Chapter 52

Reintegrating the Apartheid City? Urban Policy and Urban Restructuring in Durban

Alison Todes

Introduction

Current South African urban policy is founded on intentions to reintegrate cities, and to move toward more compact urban forms. Visions akin to the urbanist ideals of Jane Jacobs (1961) offering opportunities for higher-density living, proximity between home and work, land use mix, and social integration are prevalent. These city visions emerged as part of planners' critique of apartheid and their alternative of more developmental forms of planning (for example, Dewar and Uytenbogaardt 1991; Hindson et al. 1993). They appeared to accord with both resistance to urban apartheid and to the less divided urban forms which emerged as it broke down. Accepted within the inclusive forum processes which characterized the transitional period (Turok 1994; Watson 1998), and endorsed by neoliberal technocratic bodies such as the Urban Foundation (1990) and World Bank (1991), these ideas soon became a dominant discourse, and were embodied in legislation by the new government.

The compact integrated city ideal has however increasingly been questioned, as has been the case internationally. J. Robinson (1992, 1998) critiqued its technocratic discourse, suggesting that it could become another oppressive form of urban ordering – a physicalist metanarrative imposing a singular moral view of the good city. Further, the oppositional binaries contained within its narrative of the city limit perceptions of the diverse interactions across the city, and the way disconnections might, for example, have enabled economic activity in peripheral areas (J. Robinson 1998; see also Mabin 1998). Others have questioned its modernist assumptions that urban change can be controlled by policy (Simone 1998), and its prospects in a postmodern world where cities everywhere are increasingly characterized by division, fragmentation, and sprawl (Mabin 1995).

Rather than compaction or integration, empirical research on South African cities – focused mainly on Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city – suggests that new spatial divides are emerging along lines similar to patterns internationally (Mabin 1995; Murphy 1997; Beavon 1997; Tomlinson 1998). Compaction-integration appears to offer little to the urban poor on the periphery of the city (Tomlinson 1997).

The significance of compaction-integration is also being displaced politically at national level by a broader emphasis on developmental local government (Parnell and Pieterse 1998), and by a pragmatic politics focused on delivery and a reorientation to the market. A negotiated settlement may have played a role in the shift towards neoliberalism, but global markets provide a sharp discipline. Discourses of "competitive cities" are becoming increasingly common in the light of economic stagnation, growing unemployment, and South Africa's marginalization within current rounds of global economic restructuring. As Mabin (1998: 13) puts it, "there is wide agreement [among political parties] that urban policy should make cities safe for capitalism."

This chapter explores the prospects for compaction-integration against an analysis of current spatial restructuring in Durban, a city of three million people. I examine changing locational trends of residences, retail, and offices, considering the role of planning, and the extent to which new forms of planning are likely to achieve greater integration.

Durban is a city on South Africa's eastern seaboard. A branch plant manufacturing, port, commercial, and tourist city, it grew rapidly under import substitution policies from the boom years of the 1960s. Its position in the 1990s as South Africa opens to the global economy has been less secure: labour-intensive industries such as clothing have contracted substantially (Harrison 1998), while more capital-intensive industries have shed jobs through restructuring and repositioning (Valodia 1998). Durban's tourism position is also weakening as it is bypassed by international tourists, and as its traditional White middle-class market seeks seemingly safer and more varied experiences. These shifts, and the influence of a local growth coalition, underpinned an early emphasis on local economic development, largely focused on major projects, Durban's image and tourist roles (Freund 1998). Influenced by arguments that Durban could become one of South Africa's most internationally competitive cities (Centre for Development and Enterprise, CDE, 1996), economic regeneration and repositioning Durban as a "world class" city, is displacing the importance granted to spatial restructuring within planning agendas (Dominic 1998). Although strategies for economic regeneration include small firms, informal economic activities, and development within old township and informal areas, a greater "realism" is emerging, weakening support for forms of compaction-integration which contradict the market.

