LEFT BEHIND
Siyanda Informal Settlement

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Socio-economic rights institute of South Africa
INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA
NORMS, PRACTICES AND AGENCY

Report 1:  The Promised Land: Ratanang Informal Settlement
Report 2:  Our Place to Belong: Marikana Informal Settlement
Report 3:  Left Behind: Siyanda Informal Settlement
Report 4:  Here to Stay: A Synthesis of Findings and Implications from Ratanang, Marikana and Siyanda

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Photographs were taken by SERI staff

Cover photo: Edward Molopi
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1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1.1 THE RESEARCH SERIES

The Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa’s (SERI’s) Informal Settlement Research Series is called “Informal Settlement: Norms, Practices and Agency”. It has produced three site-based research reports and a fourth synthesis report. The primary site-based research on which the reports are based was undertaken in 2016 and 2017, and the reports were drafted and edited in 2018 and published in 2019.

This report, “Left Behind: Siyanda Informal Settlement”, is the third of the three site-based reports. The first is “The Promised Land: Ratanang Informal Settlement” and the second is “Our Land to Keep: Marikana Informal Settlement”.

Siyanda is located in KwaMashu, eThekwini, KwaZulu-Natal; Ratanang in Klerksdorp, North West Province and Marikana in Philippi, Cape Town, Western Cape.
A fourth report synthesises and compares findings across the three research sites.

Following the publication of the three site-specific and synthesis reports, SERI will develop a set of informal settlement policy briefs which build on the results. The diagram below depicts the progression of the research products graphically.
1.2 THE CONTEXT OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Informal settlements have been part of the South African urban landscape for decades. In 2011, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) calculated that 14% of households in South Africa live in informal settlements and that major metros have experienced an increase in informal housing over the last ten years.\(^1\) The persistence of informal settlements reflects the lack of affordable accommodation options available to poor households in well-located areas\(^2\) where systems of private and public allocation of land are failing, giving rise to systems of “self” allocation. Due to government’s hesitation to intervene in the land and property market,\(^3\) the availability of affordable, well-located, serviced land remains a significant challenge and poses a major obstacle to the provision of adequate housing for the urban poor.\(^4\)

National policy processes paid little attention to informal settlements until ten years after the introduction of the post-apartheid government’s housing programme.\(^5\) In 2004, *Breaking New Ground: A Comprehensive Plan for Sustainable Human Settlements* (BNG) and the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) were released, which began to shift the narrative around informal settlements from “eradication” towards *in situ* upgrading in desired locations.\(^6\)

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\(^{3}\) At the time of writing, “the land question” was in the foreground of the formal political arena and the public discourse due to the prioritisation of “expropriation without compensation” by the Economic Freedom Fighters and, in response, its centrality at the African National Congress conference in December 2017 and in Cyril Ramaphosa’s state of the nation address in February 2018. The practical impact of this on government’s willingness to intervene in the market and on the daily lives of people living in informal settlements were not yet apparent.


1.3 THE UPGRADING OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME

The UISP prioritises the provision of basic services, sanitation, bulk infrastructure and tenure security before the delivery of top-structure houses. It aims to facilitate upgrading projects on sites where informal settlement residents reside and makes provision for the acquisition and rehabilitation of well-located occupied land. Municipalities are expected to work closely with informal settlements through extensive community participatory processes. The UISP does not require qualification in terms of income or nationality selection criteria. This means that informal settlement residents classified as “non-qualifiers” according to the housing subsidy scheme should be included as beneficiaries in upgrading projects, at least in the project’s initial phases.

Municipal implementation of in situ upgrading according to the UISP is generally poor. The relocation of informal settlements to vacant land (called “Greenfield development”) and “roll-over” upgrading remain common practices amongst municipalities. Huchzermeyer\(^7\) explains that the latter practically translates into the removal of all shacks from the land, their temporary reconstruction on nearby land, and the installation of layout and infrastructure according to conventional Greenfield procedures. A formal layout generally results in increased plot size and wider access routes and dwelling densities are reduced. Only a portion of the original population is re-allocated sites within the “upgraded” settlement, often leaving the majority of “non-qualifying” residents to be relocated and allocated sites elsewhere.

1.4 PROJECT ORIGINS

The origins of the project in 2016 lay in the context of informal settlement upgrading at the time when the research was conceptualised: a good policy framework with little evidence of implementation on the ground; frustrated claims by residents who sought to engage the state on their upgrading; so-called service delivery protests as people took to the streets to voice this frustration, often met by a state which sought to silence dissent, sometimes brutally; and a ground-breaking judgment in the courts. This judgment emerged after the residents of the Slovo Park settlement to the south of Johannesburg went the route of litigation, as an option of last resort after twenty years of broken promises,\(^8\) to compel the municipality to submit to provincial government for the application of this policy, the UISP.\(^9\) The Gauteng

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9 See Melani and the further residents of Slovo Park Informal Settlement v City of Johannesburg and others, South Gauteng High Court, Case No. 02752/2014 (22 March 2016) (Melani).
Local Division of the High Court ordered the City of Johannesburg to apply to the Gauteng Province for a grant to upgrade the Slovo Park Informal Settlement. The positive outcome of this case means that the UISP is binding on all municipalities and that the prospects for informal settlement upgrading elsewhere may improve.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEMATIC FOCUS AREAS

The research project was conceptualised against this background. At the heart of the project lay a concern that *in situ* informal settlement upgrading tends to adopt a roll-over approach (described above), effectively replicating the conventional Greenfield method to development and thereby treating existing settlements as if they are blank slates. More specifically, the problem with this tendency is that it pays little attention to the existing arrangements, systems, patterns and procedures that make up norms, practices and agency in the settlements that are being upgraded. If this intervention approach were to be replaced with an alternative logic, then the approach would surely begin with what already exists. The research therefore turned on a single question: if UISP interventions are to result in meaningful change on the ground, how should they engage with the realities in the places they seek to improve? In turn, what is the nature of those local realities? What are the existing practices that characterise daily life in informal settlements?
More specific questions were developed, informed by SERI’s focus areas. How are people getting by without legally secure tenure? In the absence of official planning, how is land managed? How does housing rights litigation figure alongside these practices? How do people secure access to the basic water and sanitation? And energy? How do informal settlement residents make a living in the context of precarious residential circumstances? How does political life work for people in informal settlements, can and do they assert their agency? These questions led to the formulation of four focus themes for the research:

- Tenure security and land use management
- Access to basic services
- Livelihoods and economic life
- Political space

1.6 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The purpose of the project is to draw portraits of the “local realities” in the site-specific and synthesis research, in order to better inform the participative informal settlement upgrading processes than the conventional blank slate approach would normally permit.

The site-based reports respond to the local realities question by documenting and analysing findings in four theme areas in three different sites. They also offer preliminary site-specific directions for future intervention as well as highlighting general, broad implications for informal settlement upgrading and implementation using the findings. The fourth research report synthesises findings, comparing and contrasting themes across the three sites. It also considers the implications for upgrading in a comparative way across all three sites.

A subsequent phase of work will more fully develop the informal settlement upgrading policy and implementation implications of the research project as a whole. It will build on the preliminary directions and general implications contained in the three site-specific reports and the synthesis report in order to develop theme-based informal settlement policy briefs for tenure security, basic services, community participation and economic life.

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10 “Securing a home”, “making a living” and “political space”.
2 BACKGROUND

TO THE RESEARCH IN SIYANDA

2.1 THE CONTEXT OF SIYANDA

Home to approximately 13 300 people, the Siyanda informal settlement is located between two Durban townships, Newlands East and KwaMashu. Geographically, Siyanda is divided into three sections: “A”, “B” and “C”. Sections B and C which were previously connected to each other, were separated when the MR577, named Dumisani Makhaye Drive, was constructed in 2009. Section A, though initially part of the informal settlement, has since benefitted from a housing development project known as “Siyanda Interface” which led to the area’s formalisation, while sections B and C remained underdeveloped. At the time of this research, Siyanda A and its residents were no longer regarded as part of the informal settlement.

The settlement was founded in January 1988 when its first resident - believed to have been a man by the name of Bonginkosi Makhubu - settled on the vacant land that would become Siyanda. Subsequent to his arrival, it is said that he began to mobilise others from his previous home in Bester’s Camp informal settlement,

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12 The names of all respondents in the research have been changed to ensure anonymity.
located in section M of KwaMashu. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, in the midst of a politically charged atmosphere between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the African National Congress (ANC), several households from Bester’s Camp heeded Makhubu’s call and settled in Siyanda. A leadership structure emerged quite early in the establishment of the settlement, and took on the responsibilities of facilitating access to the settlement, allocating land to newcomers and keeping a record of the number of households in the settlement. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the residents of Siyanda, with the exception of Siyanda A, lived without any municipal services provision.

The nature of the informal settlement changed between 2006 and 2008, when approximately 560 households were relocated from their homes in Siyanda to make way for the construction of Dumisani Makhaye Drive. This event held significant social, political and economic ramifications for both those who left and those who were left behind, and spurred new forms of mobilisation. In 2009, the leadership structure, at this point an elected committee, aligned itself with Abahlali baseMjondolo, a shack dwellers social movement born in Durban. Respondents described this move as an important step towards securing services for the settlement. Together with Abahlali, the Siyanda committee proactively engaged the municipality on the provision of services to residents and the in situ
upgrading of the settlement. In addition to the water and sanitation facilities by way of the eThekwini Municipality Water and Sanitation Unit’s Communal Ablution Blocks Project, electricity was installed in 2014 for the majority of the households in Siyanda.

Throughout this time residents continued to strive to make a living for themselves and their families: some residents of Siyanda had managed to find work as wage labourers, in the manufacturing, construction and retail industries while others engaged in more “informal” work as informal traders in the Durban city centre or as domestic workers in Durban’s more affluent areas. Many more residents were involved in the economic activities within the settlement itself as hairdressers, seamstresses or owners of spaza shops.

2.2 METHOD IN THE SIYANDA RESEARCH

The research on which this report is based was conducted through semi-structured interviews, including both household profiles and life histories with 66 participants. The interviews raised questions about life in the settlement as the research was intended to build its evidence base on the foundations of the experiences and perceptions of people living in informal settlements. The interviews were framed across the four themes: tenure security, basic services, sustainable livelihoods and political space. We supplemented these responses with ethnographic field work, during which we spent time in the settlement on three visits to Siyanda informal settlement. Interviews were conducted in Zulu and English.

Research support was provided by our partners in the study, Abahlali baseMjondolo, which provided assistance in identifying Siyanda as the research site, provided three field researchers to accompany SERI researchers in the fieldwork and facilitated access to the settlement through the Siyanda leadership committee, a member of the social movement.

We conducted seven focus groups in total. The first focused on the Siyanda leadership committee, its goals and expectations in collaborating with Abahlali, the challenges it faces in mobilising residents and its engagements with the municipality in the quest for upgrading the settlement. This focus group also explored the history of Siyanda, considered the initial occupation, and the local norms and practices regarding how people relate to and hold the land. Another focus group was conducted with the Siyanda leadership committee to hone in on the subject of tenure. The group considered how land is accessed, used and transferred within the settlement. A third focus group focused on the theme of economic life, with spaza shop owners participating in a discussion about running a business in the settlement and the potential advantages of collaboration between the business owners of Siyanda, amongst other issues. Connected to this theme, we conducted a fourth focus group discussion with members of a stokvel, on the topic of the operations of a stokvel, and the advantages of belonging to a stokvel. We conducted two focus groups with former residents

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13 Informal savings group.
of Siyanda, who had been relocated to Lindelani and Cornubia during the 2008 relocations. The two groups discussed their adjustment to life outside of Siyanda and the unexpected challenges associated with maintaining houses and their daily struggles to make a living since moving away from Siyanda. Discussions were also undertaken with representatives from eThekwini Housing and Water and Sanitation, who discussed the municipality’s approach to interim basic services provision and upgrading of informal settlements within its jurisdiction. The last focus group was held with the local leadership in which we revisited the main findings and clarified key questions relating to political life and tenure security and observed the communal ablution facilities.

This research report focuses on the local practices, lived experiences and perspectives of residents living in Siyanda sections B and C, as well as the experiences of a selection of residents who were relocated.

2.3 OUTLINE OF THIS REPORT

In this initial section (Chapter Two) we have introduced Siyanda in order to provide context for the thematic sections which follow.

In Chapter Three we consider the nature of political space in the lives of Siyanda residents. This chapter focuses on the political activity in and around the settlement, specifically on the Siyanda leadership committee, its alliances with external stakeholders such as Abahlali baseMjondolo, the ensuing mobilisation strategies to improve the living conditions in the settlement, and its engagement with the eThekwini municipality about in situ upgrading of the settlement as a way to build on the existing access to basic services, sanitation and tenure security. The chapter also outlines the consequences of the large scale 2008 relocations that were carried out by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements that came about as a result of the Dumisani Makhaye Drive construction. These consequences include the litigation process embarked on by the 64 former Siyanda residents who were relocated to the Richmond Farm Transit Camp, instead of Khulula Housing Project as they had been promised. Subsequent to the move, the municipality had assured residents that they would not stay in the transit camp for longer than six months. The residents remained in the transit camp for six years before relocation to permanent residences was concluded, as a result of litigation.

In Chapter Four we explore local realities and practices in land use management and tenure. Our starting point was to understand the social relations that people have to land and to each other, based on the notions of tenure “arrangements” and local legitimacy rather than a narrower focus on legal forms of tenure. We set out to understand what and how local rules or norms configure tenure in Siyanda, and the authorities that underpin these rules.

The fifth chapter focuses on access to basic services. Local management arrangements with respect to water supply, sanitation, energy and solid waste are
explored through the lens of community versus state supported service delivery. In Siyanda, government-led service provision existed alongside self-provision of services for a significant portion of the population. eThekwini municipality’s proactive approach to the provision of interim services while the process of formalisation of informal settlements is (theoretically at least) underway, and Siyanda residents’ response to these services, is analysed. For the most part, where residents found services inadequate, costly or inaccessible for a variety of reasons, they resorted to self-connections.

In Chapter Six of the report we discuss the livelihoods of the residents of Siyanda. By profiling the informal and formal sectors of the city’s economy, as well as the local economy which developed in the settlement itself, we explore the various livelihood strategies of residents, and how they were able to sustain them in conditions of severe scarcity and limitations. The research revealed that the variety of economic activities within (and outside of) the settlement enabled residents to support their families. However, these activities were rarely able to lift a household out of poverty. Furthermore, a view of economic life in informal settlements which has people’s experiences as its starting point makes plain the important role which social grant distributions play in people’s livelihoods within a broader context of entrenched and structural mass unemployment.
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NORMS, PRACTICES AND AGENCY

Photo: Edward Molopi
3 POLITICAL SPACE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

‘Political space’ in this research refers to the multitude of ways in which people seek to advance their rights. Litigation is one of these. The theme aims to identify others and discusses the extent to which they, and litigation, expand or constrict political space. What are these spaces? How can they be characterised? How is politics articulated internally between residents and community leadership structures, and external to the settlement between residents, private property owners, the municipality and the courts? Using a “bottom-up” lens, derived directly from the voices of residents, the research aims to discern, to the extent possible, layers of power and contestation that inform the complex terrain which residents of informal settlement residents navigate in the private and public spheres.

14 Julian Brown, Associate Professor in Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, provided an invaluable sounding board as the conceptual framework for the political space theme in this project developed, for which the researchers are grateful.
In the context of informal settlements, engaging with the state is an important way in which residents and their representatives attempt to carve out political space. Participation in local government decision-making around access to basic services is a core principle of the numerous policies and laws which provide for formal channels of participation. However, the systemic exclusion of communities from formal means of participation often means that engagement with the state happens outside of official participatory channels. These voices are often ignored, leading to frustration and increased “service delivery” protests. Given this context, the research is particularly concerned with “community participation”. What does the evidence reveal about whether or not it occurs, the nitty-gritty of its mechanics, and perceptions about its impact?

In documenting the strategies that residents of informal settlements use to expand political space, the chapter develops a portrait of how local politics was articulated in Siyanda up until the time of the research. It provides a view from “below”, focusing less on the arena of formal politics and more on its local expressions and enactments, although interactions between formal and local politics are evident.

In Siyanda the research identified four different spaces in which politics was being articulated: settlement-level, local, municipal and juridical. The “settlement” space was internal to Siyanda and was characterised by the way in which residents organised themselves and institutionalised leadership in the settlement. The “local” space engaged external interests and influences with residents and their leadership structures, such as political parties and social movements. Municipal space was both administrative and political in nature: administrative when the state’s presence was experienced through development initiatives and the different kinds of participation processes that occurred and political in respect of ward councillor activities and influence. The courts were a juridical space in which the people relocated from Siyanda to the Richmond Farm transit camp argued in defence of their housing rights and for fulfilment of the municipality’s promises to move them to permanent accommodation.

This chapter begins by periodising how politics was enacted in Siyanda. It then narrates a more detailed account of the development projects that occurred in Siyanda, showing how a decision to construct a freeway on the road reserve that people were occupying was a significant moment in the political narrative of Siyanda as it fragmented the community and gave rise to a contested consultation process, large scale relocations to several sites and disputed “beneficiary” identification and allocation.

The chapter then addresses the ways in which the leadership structures in the settlement evolved over time, recognising that the settlement was born from a legacy of committee structures that combined traditional and political forms of leadership in the manner it engaged with residents and managed land. The chapter considers the local organisation and mobilisation strategies of the settlement’s leadership structure as a result of joining Abahlali.
It also reflects on experiences of engaging with the state via the ward system.

3.2 FINDINGS

PERIODISING POLITICAL SPACE IN SIYANDA

Established in 1988, Siyanda is one of the oldest informal settlements Abahlali baseMjondolo (Abahlali) was working with and many of the very first residents that moved to Siyanda in the late 1980s were still living in the settlement with their families which had expanded over three generations. Unlike the other settlements in this series, it is possible to review political space in Siyanda with the long lens of history. In many ways Siyanda tells a story that mirrors significant aspects of South Africa’s changing political landscape: late apartheid struggles for hegemony in one of the most politicised and factionalised provinces in the country; the possibilities presented by new local democratic structures and processes; the early prospects of a “developmental state”; the opportunities of the constitutional democracy and the housing rights it enshrined; and the search for new associations and affiliations with alternative social movements. Underpinning these dynamics was a community whose shifting allegiances corresponded with what was required of them to secure their tenure in the face of external powers and interests, as well as their more pro-active engagement with the potential benefits that association and affiliation promised. Alive to the political interests and different norms and practices of the powerful authorities they confronted over the years, they asserted considerable agency as they navigated a complex political terrain.

Late apartheid: local struggles for hegemony

This period is characterised by the highly politicised nature of the original occupation and the original customary-styled leadership, occurring in the context of fierce Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and African National Congress (ANC) contestation in the area.

One of the first shacks in Siyanda was built in 1988 by Bonginkosi Makhubu, the first official leader of Siyanda. Before moving to Siyanda, he lived in a men’s hostel in KwaMashu. The men’s hostel was considered to be IFP affiliated and Makhubu was well known as an IFP leader in KwaMashu. He apparently moved to Siyanda with the intention of setting up a larger IFP support base to stand in opposition to KwaMashu, which was predominantly populated with ANC supporters. The settlement was originally named “Siyanda MaZulu”, which translates to “expanding the Zulus”.

Once Makhubu moved to Siyanda, he sent out a call to surrounding areas for people to move to Siyanda with him. Word-of-mouth advertised the vacant land for interested occupiers. Respondents recalled that anyone was welcome to move to Siyanda under his leadership on the condition that they would join the IFP.
Mthokosizi Mnisi was one of the first people who responded to Makhubu’s call to move to Siyanda. He moved from KwaMashu. When he arrived in Siyanda it was made clear to him that the land was only for residents that supported the IFP and that he would be required to leave if he was not in support of the IFP. Mthokosizi was one of many residents who openly considered themselves to be IFP supporters before they moved to Siyanda and had no objections to the requirement.

Mzwake Mdlalose, an Abahlali researcher who grew up in KwaMashu, described Makhubu as “a self-appointed Nduna with a political agenda”. He drew a parallel between the approaches of IFP President, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and Makhubu because they both combined traditional leadership methods from rural areas in an urban setting. As such, the first committee structure in Siyanda that Makhubu worked with was not democratically elected by residents. Makhubu’s committee was made up of close friends and family members that he personally approached to live with him in Siyanda and to join his leadership. Committee appointees were usually people considered by Makhubu to be intelligent, politically connected and business savvy.

Some residents strongly supported Makhubu’s leadership style and others opposed it. Mthokosizi considered Makhubu’s “reign” as necessary and orderly. As someone who was raised in a rural context, he said he understood the importance of a highly regulated environment. He considered Siyanda to have been best controlled and monitored by Makhubu and his committee, especially when it came to reducing theft in the settlement. On the other hand, MaBhengu, a Siyanda leadership committee member in the 2000s, remembers Makhubu as “a dictator” who overregulated the settlement to the extent that visitors had to be reported to and approved by the committee before they could enter, a practice which she viewed as unnecessary.

In 1990, the ANC was unbanned by the apartheid government and Nelson Mandela was released from prison. Conflict escalated between ANC and IFP supporters in KwaMashu. Outbreaks of violence between ANC and IFP supporters burning tires, using petrol bombs and stoning were common. Mthokosizi recalled a fight between IFP and ANC supporters at the Pietermaritzburg train station where he incurred a severe head injury from a rock being thrown at him. The fight was over Siyanda residents being accused of occupying territory that “belonged” to the ANC. He recalled how divided people were by politics at that time.

