

# Exploring the informal business sector in Clairwood, Durban, South Africa

Technical Research Report 2017 No #14

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This work is based on research supported by the South African Research Chairs Initiative of the Department of Science and Technology and National Research Foundation (DST/NRF) of South Africa (Grant No 71220). The contents of this work are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect neither the views of the National Research Foundation.

### **Contribution statement**

This paper examines a common data set of research materials, interview transcripts, pictures, documents and grey literature produced as part of the Leverhulme Centre for the Study of Value (LCSV). The project was led by Professor Sarah Bracking, SARCHi Chair in Applied Poverty Reduction Assessment at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The data was collected by the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA). The analysis of the data was also contributed by several research assistants: Ms Kathleen Diga, Mr Stephen Olivier (Co-ordinator), Mandy Lombo, Nduta Mbarathi, Tawonga Rushambwa, Mbali Mthembu, Danford Chibvongodze, Pia Falschebner and Ayanda Tshabalala. The overall methodology referred to here was collectively pursued and is thus also referred to in forthcoming papers.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors wish to acknowledge the valuable feedback provided by the community members of Clairwood who participated in the survey and in a subsequent Community Engagement event in 20 November 2015.

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ISBN: 978 1 86840 594 7

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## Abstract

This paper aims to investigate alternative measures of value amongst marginalised citizens in South Africa. More specifically, the objective of this study is to understand the value of informal business within the under privileged area of Clairwood, Durban. The rationale is to explore the under-reported economic activities and advantages of micro enterprises operated by low income households. These livelihood and small enterprise activities are at risk by changing infrastructural developments which threaten displacement to this community, which is based within an industrial complex. This study highlights the contribution that informal traders make to the city and re-imagines sustainable development in the urban low-income context. This locally driven micro economy provides sufficient

resources to raise many out of poverty. Clairwood is one of these unique scenarios: a mix of formal, yet declining manufacturing industries, surrounded by complementary micro informal businesses, as well as formal to informal dwelling settlements. These characteristics somehow work symbiotically and in harmony to support each other, benefiting residents' financial and work needs. Findings show that Clairwood residents are not necessarily unsupportive of economic activities in their community, but that they are concerned about the encroaching and non-participatory nature of national infrastructure and specifically port sector imperatives which further debilitate their efforts to preserve their heritage and economic livelihoods. Worryingly, residents feel continuously framed as uncooperative and unable to participate. Such perceptions miss the true value of the economic and participatory contributions of the local community of Clairwood. This study offers an alternative that hears the voice of this diverse community and allows them to express their values, further contributing to an alternative vision of low carbon, sustainable development.

**Keywords:** participation, economic development, micro-enterprise, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), Clairwood, port development

## **Introduction**

There is complex politics which conditions how knowledge is understood, validated and seen to have worth when decisions on our collective futures are required to be made. It is a politics of representation which aligns with power, and we suggest that innovation in local planning would be to rescale the local, and give communities more voice, their knowledge more authority, and themselves more democratic power as citizens. This paper can perhaps be viewed as part of an alternative approach to providing, particularly the poor, with political participation, and a way to voice alternative knowledge and values to the current spaces of participatory governance. The study investigates alternative measures of value amongst marginalised citizens in Durban, South Africa, many whom have their knowledges side-lined under the context of larger nationalist and public infrastructure imperatives. More specifically, the objective of this study is to understand the perceived value of informal business within the community of Clairwood, Durban, a generally unaccounted for sub-population and its respective enterprises which greatly contribute to the well-being of low income households in the area.

The Clairwood community offers a unique perspective of Durban through its ethnic and cultural diversity and close community relations despite its historical experience of displacement and exploitation, and current pressures for change. Given its location near the harbour development, Clairwood is the ideal location for many aspects; the area has easy access to the functioning port and logistical operations for the movement of import and export goods. It is also a good location for small and large size industries within manufacturing and other mechanical production. The offer of various skilled and unskilled work, its proximity to the sea and the various welfare services provided to citizens, even those who earn a low income, allow for relatively good well-being for households in the area. Despite the local socio-economic contributions (albeit undocumented) and the historical foothold of residents, their lives are exposed to non-participation in the national to local infrastructural developments that surround their community and yet affect their everyday lives. In this case, the planning for the expansion of the Durban port and re-zoning from residential to commercial of many parts of Clairwood and surrounding areas are encroaching into the backyards of many residents, and in many cases, without their say in the matter. Yet the residents contribute meaningfully in various ways, many of which can be undervalued and ignored and unlikely be compensated should displacement (due to the large infrastructural investments in their area) of their business or homes take place. Therefore, an alternative approach of sharing the under-reported economic value of Clairwood is sought by this study. This paper also provides an alternative notion of sustainability and development with particular reference to the informal business sector in Clairwood.

As for the research project, the overall Clairwood survey ultimately used a quantitative method design and had the research objective to gain a sampled aggregate measure of the varying perspectives and experiences of residents in this community. The survey's purpose was to appreciate the voices of the residents as they expressed their economic and social outlook on their diverse area. The findings showed how residents reflect on value within their conceptualisation of a non-racial South Africa, accepting of all walks of life, and that they have remained strong despite being embedded within many vulnerabilities and threats. Qualitative questions were also raised to study residents' values and views. We asked the following research question, what are the findings and lessons from the current Clairwood community enterprise practices which can be learned in revamping our concept of urban sustainability geared towards poverty reduction? The qualitative responses are analysed and are the focus of this paper, in hope of yielding deeper understanding around the value placed on informal enterprises amongst the Clairwood community members.

This paper provides the following: the next section provides some background around the case study of Clairwood and information about eThekweni Municipality as well as the motivation for this research. The paper then proceeds with theoretical concepts on sustainability and development, the debate on what knowledge has value in development and the connection to the informal economy. The paper then expands on characteristics of Clairwood and the municipal ward, followed by the methodology section. The research findings around informal businesses and an analysis around sustainability through informal business is described. Finally, the paper concludes with some discussion on current developments of the port expansion and future implications.