Housing and Urban Integration

In the late apartheid years, Durban's spatial form began to change, as rapid urbanization and weakening apartheid controls led to a massive growth of informal settlements on the periphery. Violence, overcrowding, and growing class differentiation also underpinned "decompression" into new middle-class housing areas and informal settlements within and on the edges of old African township areas (Morris and Hindson 1997). A few informal settlements emerged within central city areas as political instability undermined controls on settlement (Hindson et al. 1994). By 1994, informal settlements accounted for about a third of the Durban's population, but less than 4 percent were in central areas (Urban Strategy 1995).

Some of these settlements have densified, and a few land invasions have occurred since the 1994 elections, but a commitment by all levels of government to prevent land invasions has limited new growth. Urban growth has slowed (Urban Strategy 1995) as the economy stagnated (Cross 1996). Peripheral locales, such as unserviced tribal areas, defined beyond city limits in a recent (contested) demarcation, appear to provide important sites for households surviving through complex urban–rural linkages and marginal local employment (Cross et al. 1996).

Housing subsidies based on a capital grant to low-income households, and an initial application-based allocation system have largely reinforced apartheid patterns (Makhatini and Bedford 1998). Projects offering 73,300 housing opportunities had been approved by mid-1998, but most were in peripheral areas, reflecting the preexisting momentum of development, and the weight of informal settlement upgrading.

While the newly created Metropolitan Housing Service Unit is committed to restructuring the city along compact-integrated city lines, and has devised a number of innovative approaches to housing development, it is constrained by land cost and availability, competing claims to land, and resistance by adjacent communities. Vacant land is rarely "empty." Some 60 percent of housing development is likely to occur through informal settlement upgrading (Bedford 1998), following years of antiremovals struggles, and a recognition of the significance of people's investments in housing and social networks.

Centrally located informal settlements are a potential focus, and some projects have been developed, but they are often complicated by land ownership questions, and by the need to negotiate developments with adjacent – usually higher income – communities. Conflicts occur, for example, over service levels, impacts on property values, crime levels, race and culture. Although there is officially commitment to compaction policy by councillors, in practice the focus is on delivery, and constituency politics prevails, weakening the support for complex projects in central areas.

While Durban councils have largely avoided confrontations with high-income communities and landowners over the location of new low-cost housing – once an initial enthusiasm for more extensive redistribution was curbed by "economic realism" – some new developments defy an older race and class geography. Developments include those aimed at accommodating informal traders in the city center, Cato Manor, and infill on old buffer strips separating races. Justified by authorities in terms of antiapartheid discourses, such projects are usually contested along the lines suggested above. Claims by adjacent communities to housing developed in infill projects is a further source of contestation (Baskin 1998; Byerley 1998; Smit and Charlton 1998).