Makhubu was shot dead in this period. No official conclusions about this murder were shared, but occupiers suspected that it was politically motivated. Respondents recounted that a Siyanda resident by the name of Zwelibanzi Gwala became Makhubu’s successor. He continued to work with Makhubu’s committee structure and appointed additional committee members at his discretion.

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15 In Zulu culture “Nduna” refers to a chief or headman, who acts as a bridge between the king and the people.
MaBhengu remembered widespread fear amongst residents because Zwelibanzi was a strict leader. She described this period as a difficult time in the settlement, which resulted in many residents voluntarily leaving Siyanda in search of a less violent and hostile living environment. Zwelibanzi charged a small access fee to become a new resident in the settlement. For example, Zwelethu Ngobese remembered that as an incoming resident, he had paid R7 to Zwelibanzi to live in Siyanda.

Early democracy: the possibilities of participation

This period was marked by the sense of possibility in the early democracy and the prospects of electoral politics and ward-based representation. It was also characterised by settlement level organisation opening up to new norms and style, in protest against the old order. In particular, the construction of a school in the settlement had both symbolic and material value to people living in Siyanda.

Siyanda MaZulu Primary School was built in 1994 and was not accredited by the government for its first two years of existence. 1994 also marked the first democratic elections in South Africa and launched the ANC’s overwhelming electoral dominance, although the conflict between the ANC and the IFP did not come to an immediate end. The principal of the school, Dr. Skhosana, described the school’s establishment as a matter of political necessity. Siyanda Primary became “the only school parents and learners could depend on”. If parents living in Siyanda sent their children to school in KwaMashu section K they ran the risk of endangering their children while commuting in and out of “KwaMashu as an ANC area”.

His view was confirmed by Solomon Phewa, chairperson of the Siyanda Committee and ANC branch committee chairperson at Siyanda at the time of the research, who had attended the school in 1994. He first moved to Siyanda as a child with his mother in 1990 when most residents were seen to be IFP supporters. He described how party-political divides were reinforced for young people at Siyanda through compulsory youth meetings. As a matter of survival, all residents represented themselves as IFP supporters at the time, even if they were not. “Staying in a place of IFP, you have to say you are an IFP [supporter]”, he said. Even though Siyanda MaZulu school was desperately under resourced, operating out of containers without access to toilets and electricity, Solomon Phewa confirmed that the school had provided safe ground for children from Siyanda because it was considered dangerous for children to walk from Siyanda to KwaMashu because of their IFP affiliation.

In 1996, a resident-led protest against Zwelibanzi’s leadership in Siyanda occurred. Respondents claimed that residents had had enough of the excessive murders and deaths of adults and children in and around the settlement. Zwelibanzi stepped down as Siyanda’s chairperson, following demands from protesters. Siyanda residents nominated a new chairperson, locally known as Bhekani Mavuso. This was the first democratically nominated chairperson of Siyanda whom the majority of residents voted for
by a show of hands, all respondents recall. Given the settlement’s past experience with “strict and authoritarian leaders”, MaBhengu remembered residents agreeing that future leaders of the settlement should maintain an anti-violent and anti-intimidation stance, show strong commitment to communal values, and must have lived in the settlement for a substantial amount of time.

Bhekani worked with a committee of twelve people and aimed to interact closely with the ward councillor and ward committee. Zwelethu Ngobese was one of the residents who was satisfied with Bhekani’s term of leadership because “community voice” was taken seriously by the chairperson. For example, he remembered a community dispute over operating times for taverns in the settlement and Bhekani implemented the regulations around closing times for tavern owners according to the majority vote.

In this period, Siyanda sought to connect with organisations outside of the settlement and outside of traditional party politics. The settlement became a member of Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDUP). Siyanda’s committee structure approached SDI and FEDUP with the aim to improve the settlement’s access to basic services.

In 1996, South Africa also held its first democratic local government elections. Mrs. Masia was one of the Siyanda residents who participated in protests blocking main roads in Siyanda and demanding local government to deliver basic services. She argued that the pressure Siyanda residents placed on local government officials through protest resulted in the municipality formally registering Siyanda MaZulu Primary School with the Department of Education. The school received funding from the municipality to build its first concrete block of classrooms and a school hall.

Rumours of a possible development project that could result in the relocation of households started circulating amongst residents in Siyanda section C at this time.

**Politcisation of development**

In this period the early promises of democratic participation began to fade. The prospects of the developmental state materialised in part, for some, with the implementation of two housing projects and the construction of a new freeway. However, fundamental questions arose around inclusion in participatory democracy and transparency in access to and allocation of development opportunities, which are discussed in detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

After the local government elections, the ward councillors began to play a role in Siyanda. Evodia Msimang, a KwaMashu resident at the time, approached the ward councillor for assistance in moving out of the home of her in-laws and he proposed she live in Siyanda. Evodia paid the ward councillor R80 to move into a shack left vacant by a former Siyanda resident. She was aware that Siyanda was mostly occupied by IFP supporters,
but she took a decision to move there anyway, despite being an ANC supporter. During the first few years of living in Siyanda, Maria pretended to be an IFP supporter but refused to attend any IFP-related meetings. She avoided attending political meetings by closing the front door of her shack to create the impression that nobody was home when committee members gathered residents.

At the end of the 1990s, development plans for the construction of Dumisani Makhaye Drive were officially confirmed. Ward councillors organised and facilitated meetings with residents and municipal and provincial officials at two sites in the Siyanda area: Siyanda MaZulu Primary School and the VN Naik School for the Deaf to alert residents to relocation projects that would result from the road construction (See Figure 4, below highlighting the location of the schools in purple.). At this stage, residents were unclear about where the road would be built, and which households would be relocated.

In 1998 and 1999 the eThekwini Transport Association (ETA) implemented the Siyanda Interface Project and the Khulula Housing Project, both located within Siyanda, as Reconstruction and Development Project (RDP) housing projects from which the residents would benefit. However, only

Figure 4: Siyanda area map illustrating the location of Siyanda MaZulu Primary School and the VN Naik School for the Deaf, Google Maps (2017)
affected households were invited to meetings with the ETA and Human Settlement officials. They were instructed to keep information discussed during meetings confidential. As a result, the projects became extremely controversial.

Respondents recall that committee members were excluded from meetings and were not kept up to date on the road development and relocation plans. Zwelethu Ngobese, a long-term resident of the settlement, was uncomfortable with the prominent role ward councillors played in the build-up to the road construction because Siyanda’s local committee structure was side-lined in the process. Committee members were neither notified nor invited to participate in meetings with affected households, the ETA and Human Settlement officials. Tensions between residents and committee members heightened due to the breakdown in communication between affected residents and the committee. “The municipality divided us as they pleased”, explained Solomon Phewa.

The majority of the beneficiaries of the Siyanda Interface housing project resided in Siyanda section A. In addition to them, approximately 560 homes located in sections B and C were marked with an “X” by land surveyors and household profiles containing residential details were collected. The “X” denoted homes expected to be relocated due to the road
construction. Roughly 20 of these households - located on the boundary of section B and C - were relocated to Siyanda Interface. These people did not object to this relocation because they were moved to land that was in close proximity to the settlement. The relocation of households to Siyanda Interface did not drastically affect people’s access to work, schools and transport.

Between 2002 and 2005, the remaining 540 marked households expected to be relocated to Khulula Housing Project. However, “only a few households were moved” from section B and C to Khulula, as Zwelethu explained. Residents were disappointed with the municipality and accused officials of corruption and misallocation of houses in Khulula to communities that lived outside of Siyanda. “We (section B and C residents) were all promised houses there, but those houses were given to people that were not supposed to be the beneficiaries”, Zwelethu indicated.

**New associations and affiliations**

The opportunities created by constitutional democracy and the housing rights it enshrined came to the fore in this period. The search for new associations and affiliations with alternative social movements were also characteristic of the time, often on the back of mounting disillusionment with the democratic state’s inability to fulfil these opportunities. Residents began to engage the formal channels for participation, and to involve themselves in a participatory task team. They achieved significant material gains, including the installation of communal ablution facilities and electrification. However, the exclusion of 614 households from the local housing developments created divisions and destabilised the community.
Between 2006 and 2008, many residents of Siyanda section B affected by the road construction were relocated to a new state subsidised housing development project at Mount Moriah. Similarly, many residents of Siyanda section C moved to the Lindelani housing project. Sixty-four households from Siyanda section C were housed in the Richmond Farm Transit Camp, on the understanding that their relocation was temporary and that they would be provided with permanent accommodation within six months.

In 2009, the construction of Dumisani Makhaye Drive was complete. The character of the settlement changed significantly, and a number of households were left behind in Siyanda after the road was built, as they were not provided for in the developments. At this stage they were estimated to be 614 households on either side the Dumisani Makhaye Drive.

The ward councillor announced on radio that the housing development in Siyanda was complete, and added that all those residents who claimed not to have been provided for had now been settled in other housing projects. This statement angered both residents remaining in Siyanda - who had not benefitted from these developments - and those living in Richmond Farm Transit Camp, who all felt overlooked.

At about the same time, Siyanda withdrew its membership from FEDUP. According to MaBhengu, “FEDUP did not understand Siyanda’s vision”. Instead, in 2009, Siyanda became a member of Abahlali as a local branch committee. Respondents indicated that they saw their membership as taking them a step closer to securing services for the settlement. The Siyanda area committee included seven positions and four additional members. It was nominated by residents voting for their selected candidates. At this time, MaBhengu stood as chairperson for a five-year term from 2009 - 2014. Working with Abahlali, the Siyanda residents organised a march to the Mayoral Executive Committee (MMC) of Human Settlements and handed over a set of demands on behalf of residents to gain recognition as residents excluded from the municipality’s housing projects.

In June 2009, the Head of Department in eThekwini responded to their requests. He said that he was unaware of residents at Siyanda being left out of the allocations to housing projects and proceeded to set up a task team to upgrade Siyanda in situ. According to respondents, the task team was made up of residents in their capacity as an Abahlali local branch and politicians at a provincial, municipal and ward council level.

This seemed to lead to some initial change as, in 2010, the municipality installed communal ablution facilities in Siyanda. In 2012, however, the task team ceased operating. The dual ownership of the underlying land by the ETA and the Department of Human Settlements became a point of contention between task team members, according to MaBhengu. The Department of Human Settlements told residents that it could not install services on land that was owned by a different government
department. This created a perceived impossible dilemma, and the task team fell apart.

Meanwhile, the 64 households who had been moved to temporary accommodation in the Richmond Farm Transit Camp launched a case with the assistance of Abahlali to compel the Mayor of eThekwini, the City Manager and the Director of Housing to take all the necessary steps to provide permanent housing to them and their families.

In 2014, the municipality installed electricity in Siyanda. Mandla Mtshali, a ward committee member and Abahlali member living in Siyanda, indicated that the decision-making processes around the provision of electricity was “politically contested” because the Democratic Alliance and the IFP voted against the ANC for its installation. MaBhengu stepped down as the chairperson of the Siyanda committee, and was succeeded by Solomon Phewa.

In 2015, more than five years after their initial relocation, the residents of the Richmond Farm Transit Camp were finally granted permanent accommodation in the Cornubia Housing Project.

THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT: ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND RELOCATIONS

Having periodised political space in Siyanda, this chapter now turns to the development projects and their implications for political space.

From the late 1990s, when the decision was taken to build Dumisani Makhaye Drive, until around 2015, when the Siyanda households who had been relocated to Richmond Farm Transit Camp from the road reserve were moved to permanent accommodation in Cornubia, the residents of Siyanda were on the receiving end of a series of development projects. The residents did not experience the projects in an integrated way. In their experiences, the interventions never adopted an area-wide approach to develop Siyanda as a whole, with a unifying goal to improve the lives of all the occupiers. Instead, the projects gave rise to large scale relocations which fragmented a community that had spent decades living together in one place. Further, official communications about the interventions were heavily contested by residents who felt excluded from “public participation” processes. Our respondents also questioned how beneficiaries had been identified. They believed that the allocation of housing subsidies lacked transparency and that patronage was at play. Finally, they described how the state used the prospect of development to actively undermine leadership in Siyanda and Abahlali, the social movement of which the residents in sections B and C were a part.

The following timeline provides an overview of the various development initiatives that occurred in Siyanda, including the construction of the freeway; the development of two housing subsidy projects called Siyanda Interface and Khulula; relocations to Mount Moriah, Lindelani and Richmond Farm Transit Camp; and the relocation of the transit camp evictees to Cornubia. The graphic also locates electrification and the installation of the communal

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**LEFT BEHIND**

Siyanda Informal Settlement
Construction of Dumisani Makhaye Drive approved

Section A formalised as Siyanda Interface. About 20 of the 560 designated households in sections B and C are relocated to Siyanda Interface as well. The remainder anticipate relocation to Khulula.

54 section C households in the road reserve are temporarily relocated to the Richmond Farm Transit Camp with the undertaking of permanent accommodation provision within six months.

Siyanda withdraws its membership of FEDUP, becomes a member of Abahlali and duly hands over a set of demands to MMC addressing their exclusion from formal developments in the area.

Community ablution facilities are installed. 37 families take municipality to court for not providing permanent accommodation.

The municipality commences with the installation of free basic electricity to households in Siyanda.

INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA
NORMS, PRACTICES AND AGENCY

Figure 5: Development timeline

560 section B and C homes located in the road reserve designated with an ‘X’.

Khulula Housing Project (adjacent to Siyanda) implemented with a few beneficiaries from section A as well as people from elsewhere, unknown to Siyanda. Remaining 540 households in sections B and C are not relocated to Khulula.

Remaining section B residents are allocated to Mount Moriah and relocate.

Remaining section C residents in the road reserve are allocated to Lindelani and relocate.

Road construction is complete; 634 households are ‘left behind’ in Siyanda; ward councillor claims on radio that all households in Siyanda have now been accommodated.

Task Team of housing officials and Siyanda representatives engage about in situ upgrading of remainder of sections B and C.

Task Team ceases operating over perceived intractable problems with ownership of underlying land.

After five years at Richmond Farm Transit Camp, 37 households are relocated to Cornubia housing project.
ablution blocks in time. Residents saw the provision of services, electricity in particular, as a result of their active engagement with the state and of their political organisation.

As the preceding periodisation suggests, "development" was politicised in Siyanda. Formal, party politics came into play at times, but more significant in the politicisation of development were the local power relations and interests that underpinned the manner in which project implementation occurred. politicisation was also evident in the way that project implementation raised questions for ordinary residents about participation in the new democracy and transparency in access to and allocation of development opportunities.

In this section we unpack the various projects in more detail, tracking how the residents who were “left behind” experienced the development process. We also identify how the consequences of these experiences led to mobilisation around in situ upgrade.

In order to inform our primary project purpose of influencing alternative approaches to informal settlement upgrading, we set out to explore what the impact of relocation had been. Interviews with residents at one of the relocation sites - Lindelani, and at Cornubia - the subsidy project to which the transit camp occupiers were eventually moved, are important evidence for obtaining deeper insight into the consequences of relocation and how the people left behind at Siyanda came to insist on staying.

The construction of the Dumisani Makhaye Drive was a watershed event in the lives of Siyanda residents. We begin the narrative that follows with resident experiences of government “consultation” processes. We then move chronologically through the two subsidy housing projects at Khulula and Siyanda Interface, the relocation to Lindelani, the eviction to Richmond Farm Transit Camp, the litigation that followed when people did not receive permanent accommodation, and finally, the relocation of a group of these households to Cornubia.

**Resident experiences of government processes around the construction of Dumisani Makhaye Drive**

Siyanda’s committee members felt side-lined by the municipality. Solomon Phewa recalls that from the beginning of 1998, community leaders were deliberately excluded from the municipality’s planning and implementation processes around the construction of the freeway and the subsequent relocation of residents. MaBhengu, member of the

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16 Mount Moriah was the other, but we selected to research only one due to time and budget constraints, and the prioritisation of the people left behind in Siyanda as our focus.
Siyanda leadership committee, argued that “the municipality was dividing and ruling Siyanda” by not acknowledging the committee’s legitimacy and local authority in the settlement. They believed that the committee was a key stakeholder that should have participated in the road construction consultation and relocation decision-making processes.

Instead, the municipality arranged multiple meetings at the VK Naik School for the Deaf exclusively with residents that were going to be relocated off site. “Access to meetings was tightly controlled through invitations slipped under the doors” of relocatees and later used as an “entrance ticket to each meeting”, said MaBhengu. When residents without invitations tried to attend these meetings, they were turned away at the door.

It was difficult for committee members to obtain clear information on what was discussed at each of these meetings because the municipality instructed attendees to keep the contents of their discussions confidential. This exacerbated tensions amongst residents and between the committee structure and the municipality, because the committee structure was unable to account to residents at public meetings about the future of the settlement and the committee felt unacknowledged and disrespected by the municipality.

The committee expressed their grievances about the municipality imposing development plans on Siyanda without proper consultation with and participation of all residents, including its local representative structure. In response, the ETA told the committee that their mandate was to deliver roads, and issues around the implications of the road development on housing should be taken up with the Department of Human Settlements.

During the early 2000s, the municipality communicated that residents located in the road reserve would be relocated to two main housing projects within the Siyanda area – “Siyanda Interface” and “Khulula”. However, things did not work out this way. Instead, a handful of households from the road reserve moved to Siyanda Interface, while the rest were relocated outside of Siyanda. Sitting at the heart of the contested nature of development projects for the residents of Siyanda, past and current, was the fact that occupiers of the land reserved for the road did not access the subsidised houses within what was then Siyanda section A and a project immediately adjacent to the settlement, Khulula.

It was not made clear to the committee how the municipality came to decide on who would be relocated and where they would go. As Zamani Mdluli, a 48-year-old resident of Siyanda, described it, “the municipality divided us as they pleased”. This continued to cause tensions within the community as only some residents were benefitting from the new developments.

Despite the earlier undertakings of the municipality, only twenty of the 560 section B and C households occupying the road reserve moved to Siyanda Interface and none of them relocated to Khulula. Instead, from about 2006 to 2009 they were moved to three different sites outside Siyanda: Mount Moriah, Lindelani and Richmond Farm Transit Camp.
The transit camp relocatees were moved to Cornubia in 2015. In the course of the road construction and the relocations, the two housing subsidy projects were implemented in Siyanda section A and on a site adjacent to Siyanda, Siyanda Interface and Khulula, respectively. We discuss these next.

**Housing Developments in the Siyanda area: Siyanda Interface and Khulula**

Siyanda Interface was a formalisation of Siyanda section A with the provision of RDP houses in 1998. Some section A residents were moved to the Khulula housing project. As discussed in the periodisation section, MaBhengu recalled that a handful of residents, estimated at 20 of the 560 designated households in the road reserve, were moved from sections B and C and allocated housing in Siyanda Interface during 1998 and 1999. Once the residents of section A received RDP subsidised housing, as part of the Siyanda Interface project, neither these residents nor municipal officials considered them to form part of Siyanda at large. Despite section A’s shared origins, born out of a common history with sections B and C as a single informal settlement named Siyanda, they had no formal organisational or administrative links. For the people left behind in Siyanda sections B and C, the impact of the project was to rupture a community that had lived together for decades. It made them determined to organise around an *in situ* upgrade for themselves, that would preserve their shared identify instead of fragmenting it.
The Khulula Housing Project was built at the far end of Siyanda, beyond section C. Although some members of the Siyanda community, from section A, were moved to this site, it was a source of contention in the informal settlement. Regarding Khulula, Solomon Phewa explained that: “Only a few households moved to these projects”. Many residents accuse the municipality of corruption and misallocation of households in Khulula to “outsiders”. From the perspective of a resident in Cornubia – one of the community members who had been moved into temporary accommodation in the transit camp, before moving to Cornubia rather than into permanent accommodation in Khulula itself - the ward councillor did not consider Siyanda residents for the Khulula Project, but instead “gave Khulula houses to volunteers of the ANC”. Zwelethu Ngobese, a Siyanda committee member at the time of the research, sought out former Siyanda residents who had been relocated to Khulula, to follow up on their relocation experiences and post-relocation adjustments. He said that people in Khulula had faced “many challenges” because even though “houses were built, there were no proper services”. He said that Khulula residents had no access to water for the first year of living there and had resorted to collecting water with buckets
on a daily basis. Lamp poles had been erected, but no electrical services ran through the houses for months. When residents raised their concerns about moving into unfinished houses, they were dismissed by the municipality.

Despite the undertakings given by the municipality that Siyanda Interface and Khulula would benefit Siyanda residents, it was residents of Siyanda A who experienced these material benefits. In the eyes of many Siyanda residents, political patronage featured as a key determinant for the allocation of sites at Khulula. Corruption and misallocation also featured in the accounts of people who were relocated outside of Siyanda, despite their expectations of Siyanda Interface and Khulula. The discussion now turns to this group of former Siyanda residents.

In the following section we discuss resident experiences of the Lindelani housing project - which is located at a distance from Siyanda - and the Richmond Farm Transit Camp - which was only intended to provide temporary accommodation,
but which ended up housing 64 families for over five years. We also look at the housing project at Cornubia, where these 64 families finally ended up receiving permanent accommodation.

**Resident experiences of relocation to Lindelani**

The relocation to Lindelani, situated ten kilometres from Siyanda, took place in 2007. Abahlali baseMjondolo did not have a presence in Siyanda at the time. The removal of shacks from Siyanda section C and the relocation process was facilitated by the Metro Police and the eThekwini Anti-Land Invasion Unit. Many residents witnessed the demolition of their shacks while still on site gathering their belongings. “It was a painful moment because Siyanda was our own place”, remembered Zwelethu Ngobese, one of the settlement’s long term residents. The belongings of residents were stacked onto a truck and transported to Lindelani separately from residents. Zwelethu and his wife lost some of their household belongings in the process. They were unable to recover them, nor able to receive compensation.