## **Background**

The Clairwood Value study was a research project commissioned by the Leverhulme Centre for the Study of Value (LCSV), with the field work conducted by its associated local partner, the South Durban Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) (Bracking and Diga, 2015; Diga and Bracking, 2015). The data entry and analysis were conducted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, under the South African Research Chair Initiative in Applied Poverty Reduction Assessment. The overall aim of this study was to independently assess a research gap on alternative socio-economic value, particularly around how the proposed Durban dug-out port expansion would impact on the livelihoods of the vulnerable community members in the South Durban Basin area, namely the Clairwood community. The research objective of this project was to gain a sampled estimate of the varying perspectives and experiences of value amongst the residents of Clairwood.

In 2012, the Durban port authority, Transnet, had been preparing plans to expand the existing Durban port, in alignment with the registered Special Infrastructure Project (SIP) under the Presidency of the

Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 2012). The Municipality documented the possible plan of rezoning Clairwood in order to accommodate logistics and 'back-of-port' (BOP) activities. An assessment commissioned by eThekweni Municipality and carried out by Graham Muller Associates spoke about the production of employment and economic growth as well as the 'project affected persons' who would be displaced should this expansion project go ahead (2009). The proposed changes would mean the possible re-location for the people currently living in parts of Clairwood, an idea which would be challenged by residents "who seek to preserve their historic home and residential character" (Graham Muller Associates, 2009: pp. 67). In further investigation, the assessment appears limited in understanding the socio-economic impact on the communities; it lacked in-depth information around what value would be lost in proceeding with the large infrastructural expansion. For this Clairwood value project, the preservation of the suburb required some alternative evidence of unknown value (in this paper, we focus particularly at informal activity) and contest the social costs which would be displaced should the port expansion move forward. This paper rather re-interrogates whether the proposed Durban port expansion would have any valuable development advantages for the community of Clairwood. Now, the residents of Clairwood are engaged in a variety of both formal industrial work and complementary informal micro enterprises. If the development goes ahead, there is no guarantee that the local residents will be employed in the new port and logistics facilities, while their current businesses are likely to be displaced.

The other goal of the project was to inform stakeholders such as government institutions, such as Transnet, eThekweni Municipality and national government, about the community of Clairwood and the socio-economic consequences which may not have been considered and may occur because of the port expansion. This study provides a community perspective to give more accurate value to the people's assets, properties and livelihoods and therefore aspire towards appropriate developmental interventions which enhance sustainable practices, participation, and locally driven initiatives. EThekweni and the South African department of trade and industry would benefit from an understanding of the community within worksites of growth in local manufacturing and port activities in the area. While negative perceptions may have been framed in the past, eThekweni Municipality has many benefits to gain from understanding the social and cultural importance of Clairwood as an industrial place where people value their living space, and maintain their cultural heritage for which they have historically struggled and worked to legitimise.

### **Sustainability and Development**

This section explores the concepts of human development and sustainability, much of which expands thinking of value beyond monetary, formal definitions and opens discussions around the value of

informality. In some cases, economic value can be pinpointed to earnings from informal enterprises (despite being under-reported), however, many of the values of Clairwood residents go beyond concepts of economics, and are immaterial and intrinsic. Much of these non-monetary values contribute positively to an individual's well being. Fine (2009) discusses how economics has influenced the approach of other social sciences in presenting its methods as absolutes without the mention of other alternatives. Alternatively, Sen (1999) guides the discussion of human development as life improvement based on the measurement of enhancing a person's freedom. Non-money metric measurements of well-being drive the importance of viewing development through multiple dimensions. There is a further argument of sustainability for communities to take autonomy, particularly in restoring the natural environment through their small-scale economies. Yet within development, it is a challenge of articulating such issues beyond conventional economic and scientific paradigms. The costs can also be high in mediating between those in power (in this case, government and infrastructure developers) and those affected communities on the ground. It is through conceptual expansion that this paper furthers discussion the under-reported values within urban resource-constrained communities through the perspective of development and sustainability.

Urban development is inevitable in developing countries and strategies most suitable for sustainable management within these environments must be taken into consideration. The expansion of population and growth in particular businesses or housing needs can be met with the detrimental demise of green, ecological spaces. According to Scoones (2007), "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs". Scoones (2007) refers to a definition of modern sustainable development. At the broad level, the definition appears appropriate, however, specific acknowledgement is needed for community specific challenges and obstacles. In this case study, the needs of a particular sub-population (ie. the community of Clairwood) are not being met, while the needs of larger corporate builds, such as the petrochemical and shipping industries, are privileged. However, in this paper we attempt to recalibrate local urban development needs with both environment and alternative emancipatory approaches in mind.

The rising unemployment levels in the country have increased urban migrations as people move to the city-slums in hope of higher employment opportunities. In order to cope with the human influx, informal settlements are expanding and urban developers need to start finding strategies that assist these communities with basic service and infrastructure delivery, while maintaining the ever shrinking green space. In some cases, informal settlements lack appropriate infrastructures in their communities that would give them access to basic, essential human needs and left with neglect. This absence of infrastructure or poor maintenance in informal settlements can also lead to the degradation of the

physical environment. In other words, due to poor service delivery, natural bush or rivers are used for sanitation and housing material; stripping these natural resources are forced upon the poor. Yet is the sole narrative of the poor and sustainability? In this urban context, we ask what are the lived experiences of sustainability within poor communities and what ideas of environment can be illustrated, particularly from informal enterprises. The relationship between urban growth, sustainable and informality is not well understood, suggesting a necessary imperative to build on development practice, and accommodating the existence of both informal and formal spaces efficiently. There is a further paucity of information in understanding environmental protection in this perspective. It is in such cases that urban development can be re-imagined with informality being a conduit to promoting sustainability and environment.

The absence of the provision of services and institutions can frame resource-constrained communities as contributing less of an ecological footprint to their environment. Some communities have no sewerage or waste removal systems; limited water or electricity provision; and (in most cases) no nearby health services or educational institutions. The lack of these basic needs leaves the poor using minimal material to eke a living. The use of limited resources derive far less energy and environmental damage. Yet, ongoing narratives seem to imply that the poor cause tremendous strain on environmental resources. As reiterated by Amechi (2010):

“Environmental degradation and poverty are inextricably intertwined. The consequence of this linkage is a vicious cycle in which poverty causes the degradation of the environment, and such degradation in turn perpetuates more poverty [...] the main cause of environmental degradation in Africa, then policies, programmes and legal provisions (regulations, bylaws, rules) designed to protect the environment in the region will be unsuccessful without a significant improvement in the living standards, wellbeing and livelihoods of the poor.”