The case of Cato Manor, the largest and perhaps most important integrative project symbolically, exemplifies many of the tensions associated with policy directed attempts at urban integration and the challenges to planning imaginaries. Cato Manor is an area of 2,000 ha (900 developable), 7 km from the city center (P. Robinson 1994). It has "the most complex history of settlement . . . of any area in the city. It has been fiercely and often violently contested" (Edwards 1994: 415). The site of mass forced removals in the 1950s and 1960s, it remained largely vacant for decades, but land invasions began in the early 1990s. Emerging from a widely inclusive development forum, the Cato Manor Development Association (CMDA),
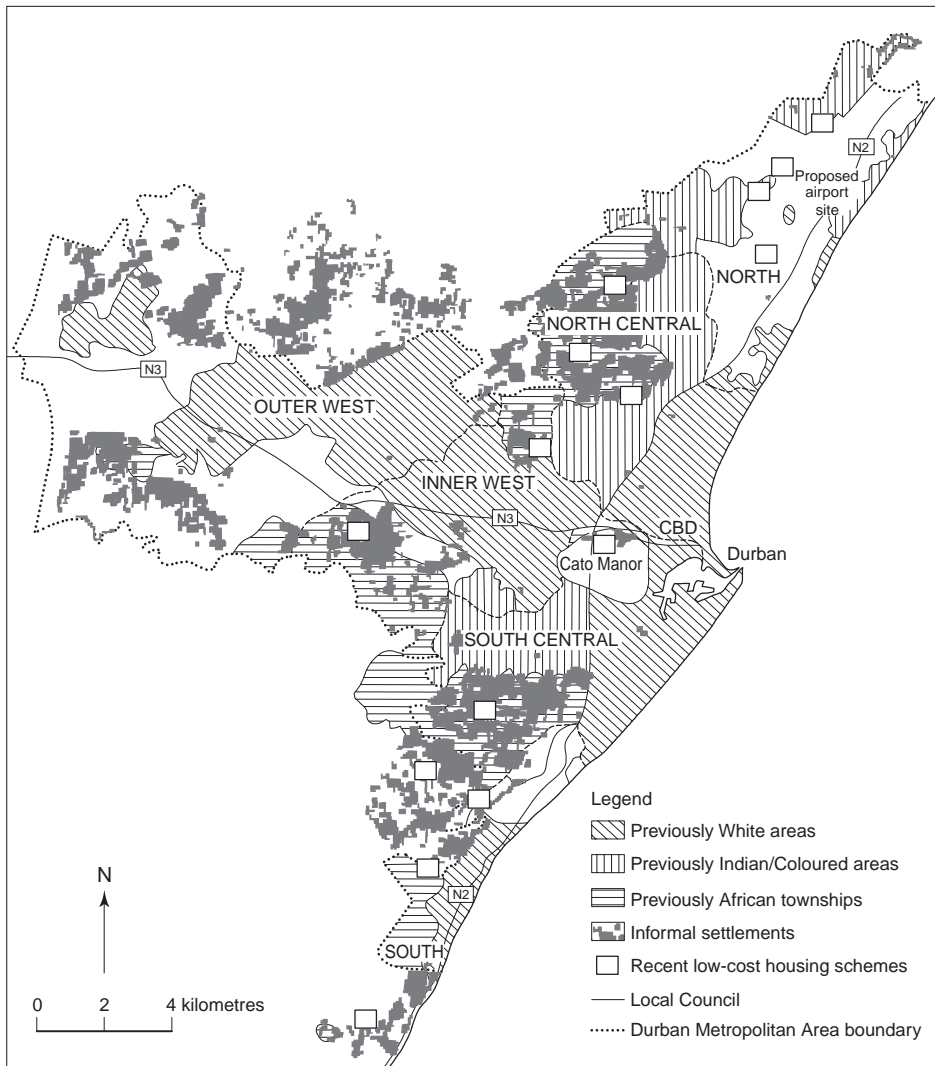
Figure 52.1   A reintegrating city? Racial zoning in Durban under apartheid, and recent developments

was created in 1993 to develop the area for around 170,000 mainly low-income people along compact-integrated city lines. By the end of 1998, some 2,000 sites had been developed, and another 8,000 were underway (CMDA 1998).

Despite its broad-based beginnings, its recognition as a Presidential Lead Project, its leadership by respected anti-apartheid planners, and international support, the project has been highly contested, slowing the achievement of objectives, and consuming considerable resources. Land invasions (Kahn and Maharaj 1998), unstable and weak leadership structures within informal communities, as well as crime and violence, have all impeded development (Foster 1998).

Figure 52.2 Centrally located informal settlements in Cato Manor, and, adjacent, higher-income areas (© Tony Smith Photography)

Further, conflict over site size – perhaps the most visible (and disliked) way in which compact city ideas are implemented – has cast planners within repressive roles. There are pressures to make proximate location available to more people through the formal system, but communities resist small sites on cultural grounds. Yet informal land markets and subletting result in far higher densities than those proposed, and high informal rents, posing questions as to whether the area can be maintained for low-income groups over the longer term (Foster 1998).

Development in Cato Manor has also been contested by competing claims to land by past victims of forced removals. Processes for land restitution – which involve lengthy validation of historical claims – only began once planning was well under-way. CMDA applied to have claims dealt with in other ways, but 400 of the potential 3,000 claimants demanded restitution and a lengthy court case ensued. Claimants appealed to historical identity and to ties to place. In the words of Agrippa Cebekhulu, "My roots are in Cato Manor. Any other place is not a home, but just a house" (cited in *The Mercury*, January 30, 1997). Planners were accused of insensitivity to history, echoing critiques of traditional planning. The outcome of the

Figure 52.3 The Cato Manor Development Project: one of the few opportunities for urban integration (© Tony Smith Photography)

court case was a mediation process, involving case-specific assessment by a panel, returning land where possible in terms of the development.