Residents in Lindelani were disappointed with the houses they had been allocated. No-one being relocated was granted the opportunity to pre-inspect Lindelani as a relocation area or the houses they would move into. Zwelethu’s house was constructed with poor quality building materials that easily cracked. It was damaged when he moved in with his wife. On arrival, they discovered that their house did not have windows, doors or ceilings installed. They used money of their own to complete the house, an expense for which they had not budgeted. In addition, the municipality had assured Zwelethu and his family that they would receive a four-bedroom house to match the size of their household in Siyanda. When they arrived in Lindelani, however, the standard size of the houses all residents were provided was two bedrooms. Moving into smaller homes than those the residents had lived in at Siyanda was challenging. Households had to negotiate privacy and found it hard to accommodate growing families. Zwelethu built a passage inside his house to re-divide the lounge from the bedrooms and added an outside room for his son and grandson to live in. Other residents also extended their houses, and in some instances built additional dwellings on their properties. They did not seek permission from the municipality.

When people followed up with the municipality about the incomplete and poor quality houses they found in Lindelani, they were told that the money allocated to the project was finished and that the project was complete.

The residents of Lindelani acknowledged that their new accommodation was an improvement in terms of their access to toilets, water and electricity. However, many respondents felt that these improvements came at a considerable cost.

Participants in a women’s focus group at Lindelani shared how they missed Siyanda’s landscape and having open space, as well as its proximity to
work in KwaMashu and Newlands East and easy access to transport and clinics. They did however see improvement on the pit latrines they had in Siyanda and the extreme, muddy conditions when it rained. In adding to the experiences of relocation Melokuhle Mbebe recounted “I remember my old shack, we would extend as much as we want. The understanding was that we had land, there was a big yard there, even myself I had my own shack there”.

Even though the residents had moved from shacks in Siyanda to houses in Lindelani, there was still uncertainty around whether they would be evicted and relocated again. “We don’t have title deeds”, said Zwelethu, “we don’t know if the municipality will move us again”.

Figure 8: Zwelethu Ngobese’s house in Lindelani (2017)
“Temporary Accommodation” in Richmond Farm

By 2009, only 64 households remained in the parts of Siyanda section B and C that were located along the road reserve. By this time the other households had been relocated to Mount Moriah (from section B) and Lindelani (from section C).

The eThekwini municipality alleged that these 64 households could not be accounted for and were not among the 560 original households who were recorded for relocation to formal housing projects when these projects began. The Siyanda leadership committee however held that the 64 households were counted amongst the 560 households. The truth of the matter was never resolved. In 2009 the municipality applied for, and was granted, an eviction order against these households on condition that they be provided with permanent housing within a year. As the municipality claimed that it had no permanent housing available, a temporary relocation to a transit camp in Richmond Farm for a maximum of six months was proposed as an interim solution. The residents were moved - but no permanent houses were provided.

Zamani Mdluli, a 48-year-old member of the relocated group, said that remaining residents had not been given much of a choice but to comply with municipal instruction. “The Land Invasion Unit made sure people were evicted” on the date set by the municipality, and then “whether we liked it or not, we found our belongings at the new location”. No compensation was provided to residents for the loss of their shacks, or - in some instances - for loss of their belongings in Siyanda. Zamani still found it difficult to come to terms with feeling manipulated and disregarded by a municipality that prioritised the development of a road over people’s right to a home. It was difficult for residents like Tumelo Skiti, another Richmond Farm relocatee, to witness their neighbours move into houses, while he moved to a transit camp. “It’s the way [the municipality] treated us, without dignity”, he said.

When residents arrived at Richmond Farm, they had access to water and shared ablution facilities but no electricity. “We had to use what the government regarded as illegal connections”, explained Thabo. At first, residents self-connected and sourced electricity from the RDP houses in the area. This proved to be a major source of conflict between these residents and newcomers from Siyanda. Within months, former Siyanda residents withdrew their self-connections from the RDP houses and sourced electricity from the street lights instead. Residents experienced regular cuts in water and electricity at Richmond Farm for weeks at a time, with little to no response or assistance from the ward councillor or the municipality.

“On paper, the transit camp looked much better than our shacks in Siyanda”, reported Zamani. In reality, the number of people per household in Siyanda exceeded the size of the shacks built in Richmond Farm by the municipality. Families of 4-6
people that used to live relatively comfortably in Siyanda felt overcrowded in the transit camp, which compromised levels of privacy between family members. According to Zamani, if the community had known that they would spend six years in a transit camp that did not have the space to accommodate their families, they would never have moved. He explained that “the shacks constructed by us in Siyanda were much more responsive to our needs because we extended as much as we needed”. The difference he highlighted was that “with the transit camp there were restrictions” placed on families that could not be negotiated. “With transit camps you are told that irrespective of the number of members of a household, you will get a single room. That deprives you from various things”.

Few people were able to keep their jobs once they moved to Richmond Farm. Distances from workplaces became a challenge because employees had to spend more money and time travelling to and from work. This placed a strain on their salaries because “so much of our salaries went to transport”, explained 31-year-old Patricia Mkhabela, who was now unemployed. She also pointed out that walking earlier in the mornings and later at night while it was dark made residents vulnerable to muggings and attacks. Over time, people had to look for work closer to their new location and many of them were unsuccessful.

For some residents living in the Richmond Farm Transit Camp, high levels of frustration were common. They felt that their socio-economic conditions were not improved by their affiliation with Abahlali. Solomzi Duma said that they preferred to work with the ward councillor instead of Abahlali, because that way residents stood a better chance of receiving housing through the ward committee. However, not all residents living in Richmond Farm shared these sentiments and some considered themselves to be long-term members and supporters of the social movement. They acknowledged Abahlali as making a positive contribution to their eventual access to housing by initiating litigation against the municipality in 2012.

In 2012, after three years at Richmond Farm, 37 families from the transit camp sought and obtained legal services from the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI). This activated the juridical space in the Siyanda narrative, addressed in the next section.
Litigation to compel the municipality to provide the permanent homes it had promised the people evicted from Siyanda to Richmond Farm Transit Camp

In the *Mchunu* case the residents argued for the permanent housing they had been promised in the 2009 eviction order to be finally provided. On 19 September 2012, the Acting Judge Nigel Hollis, in the KwaZulu-Natal High Court, Durban, granted an order requiring the Mayor of eThekwini, the City Manager and the Director of Housing to take all the necessary steps, within three months, to provide permanent housing to the 37 families. The court held that the officials were “constitutionally and statutorily obliged to take all necessary steps” to comply with the 2009 order. If they did not, they could be held in contempt and fined or imprisoned. However, it still took time for progress to occur.

In April 2013 the eThekwini municipality tendered some houses on the South Coast of Durban. However, it was unclear exactly where they were and it appeared they might have been some 40km away from Richmond Farm. The municipality then brought an application for an order declaring that it had complied with its obligations which was opposed by the residents of Richmond Farm, on two counts. First, they argued that the order required the municipality to accommodate the residents at Khulula, if possible. At the time of this application there were 70 vacant sites at the Khulula housing project, on land where bulk infrastructure appeared to have been installed. The residents argued that it was possible to provide housing at Khulula. Secondly, they argued that if it was not possible to offer accommodation at Khulula then accommodation needed to be found at a place as near as possible to it.

This next phase of the case was heard in the Durban High Court on 20 February 2015, where the matter was settled. An order was agreed by consent, with the municipality offering houses at an acceptable location within sixteen months. On 14 September 2015, SERI met with the municipality’s Manager for Housing Support. All residents were subsequently registered for houses at the Cornubia Housing Project. On 30 November 2015, a relocation plan was adopted by the municipality. The relocation process commenced on 15 December 2015, six years after the residents were evicted and relocated to Richmond Farm.

Relocation of transit camp households to Cornubia

Once the relocation to Cornubia took place in 2015, the new residents were relieved to finally access better quality services in two and three storey walk-ups. However, they were challenged by the poor quality and limited space offered by each apartment. Although the flats provided more space than the transit camp, the two bedroom apartments

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were too small for families that had up to seven members. According to Vusi Mbuya, “When you look at this flat, its structure compared to Siyanda, we would say we prefer this flat. But when it comes to the number of family members a household can accommodate, then we prefer Siyanda”. The distance of Cornubia, located over 10 km from Richmond Farm, also compromised residents’ access to work, schools, clinics and limited public transport routes. Ulwazi Dlomo, a 53-year-old woman, was an example of someone who lost her job as a result of moving to Cornubia because her job as a domestic worker required her to get to work by 6am. Public transport from Cornubia to Durban’s CBD, and from there to the suburb she worked in, only started at 6am, which meant that she was regularly late. After losing her job, she tried to find work in the Cornubia Mall and surrounding factories but had not yet had any luck. As a result, her children and extended family were financially supporting her.

Figure 9: Cornubia Housing Project (2017)
This section showed that a series of development projects affected Siyanda residents over a period of about fifteen years. The road construction triggered a fundamental change in the lives of people living in the area. The manner in which the state engaged with residents, a “municipal space” in this research framework, was highly contested by section B and C residents, and it led to community fragmentation and separation, and disputed outcomes. Residents’ experiences of these development projects show how the early promises of participatory democracy failed to materialise for many people living at Siyanda and that political space shrunk considerably as a result. The experiences of people relocated outside of the settlement reinforced the relative benefits of living at Siyanda and, for the people “left behind” it fuelled the strategy to stay.

Many of the families that remained in Siyanda had been living there for over three decades and had built secure social networks and livelihood strategies that solidified their ties to the area. The experiences of the Siyanda residents of allocation and development at Khulula, the housing development on its borders, and Siyanda Interface, formerly an integral part of Siyanda as section A, as well as those relocated to Lindelani and Cornubia, informed local discussions about the desirability of relocation. The communication between these communities, often mediated through their continuing relationship to Abahlali, shaped the political organisation of the remaining residents of the Siyanda informal settlement – and helped push them towards campaigning for an *in-situ* upgrade of their homes, rather than further relocations.

At this point, the chapter shifts perspective to address the dynamics of leadership and its structures, over time in Siyanda, including but not limited to the “development” era addressed in this section. As the introduction indicated, we characterise this internal settlement focus as being an expression of politics in the “settlement space”. It offers insights into the local organisation and mobilisation strategies of the settlement’s leadership structure and reviews the consequences of joining Abahlali.

**LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATION**

At the outset, Siyanda was established under local leadership practices that were “neo-customary” in nature. This played a central role in securing the initial occupation of Siyanda and foregrounding a political identity associated with the land. Siyanda gained a reputation as a stronghold of IFP supporters, even though not all residents associated with the party. The land Siyanda is situated on was contested as political territory and violence was used to challenge and defend political bases throughout KwaMashu. Mthokosizi Mnisi, a long-term resident, told vivid stories of residents living in Siyanda who had experienced extreme clashes between the IFP and ANC. He described Siyanda as a microcosm of national divides between the IFP and ANC in the build-up to South Africa’s first democratic elections. The turbulence of South Africa progressing towards democracy, and to electing leaders to represent all
citizens on a national scale during the 1990s, was comparable to the unsteady transition Siyanda made towards establishing a democratically nominated local body of informal settlement leaders to represent the interests of all residents. MaBhengu, another long term resident and Siyanda leadership committee member, was proud to state that by 1996, political affiliation was no longer the primary source of claims to the land Siyanda was situated on, nor was it the key criterion upon which new residents were granted or denied access to living in the settlement. She argued this was a result of a series of resident-led discussions and protests within Siyanda that challenged undemocratic leadership structures, ultimately ensuring that committee members of Siyanda were voted in and endorsed by the majority of residents.

Committee members saw improving Siyanda’s access to water, sanitation and electricity as interim necessities but not necessarily as signs of permanence. “Everything starts on land, let’s be honest. We don’t want to lose those pieces of land we are in, we are there for a reason sometimes for jobs and schools. We know the houses won’t come now, but services must be given to the people so they can build their homes and gain security of tenure”, said Mandla Mtshali, both a ward committee and Abahlali member. The representatives of Siyanda informal settlement had a challenging relationship with municipal officials and provincial officials in the department of Human Settlements, especially since the road construction, as the previous section showed.

In 2009, Siyanda’s committee became a local branch of Abahlali as a way to work towards building a “good relationship” with their ward councillor. Siyanda committee members and Abahlali viewed ward councillors as key local government stakeholders to assist in upgrading informal settlements. Abahlali’s “theory of change” is a triangle between “government, community and partners”. Central to Abahlali’s principles is bringing the government closer to poor people. It emphasised building a relationship between poor people and the government, especially local government as an entry level. Both hope and suspicion characterised residents’ attitudes to whether Siyanda would feature in the ward committees’ development plans for the area. Solomon Phewa, Siyanda committee chairperson, expressed his concern that ward councillors favour their political party supporters. From his perspective, Siyanda was not as developed as the surrounding township areas because ward councillors still viewed the settlement as an IFP ward that voted against the ANC: “If your councillor considers you to be someone that voted for him, he will reward you”.

Improving residents’ access to basic services such as water, sanitation and solid waste management and tenure security was the main reason that Siyanda joined Abahlali in 2009. Committee members aimed to achieve this by engaging with

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18 The researchers were unable, despite several attempts, to interview the ward councillor.
local, provincial and national government officials. Their preferred method of engaging with the state aligned with Abahlali’s “theory of change” that prioritises communication between government, communities and partnering organisations. Abahlali emphasised the importance of building relationships between shack dwellers and government officials to increase community participatory processes during the planning and implementation of municipally provided services and housing. Once Siyanda joined Abahlali, residents gained access to workshops and engagements around organisation and mobilisation strategies for informal settlement committees. The settlement’s committee structure changed from a twelve-member committee, arranged by self-appointed portfolios led by a single chairperson, to an Abahlali branch committee. The format of this leadership structure was prescribed by Abahlali in order for Siyanda to become recognised as an official member.

Abahlali was embedded in the committee structure of Siyanda and its extended spaces of engagement with external stakeholders. For example, MaBhengu was a former chairperson of Siyanda’s branch committee from 2009 - 2014 and at the time of the research was a member of Abahlali’s National Council. Mandla Mtshali was an Abahlali member at National Council level and a ward committee member under the housing portfolio. MaBhengu and Mandla argued that they were in a stronger position to ensure that services would be delivered in Siyanda if they interacted in overlapping spheres with municipal officials in their simultaneous capacities as residents and leaders of Siyanda, ward council members and Abahlali members. They attributed the settlement securing electricity in 2014 to this strategy.

As it stood at the time of the research, Siyanda’s area committee was aware that the land that Siyanda was on was only partially owned by the Provincial Department of Human Settlements (DHS). The goal of the Siyanda area committee was to work together with Abahlali to ensure that the Department of Human Settlements owned all of the underlying land. Committee members felt that they would have a stronger sense of tenure security if residents lived on land entirely owned by the DHS because, unlike the ETA, their governmental mandate is to provide services and housing to occupiers. Even if the DHS would not provide housing to occupiers, committee members said that residents would use their savings and build formal homes for themselves if the fear of being evicted by the ETA was alleviated.

The residents who remained at Siyanda intended to stay on the land and build on basic services already available. After the construction of the Dumisani Makhaye Drive, the Siyanda leadership committee’s main goal was to ensure section B of the settlement, owned by the ETA, was transferred to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements which

19 The parcels of land not owned by the DHS are noted as privately owned by “Gem Ont Raascom Dev Board” by the eThekwini Planning Department in correspondence (not dated).
already owned section C. This was a priority because committee members felt they would have a stronger sense of tenure security living on land that is entirely owned by the DHS.

Unlike the ETA, the official mandate of the DHS was to incrementally improve the quality and quantity of basic services to the settlement and eventually provide housing to residents. Solomon Phewa argued that once a single government department owned the land Siyanda was situated on, residents would feel less threatened by an eviction and forced relocations happening again. He felt that this would put the branch committee in a stronger position to leverage the municipality to improve the settlement’s access to basic services, because they would no longer be in a position to use the ETA’s ownership of the land as an excuse to not upgrade the land. Secondly, Solomon argued that residents who had saved their own capital over time would feel more secure to begin building their own houses and upgrade their settlement independent of government subsidies “if they know for sure [that] they won’t be chased away from this land”.

The advent of democracy in South Africa influenced political space in Siyanda, and the chapter now turns to how leadership engaged formally in the local level ward system.
ENGAGING WITH THE WARD SYSTEM

The induction of ward councillors as part of local government from 1996 onwards strongly influenced the organisation and mobilisation strategies of Siyanda’s leadership structure. From the outset, Siyanda’s first democratically nominated leader, Bhekani Mavuso, committed to working closely with the ward councillor and ward committee. Residents were hopeful that the ward councillor’s office would act as a gateway for community representatives to establish constructive and sustainable relations with the municipality.

Previous experiences of ward councillor engagement in Siyanda since the 2000s had been largely disappointing for committee members and residents. Former leaders of the settlement deemed the ward councillor’s role as divisive within communities because committee members were deliberately excluded from participating in decision-making processes around the relocation of affected households and allocations in RDP housing projects during and post the construction of the Dumisani Makhaye Drive. This perpetuated the general assumption that ward councillors favour their political party supporters. For Solomon Phewa, past experience was that ward councillors commonly exercised a sense of “party preference and punishment”. He said that the legacy of Siyanda as an IFP stronghold still hung over the area and was one of the main reasons Siyanda’s leadership committee was disregarded and the settlement remained underdeveloped, compared to townships in KwaMashu at large.

Despite this difficult history, Solomon explained that for residents, the ward councillor had always been seen as the most accessible municipal actor who was aware of the context and day-to-day challenges experienced in informal settlements. This was why Siyanda committee structures prioritised working with the ward councillor, said Solomon, because there was no better placed municipal office bearer to represent the interests of informal settlement communities in higher ranks of local government. The committee hoped to keep working with them.

3.3 DISCUSSION

The political story of Siyanda unfolded from a single informal settlement established in the late 1980s, to a vast range of resident experiences scattered across multiple sites in housing projects, a transit camp and what remained of the initial settlement. Siyanda was established as an IFP stronghold and expanded in the context of fierce party-political tensions, particularly between the IFP and ANC, in the build-up to South Africa’s democracy. Many of the residents who moved to Siyanda when the settlement was established continued to live there and held vivid memories of how the road construction was a central force in destabilising relations between residents, the committee structure and local government in the history of Siyanda.
Siyanda’s establishment was politically motivated. The founder of the settlement made his intention clear to all incoming residents that his vision was to build an IFP support base in opposition to the ANC supporters living in KwaMashu. Siyanda’s history tells a story of long-term rural to urban migration before and after 1994. From 2000 onwards, the settlement narrative shifts to an account of the politicised nature of development. Although no longer party political, the expression of politics locally continued to influence access to power and resources, and the legacy of its political association remained. Siyanda became subject to a road development plan for the Dumisani Makhaye Drive and two state-subsidised housing projects, Khulula and Siyanda Interface. This resulted in the settlement’s physical and social fragmentation. Siyanda subsequently experienced deep community division between residents that were relocated and residents who continued to live in the settlement.

Siyanda also tells a story about housing allocation as selected residents from one informal settlement were relocated to four neighbouring relocation sites and reveals how residents perceived the gaps in the eThekwini municipality’s practice as 614 households were “left behind” in Siyanda. Committee members remained particularly resentful about the municipality’s perceived lack of transparency around the road development and relocation plans that were selectively communicated to people living in the settlement. Even though the municipality stayed in close communication with residents that expected to be relocated, there was widespread confusion amongst them around why they were chosen to be relocated, where they would go, when they would be moved and what kind of home and level of services they would receive at the new site. Residents who were relocated to distant housing projects (Cornubia, Lindelani and Mount Moriah) needed to adjust to their living environment outside of Siyanda. On moving, the majority dealt with unexpected challenges around repair and maintenance of poor quality houses and daily struggles to stabilise their livelihood strategies in the light of living further away from previous job opportunities in Siyanda’s surrounding areas and Durban’s CBD.

From all the sites that constituted the dispersed Siyanda community, Abahlali’s relationship was the strongest with remaining residents in Siyanda. Their joint mission was to advocate for the in situ upgrade of the settlement in order to improve the level and quality of basic services and tenure security in the settlement. Siyanda, as a local branch committee of Abahlali, therefore viewed the Upgrading of Informal Settlement Programme (UISP) as an important policy framework around which to engage local government. Most respondents attributed the settlement receiving electricity to Abahlali’s presence and work in ward committee meetings.
Siyanda committee members viewed the settlement’s access to water, sanitation and most recently electricity as gradually gaining a claim to and a sense of permanence on the land. They attributed the installation of electricity in 2014 to joining Abahlali. In terms of access to basic services at the relocation sites, there were mixed reviews. Most respondents were disappointed with the incomplete homes with inadequate service provision they were expected to move into. Others emphasised that while moving into top-structure houses may have improved their access to services, they had less space and privacy than the shacks and portions of land they had access to at Siyanda.

Siyanda emerged from a context where tenure security came from political affiliation. With the rural to urban migration and subsequent “neo-customary” rule over the land, the main threat to tenure for residents was the political contestation and conflict over the land during the 1990s. By the 2000s, the road reserve became a major threat to tenure security for all residents living in Siyanda, irrespective of political party affiliation. Post-construction of Dumisani Makhaye Drive, all respondents we spoke with, whether at Siyanda or at a relocation site, did not feel secure in their tenure. None of them have recovered from the removals imposed on households that were located in and around the road reserve in Siyanda.