Yet, poverty cannot solely be blamed for the degradation of the environment. Most of the poor in Africa live in the rural areas and rely primarily on natural resources provided by the environment, and given their ongoing return to these resources, they would have an interest in maintaining the quality of natural assets. Furthermore, the case against the urban poor as the principle culprits of environmental degradation tends to forget or exclude the role of big industry and pollution. Thus, in building sustainable urban development, poverty reduction methods should include both improving the service delivery facilities necessary for living and the natural environment that the poor depend on, while at the same time include broader policy on pollution abatement and regulation. Industrial businesses which release fumes and effluent produce more environmental degradation than say a poor farming household in rural areas or an urban informal trader in the markets. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to investigate the often -invisible role of informal economic activities as a low carbon approach in the

absence of assistance from the municipality. This paper provides evidence to further the sustainability narrative from an urban, resource constrained context.

Within communities, African people are aware of the issues around sustainable living, but because of cultural backgrounds and ethnicities; the meaning and practise of a sustainable lifestyle are communicated differently and are used from different reference points (Amechi, 2006). African cultures have always practised rituals that involve valuing and praising the environment as a life and food source. As stated by Amechi (2006):

“These practices which to a certain extent, account for the pristine condition of the natural environment in Africa before colonisation, were based on the traditional African notion of the unity of humanity and nature, and therefore, emphasised conservation and sustainable utilisation of natural resources by man [and woman].”

This statement further emphasises the need to interrogate the contemporary practise of sustainable living within an African context.

Under circumstances of dire poverty, it becomes difficult to imagine a scenario of sustainable development when persons can barely afford to feed themselves or their households. The proportionately less environmental damage of the rural poor brings about an alternative narrative (Forsyth *et al.*, 1998). Yet, the poor cannot be romanticised if the basis of their environmental practice is due to their poverty and lack of service delivery provision. Nevertheless, one can still re-imagine and aspire towards sustainable living societies in different scenarios. In the Clairwood case, this can be done within a context specific to the limits of public resource provision, a view of de-industrialisation (particularly the decline of manufacturing), and therefore the need to prioritise alternative initiatives such as local economic development or perhaps green industries. In this case, methods of sustainable development may prove successful to low resource communities if they can be based on the value of local knowledge around sustainability and can fit within the urban context, in this case the value of informality.

### **What knowledges count for value**

In the field of infrastructure, and its contribution to development, contested knowledges are particularly stark between stakeholders who will receive direct economic reward, and those who must give up their livelihoods, and move to make way for a ‘development’. Planners tend to stand as interlocutors between the two groups, but with their behaviour is conditioned by government directives, processes and mandates. There are also roles that are played by banks and development finance personnel; by government and planners; by consultants and professional evaluators; and by the community itself, both the proximate community and the nation as a whole. In the case of the Durban dug-out port

expansion, there have been a range of evaluations performed which seek to describe and analyse the worth of the project at different scales, from the national, provincial, and the local level. The technical evaluations by Transnet, government, and planners have tended to frame a positive case. However, the local scale tended to be neglected or pathologised as a necessary, if unfortunate cost made in the context of expected benefits at the national scale in growth and jobs. In the current case for the port expansion, the scientific, banking and economic case for the role of infrastructure in reducing poverty is weak; and that if poverty reduction is a key goal of government, then public expenditure is probably more cost effective when spent on other things. Thus, this paper proposes that we move towards calculative processes and voice to underserved citizens which revalue community and soft infrastructure more highly than in relation to hard infrastructure, particularly if there is a competition for space between them, as there is in Clairwood. To record some of the voice of the underprivileged, this Clairwood project investigates the alternative perspectives of value in the community, and how the impact of development is perceived.

Lastly, at an epistemological and methodological level, urban studies in sub-Saharan countries are associated with negative connotations, and there appears to not yet be sufficient literature that produces a positive perspective on the discourse of informality in urban areas. Informal spaces are perceived as 'subaltern' spaces without any sort of organisation as found in formal spaces of the urban areas (Roy, 2011). This paper does not follow this precedent of negative connotation in the concept of informality.

### **Sub-Saharan African Informal Business sector**

Clairwood is only one of many communities in South Africa where informal business is a way of life for many of its citizens. Valodia (2007) state an interesting contradiction in the South African economy; the country hosts high levels of unemployment (particularly among the youth), and among those who are employed, there is a small, emergent informal economy sector counteracting the high unemployment. It is also important to mention that unemployment is affecting the majority of the youth in the country, including a number of young people living in the Clairwood area. In the study, we find that residents of Clairwood perceive its community to have an abundance of part-time employment opportunities which require minimal skills and that serve as a buffer and safety-net needed for their young population and their respective households, in the absence of more formal opportunities.

Informality within Africa has long been within the history of the continent. The distinction between informal and formal business sectors emerged largely as sub-Saharan African countries gained their independence. In the 1970s, the International Labour Organization (ILO) categorised and defined the informal sector as: "the non-structured sector that has emerged in the urban centres as a result of the

modern sector's inability to absorb new entrants [...]". The statistical definition of the informal sector was only prescribed in 1993 by the ILO (Sparks and Barnett, 2010). In some cases, employment in the informal sector has become a safety net for many households living in dire poverty. It has contributed to the creation of some employment opportunities while also reducing poverty for many. Across the African continent, the informal sector holds a dominant share of many sectors including: manufacturing, commerce, finance and mining (Sparks and Barnett, 2010). Trade related activities such as street vending is one of the most common informal business forms in Africa, with the sector employing approximately 50-70% of the population (Sparks and Barnett, 2010). According to Ahmadou Aly Mbaye (2014), rapid population growth had led to high levels of rural-urban migration which has increased the urban informal sector because cities have failed to match employment opportunities with the rate of population growth. Unemployment amongst young people has become one of the biggest challenges to be faced by the sub-Saharan African society. The dualistic (informal and formal) nature of the African economies is largely influenced by the unregulated and untaxed informal sector which some view as a barrier to economic growth. Gathering useful and relevant data on the informal sector is still a challenge because the informal economies barely keep formal records of their activities (Mbaye, 2014). This too contributes to the stigma and negative associations surrounding the informal business and residential sectors.