Other challenges to the form of development have come from the adjacent Greater Manor Gardens Residents Association (GMGRA), in terms of its "constitutional rights to protect and maintain property values, quality of life and safety and security" (GMGRA 1997). In the early years, an emphasis on extensive participatory processes, CMDA's weak institutional position and uncertain political support, as well as the presence of GMGRA on the CMDA Board, forced it to engage in extensive appeasement of local interests (Foster 1998). GMGRA's objections have more recently been marginalized by CMDA's incorporation into the municipality, greater representation of informal communities, and the growing focus on delivery in national development discourse.

A limited form of densification is underway, facilitated by revisions of Durban's town planning schemes (providing for control of physical development through zoning) in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, the old logic of limiting densities through fairly low maximum limits remains. Still, densities are far lower than allowed in central areas, and apart from small high-income developments, the pressure is rather to convert to higher-yielding business uses.

Walled housing complexes – developed in response to land costs and security concerns, as in other increasingly unequal societies (Soja 1997) – are becoming common. While higher-income complexes frequently extend the divided and

sprawling city (perhaps densifying the edges), those at the lower end may represent a form of integration. There is considerable demand for well-located housing at the lower end of the private formal market, but banks, fearing nonpayment and abandonment, are unwilling to loan money to African people in sectional title developments – a problem also affecting multistory public housing developments (Supersad 1998). Mechanisms are being developed to respond to these issues at national level, however.

Where developments of planned housing complexes involve rezoning, and there is space for adjacent communities to object or appeal against favorable decisions, they are often resisted in terms of older planning discourses of amenity and property values. A fear of "others" is often an underlying theme. Although resistance does not necessarily stop developments, it slows them, reducing their viability. The shift to democratically elected local councillors is resulting in greater support for densification than before, but older Garden City visions and planning discourses are still influential within appeals bodies.

A Decentering City

A level of deracialization along class lines is occurring through the housing market (Saff 1994), but patterns of race separation largely remain. Older apartheid orders have broken down more substantially in the inner city. From the late 1980s, the racial composition of residential areas changed markedly (Maharaj and Mpungose 1994), albeit less extensively than in Johannesburg (Crankshaw and White 1995; Morris 1997), and informal economic activity grew rapidly. Council response in recent years has been facilitative, providing infrastructure to accommodate informal trade and housing, but there is also a greater emphasis on control as Council attempts to manage competing images of the city.

Perceptions of "crime and grime," of growing disorder, in part underpin a process of decentralization from the Central Business District (CBD), but some of this movement has been occurring for a much longer time, and resembles patterns internationally. Suburban shopping centers have grown rapidly since the 1970s, facilitated, inter alia, by growing automobile usage, extensive highways, and a relatively laissez-faire planning approach, concerned largely with local impacts and evidence of demand. By 1998, there were 18 centers of over 10,000 m outside the CBD (JHI, Property Services 1998) – largely in previously White suburbs, but recently also in old Indian areas, as incomes rose. Major regional centers have developed in the 1990s. Apart from some failed developments in the 1980s, such centers have avoided old African township and informal areas. Incomes and thresholds are seen as too low, and levels of crime and violence too threatening (Harrison et al. 1997). Instead, large wholesalers locate on the edges, servicing convenience needs provided by small township spaza shops (run from home) (Watkinson 1998), and shopping remains centered on the CBD. The CBD has reoriented to the large Black consumer market, dependent on public transport, for whom it remains the most central location – despite distances to residential areas. It is an exceptionally vibrant market, despite images of decline and degradation.

Offices have begun to move to suburban locations, but the shift is not as strong as in Johannesburg (see Rogerson 1997; Murphy 1997). Durban's business has

historically been far more CBD focused, with as much as 85 percent of A and B grade space located there as late as 1990. Vacancy rates increased from 2 to 11 percent between 1990 and 1998 (SAPOA 1990, 1998), but 76 percent of such space remains concentrated there.