Residents remaining in Siyanda were unhappy about the dual ownership of land between the ETA and the DHS. The task team established in 2009 to incrementally upgrade Siyanda was brought to a halt in 2012 due to the issue of land ownership. According to MaBhengu, this resulted in the DHS stating that it could not install services and bulk infrastructure onto property that it did not own, even if owned by a different government department.

Politics was articulated in four different spaces in Siyanda: settlement-level, local, municipal and juridical. At the local scale, the nature of political expression and engagement changed over time. The research tracked a dynamic articulation of local politics that impacted on Siyanda from IFP struggles for power, to democratic-era ward-based politics to alternative affiliation with social movements.

In the settlement space, organisation and mobilisation changed dramatically in Siyanda’s history from the establishment-phase customary-style appointed leadership amidst the fierce political conflict in the province, to the democratic-era elected leadership committee in the context of the optimism-infused transition, to the politics of networking with social movements when the early promises of democratic participation waned.

In the municipal administrative space, engagements occurred around several development initiatives including the construction of a freeway and the implementation of two RDP housing subsidy projects. The task team was a formal platform of engagement between community representatives and municipality, but it lost momentum and fell into abeyance. In the municipal political space, ward councillor interaction with the settlement was
both cooperative and contested in nature. This had settled into an uneasy arrangement of co-existence between settlement leadership and ward councillor at the time of writing.

The juridical space was activated by municipal failure to relocate former Siyanda residents from a transit camp to permanent accommodation, as agreed. Aside from the direct material gains of securing housing at Cornubia for the residents, the litigation also contributed to developing the jurisprudence around a legal principle that municipal office bearers may be held personally liable in the event of non-compliance with court orders.
4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to paint a picture of the local tenure arrangements and land use management practices in Siyanda by focusing on the social relations that people had to the land on which they lived, and to each other. We use the notion of tenure “arrangements” and local legitimacy rather than a narrower focus on legal forms of tenure. We set out to understand what and how local rules or norms configured tenure in Siyanda, and the authorities that underpinned them.

The chapter uses a three-part conceptual categorisation\(^2\) to unpack local tenure arrangements - “land access”, “land holding” and “land transfer”.\(^{21}\) These broad conceptual categories guided the field research questions. We investigated how tenure worked locally, including how occupation occurred initially and subsequently and how newcomers obtained access to the settlement. We considered how secure access to land was and what threatened it by

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considering what evidence existed of land holding, how non-residential land uses were managed, how succession worked (or was intended to work) and what happened when residents left temporarily or permanently. We also asked if people rented out their residential spaces or sold them, and if so on what terms. The results of this investigation allowed us to characterise the nature of local tenure in Siyanda, and by doing so we hope to contribute to a better understanding of existing practices as a basis for increased official recognition.

In the next sections of this chapter, we will consider what the residents of Siyanda told us about issues around access to land, the processes through which land holdings were recognised and uses managed within the informal settlement, and questions of transfer and succession of land. At the end of this chapter, our discussion centres on characterising local tenure in Siyanda in order to inform a better understanding of how tenure actually works in informal settlements. As we will suggest later, and in the other site-specific reports, any attempts to develop Siyanda, and other informal settlements, should take the existing local tenure and land use management practices into account.

The underlying land, over which the local tenure arrangements occurred, was publicly held. Section B in the map below was owned by the eThekwini Transport Association and section C was owned by KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements. The land parcels not owned by the Department of Human Settlements are identified as being owned by “Gem Ont Raascom Dev Board”, according to the eThekwini Planning Department.

Figure 10: Map showing registered owners of land in Siyanda, Google Maps (2017)
4.2 FINDINGS

LAND ACCESS

Given the age of the settlement, the land access narrative in Siyanda is complex, and plays out over multiple dimensions. In order to portray the history, the authorities underpinning tenure and land governance relationships over time, this section periodises land access in Siyanda from the late 1980s onwards.

Initial occupation and “invitation” in the 80s

As discussed in the previous chapter, the first person to have settled in Siyanda informal settlement is believed to have been Bonginkosi Makhubu. Upon his arrival in Siyanda in January 1988, he erected a shack and established his home there. Shortly after he had settled on the land, he began to mobilise some impoverished people to come and occupy the land with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied in Bester’s Camp informal settlement located in section M of KwaMashu, Makhubu went to mobilise in this section of the township for people to occupy with him. Having previously occupied

In much the same way as Zwelethu, a number of people took heed of this call and from the late 1980s to the early 1990s a number of families left Bester’s Camp to settle in Siyanda. These first occupants settled on a tract of land located within Newlands East on the south edge of KwaMashu. A community was in the making and the occupiers named the newly formed settlement “Siyanda MaZulu” meaning “we are increasing as Zulus” - suggesting something about the spread of Zulu (and by extension, black) people in the area.

Nobantu Bhengu commonly known as MaBhengu, a Siyanda leadership committee member, was one of the residents who settled in Siyanda in the late 80s. She was attracted to the area by the sight of people erecting structures there. She described asking permission from Makhubu. Once granted, she marked the boundaries of her new place by tying knots at the corners of the property with the overgrown grass and veld.

The research found little evidence of a local land market at this time. Bonginkosi Makhubu did not ask for money from people for their occupation of the land - although a “gratitude fee” was paid to people in the community who would assist in setting up a shack. This fee, colloquially referred to as “cold drink”, often amounted to the price of soft drink or constituted an actual bottle of soft drink. News of available vacant land spread through word of mouth and people seeing others erecting their shacks and enquiring if they could do the same.
Inkatha Freedom Party mobilisation and settlement into the 1990s

Not long after the initial occupation began, a period of organised settlement occurred under Bonginkosi Makhubu’s leadership. All long-standing respondents described this process as an intentional strategy to create an Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) aligned settlement.

Makhubu divided the settlement into three main geographic sections identified as A, B and C. At the time of the research this demarcation was still widely recognised by members of the community through local knowledge and memory. The map in the political space chapter (Figure 6 on page 32) illustrates Siyanda’s geography with these local divisions. Section A is situated opposite the formal township of Newlands East and is divided from the rest of the settlement by Inanda Road which pre-dates the settlement. Section B runs from Inanda Road to the end of the VN Naicker School for the Deaf property. The school property is enclosed within a concrete palisade barrier clearly outlining the school boundaries. Section C begins where section B ends and extends towards the beginning of the Khulula Housing Project, a Greenfields housing development for 798 households undertaken by the eThekwini municipality in the early 2000s.22

Makhubu was killed in 1990 under mysterious circumstances but occupiers suspected that it was politically motivated. A man named Zwelibanzi Gwala became the chairperson of the settlement in his place. Zwelibanzi appointed leaders, *izinduna*, to work with him. These men assisted Zwelibanzi in the task of facilitating access to Siyanda. Although respondents describe that the area was occupied in a short space of time, ongoing access occurred within the settlement boundaries, densifying Siyanda over time. *Izinduna* would show new entrants vacant sites and have the boundaries of the new place demarcated by the tying of knots once the space was accepted by the new resident. In order to gain access, residents were required to provide a gratitude fee and join the IFP. Zwelibanzi, like Makhubu before him, was an IFP loyalist and sought to grow party membership through the settlement of Siyanda. “If you didn’t want to join the IFP then you needed to go elsewhere. Siyanda was for Inkatha”, recalled Mthokosizi Mnisi, commonly known as Bab’ Mnisi, a long-term resident of Siyanda section B.

Janet Mathebula, a pensioner, arrived in Siyanda with her husband in 1990. She was fleeing from the violence that was prevalent in Bambayi, an informal settlement located in Inanda, a large township roughly 24 km North West and inland of Durban. Janet and her late husband were made aware of Siyanda through her husband’s colleague who lived there. They were then introduced to Zwelibanzi who agreed to sell them a two-roomed wooden shack located towards the entrance of the settlement for R270. The shack had been left by the previous owner whom Janet believed fled the settlement.

Zwelibanzi conducted the first enumeration in the early 90s and used it to identify and regulate the number of people in the settlement. However, the size of the settlement steadily increased with new people arriving later in the decade. Many occupiers in this period obtained access through acquaintances and people they knew from “back home” in rural KwaZulu-Natal. There was generally a strong link between families and friends that moved into Siyanda from the same village in communal areas. As Lembede, an Abahlali researcher, explained “typically when you move to the city you will search for someone who comes from the same village you come from, those are the people that will look out for you and take care of you”.

**Democratic era development and contestations over access**

During the early years of democracy Siyanda, like other informal areas in the country, was affected by the extension of the formal local structures of participation via the ward-based system that had arisen in the electoral demarcation process and the introduction of new municipal systems. In the same period, the promise, and implementation, of development projects in and around Siyanda influenced the tenure security of the occupiers.

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23 The word “Baba”, which means father in English, is used as a sign of respect towards elderly men.
By the early 2000s, Siyanda had become a settled community with established access rules and practices. However, volatility was still evident and the local system could be manipulated by people with power and authority. Access and allocation remained the focus of political contestation, in this period shaped by the local ward councillor and Abahlali.

A second process of enumeration occurred in 2009 after the relocations discussed in the previous chapter. It was undertaken with the municipality. The enumeration resulted in an agreed number of 614 households in Siyanda sections B and C and became the basis on which the committee engaged with the municipality about upgrading. These 614 households, recognised locally and administratively by the process of enumeration and its product – a list or register, were seen by the committee, and research respondents, as legitimate occupiers with a claim to development. Legitimate access to any future projects was fixed at the 614 households included in the enumeration process. Practically, this meant that people were no longer allowed to build an extra shack on their site and that no new occupation was permitted.

While the committee was effective in managing internal settlement growth via a local norm about one shack per site and a system of internal allocation, the issue of new entry was a site of considerable struggle. At the time of writing, respondents reported that access to and growth of the settlement was no longer permitted because of their aspirations for upgrading. In section B, where Abahlali was dominant, the local norm of controlling access appeared to be widely practised. According to Abahlali, “numbers come with a promise and
an expectation that a house will be received. That mentality stays with you, and then you hate someone who is trying to expand their shacks because you might say they are limiting our chances of getting houses. You can become enemies with neighbours based on this and no houses come”.

Regarding internal growth, compliance was widespread because people had shared interests in maintaining a household count of 614 in order to safeguard their upgrading prospects. For example, Mzamo Masilela, a 30-year-old man who arrived in Siyanda in 2012 from Ntuzuma, bought a house from a person who had moved to Umlazi. Mzamo wanted to be closer to his job as he was working on the road construction. In this case, a new entrant did not increase the population count as Mzamo “took over” the number of an outgoing occupier and changed the name on the register. It was therefore accepted by other members of the community.

Internal mobility was also possible as long as the numbers did not increase overall. For example, Sibongile Cele, single mother to a six year old, moved into the settlement in 2006. She came to stay with her sister, who subsequently left the settlement. Sibongile described taking ownership of her sister’s number and registering her own name on the list with the number. Sibongile later relocated her shack to a bigger plot in the settlement and took her number with her.

Although the fine-grained internal allocation process was managed locally, Abahlali recounted that the local norm was compromised by the previous ward councillor who Abahlali believed “brought new people into the settlement”. According to Abahlali, this was done in order to construct a narrative that people who were currently resident and seen locally as legitimate occupiers were “new people” who came in with the construction of the road and wanted to benefit from the new housing opportunities in Siyanda. The councillor made these allegations on national radio, describing how new people occupied the land in order to benefit from state subsidised housing. Abahlali argued that the councillor together with the municipality brought in these families to create the evidence for this story. These households had not been included in the 614 list and had not been allocated house numbers.

The land access rules made it difficult for people without strong social and political networks to find a place in Siyanda. This was true for Esther Adams who had been renting in Siyanda for seven years and was hoping to have her own property someday. A woman in her early 40s, Esther lived with her sister in Siyanda and described walking around the settlement looking for a place she could call her own within Siyanda but without any luck. If she were to find a vacant place Esther thought the correct process would then be to speak to her prospective

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24 SERI researchers were unable to interview the ward councillor at the time as agreed meetings were subsequently cancelled.
neighbours to ask them if she could settle on the piece of land. Until then, however, she would have to remain as part of her sister’s household in the eyes of the community, and only had rights to remain in the settlement through her sister.

**LAND HOLDING**

The map below illustrates Siyanda informal settlement and neighbouring KwaMashu. The black dots represent shacks within Siyanda and how they are distributed.\(^{25}\) It provides a sense of the density of Siyanda. The existing dwelling count of 614 – as captured in the 2009 process of enumeration - was meant to be managed locally, as it was understood that any additional residents would not be eligible for future development.

Enumeration was one of the more significant land management practices in Siyanda. The research found other locally configured rules such as “one shack per household”, the identification of a designated public meeting area where no one was allowed to build, and an established procedure for the transfer of property. For many, tenure security came from possession of a proof of residence letter.

\(^{25}\) This map was created using an online interactive GIS software accessible from the eThekwini municipality website available at: http://gis.durban.gov.za/gis_Website/internetsite/#top.
and from being counted as one of the 614 households who had been registered by the municipality. In this section, we consider first how these processes have created an ambivalent sense of secure tenure before turning to consider other land management practices in Siyanda including local administration of shared public space, non-residential, commercial use and building regulations.

**Tenure Security**

As reported in the previous sub-section, enumeration occurred on two separate occasions: the first in the late 90s under the IFP-aligned leadership and the second in 2009 undertaken by the municipality. Enumeration was a critical instrument for holding land. It was this second count that registered the 614 households in Siyanda who were making a claim to future development at the time of the research. However, significant contestation occurred around people who were not on the list, with several respondents alleging that the municipality and councillor allocated additional plots in order to undermine the Abahlali-aligned leadership, as discussed previously.

Nonetheless, many respondents perceived their tenure as being secure. They attributed their security to:

- A proof of residence letter; or
- A house number and having their name on the register; or
- Awareness of their right to housing, specifically that their home could not be demolished without a court order.

Proof of residence came in the form of a letter from the councillor, which respondents saw as evidence of their right to be there. Many of these letters were yellowed and frayed but people preserved them to use as proof should they need to defend their occupation. For example, Bandle Mthembu, known as Bab’ Mthembu, a man in his early 60s who had lived in Siyanda since 1993, recalled an incident where he used the letter as a source of authority legitimising his stay in Siyanda. His fence was demolished in a fight between him and some young men who were renting from him. Bab’ Mthembu allowed them to rent a space within his yard and they built their own shacks. When he tried to reconstruct his fence he was told by ward committee members that he was not allowed to do so as the place did not belong to him but to the municipality. In a challenge against this, Bab’ Mthembu referred them to the letter in his possession. He continued reconstructing his fence without further interference.
In addition to the possession of a proof of residence letter, respondents identified that tenure security was derived from being counted as one of the 614 households who had been registered by the municipality in the enumeration and who had a house number. This number could be deployed in disputes to indicate that their residence had been officially recognised.

For others, tenure security came from the knowledge that their shacks may not be demolished without a court order authorising the eviction and demolition. For example, Shaka Khumalo, a 40-year-old taxi driver, recalled a confrontation he had with municipal officials who wanted to demolish his shack. He mentioned to them that “ngeke udlize indlu enombede na ma bodo” which translates as “you cannot demolish a house with a bed and pots” and subsequently told the officials to go and apply for a court order. Shaka attributed this knowledge to his various interactions with Abahlali, especially attending their workshops.

Building regulation

Within the community, a number of local norms were established to manage the recognised households and to maintain their local legitimacy. One of the most significant local norms was that people were permitted only one shack per household and it appeared to be uniformly observed in practice. People were not permitted to erect separate, non-dwelling structures such as spazas. However, the construction of superstructures for self-dug pit latrines, which some residents opted to have in their own yards, was permitted.
While the construction of additional dwellings was not seen as an acceptable practice, extensions were locally permitted. Partitioning of existing dwellings in order to create separate rooms such as kitchens, lounges and bedrooms, was also an acceptable practice. Extensions to existing dwellings were seen as a way of accommodating adult children who had grown up in the home but needed privacy and additional space, in preference to building a separate shack. The local norm was clear to respondents: extensions needed to be attached to the main structure and not a separate dwelling. In this case, the resident would go to the councillor to inform them about their wishes to extend their current structure. The councillor would then give the resident a letter providing consent. Dingane Ntuli explained that extensions were generally not a problem because “awuvuli omunye umnyango” meaning “you are not creating another door”.

Renovation and extension were observable during the field work. For example, one household was in the process of “renovating” their shack which actually entailed demolishing it and rebuilding it from scratch. One family member explained, “constructing a shack only takes a day when one has people to assist in the construction”. Being in possession of a letter from the councillor gave them permission and created evidence to show people that “asivusi enye inumber” (we are not creating a new number). It was widely understood that you would obtain consent for extending your shack, provided that you were not adding more shacks in the yard.

**Land use management**

Other local norms applied to shared spaces and non-residential land uses. An open space in front of the crèche in section B was a designated public meeting space. In order to accommodate this community use, an agreement was reached between Abahlali and the community that no one would be allowed to build in that area. According to MaBhengu, the agreement was confirmed in a public meeting, and she noted its relationship to the decision to limit the household count to 614, presumably because it meant that the space would otherwise potentially be occupied by additional households. In addition to Abahlali meetings, the public space was also used for public meetings convened by the ward councillor and non-Abahlali members who wished to hold meetings there.

Subsistence gardening was another non-residential land use in the settlement. For example, Dingane Ntuli was one of few residents who established a vegetable garden in the settlement. He planted his approximately 30m$^2$ garden towards the end of 2016. He grew a variety of vegetables including spinach, cabbage, tomato, sugar beans, peas, pumpkin, spring onions, and a number of peach trees. He settled on a strip of land left vacant after the construction of the freeway as he was not relocated to the new housing project at the time. When the land next to him stayed vacant he decided to start growing vegetables there. He indicated that the current councillor, Mondli Zwane, made sure that there were no further occupations on the land and was in favour of his vegetable garden because
it was preventing people from using the land for housing.

As this example suggests, in addition to the local norms, the ward councillor played an important role in managing and regulating land uses in the settlement. According to Mzamo Masilela, the councillor had to be consulted for various land use decisions, especially spaza shops. Once consulted he gave the applicant a letter and that letter would be brought back to the Siyanda committee to inform them of the ward councillor’s consent.

Sometimes this process for acquiring land was reversed, and MaBhengu (previously committee chairperson) would be the first point of reference and the applicants trusted that she would inform the ward councillor on their behalf. While no longer holding the position of local chairperson, MaBhengu still played an important role in the settlement. Having been in the leadership role for over six years people held her in high regard. While some people used the new chairperson, many continued to use MaBhengu as the first point of reference. In addition to her historical role and the respect that it commanded, people also saw her access to the ward councillor as advantageous, especially for introducing business operators to the councillor and for conflict avoidance because MaBhengu owned a spaza shop herself. MaBhengu owned the only standalone spaza in the settlement.

Generally, the local norm was that spaza owners could not possess more than one shack even if the other shack was for non-residential use.
Respondents indicated that MaBhengu was an exception to the local rule due to her status in the settlement. Furthermore, while it was a norm to seek the ward councillor’s permission to start a spaza shop, this practice seemed to have been discarded as those who had started their shops in recent years claimed that they did not need permission from the councillor to start their businesses.

TRANSFER

The research revealed a strong and widespread sense of local respect for people’s claims to the land. In fact, the findings show something resembling a locally articulated right, stronger than a claim, that obtained its legitimacy through established and recognised procedures. Once acquired through the locally legitimate process, rights were seen to be vested in the family, such that a plot (over and above the dwelling) was understood to “belong” until they chose to transfer it through sale or giving it away, or through succession.

The transfer of a plot from one occupier to the next happened under a range of different circumstances and could include family members departing from the settlement and leaving their site in the hands of another family member or people deciding to leave the settlement and selling to an interested party. Gogo Ndondoloza Ngobeni’s case illustrates the former. Gogo Ndondoloza came to Siyanda through her older sister, who resided in the settlement. She arrived in Siyanda in the early 1990s and stayed with her sister for a short period until her sister decided to go back to their area of origin. Ndondoloza’s sister left the place with her as she no longer intended to return to the settlement. Mzamo Masilela’s case, on the other hand, illustrates another process. He bought his place from an unrelated original occupier who needed to relocate because of a job opportunity away from the settlement.

A locally understood procedure was in place for transfers. If an occupier wished to leave the settlement and sell their home, they informed the committee chairperson to communicate with the ward councillor about their move. When MaBhengu was local chairperson and Mandla Mtshali was the local secretary, they facilitated the buying and selling process. Many respondents indicated that the maintenance of this system required “strong leadership” and “control over what people can do with the piece of land”. The committee contended that their role in regulating land purchases and sales was necessary to minimise fraud through the multiple sale of shacks where one seller sells a single shack to many buyers. Other residents elected to go to the police station for an affidavit as proof of the sale, without engaging the committee and in some cases combining the committee communication route with the affidavit.

The committee attempted to monitor and facilitate this process by requiring that each prospective resident be introduced to them. Any new entrants into the settlement were expected to come in through an existing, departing resident who would leave the settlement upon the arrival of the new entrant. The new arrivals would adopt the house number of the departing residents. Reliance on
social networks was a way of mitigating the risks associated with strangers entering the community. Respondents indicated that occupiers had an obligation to inform the committee of their intention to leave the settlement and introduce the person who would be taking over their property if they were selling it. The municipality, in the form of the local councillor and ward committee, were also kept abreast of the developments in the community by the committee mostly through phone calls or meetings with the councillor. These communications included the buying and selling processes that took place. While largely observed in practice, the research did find evidence of non-conformity. 30-year-old Gugulethu Dlhomo bought her shack from a resident who was leaving Siyanda. The sale amount was R1 000 in 2008. Gugulethu did not feel the need to consult with the committee or any other persons besides her immediate family regarding this sale.