The informal sector in many African economies shares a large proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which should stimulate governments to debate and seek to design mechanisms that formalize informal businesses instead of creating legal barriers for this sector (Mbaye, 2014). The debate can include questions such as; is the entire informal sector homogenous or do the sectors require differentiated policy? Such debate questions could explore the question of whether informal business should be formalized against the same requirements as the businesses that exist in the formal sector.

A study conducted by Dougall (2014) in Nairobi found that legal structures do not affect the size of informal economies in African countries. Informal businesses continue to grow and exist despite the legal restrictions. These legal structures and the distribution of human capital directly impacts informal economies in sub-Saharan Africa. Designing laws that manage informal businesses rather than restrict them will be supportive to these communities. Instead of judging whether the informal sector is financially viable, more explorations can be made to find out if the informal sector does indeed contribute to poverty reduction and assists individuals to skill themselves for better livelihoods.

The informal sector is a source of employment for many households, but this informality, also to an extent, counters development objectives because these incomes are not included in a country's fiscal revenue. According to Moreno-Monroy (2012) the informal sector in sub-Saharan Africa absorbs higher

employment than the formal sector, but most literature explores the informal economy in relation to other subject matters that are most often placed as the primary concern. Some existing unsubstantiated theories on informal businesses are based on the analysis of the informal sector through standards used by the formal sector (Moreno-Monroy, 2012). Developing governments are therefore faced with the dilemma of choosing between propelling and restricting the informal sector. The dilemma expands to better understand which efforts increase the contribution to inclusive economic growth of countries (Mbaye, 2014).

Researchers unfortunately face data constraints that clearly identify the dynamics of informal sector employment (Ray, 2011). Compounded to this are restrictions placed by institutional gatekeeping methods. These constraints limit the number of comprehensive empirical studies conducted on the informal section. Informal spaces rightly deserve focus as a subject matter rather than remain a periphery topic. Informal work is a primary mode of livelihood and survival for a larger portion of the sub-Saharan African population, and as a growing population in South Africa use an alternative strategy to understanding informality in-depth, it could be explored outside of the elitism of existing urban areas; removing its assumed perceptions and linkages to poverty, crime and a general stereotype of chaos (Roy, 2011).

Many African leaders are inclined towards an urban bias when the implementation of developmental policies is concerned. As a result, most resources are devoted to urban development which often neglects aspirations towards rural development (Sparks and Barnett, 2010). Influential international institutions that claim to be prioritising development also favour urban development in emerging African markets over rural development. The perceived convenience associated with running projects in the metropolitan areas, places these spaces as better managed, with good levels of political stability, and governance accountability (Sparks and Barnett, 2010). People living in the rural areas then migrate to the cities in hope of also reaping the benefits of this urban development and to find better job opportunities. The cities are now overwhelmed and cannot supply these demanded jobs and opportunities. For many unemployed individuals, this becomes a reason for entry into the informal business sector.

A rather interesting alternative to isolating informality and formality would be viewing both as a practise that could be adopted. Rethinking informality in this manner could allow urban planners to act within equal relationship dynamics towards the development of both informal and formal spaces. This would reduce the politicised pressure that geographical differences are contributing to the status-quo of informal areas. It would also reflect the dynamic nature of formal and informal spaces, and how they are moving into other spaces of society. Viewing, perceiving both (informal and formal spaces) as active practises, allows both the spaces to co-exist in society, without furthering the existing

marginalisation of informal spaces and their activities (McFarlane, 2012). As reiterated by Sparks and Barnett (2010: pg. 3): “Policies of urban bias had other effects as the migration from rural areas to urban areas increased, secondary school education, while once an assurance of a state job, became less and less guaranteed, and many secondary school leavers have found themselves in the informal sector [...] movements of unemployed (especially young people) from rural to urban areas [...] resulting in increased work in the informal sector as the formal sector did not have sufficient jobs available.”

According to Luiz and Mariotti (2011) South Africa’s state of entrepreneurial development and small business development is under performing compared to other developing countries. This may also have to do with people’s perceptions and attitudes about the informal sector. In a global survey around entrepreneurship, South Africa has poorly ranked low, holding a established business activity rate of 1.4 per cent, while the average amongst 53 countries is 7.7 per cent (Luiz and Mariotti, 2011). Yet with the low established business rate, there is seemingly a low uptake for people to work within the informal sector. This is driven by the fact that both formally educated individuals and those who are not, all still perceive formal jobs to have financial security and better career prospects.

### **Background: Clairwood**

Clairwood is the case study investigated in understanding sustainability in the context of local community cohesion, low carbon urban ecosystems, and the lived experiences of informal enterprise by the community. South Africa’s largest port is in Durban and is also located in the southern section of the city, providing various economic activities including port activities and logistics. Clairwood is located within the eThekweni Municipality, in the back of port area, on the east coast of South Africa in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The municipality covers approximately 2297 km<sup>2</sup> of land that is accommodating a population of 3.5 million people. Clairwood is a community located in the southern section of the municipality within local Ward 32 (a ward shared with a large area covering Bayhead, the Durban Harbour, Congella, Esplanade and Rosburgh) (Wazimap, 2016)<sup>1</sup>. According to the 2011 census data, Clairwood is a relatively young population with a median age of 26 and with over a third of its over 25 000 residents being between the age of 20 to 29 and majority Black African, followed by Indian or Asian racial groupings (Wazimap, 2016). Of the households, just under half of the Ward’s households live in apartments (while 4,4% of households are living in informal dwellings), and over 50% of the households are renting their dwelling (Wazimap, 2016). The average annual household income<sup>2</sup> for households in Ward 32 is R29 400 (compared to R115 100 annual household income for those

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<sup>1</sup> Wazimap (<https://wazimap.co.za/>) is an open source platform, providing South African election ward and census data in readable form.

<sup>2</sup> Wazimap uses a median estimate for estimating the average household income

living in the affluent neighbouring ward, the Bluff). Of those at working age<sup>3</sup>, under half of the working age population is employed, and of those employed, 71% work in the formal sector and 26% work in either the informal sector or in a private household (Wazimap, 2016). In summary, the young population of Ward 32 are low-income households, with a quarter of working adults working primarily in the informal sector.

