inner city redevelopment project. The paper uses the above projects to demonstrate the extent of transformation and integration in the post-apartheid democratic South African city with an aim of providing a critique of factors of built environment constrain and opportunity for integration in the planning and making of cities for all.

2.1 Integration and Transformation: The South African city context

Cities in South Africa have been shaped by a variety of historical and economic factors, but the most significant factor was the arrival of modern planning and architecture from Europe and the United States of America as early as 1925. This was applied in the service of the apartheid state and as a means to implement segregationist legislation mainly the Group Areas Act (Murray, 2007). The Act clearly spelt out that South Africans of different racial groups as indicated by the Population Registry Act of 1950 (Whites, Blacks, Indians and Coloureds) were supposed to live in different neighbourhoods. Whilst a loose, zonally-organised pattern of segregation prevailed in most South Africa cities by 1950, what emerged after the application of the Act was 'a city more structured and quartered than anything which had preceded it (Davies, 1976, cited in Turok, 1994). As such apartheid plan¬ners created the racialised grids of the apartheid city as black and coloured city residents were removed from the multiracial working-class inner-city neighborhoods as in the

case of District Six in Cape Town and Cato Manor in Durban in the 1960s, and relocated to the outlying areas as Manenberg and Gugulethu in Cape Town and Umlazi in Durban respectively (Robins, 2007).

In the light of the aforementioned problems of the apartheid city, since the advent of democracy in South Africa, in 1994, concerted efforts were made to promote the integration and transformation of the apartheid city fabric. Integration acknowledges the existence of ethnic/racial diversity and ensures the rights of individuals to retain their cultures hand in hand with enjoying full access to, participation in and adherence to constitutional principles and commonly shared values prevailing in a society (Inglis 1996: 16 cited in Dijkstra et al 2001). Therefore integration in the context of South Africa acknowledges the existence and constitutional rights of mainly four racial groups Blacks, Indians, Coloureds and Whites on which the spatial hierarchy of urban areas in the pre-democratic era was based (urban African townships, located in peripheral areas far from the core, core and suburban areas composed nearly entirely of whites or Indians; and core, primarily white communities) (Schensul, 2008). As such transformation of the post-apartheid city encompasses the vision of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic spatial order where different forms of geographic space, socialized through a specific configuration of social relations/experiences of work, residence, recreation and cultural heritage, amongst others, are readily accessible to most citizens (Williams, 2000).

Notable pieces of legislation introduced by the government in a bid to support the transformation of South African cities include the Development Facilitation Act (1995) and the Local Government Transition Act Second Amendment (1996) which came into the arena, overhauling the South African planning legislative framework forcing all councils to draw up plans that amongst others promote sustainable integrated settlements, higher densities and mixed use of land. The other main policy that was put in place is the Breaking New Ground (BNG) of 2004 whose aim is also "to promote the achievement of a non-racial, integrated society through the development of sustainable human settlements and quality housing" (Dept. of Housing 2008: 4).

2.2 Integration and Transformation of the Durban City fabric

The city of Durban is located on the east coast of the South Africa's Province of KwaZulu-Natal covering an area of 2 300km2. The city is a microcosm of the typical former and post-apartheid cities of South Africa. At the height of formal apartheid in the mid-1980s, the majority of the city was composed of three types of areas: urban African townships, located in peripheral areas far from the core, where 75% of the Africans in Durban lived, core and suburban areas composed nearly exclusively of whites or Indians; and core, primarily white communities (Schensul, 2008). Most notable projects to transform space post-apartheid in the city of Durban to date include the Florida Road Heritage Precinct project an inner city neighborhood revitalisation project, the Durban Point Water Front redevelopment project which is an inner city redevelopment project, the Bridge City project a new mixed node for integration located on a buffer zone that separated the three main races, blacks and whites during the apartheid era and the Umlazi Town centre upgrading project a township town centre upgrading project.

Figure 1: KwaMnyandu node Site Location, Figure 2: Concept Plan- Source BKS consortium

2.2.1 Umlazi Town Centre Upgrading Project

The township of Umlazi is located on southern periphery of the city of Durban. It was established in 1950 during the previous apartheid regime as a commuter township supplying labour to the city's industrial area. In a bid to stimulate development in one of the socio-economically depressed city's townships the municipality of Durban in 2009 commissioned Ambro Afrique Consultants, Walkersmith Consultants and

BKS consultants to come up with an Urban Development Framework Plan (UDFP) to provide an integrated urban design vision for the development of KwaMnyandu node shown on Figure 1 below in Umlazi Township.

