CHAPTER EIGHT

CONFLICT AND MIGRATION IN KWAZULU-NATAL

By Simon Bekker and Antoinette Louw

Research into informal settlements of the Durban Functional Region has revealed a very high population exchange. The high incidence of ‘moving on’, reported by Cross and Clarke in their research for the Rural Urban Studies Unit at the University of Natal, is explained in a complex manner. But one important element is the role that both perceived and experienced violence play in decisions to quit one residential area and seek out another in which to settle.

This research also reveals that most recent migration streams in informal settlements are intra-metropolitan: rural to urban migration comprises a small proportion of the volume and, once having entered the Durban Functional Region (DFR), households tend to ‘move on’ within the area.

A different research programme, Conflict Trends in Natal, has as its aim to develop a data base of conflict events in the KwaZulu-Natal region from 1986 to the present. The project, which defines conflict as collective violent behaviour, uses multiple sources and has captured some 10 000 conflict events. Analyses based on the data, by Bekker and Louw, have shown not only that regional conflict is sustained, but that its occurrence in urban informal settlements is pronounced.

Since this data base enables analyses which are sensitive to place as well as time of conflict event occurrence, it is possible to describe
fluctuations in the frequency as well as intensity of conflict in different defined localities from 1986 to the present.

A number of analyses of conflict trends point to the importance of migration within settlements as a major context in which most conflict takes place. This context also includes both the informally housed in townships and, sometimes, lodging and tenant households in township housing. Migration of such households within the DFR underlines the openness of township, backyard and infill, and informal settlement vis-à-vis one another. In addition, conflict between single men hostels and their surrounds defines a separate and important context for conflict.

A number of case studies demonstrate the importance of the relationship between migration and conflict in explaining both these activities. The two are often interdependent: conflict may contribute to a household’s decision to move from a sending area, and that move may contribute to conflict in the receiving area.

SOME CASE STUDIES

The relationship between migration and conflict is an interactive rather than a causal one, shaped by the characteristics of different areas. The effects of violence on communities have not been well documented. The most immediate and visible consequence of violence is the displacement of people. Tens of thousands of residents in KwaZulu-Natal have been forced to flee their homes. Many never return.

Conflict thus drives some people to migrate to more accessible settlements in the hope of a more peaceful existence. The movement of people into informal communities, for whatever reasons, may also engender violence in these communities. Newcomers place additional strain on already scarce resources and the contestation over these may become violent, especially where local institutions are weak. In some cases in-migrants transport the seeds of the political conflict from which they fled to their new homes, particularly if they challenge existing authority structures.

The following case studies illustrate the interactive relationship between migration and violence, and some forms which this relationship assumes in different areas. Also, while violence, as both a cause and product of migration, need not occur exclusively in informal areas, they illustrate that settlements are usually the site of such conflict.

Tshelimnyama

Tshelimnyama illustrates how, by controlling in-migration to an informal area and maintaining political unity within the community, violence may be limited. In this case, according to Cross et al, residents and community organisations perceived control over the entry of strangers to be directly linked to preventing violence.

The Marianhill area in the west, where Tshelimnyama is situated, is an exception in the DFR, where most informal settlements lack the coherent, legitimate local governing structures which in this case regulated access to the informal settlements. Cross et al found that local committees in Marianhill were well established and controlled in-migration strictly, favouring families of established residents over outsiders.

Outsiders could acquire ‘insider status’ after being tenants in the area for two or three years, during which time they could be assessed. In-migration levels were regulated to suit the resources available to the community and to allow for successful development initiatives. The presence of strong local organisations and leadership prevented the outbreak of violence as a result of an influx of people into the area.

In Tshelimnyama, however, a warlord began illicitly selling sites without planning approval and at prices lower than the agreed rate, resulting in rapid in-migration. The local committee was unable to curb this activity, and lost popular support among the established residents, which fueled a crisis. Conflict resulted when residents opposed the new entrants.

Shakaville

This example illustrates the interactive relationship between migration and violence, in which violence causes people to flee their homes in favour of a more peaceful environment. The politicisation of newcomers in the receiving area and attempts to appropriate control over the area result in the transposition of the political conflict.

Shakaville, near Stanger on the North Coast, was established about 40 years ago. Five kilometers from Shakaville is the settlement of Entshawini. Conflict in this community in 1992 caused many people to flee to an area adjacent to Shakaville. Most of these refugees were Inkatha supporters, who named the area in which they settled Lindelani.
While conflict had been brewing for some time in Shakaville, tensions developed between the newcomers in Lindelani and Shakaville residents, and violence broke out in December 1993. A resident in Lindelani - viewed by many as a warlord - had taken control of resource allocation, and carried out forced recruitment drives in Lindelani and Shakaville. Although Shakaville comprises both African National Congress and Inkatha supporters, the whole community is against the warlord.

The Role of the Youth

This example, like that of Shakaville, illustrates the interactive relationship between migrancy and violence and how political conflict is spread to settlements into which people move. Before 1990, Gwala notes, violence occurred mainly in urban areas while rural violence was centred mainly around the peripheries of cities like Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

After February 2, 1990, violence levels soared not only in and around the metropolitan areas but in remote areas on the north and south coasts and in the midlands. This was largely attributed to the activities of youths who fled the urban violence, seeking refuge in rural areas where they set about politicising the communities in which they settled, especially other youths.

These youngsters were activated against tribal authorities and the education system, which were perceived as corrupt and inefficient. Such activities, Gwala contends, inevitably led to conflict with the KwaZulu administration, the chiefs and Inkatha, which elicited violent counter challenges, giving the violence a destructive momentum.