A number of residents who had left the settlement were also renting out their shacks. Although this was not formal transfer, it suggests that other kinds of rights to reside and use land in the settlement were sometimes in play. Esther Adams, who moved from Newlands East to Siyanda eight years previously, was renting a shack with her sister in Siyanda for which they each paid R250. Esther’s chief complaint was that the place leaked and was infested with mosquitoes. They had informed their landlord of the leakage and, although he promised to resolve it, nothing had been done at the time of the research. The sisters were informed of the
availability of the place for rent by Janet Mathebula, the absent landlord’s neighbour.

In case of death, the dwelling could be bequeathed to relatives of the deceased. This was important to people who wanted their children to have a home. Dingane Ntuli, for example, took some time to reflect on what would happen to his property should he die. He was confident that the place would remain in the care of his wife and children. Dingane presented the yellow certificate with his hand written particulars which listed all seven of his children as evidence. Dingane believed this certificate recognised his right to be on the property and guaranteed the succession of his wife and children should he die. In another instance, the dwelling had not been claimed by the deceased’s family members. While it was understood locally that the rights vested with the family members of the deceased, Jabulani Motha’s house had been vacant since Jabulani passed away. Following his death his wife and son did not want to live in Siyanda. Veld grew around it and the community were not at ease about it due to safety concerns. As a result, the community took a decision to demolish the house once they had established that the wife was not interested in living there. However, no contact had been made since then and the house remained standing as residents were cautious, even unwilling, to interfere in someone’s property. This may have also been out of fear that there might be legal action taken against them by the wife and son who were understood to be the rightful heirs. Hlengiwe Nene, who lived in a yard adjacent to that of Jabulani Motha, expressed fears about the unused plot and derelict structure: “If the place is not taken care of it’s going to be a big problem for me. There was a huge snake in that house and I am afraid that one day it might attack me”.

4.3 DISCUSSION

The research was able to identify the dynamic nature of local tenure arrangements and land use management practices. The key determinant in change can be attributed to power and authority within the settlement: in the late 1980s the IFP was on the ascendancy in the area and its authority underpinned the occupation and individual occupiers’ access to land. When the IFP’s political weight waned in the mid 90s and other authorities were brought to bear, including the ANC, Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP) and later Abahlali baseMjondolo, the occupiers were able to negotiate new practices. Throughout the settlement’s history, ordinary people have navigated their ways through, and sometimes around, the forces that were struggling for hegemony in the area. For example, in the early 1990s people reported concealing their political affiliation and going along with whatever party was likely to secure them a better life. When the early promise of democracy was tarnished by selective consultation in the housing development projects, residents aligned themselves with the non-partisan shack dweller movement because they believed it was most likely to secure them access to services.
Access to registered title occurred through a subsidy development project, such as Khulula or Cornubia, as discussed in the chapter on political space. In Siyanda, such inclusion depended on the allocation practices of the state deploying its political or administrative authority – ward councillors or municipal officials – in the context of relocation from an occupied road reserve when the time came to develop the freeway nearly two decades after settlement had taken place. Allocation also bore a relationship to litigation, in the case of the Richmond Farm relocation to Cornubia, where the court ordered the provision of permanent accommodation and the municipality was required to allocate the transit camp households to another subsidy project in the municipal area. The findings show that access to the formal property system was highly contested: by the residents who were excluded from the Khulula allocation process and “left behind” in undeveloped Siyanda sections B and C; by municipal recalcitrance regarding moving people in the transit camp to permanent, formal property; and by the conflict surrounding the officially recognised households on the register, 614 in total.

For the households that did not participate in the housing subsidy developments, who continued to live in sections B and C, their route to formal property remained reliant on obtaining access to a housing subsidy project in the future. Staking this claim hinged on inclusion into a household cohort of 614 which had achieved official recognition via the authority of the municipal enumeration process and the register it produced. Viewed in this context, contestation over the list of 614 is not hard to fathom. Neither is the outrage with which respondents recounted the alleged allocation of new sites in Siyanda by councillor and municipality, a strategy deemed to undermine the claims of the legitimate 614 rights holders to future development.

In the meantime, the tenure arrangements for those “left behind” in Siyanda were off-register and social in nature. Local norms around restricting each household to one dwelling relied on social oversight to ensure that extensions were not a cover for bringing in new people. Using a second, separate shack exclusively for business was not a locally acceptable practice. Exceptions were few and far between and justified by reference to status within the community. Transfer through sale, succession or “looking after” depended on familial networks and character references from departing residents as a means of verifying incoming occupiers.

Respondents estimated that approximately 1,000 households were living in Siyanda at the time of the research, including the 614 enumerated households. They did not see their tenure as being vulnerable to the threat of eviction. Indeed, respondents indicated feeling secure there due to the enumeration and the register it produced, the housing numbering arrangement, the proof of residence letter with an official stamp and the awareness in some case of legal protections in terms of the PIE Act. This sense of security was however balanced against the extremely contested nature of claims to future development as in the region of approximately 400
households resided in the settlement without being registered.

The state featured in Siyanda’s tenure arrangements in a range of different ways: the formal ward based political processes; the role the ward councillor shared with settlement leadership in regulating access, transfer, land use and building; the municipal enumeration; the development of subsidy housing projects at Siyanda interface, Khulula and further afield at Cornubia; the provision of alternative accommodation at Richmond Farm, Mount Moriah and Lindelani; and the construction of the freeway. The litigation around the Richmond Farm relocatees reveals a state that was reluctant, then uncompliant and finally compliant under duress. The ward councillor’s role shows an active, but far from impartial, state presence in informal settlement land governance matters, and the negotiated nature of social tenure. The state also featured as “developmental” in implementing the housing projects and road construction.

Social relations configured tenure over the history of the settlement at different scales: from reliance on families, friends and neighbours to fostering relations with the different political authorities – party, social movement and local leadership. In the early, apartheid era life of the settlement, party political allegiance played an incontrovertible role in land access and tenure security. Leadership style also meant that land governance was more authoritarian in nature than in the more recent period and it drew on notions of customary leadership to regulate the settlement. In the context of the widespread politically motivated conflict in the region at the time, life in the settlement was often unsafe and sometimes violent. History shows that in Siyanda the partisan politics gave way to organised, statutory democratic structures at local level. However, the early signs of democratic-era hope gave way to another kind of mobilisation as the Siyanda leadership networked with SDI and then Abahlali. The importance of these political dynamics for tenure and land use management lay in the changing and negotiated character of land access, holding and transfer.
5 ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The basic services theme identifies the existing provision of services in the settlement, interrogates the relative presence of the state and explores the extent and consequences of community or self-provision.

In the case of Siyanda, government-led service provision co-existed alongside self-provision of services for a significant portion of the population. Residents found services inadequate or costly to maintain in the case of free basic electricity, or inaccessible because of topography, regulations and safety in the case of water and sanitation facilities. As a result, the residents of Siyanda resorted to self-supply, connecting water and electricity themselves, digging pit latrines in their yards and burning their own refuse.

This chapter begins with an account of energy provision, followed by water and sanitation and finally refuse management. In the water and sanitation section, it pays particular attention to how communal ablution facilities installed by the municipality operated in the daily lives of residents, alongside pit-latrines. It ends with a discussion of the findings.
5.2 FINDINGS

ENERGY

In the early years of the settlement, no municipal electrical connections had been installed. At the time of writing, however, the eThekwini municipality had begun to roll out 8 Kilowatt hours (kWh) of free basic electricity to households in Siyanda, for which a R100 initial connection fee was paid by residents. This was sufficient to run lights and essential electrical appliances. Nonhlanhla Mahlangu, who had lived in Siyanda since 2003, used the prepaid electricity supplied by the municipality and reported that it cost her approximately R200 a month to recharge. Other residents cited higher recharge costs, up to R400 a month. Not all households in the settlement had been connected to the municipal grid, and residents used this reality to justify the persistence of self-connections.

Prior to the installation of these new connections, self (informal) connections were common. Even after the installation of more formal connections, municipal and self-connections co-existed. During the research, some households had both formal and informal connections while at least half of the households in Siyanda had only informal electricity connections.

Referring to self-connections, a Siyanda committee member stated, “Many more have people’s power than government power”. They also served a political purpose. Residents believed that the self-connections forced the municipality to make formal connections for them. The community also had a strong background of struggling with municipal officials who would come and disconnect their connections. Residents would self-connect immediately afterwards, thus creating an ongoing back and forth of connection and disconnection. Electricity provision was thus central to a range of political and social
struggles within Siyanda throughout the period of
the research.

WATER AND SANITATION
The way in which Siyanda residents have accessed
water and sanitation over the last few decades,
through a mix of household, community and
government led efforts, is closely linked to changes
in provincial and municipal administration, land use
and tenure issues over time.

In Siyanda, connections to municipal water supplies
were rare and – for much of the settlement’s history –
so too were municipally-provided sanitation facilities.
This meant that for the majority of Siyanda’s history,
residents were obliged to find creative ways to
access water and sanitation facilities.

Prior to the late 1990’s, government led water and
sanitation provision in peri-urban areas outside of
the Durban city council’s jurisdiction were driven by
ad hoc city health programmes and localised NGO
efforts, and included ventilated improved pit latrines
(VIPs), chemical latrines, water tankers, uncontrolled
standpipes and water kiosks.

In the mid to late 1990s, local government was
restructured and a number of smaller local councils
in the greater Durban area were amalgamated into a
single metropolitan municipality, and the boundaries
of the city were expanded to incorporate a number
of new areas. In 2000, the eThekwini municipality
transformed from a seven authority structure to
a Unicity and the metro was legally mandated to
provide basic services to all residents in its jurisdiction.

The cholera outbreak in KwaZulu Natal in August
200026 catalysed concerted prioritisation and
resource mobilisation for improved water and
sanitation provision. The eThekwini municipality
packaged a water and sanitation solution comprising
urine diversion dehydration toilets (UDDT) and 200
litre yard water tanks to all households outside of the
reach of waterborne sewage systems.27

Informal settlement households were, however,
not formalised and services delivery in informal
settlements lagged dramatically behind rural and
township areas. The residents of Siyanda survived by
purchasing water from neighbouring townships and
water kiosks, by making unauthorised connections
to communal standpipes where they existed, and by
constructing their own pit latrines. Water connections
were made and managed in ways comparable
to the making and managing of electricity self-
connections, with households pooling the costs
for piping, connections and labour and making use
of abandoned piping installed by the municipality
which was discontinued with the construction of
the highway. These self-connections were a matter
of great significance, as households without self-
connections would have to walk a few kilometres to
Newlands East to buy water for R1 per 25litre bucket.

26 By January 2002, there were 113,966 cholera cases and 259 deaths registered. See E Roma, S Holzwarth and C
Buckley, “Case study of SuSanA projects Large-scale peri-urban and rural sanitation with UDDTs, eThekwini (Durban),
South Africa” SuSanA (2011).

27 E Roma, S Holzwarth and C Buckley, “Case study of SuSanA projects Large-scale peri-urban and rural sanitation with
UDDTs, eThekwini (Durban), South Africa” SuSanA (2011).
In the late 2000’s the eThekwini municipality devised communal ablution facilities, known as “communal ablution blocks” to provide interim basic services to informal settlement residents. In an effort to manage water losses and illegal connections, the municipality reported removing or decommissioning pre-existing communal standpipes.

Household self-connections to water supply were nevertheless noted as being beneficial. Dingane Ntuli for example, who lived in Siyanda with four of his children, lived a few meters away from the municipally provided communal ablution facilities and connected a hosepipe to pre-existing communal taps in order to water his garden. Over time, Dingane began selling some of his produce to other residents. Typically, he sold spinach for R5 per full plastic shopping bag. His customers brought their own plastic bags supplied with the purchase of goods from supermarkets. He did not seek to make a profit from these sales. He described the low prices as his way of “just giving...helping the community”-“ngathi ngiyapahana...Nginceda umphakathi”, he said. Dingane said that he had up to that point not received any complaints from the community about his use of the land or the water for his vegetable garden but said he would have no problem closing it down if there were any complaints.

The eThekwini Water and Sanitation unit (EWS), a ring fenced department within the municipality, was awarded the Stockholm Industry Water Award in 2014 for its communal ablution block initiative and its transformative and inclusive approach to providing water and sanitation services. Communal ablution blocks (CABs) became a significant feature of basic services provision in Siyanda. They were constructed from retrofitted shipping containers. Each container or communal ablution block consisted of separate male and female toilets, showers, wash basins and laundry facilities, which were located on the outside of each container. They also provided a store room for the caretaker to (theoretically) store cleaning equipment and the consumables such as detergents and toilet paper. The container ablution facilities were linked to bulk water supply but there were no geyser to heat the water.

The municipality has noted that container ablution facilities are intended as interim water and sanitation services provision measures that nevertheless meet national minimum standards. Neil Macleod, former head of EWS, stated that the design life of these facilities was estimated at 5-10 years, coinciding with the estimated trajectory of formal housing provision or upgrading completion at the time. The majority of the informal settlements earmarked for future upgrading in eThekwini, including Siyanda,

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28 Rebecca Sindall et al “Municipal-academic partnerships for innovation in sanitation delivery: a case study in Durban, South Africa” unpublished paper delivered at the 41st WEDC International Conference hosted by Egerton University, Kenya (2018). p.3.

29 Pieter Crous, Communal Ablution Facilities as Interim Measure for the Upgrading of Informal Settlements, PhD, Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, University of Johannesburg (2014), p.104.
are located adjacent to bulk water and sewerage infrastructure, which can be extended into the settlement.30 The container ablution facilities are designed with bulk water meters so that EWS can monitor water demand, leaks and unlawful connections in order to reduce non-revenue or unaccounted water within the municipal area. From the perspective of the municipality, these facilities are an improvement on communal standpipes or household water tanks as the sewerage also provides for grey water disposal. In theory this reduces on-site grey water accumulation, which presents several health and environmental risks.31 The use of containers allows for off-site prefabrication and rapid installation of water and sanitation facilities in a short time with significantly less on-site labour than conventional systems. It also allows for future off-site refurbishment or removal once a settlement has been upgraded to individual, household water and sewer connections, and relocation of the container to other informal settlements.32 All of these measures guided the municipality in its decision to install CABs – rather than any other service – in Siyanda.

In 2014, 22 CABs were installed across Siyanda in eleven pairs, one of each pair marked for men and another for women. The CABs each had two showers, fitted with a door for privacy; two flush toilets with doors; two hand basins; and an additional two fitted urinals in the male containers. Attached to the outside of each container were four basins used for washing clothes and an additional stand-alone tap. At the time of research respondents roughly estimated that approximately 1 000 people were living in the settlement, which meant that each container served about 45 households, approximately 200m from each household. Officially, the CABs were designed to serve between five and 75 households within a 200m radius which meant that their distribution in Siyanda complied with design intentions and minimum standards.

The research found that community acceptance and use of the communal ablution facilities in Siyanda was mixed, with residents living closer to the facilities reporting greater satisfaction and regularity of use. Concurring with other research, this was ascribed to shorter walking distances to use the facilities while

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31 Crous, Communal Ablution Facilities as Interim Measure for the Upgrading of Informal Settlements, p.183.

32 Crous, Communal Ablution Facilities as Interim Measure for the Upgrading of Informal Settlements. In 2014, Pieter Crous investigated the whole life cycle of the Communal Ablution Blocks in the eThekwini municipality, with the aim of identifying the technical success factors in rolling out communal ablution facilities as an interim measure in the upgrading of informal settlements throughout South Africa.
carrying clothes or heavy water buckets in which residents collected water for household use.\textsuperscript{33}

Some of the concerns expressed were gendered. The women interviewed stated clearly that they did not feel it was safe to walk to communal toilets at night, regardless of whether the containers were locked and they could access the keys. As one respondent indicated, “Using toilets at night is a big problem. There are few toilets and it is far to walk especially up the hill when you need to go to the toilet or if you are sick. The toilets are locked at night because we can’t trust people not to break them”.

Distance and topography had a significant impact on the accessibility of the facilities for elderly or disabled residents as well as for young children unable to use the facilities without parental supervision. Many residents had dug pit latrines in their yards in order to mitigate distances, topography and night time accessibility and safety. As suggested above, most of the unimproved pit latrines in the settlement pre-dated the communal ablution facilities provided by the municipality. Mr Mthembu, a man in his early 60s who lived alone in the settlement, stated that, “it is better to have both [municipally provided toilet and a private pit latrine] in case you cannot use the communal toilet like at night”. Residents generally did not have any restrictions imposed on them by the municipality or local leadership in the construction of the pit latrines.

Growing up, 27-year-old Nonhlanhla’s mother was a single parent to Nonhlanhla and her younger brother. At the time of the research both had two children of their own and were all staying together in Siyanda, less than a hundred metres away from the CABs. Nonhlanhla’s family had hired someone to dig a pit latrine for them for R150. Nonhlanhla’s family used the pit latrine at night because the toilets were locked at night. Although Nonhlanhla acknowledged that she could ask the caretaker who lived a few houses from her to unlock the facilities, she said she preferred to use the pit latrine because she felt that it was inappropriate to wake people up when they are sleeping. Siyanda committee member, MaBhengu said, “In the new year we are planning to install toilets in our homes. We are planning stokvels to buy the pipes. Only toilets next to a house are safe”.

The container ablution facilities came with showers. Many of the residents, though, including Nonhlanhla Mahlangu, chose to not use them. When asked about her choice she raised safety as her concern and added that she also worried about lack of privacy. “What if a man comes in while I am bathing?” she questioned. Another female respondent, Khanyisile Mathe raised an issue with a tavern which was recently opened which faced the female entrance to the CABs. She worried about men sitting next to female showers and observing them as they entered and left the CABs. Another female respondent raised some hygiene concerns in stating her reasons for not

using them, “Asifani njengabantu ngokuncola” – “we do not all have the same hygiene standards”.

Questions related to hygiene and cleanliness were partially addressed by having the container ablution blocks serviced by caretakers. Their tasks included cleaning the facilities, ensuring that sufficient toilet paper and sanitary consumables were available, reporting leaks, blockages, or broken fittings, and ensuring that residents had access to the facilities while they were on duty.

Caretaker selection was an important and delicate issue. Caretakers were contracted on a monthly basis under the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). Caretakers were required to work four hours per day, worked over the course of a full day. Hours were logged and reported to supervisors. Typically, caretakers earned a monthly salary of R2 500. The residents of the Siyanda community went about selecting caretakers in their own way:

“We choose the poorest and then they go and be interviewed with the Ward Committee and the city supervisor. All the caretakers are women and have to look after children”- MaBhengu

Interestingly, the committee reported deciding that a new approach would be taken for the future installation of CABs whereby men would be selected to take care of the men’s facilities, women of the women’s facilities, and older people to take care of both.

The day to day work of caretakers largely involved cleaning and reporting faults. The EWS states that caretakers are provided with sanitary consumables on a monthly basis to encourage proper use of the facilities and to reduce sewer blockages from toilet paper and detergents. The caretakers in Siyanda distributed the toilet paper to the container ablution facilities using their preferred techniques, one of which was pre-cutting the toilet paper into sheets and placing them in a box or bag within each male and female facility. A review also noted that caretakers were provided with mops, brooms, cloths, and protective equipment to enable them to perform their caretaker duties.34 Although hand washing with soap is the most significant barrier to disease transmission, none of the caretakers we spoke to had received or distributed soap. Most caretakers had the required information to report faults during monthly engagements with supervisors, however some were unclear how to report faults requiring immediate attention. None of the residents interviewed knew where or how to report faults or maintenance requirements beyond engaging with the caretakers.

In addition to cleaning and maintenance, the caretakers in Siyanda played an important social role within the community. Firstly, they acted as “keepers” of the facilities, preventing vandalism and theft. Secondly, they facilitated access to the facilities outside of municipally stipulated times. According to municipal rules, the containers were to be operational between 7am and 4pm. The caretakers interviewed in Siyanda reported extending these hours and allowed for the use of the toilets until around 9pm. Even when locked at night, residents could approach the caretaker and ask for the keys when they needed them.

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34 Crous, Communal Ablution Facilities as Interim Measure for the Upgrading of Informal Settlements.
The picture on the left shows a notice put up by Busisiwe Gumede, one of the caretakers, outside a container ablution block that she looked after. She explained that the sign acted as a reminder of the operational times of the toilets as stipulated by the municipality and that she would no longer allow people without toilet paper to enter the toilets because people used other forms of paper and substances including clothes, which they then disposed of in the toilet after use. Busisiwe emphasised that she received her job as caretaker because she had previous work experience as a cleaner.

REFUSE

Municipal refuse collection occurred every Monday. Residents interviewed claimed that the truck was too small to collect all the solid waste generated, especially after a holiday period, and that many households continued to burn their solid waste. Issues with refuse collection included the increasing number of shacks and low-lying electricity wires and bad roads (particularly in the rainy reason) which made it difficult for trucks to access the settlement.

5.3 DISCUSSION

The residents of Siyanda have engaged creatively with governmental and non-governmental actors in a variety of ways over many years to bring about positive changes in their settlement, including interim basic services provision. The norms and practices that Siyanda residents established in relation to these services speaks to their relevance and fit, and to the degree of local organisation required to both secure and sustain them. Despite meeting a national standard with respect to proximity to households, households
continue for example to use self-dug pit latrines and to make household connections to water supply. This conveys an important message.