The consultants came up with a proposal shown on Figure 2 for the design precinct that were structured on two spines, aiming to integrate, upgrade, and enhance the use and sustainability of the existing sport, recreational and public facilities through the establishment of a development node that is centred on the stadium and proposed adjacent multi-modal transportation hub which incorporates the KwaMnyandu Station and a new taxi rank. The principles that were adopted were aimed at fostering the mixed use of social facilities amenities, and commercial, office and higher density residential land uses. These uses were structured around an integrated network of pedestrian oriented public spaces comprising approximately landscaped boulevards, concourses and squares. The design proposal for the area was based on a phased development of the area which could be developed by the public or private sector as separate projects, or together in partnerships. Finally, as the success and sustainability of the proposed node will be dependant on the future maintenance and management of the public spaces created, it was recommended that consideration be given to establishing a dedicated precinct management structure.

2.2.2 Bridge city

The Bridge City project was initiated to directly address the issue of buffer zones that physically separated residential areas of different races leaving them with poor access to socio-economic facilities under apartheid spatial planning in South African cities. The Bridge City uses the buffer zone to develop a new town centre for integraqtion. It is located 17 kilometeres in the North West of the Durban city centre connecting the townships of Phoenix (predominantly an Indian residential area during apartheid) and Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMhashu (INK)(mainly black residences during apartheid) Figure 3. The municipality of Durban also noted that it will be a catalyst for economic growth and the empowerment of surrounding communities by improving their access to public transport and opportunities to work, travel, shop and do business within the INK area, via a symbiotic relationship between the public and private sectors. Thus foster the integration of the divided spatial form and creating mixed use residential area for use races.

Figure: 3 Bride City Concept-Source: Nortje, 2009

The left over space used in the apartheid planning ideology to separate population groups, gave rise to an opportunity in democratic South Africa to transform cities by integration and linkage of spaces into a comprehensive whole. The Bridge city project set a good example of how a place of negative connotation can be transformed positively through urban project intervention.

2.2.3 Florida Road

Florida Road is situated in Windermere, a suburb in Durban and it acts as a minor collector characterised by a number of residential and commercial land-uses. The case of Florida Road area is different from that of Umlazi Town Centre upgrading, Bridge City, and the Durban inner city in that it was identified during the Durban municipality's Urban Core Extension Project as an area possessing special historical, architectural and townscape qualities. As such, the project designated Florida Road as an Architectural Heritage Precinct that requires special development and management intervention (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009). This consequently led to the inception of the Florida Road Precinct Project a partnership between the city of Durban Municipality and the private sector property developers whose aim was to define the special character of the area through the conservation the physical fabric and artifacts contained within the precinct.

Figure 4: Street character, Figure 5: Street Texture, Figure 6: Mixed use development

With positive and strategic objectives the Florida Road has become one of the good examples of revitalisation and gentrification of old precincts/neighborhood that have been transformed into the integrated whole in Durban city. The blending of the old and the new architecture, space and people has given a new meaning with a well articulated aesthetics quality in place making for a multicultural society to create a livable space (Figure 4, 5 and 6). The open public space that was once used by one population group based on the apartheid planning ideology has also been transformed to function as a multi-racial social space.

2.2.4 Durban City Centre and Waterfront

The city centre of Durban's revitalisation initiatives were linked to the Durban Point area, the city centre's waterfront edge, a narrow split of land with a harbor on one side and protected beaches on the other. The Point area redevelopment, and the importance of the Port of Durban in the total economic strategy, was recognised as key in the regeneration of the Durban city centre because of the linkages between the Durban Point area and the rest of the city of Durban.

Figure 7: Point Waterfront Revitalisation Revitalisation Master Plan- Source: Peters (2008), Figure 8: Point new development built environment

To realize the revitalisation of the Durban Point area and city centre the following design principles were adopted (Figure, 7 and Figure 8); an urban intensity of scale and an urbane character of development, a structure based on canals, water bodies, boulevards, vistas, urban squares, avenues, lanes and parks, all creating memorable places and an emphasis on mixed-use developments which encourages the integration of retail, commercial, office, entertainment and residential activities including safe, quality pedestrian movement spaces, and clean attractive and secure environment. But, regardless of all this, development integration has not been achieved by the revitalization of the Point area. The water canal next to the Indian Ocean is not really necessary as it increases the cost of the development, thus excludes most of the inhabitants of Durban who are in the low income bracket. A well positioned large pedestrian movement and square with hard and soft landscape would have created a more integrated urban character. Thus accordingly the key criticism of this project is of target group of rich affluent people which excludes the rest of the population. This is because prime land of estate is converted to expensive water use that requires high maintenance. Thus hybrid African cities concept has not been realized because of the exclusion of the poor and the determinist nature of the property markets and competitiveness of the city using grand architecture.

3 CONCLUSION

The various projects demonstrate their intention in transforming the apartheid city with specific focus of intervention. There is a level of success in creating new places and architecture, such as the Florida Road, in creating a vibrant urban space of integrating people, place and accommodating old and new architectural character. Through conservation to give an identity of unique space, on the other hand the point water front strives to achieve the same but failed to include all population groups due to the nature of the development

concept that is based on water and property market development. The South African city strives to be renewed and communities transformed to present a democratic space for development within a new political ideology.

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