The community of Clairwood is rich in its history. In the early 20th century, the South Durban area was mostly underdeveloped within what was formally named the Old Borough area of Durban, centrally located in today's eThekweni municipality. Flooding frequented the area and as a result, the area was left relatively swampy and neglected. When the ex-indentured Indian settlers finished their contracts, most of them settled within the area around the south of Durban and one such area is known as Clairwood (Scott, 2003). They were involved in activities such as using the flat-land in the area for gardening and selling their vegetables. By the 1930's, some members of the community began purchasing land in Clairwood and surrounding areas, forming the current semi-suburban sections of the area. These suburban areas were still surrounded by a large informal settlement (Scott, 2003). Many institutional changes took place thereafter that formed part of transforming South Durban into a highly industrial area, led by the then predominantly white government. Today, South Durban is one of the largest industrial zones in the country and contributes to the City's revenue and employment status (Scott, 2003). The Clairwood community members sentimentally refer to the area as "[...] Little South India." This unique mix of declining manufacturing, the ongoing nature of informality, local economic activities and historic and embedded cohesion makes Clairwood an eclectic environment to investigate a living, vibrant locale of a low income urban community.

### **Methodology used for the Clairwood Project**

An overall quantitative survey was conducted to collect the views on the port expansion and how people perceived value within the area. The survey also explored what people would be willing or not willing to relinquish should a port expansion proceed, which included possible material and immaterial losses. Value was determined from their answers around incomes, properties, businesses (both formal and informal), assets, culture and the relationships that they had established within the community. The survey also captured some of the challenges within the Clairwood community, including increased crime, congestion, air pollution, and the displacement of farmers in small agricultural holdings.

The Clairwood survey primarily used a quantitative design but also included qualitative questions at the end of the survey that served the purpose of recording in-depth answers from the 1 000 interviewed

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<sup>3</sup> For employment status, Wazimaps looks at individuals 15 years and older.

adult community members. The survey work and analysis further involved a multi-stakeholder collaboration with the community, a local non-governmental organisation, the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), the University of Manchester, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The survey work was collected in 2013 and the analysis took place in 2014. In total, the survey has 33 questions which are divided into two parts; 27 questions are quantitative and 6 questions are qualitative. As for the qualitative analysis; the researcher investigated the questions related to informal business and identified similar or recurring themes, patterns and categories which Patton (1990) refers to as inductive analysis. When interpreting the data, it was noted that the respondents often expressed similar emotions when asked about issues in the area and these were categorised as themes or problems. As reiterated by Bendassolli (2013): “[...] it is expected that certain themes and patterns will start to emerge from the data; that is, that they will inductively reveal themselves to the researchers in the data's interaction with the empirical tools as given.” The Clairwood project applied the inductive analysis research method which meant first organising the raw data, which were within the questionnaires and inputting the data onto a computerised database. This made it easier for the researchers to identify themes, patterns or similar categories.

There are several ways to explore the spread of informality in the urban areas of sub-Saharan African states. The ideas explored in this paper have contributed towards summarising the possible profile and nature of informality within urban areas from a community perspective. Analysing informality in urban areas through both quantitative and qualitative methodologies broadens the scope for discussion about the nature and dynamics of informality in urban areas. As earlier advised, this paper has a primary focus on discussions surrounding evidence from the qualitative methodology.

## **Research Findings: Profile and Nature of the Informal Business Sector in Clairwood**

### ***Descriptive Information of Clairwood respondents***

The descriptive information around the demographics of the respondents and their ties to formal and informal home enterprises are retrieved from the quantitative technical report (Diga and Bracking, 2015). Of the respondents of the quantitative survey, over one-third were between the ages of 35-45 years old and 57% were male respondents. Around one-third of respondents stated that their monthly average household income was between R1 001 – R3 000. Another 23% of respondents stated that their household income was R1 000 or less a month. Of the 1 000 respondents, 44,3% stated that they or a member of the household received a form of social assistance. Of those who verified receiving social assistance, the majority (over 87%) received a government grant (mainly old-age pension and child support grant) and the 46% of those who state accessing the grant received between R201 – R1 000, while just under 40% state the social assistance was more than R1 000. As for household size, 77,5% had less than 5 people in the household. As with the 2011 census, a majority (60,5%) of respondents stated paying rent to their own while 11,5% stated that they were squatting informally. Just over half stated that they were paying rent of less than R500 a month. Overall, the Clairwood survey respondents were relatively low-income households, and over half were earning less than R3 000 a month, with nearly half being on a form of social assistance (mainly the government grant).

In terms of economic activity, 28,8% of respondents stated that they (or a member of the household) ran a formal or informal business from their property. Of those who stated that they were running a business from their property, just under half of them stated having a profit of R2 000 or less per month. Another 33,3% stated earning a profit of between R2 001 to R10 000 per month. With over one-quarter of the respondents running a business from home, half of them raised around R2 000 or less a month. All in all, the low-income households are supported from meagre profits from their small enterprises run from home.

### ***Informal business in Clairwood***

In analysing the more in-depth open-ended questions asked to respondents around business, the profile of the informal businesses in the Clairwood area include: street vendors; scrap-metal/waste collectors; shebeen owners; part-time contractors; trucking; gardening/farming; running 'Spaza shops'; cooked-food sellers. The activities ranged from retailers who own tuck shops, vegetable and fruit stalls, entertainment spots such as shebeens, to self-employment work such as transit truck business or

waste and scrap metal collection. Other primary activities are found through farming or fishing within the community. Services also form part of the informal business sector such as: salons; small-scale catering; and personal gardening services. There was also unpaid or paid labour for caring for the young in childcare centres, crèches, or informally in yards and living spaces, as well as care for the elderly and disabled in households provided by members of the neighbourhood for each other. The informal activities in Clairwood are highly diversified, providing some earnings to its members.

Respondents state that Clairwood is valued for its central location in relation to the eThekweni municipality because it is situated close to the city centre. People who run informal businesses in the area appreciate this because it means when they need to purchase the stock, suppliers are not located too far away. Some purchase from suppliers located within the Clairwood area and appreciate the transport costs that they save by having their stock suppliers close-by. Respondents also expressed how, even within the area, the infrastructure and essential services are situated close to where they reside or within walking distance for some. For street vendors, this is particularly important because they must manage setting up their stock and service-stands on a daily basis with minimum hassle in order to maximise their retail opportunities as workers and residents pass by.