The container ablution blocks provide a creative solution to upgradable interim basic services delivery. Instead of waiting for the process of formalisation, they take a proactive approach, laying sewer lines needed to support comprehensive development in due course, while providing temporary container ablution blocks in the interim.\(^{35}\) The intention of the municipality is clearly stated: “This approach provides a significant improvement in servicing in the short-term, while signalling to shack dwellers in those settlements that the process of upgrading has begun. Moreover, through installing the bulk water and sanitation infrastructure each formalised settlement will require, this approach supports accelerated settlement development and housing delivery”\(^{36}\).

These facilities are not considered permanent, but they are an incremental step in the process of formalising the settlements and providing a full level of service to all households. Given the clear linkages between basic services and tenure, the provision of services connected to bulk infrastructure that can be upgraded in future implicitly sends an important tenure security message to informal settlement residents.

Two significant findings are evident from this research with respect to the local norms, practices and agency in engaging with the CAB model: its co-existence with ongoing self-provision and the local adaptation of the policy framework in, for example, extended opening hours and the application of local norms with respect to caretaker selection. The residents’ use and satisfaction with shared or communal ablutions was differentiated by gender and age. Aside from the on-site pit latrines that pre-dated the provision of container ablution facilities, self-provision was a risk mitigation response employed by women and children who felt unsafe using them at night and for elderly residents who found it difficult to navigate the steep terrain to access them. Social relations played a significant role in local norms related to use such as negotiating access outside of normal (or even extended) operating hours.

These findings are consistent with subject matter literature, underlining the finding that users simply do not want to share latrines. Many peri-urban residents are willing to accept smaller houses in exchange for higher levels of water and sanitation services in their homes\(^{37}\) for example.

The findings, in concurrence with the literature, show that people's primary concerns with communal facilities are personal safety, distance between households and the facilities, night time accessibility and the need for janitorial services. Communal ablution blocks require lighting and personal security measures around the facility as well as the regular

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\(^{35}\) Kathy Eales, “How utilities can institutionalise water and sanitation services to informal settlements, Case Study: eThekwini Water and Sanitation”, WSP-Africa (October 2009).

\(^{36}\) Ibid.

cleaning and maintenance procedures in order to be used effectively.\textsuperscript{38} Convenience of use, cleanliness and privacy are key drivers of a successful service.\textsuperscript{39} Government’s own polices point to the problems inherent in shared sanitation facilities. In its guideline on Sanitation Technology Options (undated),\textsuperscript{40} the then Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) stated that “Communal toilets are not recommended for large scale use as they do not meet the safety and environmental criteria for a basic level of service”.\textsuperscript{41} DWAF advised that the communal block system should only be considered for temporary use where a high level of cleanliness and maintenance can be assured.\textsuperscript{42} A Department of Human Settlements\textsuperscript{43} Ministerial Sanitation Task Team conducted a review of sanitation in South Africa and advised that the following sanitation solutions are not considered to be appropriate: unimproved pit toilets; bucket toilets; chemical toilets and communal toilets.\textsuperscript{44}

Findings related to caretakers and caretaker selection in Siyanda are important as the literature shows that shared toilets are often mismanaged because neither the local authorities nor the users accept responsibility for these facilities.\textsuperscript{45} Without effective operation and maintenance, water and sanitation infrastructure will not provide a service to end users, and ultimately presents a threat to their health and well-being. In eThekwini, the EWS provides for maintenance and repair of communal ablution facilities, but the functionality and quality of the service lies entirely in the hands of caretakers, supported by supervisors at district level and finance officers and maintenance teams at the metro level. Coordination and communication between these actors is central if the

\textsuperscript{38} Crous, Communal Ablution Facilities as Interim Measure for the Upgrading of Informal Settlements.
\textsuperscript{41} Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), “Sanitation for a Healthy Nation: Sanitation and Technology Options”, 2002.
\textsuperscript{43} In the last decade, national sanitation oversight and regulation has shifted from the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), to the Department of Human Settlements (DHS) and back to the renamed Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS).
\textsuperscript{44} Department of Water Affairs, “Report on the status of sanitation services in South Africa” (March 2012), available at: https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/Quality%20of%20sanitation%20Main%20report%20April%202012%20final%20Aug%202012.pdf.
\textsuperscript{45} Lina Taing, Neil Armitage, Nangolo Ashipala & Andrew Spiegel, TIPS for sewering informal settlements: Technology, Institutions, People and Services (2013).
facilities are to continue working. The quality of the end service received is centrally linked to the quality of the caretaker and his or her support system within the municipality.

The caretakers’ role goes far beyond cleaning. A significant part of the role of caretakers is regulatory; preventing and reporting theft, crime and vandalism, reporting faults and overseeing the use of the facilities by residents. The fact that caretakers are frequently women poses several questions with respect to the authority required to fulfil a regulatory role in the context of prevailing gender norms. It is interesting that future plans in Siyanda propose that male caretakers oversee male facilities.

Another element of life in Siyanda that the research identified was that the role of ward councillors is pivotal to maintaining basic services in the settlement. Ward councillors are key to the selection of caretakers, and for labour opportunities to residents. From our research in Siyanda, caretaker selection appeared to be well managed and engagement with ward councillors was effective. Caretaker selection in Siyanda was undertaken in close collaboration with the Siyanda committee members, but presented a possible fragility in which positive working relationships and the vagaries of party politics can easily disturb the equilibrium. Party politics plays a strong role in eThekwini generally and in Siyanda specifically, for a range of reasons addressed in the political space chapter of this report. Residents and committee members, for example, perceive that they were denied the benefits of basic services provision for so long because of the settlement’s Inkatha Freedom Party affiliation.

As evidenced by Dingane’s story, residents who need to access greater quantities of water or electricity make their own connections. One of the main constraints to the productive use of water, relevant to all shared water supply facilities, is distance from the household. As the productive use of water is often the most obvious means for poor people to escape poverty. And yet multiple use systems are rare in rural let alone urban South Africa. Systems are designed to meet the national minimum standard of between 6 and 15 Kl of potable water or 6-8 kiloWatt hours of electricity per household per month. Greater quantities of affordable water and power are needed onsite to generate income.

The messages are clear from the local norms and actions in Siyanda: people want affordable household connections to water supply, sanitation and electricity. Until this is a reality people will continue to intentionally or unintentionally disrupt municipal planning and service provision in order to secure the access they need to safeguard their security, privacy and dignity, and to use these services to generate economic opportunities. This goes beyond the notion of community preferences. Although shared facilities are conceived as a temporary measure, there are no examples in which informal settlements have been upgraded and full services provided to households. Participative upgrading including full services is not only legally binding but crucial to socio-economic stability.

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46 Van Koppen B and Smits S, “Multiple-use water services: climbing the water ladder”, unpublished IRC report, the Hague, the Netherlands, (2010).
6 ECONOMIC LIFE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The economic life chapter offers a glimpse into the livelihoods of the residents of Siyanda informal settlement: at once characterised by a sense of hope and opportunity, as well as precarity and instability. This section explores the economic life of the residents in the broader context of the City of eThekwini. It profiles the informal and formal sectors of the city’s economy, as well as the local economy which developed in the settlement itself in order to investigate the various livelihood opportunities and constraints in residents’ lives, and how they were able to sustain these under conditions of severe scarcity.

How Siyanda’s residents make a living is intimately tied to the historical context of eThekwini and South Africa’s economy. Confronted with an economic system characterised by low growth, high government debt, mass unemployment, poverty and inequality, in the early 1990s the new democratically elected government introduced two broad policy changes: the creation of jobs through macro-economic stability, fiscal discipline and export oriented growth on the one hand, and a radical restructuring of the labour market with a focus on worker rights on the other. The reasoning behind this was to create an environment that would improve the quality of employment for...
South Africans, especially previously disadvantaged groups.\textsuperscript{47}

However, this introduced a tension which firms had to grapple with - how to respond to a new set of labour regulations whilst at the same time facing increased global competition. As a result of domestic policy adjustments, the local government in eThekwini saw the shift in the structure of key economic sectors. Durban’s relatively high proportion of manufacturing sectors (clothing, textiles, footwear, primary processing of pulp and sugar), suffered immensely during the 1990s due to the opening up of the economy and its related increases in competition and declining commodity prices. Between 1993 and 1999 the two largest contributors to manufacturing employment, textiles and clothing, had negative growth levels of -2.97\% and -1.39\% respectively, with employment in these sectors halving during the same period. As a result, Durban experienced a lag in growth performance in the 1990s (2.3\% compared to Johannesburg’s 4.5\%).\textsuperscript{48} Although the City’s growth performance has since caught up, the municipality still faces major unemployment challenges.\textsuperscript{49} While there was growth in formal employment, most significantly in service activities, this limited growth has been overshadowed by substantial growth in unemployment levels, which rose steadily during the 1990s, reaching a high of 43\% in 2001 and dropping to 30.2\% in 2011. The youth unemployment rate in the eThekwini municipality is 39\%. The high levels of unemployment are also witnessed in the growing numbers of people resorting to informal activities for survival.\textsuperscript{50} The eThekwini municipality has estimated that approximately one in four employed persons in the metropolitan region are working informally.\textsuperscript{51}

To contextualise the economic relationships within families and between neighbours in the settlement, the section begins with a brief discussion on the reasons residents moved to Siyanda informal settlement. What follows is an analysis of the livelihood strategies employed by residents comprising of economic activities outside and within the settlement. The research revealed that the people of Siyanda exercised considerable agency in making a living and adopted different livelihood strategies - some in the formal and informal economies outside of the settlement, (domestic workers and security


\textsuperscript{48} Glen Robbins, “eThekwini Municipality’s economic development-related capital programmes: Improving the prospects of the urban poor?” Africa Insight, 35 (4) (2005), p. 64.

\textsuperscript{49} Only since 2001 has Durban’s growth performance caught up and surpassed national GDP growth, growing at 4.2\% between 2001 and 2002.


guards), and some in the informal economy that had emerged within the settlement. Although practices such as informal recycling, dress making and selling baked goods existed in the settlement, the informal economy within the settlement was dominated by *spaza* shops. Social grants were recognised as the most pervasive and reliable form of income for the residents of Siyanda while other households relied on remittances from family or friends from outside the settlement. Additionally, the residents of Siyanda formed *stokvels* as a strategy to mitigate economic insecurity.

The section then offers an account of the life history of one of Siyanda’s long-term residents, MaBhengu, an exceptional story, to provide an example of how opportunities within an informal settlement can be leveraged, and lead to an improvement in a household’s economic standing.

Lastly the section offers a discussion on the economic life of Siyanda which reviews the livelihood strategies of residents, unpacks opportunities and constraints and compares economic life in the informal settlement with that in the formal housing projects where some residents were relocated.

### 6.2 FINDINGS

**THE “MAKING” OF SIYANDA**

Throughout the social, economic and political vicissitudes of the last few decades, the number of people moving from rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal to live in informal settlements on Durban’s peripheries rose from 5.1% of total households in 1996, to 13.7% in 2001. In 2016, it was estimated that approximately a quarter of eThekwini Municipality’s total population of roughly 3.5 million people resided in informal settlements. While it is widely acknowledged that informal settlements and the processes that lead to their formation and perpetuation are not well understood, gaining access to economic opportunities is chief among the reasons millions of households in South Africa live in informal settlements.

During the course of the research project, at the start of conversations with residents we asked two questions:

“Where are you originally from?” and

“Why did you move to Siyanda?”

Responses to the first question revealed that a significant portion of residents had migrated from villages on Durban’s periphery and across KwaZulu-Natal. Some of the places mentioned were villages

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52 Informal savings clubs.

53 Glen Robbins, “eThekwini Municipality’s economic development-related capital programmes”.


in Durban like eZimbokodweni; villages in towns outside Durban like Greytown, Port Shepstone, Pietermaritzburg and Umzimkhulu; villages in towns a few hours away from Durban like Hluhluwe in the North and Mkomazi in the West. A few of the participants came from as far as the Eastern Cape.

In response to the second question, “Why did you move to Siyanda?” the majority of participants in the study stated that their reasons were related to finding work and economic opportunities. Some of the responses included:

“To get closer to jobs”- Olwethu Mbele, a security guard.

“I come from a farm in Greytown... I came to look for a job”- Velaphi Sithole, a 32-year-old unemployed man.

“I’m not sure but they (my parents) probably came for work”- Amahle Mkhwanazi, a 26-year-old hairdresser.

“I moved from Port Shepstone to live with my mother who was then working as a domestic worker in Durban”- Solomon Phewa, a member of the Siyanda leadership committee.

The movement of people to Siyanda, therefore, was affected by “push” factors like high unemployment, poor economic conditions and the lack of opportunities in rural KwaZulu-Natal and “pull” factors towards Durban like opportunities for better employment and access to schools, hospitals and other amenities.

While the reasons behind the migration of more recent arrivals were based on accessing economic opportunities, speaking to older community members, those who were amongst the first to move to Siyanda, revealed that there were political motivations involved in the establishment of the settlement. At the forefront of this were Bonginkosi Makhubu’s efforts to create an IFP stronghold in Siyanda.

One of the people who responded to Makhubu’s call was Mthokosizi Mnisi, who moved from Kwa Mashu after getting married, and set up a home for his new family in Siyanda. Having lived in Siyanda since 1988, he shared a few of his thoughts and insights about the economic life of Siyanda during the transitional period of the late 1980s and early 1990s and shed light on the influence of the economic context described in the above section on the lives of the residents. Below is an excerpt of his own experience and thoughts on economic life, as translated and summarised by one of the Abahlali researchers:

In the 1980s and 1990s there were plenty of economic opportunities, unlike now. The people living in Siyanda were employed all over Durban, at factories, by government, at the bus companies like BABS and Newline. Some people worked as domestic workers, some at wholesalers like Cambridge. To support his family, Mthokosizi used to sell “aMagwinya” and tripe around the settlement and put his three children through school that way.

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56 South African traditional fried bread.
In the early 1990s many of the factories where many people in Durban were employed, closed down due to the political and economic instability at the time. Others closed down because of the unions who were demanding more pay for workers and others obtained more advanced technology which led to the retrenchment of many people.

Bhekizizwe Ncube, Mthokosizi’s friend who moved to Siyanda in 1989, stated that he too was retrenched when the brewery he was working for replaced coal with electricity. BABS and Corobricks also closed down.

Things are much worse now when compared to the 1980s, during Apartheid. The only difference is that then, black people were paid less than white people for the same job. However in those days, all one needed was a “pass” which was simple to get from Home Affairs. Black people are worse off now.

LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF THE PEOPLE OF SIYANDA

South Africa has a large population of what Tania Li describes as “surplus people”- those who have been expelled from agriculture production but not incorporated into industrial working classes. The decline in the demand for low-skilled manual labour throughout the 1990s and rising unemployment has resulted in wages no longer being the dominant way for poor households to access income. This section describes the different activities through which residents of Siyanda accessed an income. The first part titled, “economic activities outside the settlement” describes the activities of a small portion of the Siyanda population who have managed to find jobs in the “formal” economy as wage labourers outside of the settlement. The second part titled “economic activities within the settlement” looks at what Ferguson describes as “loosely structured improvisations” or “survival strategies” that enable families in Siyanda to survive one day to the next. It also examines the occurrence of small tuck shops, called “spaza shops” and small savings schemes, “stokvels”, in the settlement. Lastly, this section explores activities rooted in the acquisition of distributive outcomes, that is accessing or making claims on the resources of others, through social grants and remittances.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF THE SETTLEMENT

At the time of writing, the economy of the eThekwini Municipality was centred on the transport and logistics activities of the Port of Durban, domestic and export-oriented manufacturing and tourism. Some of the residents of Siyanda had managed
to find work as wage labourers, particularly in the manufacturing sector, working at factories in industrial areas like Avoca Hill and Phoenix. Others worked in the retail and wholesale sector, finding employment in retail chains like Shoprite in neighbouring suburbs Parlock and Newlands, and a significant number were employed in Phoenix: at wholesalers in Crossing, at Bridge City, the new mall in Phoenix, as construction workers at a public hospital undergoing construction, and at a Coca-Cola factory. Others had found work in the central business district like Thulisile Thusi’s husband who worked at the Mr Price in town.

The kinds of work residents engaged in was largely gendered. Several men from Siyanda like Olwethu Mbele, Phila Mchunu, Lindokuhle Biyela and Lunga Khuzwayo were either employed as security guards by private security companies based in Durban at the time of the study, or had previously worked as security guards.

A significant number of women in Siyanda were employed as domestic workers in neighbouring “middle class” suburbs like Newlands, Parlock and Avoca. Although recognised as “formal” and included in labour legislation, domestic work for the most part is characterised by informality due to its location in private households. The following stories provide a glimpse into the lives of the domestic workers who participated in the study.

Since moving to Durban from the rural areas after completing Grade 12, 30-year-old Nqobile Kubheka worked a string of jobs to support her family. She lived in Mayville, Richmond Farm and Khulula housing development before settling in Siyanda where “rent is cheap”. She previously worked as a waitress but she found her current job while working at a construction site. One of the sub-contractors on the site, a woman, decided to hire Nqobile to work for her as a domestic worker in her home in Avoca, as she felt that Nqobile’s job as a cement mixer was too onerous for a woman. Nqobile was working three days a week and earning R700 per month. She was happy with this as it was “better than nothing” and she generally found her employer quite neat and clean.

22-year-old Thobeka Dladla was living with her toddler daughter in a small shack in Siyanda. Her mother died in 2004 and her father died six years later, in 2010. They had moved to Siyanda from a village in Pietermaritzburg in the early 1990s before Thobeka was born. Thobeka worked as a domestic worker in Sunshine Park, Parlock. She was working three days a week and earning R1,680 per month. She spent R14 on transport every day she worked. Her sister Ayanda did not have any transport costs as she walked to her work in Newlands, where she was also domestic worker. Thobeka liked her job “because it is stable”. Her future plans included completing her Matric through night school held at VN Naik School of the Deaf, and saving up enough money to study social work.

Sindisiwe Nkosi was 29 years old and was originally from Ixopo in Umzimkulu, two hours away from Durban. She moved to Siyanda in 2014 to find work. She was working as a domestic worker for two households: two days at a house near Pavilion and another two days at a house in Greenwood Park. Both households were paying her R130 per day.
but she was frustrated as she spent a total of R420 per month on transport, “I am working the whole month, I am working for nothing!” In Siyanda, she stayed with her younger sister Jabulile who moved in with her in July 2017 but she had three children “back home” in Ixopo who were being cared for by her aunt.

While the women in the preceding profiles were relatively young, women from Siyanda across the age spectrum worked as domestic workers. Given the high levels of unemployment in the settlement, especially amongst women, many of the domestic workers interviewed stated that they were grateful to even have a job.

A concern for domestic workers, as for all who worked outside of the settlement, was transport costs. Although Siyanda is closer to Durban’s economic nodes than the villages and townships from which they originate, residents employed outside of the settlement incurred significant transport costs. Sindisiwe, for example, spent nearly 45% of her R700 salary on the R26 taxi fare she spent every day she needed to go to work. Transport was less burdensome but still significant for those working in the neighbourhoods close to Siyanda like orphaned sisters Buhle and Charmaine Mvelase, waitresses at a catering company in Parlock. They earned R150 per shift and spent R14, about 10% of income per shift, on transport. Olwethu Mbele, the security guard, spent R250 per month on transport.

Transport costs also posed a significant challenge to those residents looking for jobs outside of the settlement. Velaphi Sithole, originally from Greytown, was unemployed at the time of the study and searching for work as a plumber in places like La Lucia and Umhlanga. He spent between R20 and R25 on transport every day he left the settlement to look for a job. Sindisiwe Nkosi’s younger sister Jabulile shared that she had spent a lot of money on transport since that July. Having studied Farm Management at Esayidi Tvet College in Ixopo, she had been taking taxis travelling all over Durban in search of a job.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE SETTLEMENT

Due to the constraints to growth and employment in the Durban economy, the city’s informal economy has significantly expanded: according to a report by Durban’s Economic Development Department and Monitor, the employment growth in the formal economy between 1996 and 1999 was 1.4% while employment growth in the informal economy was between 11-19.5%. Informal economic activities also occur in informal settlements where there are high levels of poverty and unemployment.

In response to the lack of employment in Durban’s formal economy an informal economy had emerged over the years in Siyanda. People utilised their skills, financial and social assets, and natural resources to contribute to the slow-moving but essential local economy in the settlement. While
one found a range of products and services like fridge repairs, printing and scanning services, large taverns, day care centres and live chicken sales across the road in Siyanda section A, the economic activities in the informal settlement were more modest and were better described as “loosely structured improvisations” or “survival strategies”. Nevertheless a degree of diversity was found in the economic activities of residents.

Some residents used natural resources in the settlement to sustain their livelihoods. For example, Mr and Mrs Ncube worked on a small piece of land on the edge of the settlement, adjacent to the R577. Bhekizizwe Ncube (Mr Ncube) had lived in Siyanda since 1989 and used to work in a brewery in Newlands East. The Ncubes and several other women, who were all unemployed at the time, started a vegetable garden in 2014. They planted vegetables like spinach, carrots, tomatoes, potatoes and cabbage, which they sold to customers in the settlement. The selling price of the vegetables depended on their size but they were generally sold in small packs or bunches, starting at R5. The vegetable garden was also a source of subsistence for the family and they were unable to estimate how much they made in a month as they used the money they made daily, almost immediately. To add to the family’s income, Nolwazi Ncube (Mrs. Ncube) made and sold three-piece beaded jewellery sets for R450 per set. She used R250 from her sales to contribute

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62 James Ferguson, *Give a man a fish*, p. 94.
to a groceries stokvel. The Ncubes and their friend Mthokosizi Mnisi were the only ones left working on the garden.