Decentralization began in the 1970s as largely small professional offices moved to the suburbs close to the CBD. It was resisted by planning authorities, attempting to protect both the CBD and residential "amenity," but some development was allowed around shopping centers and in deteriorating areas. This approach has been extended by current councillors, fearing loss of well-located, relatively affordable housing. In the 1990s, new waves of decentralization are occurring, as corporate head and regional offices move, and new office parks in suburban locations are developed far from townships and informal areas (apart from Cato Manor). Decentralized locations now account for 41 percent of A grade space, including developments presently underway (SAPOA 1998).

The growth of decentralized office parks follows trends internationally, but was also made possible by planning decisions under the past fragmented system of local government, and by provincial oversight based on market demand and local impact. Competing interests between areas have continued with consolidation of local government into six structures and a metropolitan authority, making it impossible for the Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework to take up issues such as the metropolitanwide distribution of commercial and office development.

Something like an "edge city" (Freund 1998) is developing in the North Local Council (NLC), but as Freestone and Murphy (1998) argue for the case of Sydney, its underlying dynamics and form are quite particular. Development is driven by Durban's major private landholder, Tongaat Hulett, which has huge tracts of land under sugar cane. It has been facilitated by past residential growth in the area, an underused highway, lower land costs, perceptions of CBD decline and insecurity, and growing demand for small owner-occupied office buildings expressing a strong company image. Such developments are intended to be coupled with a new regional shopping center, major entertainment complexes, golf estates, further high-income residences, and a new airport. The development of the NLC as a separated high-income world is presented in language of competitive cities, offering Durban a space to attract and appeal to Gauteng and foreign-based capital.

The recent Integrated Development Plan for the area also preserves this image. The area comprises a number of racially based small towns and settlements, all at some distance from one another. For nearly a decade now, Tongaat Hulett has proposed a plan based on dual corridors: a high-income corridor including its major developments along the coast, and another corridor comprising the old Indian towns and African townships, industrial development, and related economic activities. The spatial framework developed by the IDP does not depart very far from this idea, although Tongaat Hulett's own direct influence on the process appears to have been relatively confined, and a very extensive participatory process centered on stakeholders occurred. Participants for example agreed that no low-cost housing development should occur east of the highway where new developments are occurring (Williamson 1998), although two informal settlements may be upgraded. A rates shortage and lower representation of Africans in the area might have influenced decision making, but the extended spatial fragmentation of the area means

that communities largely consider development priorities and needs within their own areas, and development where they are, rather than the potential for more abstract restructuring. Similar dynamics occur in other areas, perhaps in a less exaggerated way.

Nevertheless, a number of developments in the North have been slowed or thrown off-course by the politics around major projects, or by stagnant economic growth. The NLC's right to position itself as Durban's "jewel," monopolizing developments, is also being challenged by elements of the Metropolitan Council.

Durban remains far more centralized than Johannesburg. Durban's position as a branch plant economy, and smaller impact of buyout by international firms are probably important (see Goga, forthcoming). Informalization and disorder have been far more contained, and location remains a significant factor for firms in the CBD, particularly those linked to the port (Day 1998). Decentralization has also been limited by recessionary conditions and a shift away from property investments by major institutions as opportunities to invest in international markets opened up (Rode 1998). A plummeting rand and sharply rising interest rates, as the Asian crisis spilled over into South Africa, has exacerbated conditions. Investment in property development has been uneven, however: since the mid-1990s, investment in Durban declined relative to Gauteng and particularly Cape Town (Davies 1998), as the latter successfully positioned itself in the changing global and national environment.

Planning and Transformation

Current planning is attempting to integrate development spatially and sectorally through the mechanism of integrated development plans. A spatial development framework, embodying compaction-integration, and the use of development corridors and nodes to focus development, is being formulated. Concepts resemble those in other cities (see Watson 1998).