In these respects, Clairwood seems unique in its combination of diverse economic activities and proximity and availability of complementary services. This community, based in an industrial area, is largely reliant on its informal business sector, and on the employment opportunities from nearby factories. The ability for the Clairwood community to provide livelihoods for the poor is particularly expressed by one respondent:

*"You never go hungry in CW\* [Clairwood]" (Male, Satri Road).*

Many respondents alluded to similar sentiments around the ease of gaining some earnings from various work in Clairwood in order to meet basic needs. One male respondent states the following in regard to the ability to make short-term gains in the area:

*"[It's] Easy to make money in Clairwood" (Male, Ganesh Road).*

Regarding the everyday social surroundings, Clairwood is lauded for its close proximity to work for commuters which means that the area could be viewed as a potential model of a low carbon, low emission area (excepting for the industrial pollution from the refineries and large enterprises).

As mentioned, Clairwood is a highly industrial area, but what makes it unique and valuable to the community is that the residential and commercial zones are in one space. The central location of the community within the city of Durban at large means mobility around the area is cheap; essential needs and wants are also found nearby. This also means that the area is always busy, due to the constant pedestrian flows from people moving around the industrial area for various reasons, which in turn makes pavement vending profitable. Clairwood is also along the coastline and thus fishing is a major source of income for the people in the area. As stated by these respondents:

*“Good location, very busy [...] the fact that commercial and residential zone are together so there’s a lot of passing trade which makes business good [...] Don’t want to move, very happy here[...] will be very worried about new business, rent is very high in other areas and trade may not be so good,”(Female , Flower Road).*

*“Clairwood is close to firms and it is good for business as a lot of people pass CW on way to town,” (Male, Houghton Rd).*

Respondents also value the flat-land for farming and gardening. They sell produce from this land on the side-walks, contributing to their household incomes. The community appreciates this flexibility of running informal/illegal businesses in the area. In addition to this, the area has low residential rental rates.

Furthermore, the intrinsic support of community helps those in informal sector work, ensuring informal social security of their marginalized members. One respondent alludes to the facilitative power of this community through this statement:

*“Everybody knows everybody because it’s a small community. Here, the community helps one another; I won’t get that anywhere. I was sick not too long ago, when I sat on my porch all my friend and the community itself all came to see me and comfort me as well” (Female, Houghton Road).*

The members of the Clairwood community value these social cohesion or close relationships they have established in the area with each other. Most respondents mentioned valuing their neighbours whom they trust and who assist them with looking after their elderly and young family members while they are at work. Respondents re-affirmed this by stating:

*"I like how we interact as a community and support each other," (Female, Cherry Rd).*

*"I don't want to be removed here because my leg doesn't work well and people around here understands me very well,"(Female, Sirdar Road).*

Some targeted activities in the community include supporting the most poor. Some members of the community appreciate that different religious and cultural organisations that provide free food on a weekly basis. The community also organises that clothing is handed out to the needy as well.

### **Challenges**

During the stakeholder meeting, residents expressed complexity between the present the relationships of the community to government and businesses. One member believed there was an existing imbalance between the community and the government. This is mainly because the government is working more closely with formal business, in the large enterprises category. Residents and those with smaller informal operations feel side-lined in the process. For example, one participant cited that "the eThekweni municipality was making decisions without the consent of the community of Clairwood." One key concern from the community engagement meeting was that most residents were not kept up to date on the government's deliberations around the development of Clairwood. Given this lack of communication, many residents felt threatened around the movement of commercial rezoning to pave the way for the Durban port expansion project.

The Clairwood community feel that there are also 'illegal businesses' in the area, but they are being operated in both commercial side streets and residential areas which negatively affects residents. There were not many comments or reactions made about these informal activities, when mentioned in the presentation by researchers from the SARCHI Chair, particularly when they occurred in the commercial areas of Clairwood. The informal businesses in residential zoned areas however, were not welcomed by some of the community members. They found such businesses, such as illegal trucking activities and scrap yard businesses, a threat because they are taking over residential space. An example was provided where a home was bought by an informal operator, and the property was converted to business use for trucking or scrap metal business. At times, tensions and displacement was taking place of poor tenants who were found renting space on the same land of the property conversion.

One participant suggested that the community members take these certain illegal businesses to court and pressure them to cease operations in the residential zones. The participants further argued that they are “fighting for residential zoned area to remain residential”.

One participant argued that these illegal businesses contravened private property regulation, and the Municipality seemed to have no motivation to enforce the law. One respondent provided an illustration of Johannesburg citing that the local government there was capable of controlling trucking companies and prevented them from operating in residential areas. He asked why similar regulation is not being implemented in Durban. With little enforcement or regulation, these events have led to conflict and clashes between operators using land for informal commercial enterprise and long-time residents who are attempting to uphold the residential zone, particularly where infants and children have suffered mortality due to truck activity. One participant stated that the residents have made their position clear to the local government that there would be no more trade-offs for residential space to be used for industrial expansion, both legally or illegally.

Of all industries in the area, the trucking industry is a big concern, as this is the back of port area where much truck traffic travel through in order to transport its goods. Regarding the expansion of the illegal light vehicle industries and trucking businesses in the area, a female member of the community reiterated that “the issue of trucking companies is a key challenge, and the high density of trucks is quite problematic”. Some well-informed residents expressed that the density of trucks in the residential community was likely to increase with the erection of the logistics hub. In addition, the residents felt that the truck business was more of a liability than an asset to the community. During the meeting, community members did not consider the owners of the illegal truck businesses as Clairwood residents because most owners are assumed to be residing in Umhlanga. Participants expressed that the community does not have any direct benefits from this informal trucking activities. This was obvious as one of the participants posed a crucial question, “*Who is benefitting from the trucks?*” Residents also believe trucking companies in the area are hiring illegal drivers.