The lack of space in the settlement restricted the potential for the Ncube’s garden to expand and more generally for small scale agriculture activities to occur. There was no livestock in the settlement, except for a few broods of chickens used mainly for subsistence purposes. Mbalenhle Ncgobo, a domestic worker employed in Sydenham, had a chicken coop in her backyard and sold chickens to residents in the settlement for R80-R100 each. At one point, a man named Mr Dube brought his cow to the settlement but because of insufficient space, he sent it back to a field near Kwa Mashu. Despite these rare exceptions, the lack of available land constrained the livelihood opportunities of the people in Siyanda.

Some women managed to use knowledge and skills taught to them in childhood to make a living. Khethiwe, a woman in her 50s, was one of these. She had been working as a seamstress for over twenty years. She made women’s dresses and skirts using traditional African material which she purchased in town. Her customers came from both within the settlement and outside of it, with some placing orders from as far as the Eastern Cape. A few times a month Khethiwe went into Durban’s markets and taxi ranks to advertise and sell her merchandise. In a month, she made between R500 and R600.

Another was Amahle Mkhwanazi - a popular hairdresser in the settlement. She had dropped out of her financial management course at Academy, a private higher learning institution in Durban, a few years before because her parents could no longer afford to pay for her fees. To make money, Amahle worked at Honcho’s, a fast food chain, for three months. Then she worked in a shoe factory in Avoca Hills. Finally, she decided to use her hair braiding skills to start her own business. She worked from her parents’ shack and her only expense was wool which cost R7 per pack at a spaza shop in the settlement, as she asked her customers to bring their own hair pieces. Customers paid R35-R50 for “snoopy” depending on their head size; and R80-R150 for braids depending on the length. Amahle made between R1 500 and R2 000 each month. She had about twenty regular customers who came from all over Durban through her social networks. Her main challenge was that those who were unfamiliar with the settlement sometimes found it hard to find Siyanda and once they arrived, had difficulty finding her shack. She solved this by simply directing them over the phone using key landmarks and signs. Another challenge was that some customers came to her with insufficient funds; she turned those who were not regular customers away. December, which she looked forward to, was the busiest time for Amahle because people “have extra money and want to look good during their Christmas holidays”. Amahle had aspirations of owning her own hair salon one day.

Nkazimulo Gabela hailed from Umtata and moved to Siyanda in 2013 to look for a job. After losing her job working at a factory after only a few months, Nkazimulo decided she would bake muffins to sell in the settlement. Using a portable oven, she baked

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63 A type of popular hairstyle which involves braiding hair.
different flavoured muffins which she was selling for R2 each. For occasions like weddings and funerals, some of her customers ordered 20 litre buckets filled with muffins, which she sold for R280 per bucket. In a month she made around R1 000 and used some of it to buy more baking goods at the Shoprite and Pick’n’Pay in Kwa Mashu or Parlock (“whereever there is a sale”). Nkazimulo knew of only one other person in the settlement who sold baked goods. She managed to save a few hundred rands here and there, and hoped to save enough so she could go back to school and expand her business.

Others, like Dinah Msomi, did the best they could to survive, due to a lack of education and skills. Dinah, a woman in her 50s, made a living through informal recycling, collecting glass, plastic, tin and cardboard materials littered across the settlement which she stored in her house. After four to six weeks, once they were filled up, she would take the bags to a recycling centre in nearby Parlock. She received between R250 and R350 depending on the weight of the bags.

**SPAZA SHOPS**

*Spaza* shops (tuck shops) made a considerable contribution to the economy of the settlement. Typically, a *spaza* shop was a small structure made of corrugated iron sheets adjoining the home of the owner except in the case of MaBhengu, the former chairperson of the Siyanda committee, who had a freestanding shack for her *spaza* in the same yard. Although the *spaza* shops varied in size, the majority were small shops which sold simple items like bread, fruit and vegetables, snacks and sweets, and loose cigarettes. Larger *spaza* shops sold an assortment of products ranging from small grocery items like tinned food, maize meal, rice, sugar, milk and oil; household products like dishwashing liquid, washing powder, toilet paper, insect spray; toiletries like soap, body cream, anti-perspirant, sanitary pads and toothpaste and; miscellaneous items like super glue, methylated spirits and shoe polish. There were eight *spaza* shops in Siyanda section B, south of Dumisani Makhaye, bordering the V N Naicker School for the Deaf. One person from each of the eight spaza shops was interviewed, five out of eight *spaza* shop owners were interviewed and the remaining three were represented by relatives of the owners, each of whom who assisted in running the shop.

The information and insights shared in this section of the report come from conversations with:

**Solomon Phewa**  
Siyanda leadership chairperson, who started his spaza shop in July 2017;

**Phila Mchunu**  
a 39-year-old old former security guard who left his job and established his spaza shop in 2013;

**Lungelo Masina**  
a 34-year-old man, also previously a security guard who started his business in 2014;

**MaBhengu**  
a 60-year-old matriarch in the settlement. Her spaza shop, started in 2011, was arguably the most successful spaza shop in the settlement;

**Lindokuhle Biyela**  
originally from neighbouring Newlands West but moved to
Siyanda in 2016 to start and run his spaza shop;

**Zanele Ncgobo** a 21-year-old woman who assisted in her uncle’s spaza shop;

**Sifiso Mabaso** a young man who assisted with his uncle’s spaza which was the oldest one in the settlement having been established before the year 2000 and;

**Khethiwe Ndaba** a seamstress in her 50s, who took the time to participate in the interview on behalf of her daughter who was busy in her shop. Their shop was the only one in the settlement that sold ice cream.

The discussions with the spaza shop owners and assistants explored themes related to running a spaza shop in Siyanda, namely, starting the business; operations (stock, sales and savings); and challenges.

**Starting a spaza shop**

To set up a small business like a spaza shop, a few owners said that they had sent an application letter to the ward councillor who managed land uses in the settlement and then consulted the Siyanda leadership committee. During the research period, this practice seemed to have been discarded as those who had started their shops in recent years claimed that they did not need permission from the councillor. They had simply bought the materials needed to set up shop.
A substantial amount of financial capital was needed to establish a spaza shop in Siyanda. Owners spent between R3 500 - R5 500 to set up their shops. Solomon spent a total of R3 500 to set up his shop (R2 000 for the materials to build his stall and an additional R1 500 for stock). Lungelo started his with R4 000, MaBhengu used R5 000 and Lindokuhle used R5 500. None of the owners had used bank loans as start-up capital. Instead, all had used savings from previous employment and other sources of income. Solomon used money from his disability grant and savings from his previous job as a taxi rank manager. MaBhengu had saved around R500 every month from the money she received monthly from her late husband’s estate. Phila, Lungelo and Lindokuhle had all used their savings from their previous jobs as security guards, with Lindokuhle also using money from his severance package. Khethiwe’s daughter, also a seamstress, used savings from money she made as a seamstress to start her spaza shop.

**Operations**

The focal point for most of the spaza shops in Siyanda was generating recurring income, ensuring that their businesses were generating a profit. The most significant expenses for the spaza shops were transport costs associated with the replenishing of stock. All the spaza shop owners purchased their stock at Crossing in Phoenix. Solomon occasionally bought stock in town when he could get lifts from some of his friends to cut down on transport costs. Owners had two options of travel to Crossing: they could either use the local taxi service, spending a total of R14; or hire a van for between R100 and R200. Owners hired vans for large purchases and used the taxis when making smaller purchases. Khethiwe and her daughter never hired a van as it was too expensive. Solomon replenished small items like tomatoes and chicken every two to three days; Phila and Lindokuhle purchased stock once a week and Lungelo, like Solomon, re-stocked every two days. Phila faced a unique challenge due to his shack’s location in the settlement, because there was no road access to his shack. The van he hired had to be parked on the R577 a short distance from his home, and he had to carry heavy stock on foot. Phila also had to pay his neighbours to assist him to carry the stock from the van to his shop.

It was difficult to extract information related to revenue and profits. This was for two reasons: firstly, topics on personal finances are generally delicate and, secondly, most of the spaza shop owners had limited bookkeeping skills. For example, the majority were unable to state how much profit they made each month, preferring to state how much revenue they make per day or per week. Most of the spaza shop owners stated that the profit they made was not substantial. Phila estimated that he made between R500 and R600 per week, and Lindokuhle estimated between R700 and R800. Sifiso estimated that his uncle’s shop generated about between R200 and R300 per week day and around R600 to R700 on weekends. Khethiwe stated that the shop made between R120 and R180 per day, while Lungelo indicated that he made around R3 000 per month. Generally, they made more money on weekends and at month end. Some shop owners like Lungelo and MaBhengu made extra money through other means. For example,
Lungelo transported school children in his “bakkie” to Newlands and charged R200 per child.

Few of the spaza shops were profitable, in that their revenues were not sufficiently greater than expenses. Most of the spaza shop owners lived hand to mouth and were only able to save a little if anything. Solomon saved about R100 to R150 every month, Lindokuhle was only able to save “a little” and Lungelo did not have any savings. MaBhengu was an outlier, as she had been able to save money not only to expand her business, but also to venture into the taxi business. Her story is discussed in a later section. In an effort to generate more income, a few of the spaza shops, like Mdu’s uncle, sold alcohol on weekends. Because they did not have licenses to sell alcohol, spaza shops in Siyanda were subject to police raids occasionally. In response to police harassment, some paid the police bribes to keep their weekend activities going. Solomon at some point in his entrepreneurial endeavours used to sell alcohol, but stopped. The reason he gave was, “My heart broke when I saw men come in with their entire salaries, and spend all of it on alcohol. My mind always went to their wives and children”. Additionally, fights would often ensue and someone would get stabbed or killed, and for the spaza shop owners having to give statements at the police station time and again was an extra stress.

Another avenue used by spaza shop owners to generate extra income was to sell products to customers on credit. At the end of the month, when many residents received grant money, they repaid their debt to spaza shop owners. For some owners, selling on credit was not merely a way to make money. All but one of the spaza shops charged interest for items bought on credit. For MaBhengu, the owner of the largest and most successful spaza shop in Siyanda, offering customers groceries on credit was an act of kindness on her part as she was sympathetic to those dependent on grants for an income. However, should a customer default on a payment, MaBhengu would confront them directly. She might give them some time to pay, but would discontinue the credit relationship should they fail to pay their debt. Phila and Zanele did the same. Solomon allowed customers to buy on credit and sometimes gave discounted prices, because he understood their financial situation, “many are unemployed and do not have money”. Some defaulted on their payments and to this he replied, “Because I am a man of God I can’t complain”. On the subject, Lungelo lamented “some people run away with the money but there is nothing you can do”. Lindokuhle only sold to pensioners on credit because he had confidence they would pay at the end of the month when they received their pension grant. He believed young people “have too many stories when it is time to pay”. Lindokuhle charged an extra R1 on credit sales. Khethiwe did not sell on credit at all.

**Challenges and opportunities**

There were many challenges to running a business in Siyanda. All the spaza shop owners agreed that access to better quality electricity connections would help to improve the functioning of their businesses. Phila’s unlawfully connected electricity caused damage to his fridge. Another challenge for spaza shops in the settlement was crime: Lungelo
was robbed of his money and cell phone at gunpoint early in 2017. All spaza shops had burglar bars installed at the front window.

The spaza shop owners were undaunted, however. In a focus group with a few of the spaza shop owners, MaBhengu suggested the idea of forming a business association in Siyanda. The group discussed the advantages of collaboration between the business owners of Siyanda, which included discounted prices for inventory purchased in bulk at wholesalers and the significant reduction on transport costs. MaBhengu also shared her thoughts about the political clout and legitimacy an association would carry if it was recognised and operated at ward level. She believed that an effect of such a collaboration would be economic growth in the settlement and a decrease in unemployment.

**STOKVELS**

Residents of informal settlements experience severe livelihood shocks and stresses. The residents of Siyanda used several strategies and tactics to mitigate (to some extent) these, most significantly investing in saving schemes called stokvels. Many of Siyanda’s residents, predominantly women, participated in stokvels, which are essentially rotating credit unions or saving schemes, where members contribute fixed sums of money to a central fund on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.\(^{64}\) Generally stokvels are used as a strategy to mitigate against poverty and as such participation in stokvels tends to drop during periods when members are doing “well” financially. Some residents such as Dinah, the informal waste recycler, her neighbour and single mother Nobantu Buthelezi, and girlfriends Zandile Nyawo, Zodwa Tshabalala and Sihle Hlatshwayo (all in their 30s) simply never had enough money to participate in a stokvel.

**Stokvels** in the settlement differed in size and formality. The example of the stokvel set up by Thobeka Dladla, the 22-year-old domestic worker and her sister illustrates this. Every alternating month, one sister gave the other R700. Some stokvels had small membership numbers. Others were slightly larger. Sindisiwe Nkosi, for example, “plays” stokvel with seven others who each contributed R100 while Nandi Mdabe was part of a stokvel of five who each contributed R500 each month.

Three older women, MaBhengu, Thabisile Zwane and Zenzile Mgaga, all pensioners, participated in a focus group interview about the functioning and activities of the two stokvels they were members of, as well as a third that only MaBhengu belonged to. The following findings are some details about their activities shared during the focus group interview.

Their primary stokvel started in January 2015, when MaBhengu came up with the idea. It had twelve members, men and women, and was limited to that number because they wanted to make it such that each person received a pay-out once a year. Six of the members lived outside of the settlement, in Newlands and other parts of Durban. Every month they gathered at MaBhengu’s house, where she

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also served as the secretary and chairperson. Each member contributed R1 000 per month and the recipient of the pay-out left with R11 000 at the conclusion of the meeting. The members found stokvels very useful for them because it enabled them to save and purchase larger household items. Thabisile used her savings to buy a bed, fridge, wardrobe, sofas and cupboards. In deciding to join, she thought about all the larger items she needed to buy and concluded that a stokvel would help her to facilitate the process. “Stokvels allow you to buy things in cash. Paying through instalments is expensive”, she said. They shared that people in the informal settlements generally found it difficult to use savings accounts. Zenzile was happy to join a stokvel as she thought it would help to pay her debts of large amounts. They have never experienced a default on payment.

For MaBhengu, saving was a significant part of her life. When she saw how saving helped her, she encouraged others in the settlement, telling them “just save R1 from each R10 you get”. The stokvel money had also assisted during emergencies, like when Thabisile’s son-in-law passed away. The members of the stokvel felt that the next step would be to build brick houses with the money they have saved.

The three participants of the focus group were also members of a second stokvel based in Newlands. This stokvel was much larger, comprising of between eighty and ninety people. Each member contributed R250 every month, from January until November. In December the sum of all the contributions was used to purchase groceries in bulk at a wholesaler. Each member would then receive an identical package of groceries, which ranged from food to household items like dishwashing liquid.

Finally, MaBhengu was also a member of another stokvel that was solely for meat purchases. Each member contributed R100 per month and at the end of the year the group loaded the cash into a card at a specific wholesaler butchery, which allowed them to buy from there.

GRANTS AND REMITTANCES

The most wide-spread and reliable form of income for the residents of Siyanda was social grants, in particular pension and child support grants. According to residents the majority of households in the settlement that had children received a child support grant. The other grants that were most important to livelihoods in the settlement were the grant for older persons and the disability grant. This was evidenced during the course of the research, in interviews and during field observations when, one morning, the settlement was quiet as a significant number of people went into town, SASSA card in hand, to collect grant money. This fact was also generally acknowledged by residents. Social grants were increasingly becoming an important source of income for sub-dependents, those who depended on beneficiaries of social grants. In Siyanda, as James Ferguson has remarked in another context,

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Grants do not necessarily make up the major part of a household’s income (although this is often the case). Sometimes other forms of income, from employment for instance, bring more money into a household on a monthly basis. Grants, however, were invariably the most dependable form of income for Siyanda households. The predominance of social grants in Siyanda reflects national trends in South Africa since 1994, which have seen the elaboration of a vast system of non-contributory social benefits that now transfers 3.4% of GDP every year directly to 44% of South African households. For the poorest 10% of South African households, social grants now make up 85% of household income, up from 73% in 2008 and 15% in 1993. Furthermore, it has become the norm in grant trend analysis that KwaZulu-Natal has the highest number of social grant beneficiaries, with a total of 3,919,193 beneficiaries in 2015, 23.2% of the total number of grant beneficiaries on a national scale.

Another source of income for many residents was remittances - the transfer of any goods or money from outside the settlement. Residents used various social ties between themselves and family or partners outside of Siyanda to access this form of income. While “dependence” is traditionally viewed as a passive condition, making claims on the resources of others through remittances, Ferguson argues, should be seen as a valued outcome of long, hard social labour. The experiences of people in Siyanda confirm this.

In Siyanda, there were incidences of residents in the roles of both “donors” and “recipients” of remittances. For example, Bhekizizwe Ncube, Siyanda resident since the early 2000s, used his pension grant to send remittances of R500 each month to his first wife and family who lived in the rural areas. Security guard Olwethu Mbele sent R2,000 of his R3,200 salary to his parents and relatives. 32-year-old Velaphi Sithole sent money to his family in Greytown when he managed to get “piece jobs”. Velaphi’s friend, 41-year-old Simangaliso Ntshaba, on the other hand was unemployed at the

66 James Ferguson, *Give a man a fish*, p. 104.
70 James Ferguson, *Give a man a fish*, p. 97.
time of research and relied wholly on the R1 500 he received each month from a relative. Even though 42-year-old Nandi Mdabe ran her own business selling clothes, cushions and curtains, she received an additional R1 000 each month from her daughter. 30-year-old Zandile Nyawo was unemployed but received support from her boyfriend and child support grant for an income. She received R1 000 in remittances from her mother in the Eastern Cape.

MaBhengu’s story

Amongst the many interviews conducted during the study is a life history interview with MaBhengu, the settlement’s matriarch and a successful spaza shop owner. The life history of MaBhengu is an example of how a household’s economic standing can be improved by moving to an informal settlement, taking advantage of the opportunities to earn a living within the settlement and how ultimately an informal settlement can serve as a “ladder out of poverty” for some. Of course, MaBhengu’s story of relative economic success was an exception; very few households in the settlement managed to achieve this level of financial success.

Her story carries universal themes that touch the lives of Siyanda residents and it serves to illuminate social issues that have an influence on the livelihoods of women living in the settlement, namely incidences of domestic violence, discontinuation of secondary school education and the resulting economic dependence on men for a livelihood.
MaBhengu was born in 1957 in a village in Nkandla, KwaZulu-Natal. Growing up, her father worked at Johannesburg General Hospital as a cleaner while her mother stayed behind in KwaZulu-Natal to raise her and her five siblings. In 1974, MaBhengu’s father died while she was still in high school. Life after that point was difficult and MaBhengu’s mother supported the family by growing maize in her yard and selling it for a profit.

MaBhengu did not complete her high school education. She dropped out at standard 9 and married soon afterwards. She moved from Nkandla to live with her husband in Estcourt. They later moved to Inanda, a township near Durban to be close to her father-in-law. They lived in a large house with five rooms.

Together, MaBhengu and her husband have two children. MaBhengu has a third child, her first born who stayed behind in Nkandla after her marriage. Her husband had “a good job” working as a driver for the Department of Public Works. The family was relatively financially stable. Their marriage on the other hand was less than stable, and MaBhengu stated that it was not a good marriage. Her husband drank a great deal and would get violent. He physically abused MaBhengu. In 1988 MaBhengu fled to Siyanda with her two children. After describing her ordeal of domestic violence she said “... and that is why I ended up here in the settlement... I left everything”.

Upon arrival in Siyanda, MaBhengu and her children lived in a one room shack. To support her family she worked a string of temporary jobs at the factories near Siyanda. The next year her son was diagnosed with a mental illness. In 1991, MaBhengu’s husband found them and the two briefly reunited. After a few months the beatings started again and MaBhengu fled again to another one room shack in Siyanda section C. She had very little contact with her husband after that but received some money from him. When he suddenly died of a heart attack in 1994, MaBhengu’s financial situation deteriorated.

MaBhengu was not able to describe much of what her life looked like between 1994 and 2008. She was unemployed for most of this period and survived on her husband’s death benefits. She says, “Everything was upside down... but I survived”.

In 2009, MaBhengu joined Abahlali baseMjondolo, and after participating in its activities for a few months she declared that her “mind was opened... I realised that I needed to stand on my own and not depend on anyone”. She decided that she would start a spaza shop. A few years later she was tasked with overseeing the process of the installation of the CABs in Siyanda for a short term period for which she got paid R6 000 per month. Eventually, she saved R30 000 from this money in order to build her two room brick house.

To achieve her goal of starting a spaza shop she began saving R500 each month from her husband’s death benefits (then R1 500). By 2014 she had managed to save R5 000 and put all the money in a bank account at Ithala Bank. She enlisted her good friend Mandla Mtshali in setting up her spaza shop. Mandla lent her R2 500 to buy building materials and built a small structure for her. Together they
drove in Mandla’s car (MaBhengu contributed a small amount towards petrol) to the wholesalers in Phoenix to purchase her first batch of stock. The whole thing was surreal - they could not believe that MaBhengu was taking such a huge step and starting her own business. While shopping, Mandla kept repeating, “What are we doing here?” In those first few months she was very careful, so strict that even her children paid for things in the shop. After about eight months business started picking up.

