



Living the urban periphery: understanding investment, infrastructure and economic change in northern eThekweni Municipality, South Africa



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INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH PROJECT: In 2016, a group of researchers, five from the University of Sheffield and two from the University of the Witwatersrand, began a research project in a group of areas in the northern part of eThekweni Municipality, including the communities of Hammonds Farm, Waterloo, Coniston, Verulam and Canelands. The researchers were interested in finding out about how changes (especially relating to infrastructure) in areas on the peripheries of African cities occurs, who makes changes and how, and, most importantly, how it is experienced by residents in the communities on the periphery of cities. The researchers focused on a few different types of infrastructure so the study includes examples of investment in housing, roads, transport, basic services, and investment in industrial areas. The researchers wanted to test the idea that infrastructure investment in the urban periphery can improve the quality of daily life for the communities where new infrastructure has been put in place. The research in the north of eThekweni Municipality was part of a much larger project which includes research on seven different areas in three city-regions in Africa. There are three cases in Gauteng – Lufhereng near Soweto in Johannesburg, as well as Winterveld and Ekangala in Tshwane. In Durban, the research was also undertaken in the areas of Molweni and Crestholme. Two case studies in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, were researched in the areas of Tulu Dimtu and Yeka Abado. The researchers hope to under-

stand each of these places in detail and compare them to each other to increase our knowledge of how infrastructure changes affect poverty reduction and how people living in these areas experience these changes. The researchers worked in northern eThekweni Municipality from June 2016 to December 2016. During this time, they spoke to 47 men and women in the community who also wrote diaries about their daily life for a two-week period and took photographs showing living conditions, services and experiences of their neighbourhood. The researchers also spoke to two community leaders and six professionals involved in planning and urban development to gather further information. A survey of 200 residents was also carried out in this area. This pamphlet summarises the findings of the research for the residents and local government of northern eThekweni. The information provided is based on information we gathered from residents of Waterloo, Hammonds Farm and Verulam as well as two informal settlements, Coniston and Canelands.

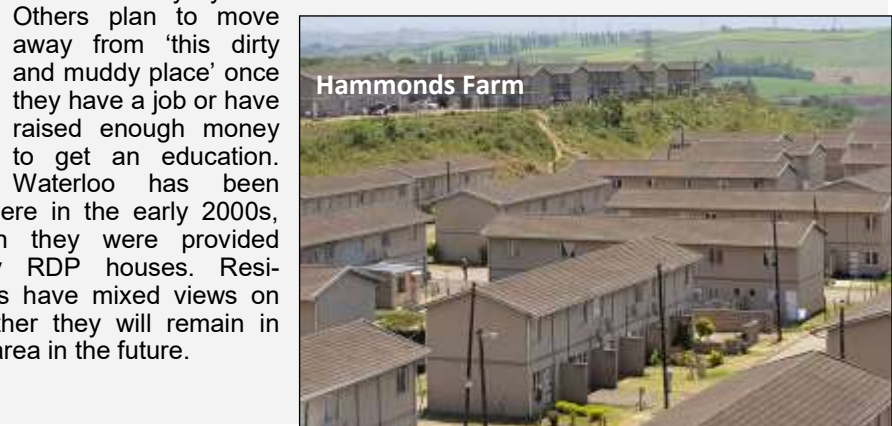


Waterloo

RESIDENCE IN THE AREA: Most of the residents of Hammonds Farm moved from informal housing to live in the housing provided by the government. Most people have lived in Hammonds Farm for approximately four years. Although many residents are very happy with their new housing, many also said they'd like to live somewhere quieter and more rural in the future as its better for raising children. Residents in Coniston and Canelands have lived in the informal settlements for different periods of time, often between 4-10 years. Mostly, residents chose to move to the settlement because they were looking for work, because it was less expensive than in other places, to escape family conflicts, and to live in a place with a good connection to shops and businesses nearby and the rest of the city. They also have dreams of living elsewhere in the city or of going back to their original homes in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal or the Eastern Cape. Some are waiting for an RDP house but they have been registered on the list for many years.



Coniston



Hammonds Farm

Waterloo has been occupied much longer with many moving there in the early 2000s, when they were provided early RDP houses. Residents have mixed views on whether they will remain in the area in the future.

We have been dumped in an empty hole to fend for ourselves in difficult moments (♂ resident).