Although participatory processes have been extensive, it is not guaranteed that the ideas embodied in the plans are widely shared or commonly understood, as Watson (1998) shows for Cape Town. Concerns raised in the context of participatory processes are not always ones to which local government can respond (such as gangsterism, rape, child abuse), nor do demands necessarily take a strongly spatial form (Moonsammy 1998; Centre for Community and Labour Studies, CCLS 1998). Planning has been accorded the role of synthesizing local demands, and of reworking them into spatial form, giving planners the power to reinterpret them in ways which accord with current discourses (see also Watson 1998; Oosthuizen and van Huyssteen 1998). Such discourses can become dominating in this context, as Healey (1997) suggests, particularly given limited capacity within communities (CCLS 1998). Planning at the metropolitan scale is rather abstract, and political participation in the process has been weak. While formal commitment to the plan exists, in practice, a constituency politics – a politics of investment in "our areas" – remains.

Despite the grand ideals of the postapartheid reconstructionists, development regulation through the town planning schemes still embodies traditional discourses, which often jar with the new ideas. While the older discourses emphasize the role of planning in maintaining areas as they were – a sense of stasis – the new approaches

emphasize fluidity and change, and would actively encourage change in many existing areas. The parameters and meanings of compaction-integration, and how they relate to older discourses, are not well developed at the level of regulation. While town planning schemes are to be reconsidered, older discourses of at least property values and amenity are still likely to be played out through the planning process at local level.

The repositioning of the city as "world class" is also likely to limit the achievement of the ideals of compaction-integration. In the face of the reality of continued disjunctures and inequalities, the language of compaction-integration is itself diffusing, and is at times being used in ways which perpetuate – or at least accept – apartheid divisions. In the NLC plan for example, the language of compaction-integration is used to mean concentration of development around existing centers, or along new corridors, but these remain divided, as the discussion above suggests. In other contexts, it is used to mean development outwards from townships and informal areas towards centers of economic activity, rather than in opposite directions; increasing densities within or on the edges of existing townships, perhaps along main routes, rather than well beyond city limits.

In some contexts as well, concepts of corridors and nodes become simulacra as suggested by Oosthuizen and Van Huyssteen (1998), promising but not delivering development. Corridors and nodes, together with the 1 km radius which surrounds them, cover some 40 percent of the city. These might help to focus bulk service development, influence the location of new low-cost housing and focus public transport, but there is also a promise that local economic activity, closer to homes, will be generated. Nodes and corridors in some areas incorporate office and retail developments, but they also run through townships and informal areas, as integrative elements. Understood in a weak way, there is some potential for these ideas to provide focal points for both informal and formal economic activities, which were in part undermined by poor spatial organization in the past (Harrison et al. 1997). Current planning focuses on the development of nodes which concentrate public investments (such as clinics, police stations, libraries) at interceptory locations, in order to provide thresholds for other economic activities. Some successes have been achieved, but there are immediate constraints as a consequence of a shortage of developable land (since much open land has been informally settled, or due to the complexity of ownership) and the chaotic administration and dysfunctional servicing which was inherited from the past (Moonsammy 1998).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the limits of compact-integrated city ideas in the face of resistance to change and the emergence of new spatial disjunctures. The shift away from spatial restructuring toward competitive cities, the turn to pragmatism, and constituency politics all combine to weaken the prospects for the newer ideas. Nevertheless, there are important achievements and there has been a significant switch of resources to previously deprived areas such as townships and informal settlements. The more limited elements of compaction-integration are perhaps more plausible than grandiose urban reconstruction, which has rarely been implemented on the scale intended (Mabin and Smit 1997).

Nor is it clear that the vision of compaction-integration is much more than a planning ideal, a particular narrative of people's disadvantages in and experiences of the city. Yet despite its limitations, it is still useful in opening up a wider variety of spaces and opportunities. Further, it helps to avoid gross peripheralization of the urban poor, and to bring questions of accessibility to the fore. In addition, it focuses attention on the need to reconstruct township and informal areas, and does in part weaken old divides. Cities are of course dynamic, and processes of change opened up by current planning could be more significant than is immediately apparent.

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