The involvement of her first born son was instrumental in MaBhengu’s economic success. After a year he came to visit her and was impressed with what she had done. He said to her, “Mama, you’re a ‘clever’” and from then dedicated himself to assisting her. He provided her with transport to the wholesalers every month and in December of 2015 surprised her with stock worth R8 000. A few months later he replaced her shop made of corrugated iron sheets with one made of bricks. He then became her business partner - every month MaBhengu sent him some of her profits which he put into a bank account.

MaBhengu’s shop was one of the most popular and successful spaza shops in the settlement. She offered a variety of products and sold to customers on credit with no interest. In a week she made about R1 000. Her other sources of income were the state pension which was R1 600 and her husband’s death benefits, which had increased to R2 000. With this money she supported her daughter, son and grandson.

MaBhengu had since diversified her business endeavours. She and her son bought their first Quantum taxi which was operating from Siyanda taxi rank. MaBhengu saved R2 000 for 24 months, came up with R48 000 which she combined with R40 000 from her son to buy the taxi. They were making about R18 000 each month from the taxi and were paying R13 000 for the monthly instalment. They were planning to buy another taxi.

MaBhengu had achieved relative livelihood success from 2009. When asked whether she would eventually move away from Siyanda if things continued to go well for her economically, she replied: “I will not move until the settlement gets upgraded. Until the people own the land”.

6.3 DISCUSSION

The research on the economic life of Siyanda informal settlement revealed that the people of Siyanda exercised considerable agency in making a living and adopted different livelihood strategies. These strategies consisted of economic activities in the formal and informal economies outside of the settlement, for example domestic workers and security guards, and some in the informal economy that had emerged within the settlement, with activities such as informal recycling, dress making and selling of baked goods. The informal economy in the settlement, however, was dominated by spaza shops. The research also found that social grants were recognised as the most pervasive and reliable form of income for the residents of Siyanda. A substantial majority of households in the settlement that included children received a child support grant, and others received the grant for older persons and the disability grant. Other households relied on remittances from family or friends from
outside the settlement. Moreover, the residents of Siyanda formed stokvels as a strategy to mitigate the economic insecurity.

Life in the settlement presented residents with some opportunities, and at the same time exposed residents to factors which serve to constrain livelihoods such as the lack of access to basic services like electricity and water and sanitation, adequate health care and nutrition. Nevertheless, residents used their skills to generate a livelihood through gardening, hair braiding, baking and other activities. A constraining factor was the education levels in the settlement. Although the study did not explore access to education in any detail, it is essential to the enhancement of human capital and allows for greater economic prospects and generation of income.\(^{71}\) Statistics South Africa reports that 41.1\% of the population in Siyanda had completed some secondary school, with those who completed their schooling comprising of 33.8\% of the population.\(^{72}\) Only 3\% of the population in Siyanda had higher education and training.\(^{73}\) Another constraining factor, that very few were able to overcome, was the lack of space and land in the settlement for agriculture and livestock farming due to high density settlement patterns. Most residents of Siyanda did not own a car but had access to taxis- a significant advantage was that important amenities like clinics, shopping centres and transport nodes like the KwaMashu station in nearby KwaMashu and Newlands, though far, were within walking distance.

The majority of the residents of Siyanda did not have access to financial capital. Nevertheless, in Siyanda financial capital came in the form of income from wages, personal savings and inflows of money through social grants and remittances, however small. For some, the ability to save was an enabling factor towards enhanced livelihood opportunities. It seemed that for a resident to raise start-up capital for a spaza shop they needed to have stable employment or income for a significant period of time. This caused a level of social differentiation based on access to a stable income to be able to raise funds. All spaza shop owners were able to earn their livelihood that way because of their ability to save money. However, for some their ability to save was reduced after starting their business, causing a level of social differentiation amongst spaza shop owners in terms of relative livelihood stability as some owners struggled to make ends meet, with the exception of MaBhengu. MaBhengu, through her life history, provided an example of how a household’s economic standing can be improved by moving to an informal settlement, taking advantage of opportunities to earn a living in the settlement and how ultimately an informal settlement can serve as a “ladder out of poverty”. However, her experience was an exception rather than the rule. The existence

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73 Ibid.
of *stokvels* in the settlement facilitated saving amongst many residents, especially women. Although access to financial capital was limited for most residents, the relative advantages which impact on economic life in Siyanda can best be illustrated through insights from former residents of the settlement. As mentioned in the introduction, Siyanda sections B and C are separated by the Dumisani Makhaye Road which was built in 2009. The construction of the road resulted in the relocation of hundreds of households to housing development sites like Lindelani, Cornubia, Richmond Farm and Khulula. In a focus group of thirteen men and women who had been relocated from Siyanda to Lindelani, all agreed that their economic life was better in Siyanda. The following are key points from the discussion:

One of the participants shared that her life in Siyanda was “alright”. The only problem they had in Siyanda was the lack of basic services and the muddy conditions when it rained. They discussed the advantages of living in Siyanda: they had access to work in neighbouring suburbs; they were close to key transport nodes like KwaMashu Station and; had access to amenities like the clinic and shopping centres.

A major grievance for the participants was transport costs. One mentioned, “In Siyanda you always had the option to walk if you could not afford taxis, in Lindelani you have no choice but to pay”. Residents had to walk a distance to catch a taxi, and from there had to pay R7 to go the clinic; R8 to the nearest shopping centre and R13 to the city centre (one way).

On the whole, participants felt that the relocation to Lindelani negatively impacted on their ability to earn a living. One participant shared the experience of one of her neighbours who was employed in town when she was relocated to Lindelani. Because of the distance and cost of transport, all the money she made was spent on transport and after a few months she decided to stop working because it was no longer sustainable.

One participant said, “There is no money, no business, it is quiet here”. Even those participants who engaged in informal trade or had small businesses suffered because of the move. One of the participants stated that in Lindelani businesses were not as successful as they were in Siyanda because Siyanda had more customers as it was densely populated. In Siyanda she sold vegetables to sustain her livelihood; she was trying to do the same in Lindelani but was not as successful. Another participant used to sell beaded jewellery to tourists in Durban but because she moved further away, her business had “fallen”.

For all the difficulties of life in Siyanda, it still provided more economic opportunities to its residents than the new housing projects that had been constructed at a distance from it. It was these opportunities that drove the economic livelihood strategies of Siyanda’s residents, as well as the residents’ claims for *in situ* upgrading.
7 CONCLUSION

“Left Behind” is the last of three site specific reports in the series “Informal Settlement in South Africa: Norms, Practices and Agency”. The other two reports document local norms and practices through the same four themes in the Ratanang informal settlement, outside Klerksdorp, in the North West Province, and the Marikana settlement, near Philippi in Cape Town, in the Western Cape Province. These themes are tenure security and land use management, access to basic services, political space and economic life. The fourth report of the series shifts perspective from local, site specific research to provide a comparative analysis and synthesis.

This research report investigated the local realities and existing practices that characterise life in Siyanda informal settlement. The purpose of researching local norms in Siyanda, and the two other sites, is to inform in situ informal settlement upgrading policy and implementation with a better understanding of the existing realities in informal settlements.
This report documented findings regarding how people in Siyanda:

- assert their agency in the different spaces that define political life and how litigation figures alongside local tenure arrangements and their other tools for claiming the dignity of a right to belong (Chapter 3);
- are getting by without legally secure tenure and how land is managed in the absence of official planning (Chapter 4);
- have developed local norms and practices in relation to basic services (Chapter 5); and
- make a living in the context of precarious residential circumstances (Chapter 6).

At the heart of the project lay a concern that \textit{in situ} informal settlement upgrading tends to adopt a “roll-over” approach which over-writes and replaces people’s agency and existing systems, arrangements, procedures and patterns in the settlement. In this way a conventional undeveloped or vacant land approach is applied even if the settlement is being upgraded \textit{in situ}. The research therefore turned on a single question: if informal settlement upgrading interventions are to result in meaningful change on the ground, how should they address the existing realities in the places they seek to improve?

In this chapter of the report we summarise the findings about those local realities in two different ways. Firstly, section 7.1 summarises key findings within each theme, to provide a high-level overview of existing realities in Siyanda. Secondly, section 7.2 shifts focus to a cross theme appraisal of the findings by turning to the title of the research series to characterise norms, practices and agency in Siyanda. The characterisation identifies key features that describe the life-world of Siyanda, emphasising the agency that ordinary people exercised. This section is intended to cut through the detail of the findings to provide a concluding overview of the site-specific research. Both sections, on local realities and characteristics, aim to indicate how the particular experiences of the residents of Siyanda can be understood in the light of the broader purpose of the work to inform informal settlement upgrading.

Section 7.3 then ends the report with preliminary directions for upgrading. It indicates Siyanda-specific upgrading issues and provides more general indications for upgrading policy and implementation. The preliminary directions and general indications are further developed in the synthesis report, which compares and analyses them. SERI will develop the policy and implementation implications more fully in a set of informal settlement upgrading policy briefs, using the evidence of this report, the two other site-specific reports and the synthesis report.
7.1 THEMATIC FINDINGS

POLITICAL SPACE

As the chapter demonstrated, Siyanda’s establishment was politically motivated. Late Apartheid was characterised in the settlement by struggles for hegemony that mirrored the fierce contestation between the IFP and ANC occurring in the province at the time. With early democracy came the promise and possibility of participation in democratic politics, but it was not long before the politicisation of development led to experiences of exclusion. In the more recent past an association with the shacks dwellers movement, Abahlali, gave new impetus to local struggles for access to basic services.

In Siyanda, politics was being articulated in four different spaces: settlement-level, local, municipal and juridical. At settlement level residents organised themselves and institutionalised leadership with different styles and political affiliations over the history of Siyanda. Structures in the settlement evolved over time, using both “traditional” and more democratic political modes of leadership. What we have called the “local” space was where external interests and influences interacted with residents and their leadership structures, such as political parties and social movements. Local organisation and mobilisation strategies and styles shifted again as a result of joining Abahlali with a focus on bringing about social change and improving living conditions.

The state’s presence was experienced through development initiatives and the different kinds of participation processes that occurred. Large scale relocations, carried out by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements, were the consequence of the construction of the Dumisani Makhaye Drive. During the road construction, Siyanda’s committee members felt side-lined by the municipality and they experienced the allocation system for the upgrading of section A / Siyanda Interface and relocation to the Khulula RDP housing development as exclusionary. Litigation, and
the juridical space came to the fore for a group of twice-relocated residents: first to the Richmond Farm transit camp and later, when the permanent accommodation that the municipality had offered failed to materialise, to a housing subsidy development at Cornubia. The broader significance of litigation in this case was that municipal office bearers could be held in contempt if they failed to implement a court order. The former ward councillor’s activities and influences were evident in the relocations narrative as well as the perceptions of the community leadership respondents about the contestation over the legitimacy of the 614 households with a claim to future development.

**TENURE SECURITY AND LAND USE MANAGEMENT**

A periodisation of land access portrayed the different authorities at work in Siyanda: party-political, ward-related, movement-based, and those grounded in the settlement itself. It revealed that the initial occupation and subsequent “invitation” to settle in the 80s were highly politicised, that the IFP mobilisation continued into the nineties, that an early democratic era was characterised by development and relocation and finally, that a period of contested allocation was underway in the contemporary period. Enumeration was one of the more significant land management practices in Siyanda, although its outcome was disputed. Other important locally configured rules were also evident such as “one shack per household”.

The tenure section showed how access to the formal property system was contingent on inclusion into a subsidy development project, and that the terms of this inclusion were challenged by residents who remained outside of it. For the residents who remained in sections B and C entry into the formal property system was dependent on access to a housing subsidy project to upgrade the settlement at some point in the future, but they were troubled by their prospects due to three primary factors: the legacy of being labelled an IFP

**How are people getting by without legally secure tenure?**

**In the absence of official planning, how is land managed?**

**How does housing rights litigation figure alongside these practices?**
settlement, lack of confidence in the official allocation system and the effort of a previous ward councillor to discredit Abahlali which undermined relations with the state. In the meantime, the tenure arrangements for the people “left behind” were off-register and local in nature. Social relations figured in different ways and at different times to shape tenure arrangements: from reliance on families, friends and neighbours to fostering relations with the different political authorities – party, social movement and local leadership. Tenure security came from holding evidence that could be used to defend one’s claim: being in possession of a proof of residence letter and being counted as one of the 614 households who had been registered by the municipality.

Although the residents remaining in Siyanda, after the development and relocation of some of their neighbours, perceived their tenure to be free of eviction threats, and hence relatively secure, they felt “left behind” and the local leadership felt side-lined by the development processes at Siyanda Interface, Khulula and Cornubia. They nonetheless continued to engage the state to push for upgrading.

**ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES**

In the case of Siyanda, many residents accessed both government-led and self-provided services. Self-provision in Siyanda was a response to the experiences of government-provision which residents described as being inadequate and costly, in respect of free basic electricity, and inaccessible due to distance, regulations and safety, in the case of water and sanitation facilities. As a result, the residents of Siyanda resorted to self-connecting water and electricity, digging their own pit latrines in their yards and burning their own refuse to meet their needs.

The communal ablution facilities were an important element in the water and sanitation narrative and the research explored how they operated in the daily lives of residents. Experiences were mixed and many residents had dug pit latrines in their yards in order to

**How do people secure access to energy, basic water and sanitation?**
mitigate constraints of distance, topography and safety. Overall however, two significant findings emerged: different models of provision co-existed and the communal model was adapted locally to overcome some of the limitations of the policy, such as extended opening hours. People’s primary concerns with communal facilities were personal safety, proximity, night time accessibility and the need for janitorial services. The findings concerning the existence of functional, and adaptive, caretakers are important to show how the mismanagement that plagues experiences elsewhere, can be overcome.

Social relations were also identified as critical in basic services, with better access for some being contingent on negotiability, such as special requests for unlocking after closing times. Social relations could also work more broadly, such as preventing vandalism or area wide agreements to extend opening hours. In addition to social differentiation, especially age and gender, experiences were distinct along other lines as well, such as proximity which was a factor in both more positive perception and more effective use.

ECONOMIC LIFE

Economic life in Siyanda was characterised by a sense of hope and opportunity, as well as scarcity, precarity and instability. About one quarter of the city’s population were living in informal settlements at the time of the research and their proliferation in eThekwini since 1996 was intimately tied to the search for employment, and the migration from rural villages that the pursuit entailed. The people of Siyanda exercised considerable agency in making a living and adopted different livelihood strategies, some outside, most within the settlement.
Residents were engaged in a variety of activities to access an income, in a city context where wages were no longer the primary way in which poor households did so. The small proportion of the Siyanda population who managed to find jobs in the “formal” economy as wage labourers outside of the settlement worked in the manufacturing sector - at factories in industrial areas - or in the retail and wholesale sector. This work was gendered, with men employed as security guards and women, both young and older, as domestic workers. Despite the much greater proximity of Siyanda to work opportunities than their areas of origin, transport costs posed a significant challenge to workers like these, and to work seekers.

Employment growth in the city’s informal economy significantly exceeded the formal sector. Economic activities within Siyanda were more modest than those in section A / Siyanda Interface which included a range of products and services like fridge repairs, printing and scanning services, large taverns, day care centres and live chicken sales. Some diversity was evident, as was limited use of natural resources to sustain livelihoods. Spaza shops made a considerable contribution to the internal economy of the settlement and were the most prominent informal livelihood activity. Lack of access to basic services, low education levels, limited land availability for subsistence gardening linked to high density settlement patterns were all factors that constrained economic life in Siyanda. Financial capital was the least available livelihood asset in Siyanda and start-up capital and ability to save were indicators of economic differentiation. Nonetheless, its proximity to transport facilities and urban amenities made Siyanda a relatively advantageous place to make a living.

Saving schemes, or stokvels, were amongst the strategies used by residents to mitigate severe livelihood shocks and stresses. Grants were the most dependable form of income for Siyanda households, although other sources of income, for those who had them, tended to contribute more to household income. Claims on the resources of others, or remittances, were also a part of the local economy, with residents in the roles of both “donors” and “recipients”.

As MaBhengu’s life history showed, social issues such as domestic violence, early school leaving and consequent economic dependency on men, had an influence on the livelihoods of women living in the settlement. A spaza shop owner, hers was also a story of economic stability, which was linked to the opportunities that living in an informal settlement offered to those with the means to leverage them.
7.2 CHARACTERISING NORMS, PRACTICES AND AGENCY IN SIYANDA

As the title of this research report suggests, residents in Siyanda felt “left behind” due to their exclusion from the development opportunities at Siyanda Interface, Khulula and elsewhere.

Siyanda was characterised by division and fragmentation: physically by the freeway and the relocation of residents to three separate settlements and the formalisation of section A into Siyanda Interface; and socio-politically by changing allegiances to different authorities including the IFP, the ANC ward councillors, Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP) and Abahlali baseMjondolo. Siyanda was a highly politicised place to live, which generated instability, and at points in its history, violent conflict, as the political space and tenure security sections demonstrated. Contestation was most evident in the contemporary period in the dispute over which residents legitimately “count” as the households in line for future development or upgrading.

Memory played a strong role in the Siyanda narrative: the people who had been living there longest recalled their history vividly and said that it continued to shape their agency. Adaptation and co-existence are two examples of how this worked. Residents adapted to changing political orders when, for example, they navigated land access and holding under different authority regimes and changing leadership styles in the shifts from overtly “traditional” or customary to more open and democratically-shaped power and affiliation.
and again to the grass-roots, networked style of social movements. They also adapted their living conditions in relation to service delivery, such as the water and sanitation services rules. Siyanda can also be characterised by co-existence, especially with regard to government and self-provided water and sanitation and also in relation to different political affiliations.

Siyanda was a dynamic place to live. Change can be tracked with the lens of history, as the tenure and political space chapters attempted to do. Considerable resilience was required on the part of the residents to weather the storms of political turmoil, the forces of development and relocation and the undercurrents of allegiance and association. However, those residents who were able to remain in their homes through these years continued to assert the value of residence in Siyanda, and to insist that – despite these problems – they wanted to remain.

7.3 PRELIMINARY DIRECTIONS FOR UPGRADING POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

The next phase of research will compare and synthesis findings in Siyanda with those in Ratanang and Marikana, producing comparative research to inform policy implications for informal settlement upgrading. In doing so the intention is to recommend how upgrading interventions should engage with the realities in the places they seek to improve, if meaningful changes on the ground are to result. The previous section used the characterisation of norms, practices and agency in Siyanda to provide some clues for the alternative intervention logic that this research seeks to inform. What further concrete directions does Siyanda offer to this general project objective?

The experiences of former and current residents of Siyanda have much to offer upgrading approaches. This report highlights two in particular: communal water and sanitation supply and resident registration practices, linked to allocation systems and procedures.

Regarding communal services, the eThekwini CAB (communal ablution block) model is seen by the municipality and international planning organisations to be a ground-breaking approach to the provision of interim services in an incremental upgrading programme. Its successes are more ambiguous on the ground. Siyanda highlights that the co-existence of self-supplied sanitation, i.e. self-dug pit latrines, with government-provided CABs is likely as people will mitigate the risks and potential exclusion arising from, respectively, lack of safety, distance, night time accessibility and the need to negotiate with caretakers for after-hours access. Rather than “rule-breaking”, some of the adjustments that caretakers and users have made in practice, such as longer opening hours, are adaptations to increase effective use and functionality. Any future policy should take these nuances of practice into account.

Regarding allocation processes and the registration practices upon which they rely for “beneficiary” identification, the perspectives of Siyanda residents show how important local, social legitimacy can
be. Allegations abound about misallocation in the past to Siyanda Interface and Khulula, due at least in part to what was perceived as a closed and even clandestine engagement process which explicitly excluded community leaders. Contestation in the contemporary period concerns the disputed cohort of 614 households who remain in Siyanda, and who were recognised in the second enumeration process. The patronage politics allegedly played by the previous ward councillor when new entrants were provided access, swelling the numbers and disadvantaging the people already living there, play into these contestations. They created significant apprehension about the future among research respondents and contributed to even greater mistrust among Abahlali-affiliated settlement leadership about the intentions of local politicians.

The implications for upgrading are procedural: open and transparent processes which engage the full range of interest groups and a clear distinction between political processes of ward-level engagement and administrative processes of allocation. Siyanda also shows how patronage politics can flourish in the context of massive under supply of formal affordable access to land and housing. Under these conditions – both patronage and large, unmet needs – community-based organisations will inevitably flounder if they are held solely responsible for managing new access, once a list or register of occupiers has been agreed.

Siyanda was a single informal settlement established in the late 80s that experienced development and relocation across multiple sites in several housing projects and a transit camp. With the support of Abahlali baseMjondolo since 2009, residents remaining at Siyanda are advocating for an in situ upgrade of the settlement as a way to improve and build on the existing access to basic services, sanitation and tenure security. For Abahlali, ensuring ownership of all the land parcels by the Department of Human Settlements is the starting point, as they see resolving multiple ownership as essential for unlocking service provision.

It is difficult to know if this will be successful. The future of what remains of the initial settlement, and for those residents who were “left behind”, shows few signs of interrupting its politicised history. For example, at the time of writing, the identification of who had a legitimate claim to future development was contested due to perceived political interference. Although the number is uncertain, in the region of 400 households in excess of the registered 614 were residing in the settlement. Resolution of authentic “qualifiers” will draw on either political authority or local, social legitimacy, perhaps a blend of both. This outcome will determine whether Siyanda breaks free of a history of fierce contestation and whether or not the people who remain living there will see upgrading in their lifetimes.
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