Several residents complained because the trucks have damaged the roads, and a number of their members of the community have been involved in fatal accidents involving these trucks. This is a big challenge for street vendors because some run their businesses close to the road and on sidewalks. As stated by a respondent in finding an alternative location to live and sell her produce:

*"We want a house and a new site to plant our vegetables and a market to sell," (Female, Chery Road).*

### **Findings on Sustainable Development in-practice in Clairwood**

As in most developing African countries, the Clairwood community values the environment where their residents live for religious and cultural reasons. Respondents mentioned not wanting to re-locate far from the cemeteries, mosques, churches, natural parks and the beach which they value for cultural matters, sustenance fishing and leisure. Recently, there is a rising trend of literature that denounces the current modernist approach to urban informality, to avoid interfering with heritage (Chigbu, 2013). Instead of imposing modernist approaches, urban planners could rather assist residents in preserving their environment because it is part of their livelihood. Several communities are now choosing rurality, even as part of the urban periphery, and this should be taken into consideration by urban planners. Involving the communities will empower them through this more participatory approach. If service and infrastructure delivery is prioritised in these communities, development goals can still be met through supporting communities that have chosen rurality as a lifestyle (Chigbu, 2013).

In its current definition, sustainable development neglects the mechanisms used prior to its own notions of meeting needs; seemingly working on the assumption that the present determines the future, regardless of a past. The need to begin vigorous research on existing indigenous knowledge systems about the environment will assist our local communities, if appropriate, with more skills to efficient planning and environment management strategies, developed in a sustainable way.

Most of the Clairwood community that were at risk of being re-located for the proposed port expansion are situated in the urban informal settlements that people have built for themselves and their households. Some reside under bridges, and have built the cover with cardboard boxes. The area is located close to the Durban city area, but this community prefers living in this area because earning a livelihood is easier and the area has higher employment opportunities because its provision of industrial work and providing supporting informal services to those in the surrounding factories. The lack of service delivery, infrastructure and the lack of law enforcement agencies has led to the informal settlements community living in rapidly degrading environments. This does not reflect on the community itself, but rather shows how no efforts are being made by the State to nurture the environment in this area. Like most of the poor in Africa, the Clairwood community relies on the environment for sustenance. Some rely on the flat-land for farming and gardening produce that they later sell to sustain

their households. The Clairwood community values their environment because they live from it and it saddens them to see it seemingly being neglected. As reiterated by these respondents:

*“I would ask for Clairwood to be cleaned, build more houses with inside toilets. The roads must be cleaned” (Male, Cherry Road).*

*“Money is not important. People and the environment are the only important things in this world. I would lose a part of who I am if I had to move” (Male, Sastri Road).*

*“This place has taken care of me and the area has been good to me [...] I think the government should look at improving our lives instead of bringing businesses that are going to destroy our livelihoods” (Male, Sastri Road).*

This also raises the issue, importance and existence of local communities in restoring the natural environment through small-scale economies. This community can sustain their lives in the area as they have been doing over the years; the proposed port expansion threatens these mechanisms they have developed for sustaining through their everyday lives, despite very little service delivery. In such a globally integrated economy, the port expansion project can be viewed as a development initiative that has been proposed to benefit the country at a national level, rather than at a local or community sphere. The locals feel they have not been consulted about this development initiative and no effort has yet been made to also consult the community for input on existing indigenous knowledge about the environment where they are living in.

At a meeting that was held with the Clairwood community to reflect on the preliminary qualitative findings report, attendees expressed that they did not want to be moved from the area because it sustained their livelihoods. The community stated that they wanted to be treated with dignity and provided with basic human services and physical infrastructure such as: housing, electricity, water and sewage/waste removal. At this meeting, community members again reiterated that they suspected the stakeholders who are supposed to be providing these services were deliberately not doing so in order to drive the people out of the Clairwood community. As stated by one respondent in the questionnaire:

*“If the government had done this area up previously, they would not be trying to get rid of this area!” (Female, Horsham Road).*

*“[...] whatever we fight for about housing, toxic waste and trucks; the Councillor does not help us” (Male, Ganesh Road).*

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In conclusion, the alternative vision of sustainable development is refreshed through the example of the post-industrial residential mix of Clairwood. This project has engaged with some of the under-reported values of citizens around informal activities, particularly those who operate near the back-of-port and provides information missed from the Mueller report. Clairwood, a close-knit community of various sized industrial complexes and local residents, has been ideal for workers due to the diversity of informal activities and the complementary ease of various conveniences (i.e. proximity transport and services). Several people in the survey were found to appreciate the high employment opportunities the area offers for both formal and informal business. Even those that stated dislike for living in the area but are staying in Clairwood for employment reasons still prefer job hunting in Clairwood. This is exceptional considering the current unemployment climate in South Africa. Other support activities help to complement the meagre earnings from informal work, including the help of neighbours in unpaid child or elderly care. Furthermore, the cost of living in the area is relatively low, and many respondents prefer living in Clairwood than in other areas of the Municipality because of its affordability. With that said, a former Mueller report discussed proposed re-zoning and relocation of the residents and this Clairwood study respondents stated that such a move would cost them these informal businesses as well as the low cost affordances for living in this part of the city.

The port expansion that has been proposed for the Clairwood area may be another example of how the government makes developmental advances at the expense, exploitation and neglect of the poor in society. The ever-changing activities of the Durban port brings with it complementary dynamics of its surrounding communities, both positive and negative. In some cases, the increasing containers being brought to the emerging logistics parks within the port complex have also seen a growth of enterprises around trucking and other related industrial needs (ie shops that provide repair services or spare parts), some of which are formal and others which are not. Clairwood residents are not necessarily unsupportive of economic activities in their community, their concerns centre on the encroaching, non-participatory nature of that development. For example, given that South African imports are larger than exports, empty containers continue to grow in stacked piles on areas of land around the port, lining the skyline and blocking the views of the residential space, as well as consuming available land. The encroaching growth in container shipping thus further debilitates the community's efforts to preserve their heritage and economic alternatives. Before the community is written off, the informal enterprises

and essentially livelihoods of the poor need to be protected as they contribute immensely to poverty reduction, urban growth, and the achieving of a city's maximum resilience, adaptability and capacity. From this research work, it emerges that there would be great value in re-vitalising the concept of the informal sector in South African in a positive genre, particularly in its contribution to poverty reduction and unemployment alleviation, but also to sustainability.