HOUSING: Residents have experienced positive and negative changes in their living space. Most people in Hammonds Farm have moved there because they were allocated housing developed by the government for disadvantaged communities. Residents are proud of their homes and believe that they a big improvement to their previous homes, especially if they had lived in an informal house. Water, toilets and electricity as well as having a secure structure and a dry home are the most positive changes for residents. Parts of Hammonds Farm are compared by residents to housing in the affluent residential and

commercial town, Umhlanga Rocks, “because I have everything” (♀ resident). However, some feel that their houses are too small to accommodate larger families. The two storey design is difficult for residents with mobility problems. Some residents wish that they had a freestanding house rather than living in a flat. Residents in Waterloo explained that their RDP houses are much smaller than those at Hammonds Farm, consisting of one-bedroom only. Overcrowding is a serious problem. Properties are also built very close together making expansion difficult although because they are free standing, extensions are possible for some. Houses located near the river in Waterloo suffer from flooding. Housing in Canelands and Coniston is commonly very poor and largely informal, residents

are hoping they will gain ‘proper’ housing soon. Residents live in very bad circumstances and fear the risks of fire, flooding and crime, noting that their houses are in such a bad state they cannot provide protection. Housing is clearly varied in this wider area.



Waterloo

We are happy because our area is improving (♀ resident).

WATER AND ELECTRICITY: In Hammonds Farm and Waterloo, residents are happy that they have basic services such as water, toilets and electricity. Some people who live in Hammonds Farm expressed their sense of safety now that electricity connections to their homes

are legal, in comparison to the illegal connections in the informal settlements. However, the cost of these services is very expensive, especially when there are many unemployed people. At times, residents must prioritise buying food for their children over paying for municipal water or electricity with the government grants that they receive. The shortage of money to buy electricity tempts residents to connect illegally and at times water must be collected

from inside the home. There is also a social pressure to pay for services, as residents want to be accepted by their community and do not want their neighbours to think they are struggling. This is especially true if a person has moved from an informal settlement into housing provided by the government. Despite the provision of piped water, there are a number of problems with maintaining water supply and



good drainage from around buildings and on streets. There are often blocked drains, stagnant water and problems with the sewerage system. In Canelands and Coniston residents are often accessing electricity illegally as they have no legal supply and many residents noted how dangerous this was for children especially.



Coniston

In Coniston, the government installed ablution blocks at the end of 2016. These toilets and better access to clean water are commonly identified as the most significant change in the community in Coniston and Hilltop. The residents feel that these ablution blocks provide them with adequate toilet facilities and preserve their dignity. In Canelands, similar provision of ablution blocks has provided dignity and made the settlement cleaner. However, access to taps and toilet facilities in the settlements can be difficult as some homes are very far from the facilities. The walk between homes and taps can be extremely dangerous because of the trucks that use the same road, and at times, you will need to queue for water. Also, the ablution blocks in Canelands are sometimes locked.

We have enough water. Before, there was only one water tap and large queues would form in order to receive any (♂ resident).

TRANSPORT, SCHOOLS AND CLINICS: In Hammonds Farm, residents felt that there was not enough public transport. Some residents have to walk long distances to the nearest taxi stop and there can be a long wait for a taxi. For those living closer to the main road and nearer the top of the hill in Hammonds Farm, access to public transport is much easier. Distances between home and the taxi stop can make it difficult to carry goods or can mean that an extra fee must be paid in order to travel slightly closer to home. There is not much choice in the type of transport available and there has been conflict between busses and taxis in the past. This means that very few buses serve residents at Hammonds Farm. Canelands is viewed as a good area in terms of access to shops and services. It is within walking distance of public transport, Verulam town centre, and some factories, which enables people to reach places quite easily. Small businesses in Coniston provide residents with fresh food, so that they do not have to travel to Verulam, saving money, time and lowering their risk of being mugged. Access to schools and clinics is a problem. In Hammonds Farm there are no schools nearby and the school in Waterloo is too full. This means that children walk long distances to school along dangerous busy roads, especially since many parents cannot afford to send their children to school in a taxi. Almost everyone who participated in the research called for schools to be built closer to their neighbourhoods. There is also a need for creches that provide good quality and safe care for

younger children and playgrounds. The nearest clinic is also far away and is ‘not in good condition’ with few helpful staff and little medicine. Those who wish to use the clinic have to wake up very early because long queues form from early in the morning in order to be treated during the day. Often, Hammonds Farm and Waterloo residents travel to the Tongaat clinic but they fear that the new management system that requires proof of address will exclude them from using this clinic, as they are not local residents.