In this study, we learned that many people in the South Durban Basin area form a part of the informal economy in the Clairwood area. They survive by selling vegetables on the sidewalks, or running 'spaza' shops that provide different goods. Even if the government were to compensate these people for their loss if re-located, this may not be enough to sustain them and their families in the long-term. Respondents fear that if they are moved their small businesses may not be as successful in the relocation area. Furthermore, the social consequences may include the dispersion of a socially cohesive community which provide unpaid supportive activities to the most poor, supplementing those of the meagre earnings of residents. Clairwood is a busy area; busy with factories, job hunters, students, and residents all of whom form integrated components of the economic network that these entrepreneurs have established. In most developing countries, people need to get micro loans to use as capital to start their businesses and this pushes them further into debt and poverty and Clairwood small business owners share these fears too. At present, many of them are established to the point where their need for borrowed capital is reduced. However, the residents were uncertain about their future in Clairwood and the financial sustainability of the businesses should they move. They also felt that they wanted houses to be built and so that they could acquire ownership because they do not aspire to rent houses throughout their lives. However, this objective is mired in the uncertainties over the future of Clairwood in light of the prevailing port development, which is making investment in property within the area risky.

Since the initial research project in 2013, much has changed in the global context. Due to the financial downturn, and the lowering price of oil, the volume of containers handled at the port has been dropping (Hutson, 2014). This has rather undermined the economic case for a port expansion, as trade volumes do not profitably match servicing the borrowing that the expansion would entail. For these reasons, combined with opposition, the government stalled the development in 2016. The expansion of the port has been halted and rather efforts are being laid out to improve the efficiency of the current port operations. Yet it does not mean that there are stakeholders who may still be motivated to continue the construction of these large infrastructure plans. This paper has provided insight and the necessary consideration into some of the intrinsic values around the informal businesses built around the nearby

port community of Clairwood, and balancing out the knowledges of local community and competing 'big' development consultant information.

African states were left to deal with the damages and consequences caused by colonisation. It can therefore be argued that even today, through the works of democratic ideology, the damages the parastatals cause in developing countries are tremendous and further disadvantage the citizens in the developing countries through pollution; endangering the livelihoods of people who live off the natural land as observed in Clairwood. Some argue (Mkandawire, 2001) that African states voluntarily give access to developed countries to integrate with the globe, but taking a non-democratic stance would result in an isolation and exclusion from world markets; and aid that African states have become highly dependent upon. For sustainable development to be a catalyst towards poverty reduction, countries such as South Africa need to possibly find solutions that best suit the context of the societies, without leaving some members of the community excluded. The port expansion's reported economic value in the consultant report does not include the social costs and cultural attachment people feel towards living and surviving in the current Clairwood environment. The port expansion's value may seem rather exaggerated, considering the number of local people that will be displaced to accommodate its implementation, and the lack of promise that any of these will be employed in the new activities as a consequence. From this light, it is therefore clear that developing countries (such as South Africa) still do not really have a choice, but to comply and adhere to the impositions of these parastatals which most often are controlled by companies in developed countries, as it similarly was during the colonial days. Ake (1996) furthers this argument by stating, "The tendency to reproduce the past was reinforced by the dispositions of the dominant social forces in the post- colonial era".

However, one can re-think the locality as microcosms of great socio-economic value in another light. South Africa has new forms of micro-towns which are made up of their own unique ecosystems. Clairwood is one of these unique scenarios: a mix of formal, large manufacturing industries, lined with micro informal businesses, as well as a residential diversity of formal housing to informal settlements. Despite their differences, these characteristics which somehow work symbiotically and in harmony to support each other are benefiting residents' financial and work needs. Yet media frames this community as one of a wasteland needing upgrades and development. Unfortunately, this negative framing then misses much of the relational and cultural value which makes this place materially and non-materially rich and diverse. The innovation is to refresh the thinking around Clairwood in an open alternative way, which encourages participation of its citizens to share its richness. This is a chance for

such vital heritage to survive the potential of its demise through the harbour development and somewhat non-informed changes to the community.

Bracking (2007) noted that when developed countries are managing development finance within developing countries, they apply the orthodox economic principle of the participants being conceived of as 'rational' individuals and treat them as a collective. From this view, developed countries fail to contextualise financing with the history and other social factors that may affect how people in developing countries handle their finances. With poverty being rife in developing countries, it is conclusive that many of the people therefore do not have the means to save their incomes: their budgets are insufficient to advance investment opportunities and the money they lend does not accumulate too much interest. To implement micro financing in developing countries for the poor on the assumption that they are 'rational' economic individuals is as ignorant as the recipients of the money who may not be fully informed of the implications and consequences of acquiring credit. If the informal business sector is to be formalised, the communities would need financing to acquire capital that will help navigate the start of their formal business obligations. Areas such as the Clairwood community rely heavily on their informal businesses and the flexibility involved with running these businesses, without disturbances or stringent restrictions. Therefore, advocating for a cross-cultural understanding of the workings of informality, in particular the workings of the informal economy, will be effective in maximising the benefit of growing businesses.

The role of informal economies within the national formal economy needs to be considered within their geopolitical contexts. Informal economies have their own existing power relations and to be able to understand this economy in-depth, it must be researched within the local communities (Jackson, 2012). Therefore, moving the Clairwood community will perpetuate the cycle of poverty because households will be losing incomes from these informal businesses and available sustenance options provided by the environment.

According to Mkandawire (2001) global markets operate in a way that provides economic growth for the developed countries at the expense of developing countries. This is all done within the so-called frameworks of democracy, development and globalisation. These notions and ideologies were coined by the developed countries within their own context and histories thus imposing these notions in African states has given the West a platform to easily access, manipulate and control developing countries in their entirety through political, social and economic mechanisms. This exercise of power through these ideologies advocates the prioritising of the needs of the citizens in the developed countries before the

needs of those living in developing countries. Within this pattern, the port expansion project is being promoted as a developmental initiative with little consideration of the proposed area for expansion, which is a dense node of humanity, history and established community. There are people who survive every day because they are situated in this area *specifically*, and life would be harder elsewhere in the eThekweni area. This statement is well demonstrated in this citizen's response:

*"I came here with nothing and I now have [...] a cell phone, stove and furniture. I want to stay because this area has made me a better person [...] I feel safe and I know that if I work hard this place will give me everything as it has done [...] The people are like my brothers and nobody here cares if you are black, Indian or white. We all live together peacefully [...] the people make this place valuable. Without the people there is no value because it is them who have helped me in my life [...] you learn a lot from the different kind of people who stay here [...] Even though we have so little, we make a difference in each other's life," (Male, Satsri Road).*

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