Some people go back at home at 4:00pm without getting any help (♀ resident).

EMPLOYMENT AND WORK: A large number of residents are unemployed and the lack of jobs is the worst problem facing Waterloo, Hammonds Farm, Coniston, and Canelands. This is especially worrying because there is very high youth unemployment. Residents plead for the provision of jobs, in order to earn money and prevent life from coming to 'a standstill'. Some residents make a living by collecting scrap metal and recycling materials. This is an increasingly difficult and dangerous form of employment because they have to use the same roads as cars and taxis when transporting their materials. Some agriculture is practised to help feed families and to sell produce as a business.

Although nearby wealthier neighbourhoods and developments of factories, shopping malls, and the airport in northern eThekweni do offer some opportunities for work, many felt that when construction of larger projects, such as the airport or the college at La Mercy, are finished, none of the residents are left with permanent employment. Newly created jobs go primarily to workers from places outside of the community

and younger residents were more likely to get opportunities than older ones (although jobs for youth have become harder to secure). Men often benefitted more than women as the work was often construction related. A few residents are benefiting from changes in service provision in the community, such as the employment of cleaners who sweep the roads and cut unwanted grass. The councillor is often used as a way of finding people to take up work that is on offer. For example, one resident stated that the Spar will contact the local councillor if there is a job available. This also happens with work created by the Expanded Public Works Programme. The councillor will then decide who will be given a job



based upon who is unemployed, and who is volunteering for their political party every day. The connections between political ties and getting a job can create tensions within the community, especially since the party represented by the ward councillor has recently changed. One resident stated that both the ANC and the DA give jobs to their 'own people', which excludes others.

Apart from links to politics, there is a feeling that people only get jobs by having links to those which have jobs or own businesses. Some small businesses have been formed by residents, including panel beating shops, tuck shops, and crèches. In Hammonds Farm there is a new business association which tries to support small businesses. There is also an Internet café, so that residents no longer have to travel to Verulam to type and send their CVs. The café enables people to search online for jobs. Residents in Waterloo noted how difficult it was to gain skills without travelling very far, and how they struggled with a skills mismatch when it came to applying for jobs. The area of Waterloo also lacks appropriate sites for residents to set up new businesses.

CRIME: There are clear distinctions in the experiences of crime that different residents are exposed to. Some residents believe that their areas are safe while others having experienced theft of the vegetables growing in their gardens, handbags, cell phones and household goods. One resident of Waterloo explained that crime is so regular that residents are afraid to leave their house without having someone to watch over it for them. Other Waterloo residents feel that once they have locked their houses they will not fear anyone breaking in. Where a community policing forum has been operating in Block Ten of Waterloo, a resident wrote in her diary that the area is much safer and there is less drug use: 'the washing can leave the whole night in the washing line and no one comes and [steals] it'. High levels of crime are viewed as the result of high unemployment within communities. Some residents of Hammonds Farm feel that there was less crime in the informal settlements where they lived previously, such as Ocean Drive In. This was because people all knew each other and were able to see everything that goes on in the settlement. Another worry is access to police services and ambulances, especially in the case of an emergency. Hammonds Farm residents stated their concerns that an ambulance can take a very long time to come and the nearest police station serves six wards with only a few vehicles, meaning that people could die before being helped by emergency services. In Coniston, men from the settlement volunteer to keep watch until midnight to deter crimes such as theft. However, some theft from people's homes still happens. A number of Verulam residents believe that crime had risen in the last year in particular, with criminals mugging pedestrians and stealing bags and cell phones as they walk between their homes and the shops. Women who work at the nearby King Shaka airport use a taxi to get to work as it is safer, while men are able to walk to work. The growing number of shacks and residents in Coniston are often blamed for the increase in crimes as people move from elsewhere in the city. But residents in Coniston suffer from high levels of crime too. Drug use, drunkenness and the presence of the tavern also leads to violent crimes. This is made worse because the police take a long time to attend to any crime.

It is not safe at all to live in this area', particularly for children (♂ resident).

GOVERNANCE: There have been mixed experiences of governance in the case study areas. Many residents who have received formal housing commend the work that the government and councillor has done building 'beautiful houses' that are 'like a dream to own', taking them away from the dangerous and dirty informal settlement where they had lived previously. Despite these positives, there are some concerns that the ward councillor is based far away from the community, making it very expensive for people in areas such as Canelands to travel to meetings, residents feel cut off from how decisions are made. Residents also noted that there has been a change in the political leadership of their areas which has created tensions. Participants in the research felt that since the DA ward councillor took over from the previous councillor who represented the ANC, there have been vertical power tensions and slow responses to the needs for maintenance of services and infrastructure such as drains and sewers. This is because the municipality is controlled by the ANC while the ward is managed by the DA.

SOCIAL CONCERNS AND BENEFITS: There are many concerns about drug and alcohol abuse within all the communities. There is also a fear that there is no future for young people who live in these communities because of challenges with education, employment, drugs and alcohol abuse and boredom. With the density of people living in Hammonds Farm, Coniston and Canelands there are concerns about noise and a lack of privacy. However, some residents felt that nearness to neighbours meant that they were able to help each other easily. As residents have moved into the government housing in Hammonds Farm and Waterloo from different areas and communities, there is a period of adjustment when residents feel isolated from their former community and lonely. However, residents did say that over time they are getting to know their neighbours and form new communities.

CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS TO SERVICES: Although the developed areas are not free of problems, there is a belief amongst communities of Waterloo and Hammonds Farm that poverty has decreased and that life is better within formal housing than in the informal settlements where many people had lived before. The Spar Supermarket is the most commonly identified positive development in Hammonds Farm and Waterloo. Its long opening hours, allows people access to shops after work. It is useful for residents as a place to collect grants and pensions, and to buy prepaid electricity, fresh or precooked food and it is also used as a place of entertainment. Although Hammonds Farm residents wish for a community hall, sports facilities and playgrounds, in Waterloo the residents love their 'beautiful' sports ground and 'stadium'. Many of the children play there, taking part in activities such as soccer and gym and there is a focus on improved health in the community. The improved quality of the roads in Hammonds Farm and part of Waterloo is also appreciated although muddy passages affect mobility and also cleanliness. In newly developed areas there is a concern that new municipal services should become more regular and reliable, for example regular rubbish removal would help residents in keeping their areas clean and the water system unblocked. In Coniston waste and rubbish removal problems were a significant concern for residents resulting in ill health.



Spar, Waterloo / Hammonds Farm

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY: The provision of RDP housing, the growth in factories and shops (including supermarkets) and improvements to water, roads and toilet facilities have all had significant positive impacts, particularly relating to shelter, security, safety, mobility, access to food and welfare benefits and some employment. There is an urgent need to ease pressures on households living in informal settlements in particular, but across the area poverty and a lack of stable income is the most significant problem. Government should be aware of how positive these developments are for many residents (but not all), but urgent interventions around employment and poverty alleviation are necessary. Overall, bigger infrastructure investments (e.g. airport) seem to have had less immediate impact compared with local changes (e.g. toilets, housing, roads). The costs for residents associated with new housing needs to be better acknowledged and planned for by government.

RESEARCH ON EXPERIENCES OF LIVING THE URBAN PERIPHERY IN OTHER AFRICAN CITIES:

In Molweni, Lufhereng, Ekangala and Winterveld in South Africa and Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, the researchers spoke to men and women in the community, collected resident diaries and photographs, and interviewed residents and key professionals. The findings of the research showed that residents had experienced both positive and negative consequences of the changes that had occurred in their areas. Some of the key findings in other areas are as follows: RDP housing is much appreciated elsewhere but residents struggle with affordability and also access to jobs and services such as clinics. Conditions in informal settlements remain very poor with little evidence of improvement. Residents are very anxious about waiting times for housing and many are living in poverty. In some areas on the edges of cities local government is quite weak or is far away, and in these cases some local powerful men control whole areas. They can often be useful to residents but also operate through a culture of

fear. Residents in many cases note the importance of shopping malls and new shopping facilities both is making their daily lives easier but also sometimes providing employment. Lack of employment was a dominant theme across South Africa and this undermined most residents' otherwise positive experiences of all the changes. In Ethiopia, more residents had employment but they really struggle with the costs of their new government homes and also with the very long commutes into the city centre for work. Residents noted the new investments in employment opportunities in their areas or beyond. But, many lacked the right skills for the work or were seen as too old or not supporting the right political party. Many struggled with basic things like lack of access to photocopiers etc. to submit CVs for consideration. These findings would all be shared with relevant government authorities and also with those involved in urban planning and housing.



Molweni, eThekweni



Lufhereng, Johannesburg



Yeka Abado, Ethiopia