The violence initiated by this activity has had devastating effects in the south coast in particular, and continues today. The Murchison/Bhoyboyi area, which had a population of 30 000 a few years ago, is now inhabited by only 3 000 people. Many residents have been forced to flee to safer areas, and refugees have been allowed to rent small pieces of ground on several farms north of Port Shepstone.

These growing informal settlements face the characteristic problems of a lack of facilities and resources, Chetty points out. Gangs seeking to gain territorial control have emerged where no local governing structures exist, resulting in additional conflict. The interaction between violence and the movement of people continues when people move back to their original homes once peace is restored, and violence flares once again.

MIGRATION AND VIOLENCE IN THE DFR

Conflict is both a major cause and a product of migration. An appreciation of the exchanges between these two phenomena is vital for understanding how informal settlements are populated and for anticipating future movements of people.

Violence not only encourages people to leave an area, but also determines which area they choose for resettlement. Prolonged conflict operates as a 'push factor' in the migration process, encouraging people to relocate to more peaceful areas. The migration data shows, however, that with the exception of the central DFR, violence was reported by respondents in all the communities into which they moved.

This is significant not only because it reflects the disturbing extent of conflict in the DFR, but also because these conditions may with time drive people to move on again in search of better lives. High levels of violence may also dissuade people from moving to an afflicted area.

Recent in-migrants are defined as households who have migrated into one of the survey areas between 1986 and the end of 1989, and very recent in-migrants are those who settled after 1989. Both groups were asked why they left their previous areas of residence, and if violence had occurred in the communities into which they had moved (Table 1).

The proportion of respondents who identified violence as the major push factor varied significantly between the sub-regions, but was identified most often by migrants in the central area: 23%. In Briardene this figure was as high as 46%: most migrants had fled violence in Inanda. In both the south and west, violence was the push factor in 18% of cases, while in the north this proportion was only 4%.

<table>
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<th>Sending Area</th>
<th>Receiving Area</th>
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<td>% households* identifying violence as the major push factor</td>
<td>% households* reporting violence in the receiving area</td>
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<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>Central</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
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| * These households comprise recent in-migrants who moved into the area during the last six years. Sources: RUSU migration data.
When asked whether violence had occurred in the areas in which migrants settled, the responses of people varied between and within the sub-regions. The most significant finding was that less than 5% of people in the central area reported violence. As many as 58% of respondents said that violence had occurred in the north sub-region. In the west this proportion was 42%, and in the south 32%. In terms of felt needs, freedom from violence was the first priority of respondents in the south.

Conflict Trends in the DFR since 1986

Data from the Conflict Trends in Natal project (Figure 1) shows the number of recorded conflict events in each year since 1986 in the four sub-regions. Based on the case studies, the assumption is that rapid migration into settlements, where the process of entry is not controlled, could lead to violent conflict over material and organisational resources.

The Central Sub-Region

Conflict levels in the central sub-region, while consistent, are far lower than those in the other sub-regions. However, if the significantly lower population figures in this sub-region are taken into account, these levels are not as moderate as the graph suggests. In 1993, conflict levels in the central sub-region were actually higher than in the west.

The migration data reveals that 89% of central settlers moved there after 1986, and most have arrived since 1989. Of the communities surveyed, conflict over the past year, 1991, was reported only in Kennedy Road, and it was not severe. However, the potential for serious violence exists.

The North Sub-Region

In the north violence increased steadily from 1986 to 1990, when conflict peaked throughout KwaZulu-Natal. The violence in 1988 and 1989 was largely sparked by intense attacks by the Amasinyora in KwaMashu, according to Gwala. In 1990 new dynamics shaped the conflict, Louw and Bekker note, with open political contestation taking on violent proportions. After 1990 levels dropped dramatically. Had violence not erupted in Bhambayi in 1993, this trend would probably have continued.

The West Sub-Region

The west sub-region recorded the most conflict events in the DFR in 1988. This trend is attributable to intense conflict in the Mpumalanga area until 1990 when a peace agreement was achieved. After 1990 conflict dropped to 1987 levels, and in 1993 dwindled further. Mpumalanga and Ndwedwe have been the scenes of most violence since the late 1980s.

Most of the migrants in the survey areas were not recent, with nearly 97% of households having arrived before influx control was lifted. These communities were thus more established and stable than the others in the DFR, and maintained strong controls over the entering population.

The South Sub-Region

Violence flared in this sub-region in 1990 for reasons similar to those in the north. But while conflict decreased markedly elsewhere, it has continued to grip communities in the south. Intensified and localised attacks characterised the violence in Umlazi, and hostels were described by Gwala as being ‘pivotal in the upsurge of violence since February 1990’. The rates of in-migration to the south correlate closely with the upsurge of violence. The major inflows of people occurred after 1986, amounting to 78% of households, and most arrived after 1989.
CONCLUSION

Analyses of informal settlements show convincingly that important relationships exist between migration streams and trends in violent conflict. We have shown that this relationship is rarely causal in one direction, but often sequential in the sense that one variable prompts the other, with a subsequent feedback effect.

This analysis also underlines the critical importance of planning interventions into settlements aimed at stabilisation, in the sense of lessening the phenomenon of 'moving on'. It would seem that a more complex intervention policy matrix needs to emerge which is able to both firm up policy at the macro-level and enable greater flexibility at local level. In particular, a policy regarding what policy makers should and should not do regarding community organisations is needed. This suggests the need for amendments to the prevailing urban development paradigm:

- It is becoming clear that the planning and implementation processes need to be re-integrated.
- Project management must include community participation throughout the development process.
- When addressing the viability of a development project, planners must look beyond the internal costs and aims of the project and include the wider external costs and consequences.
- In analysing a proposed project, planners must move beyond an analysis of three traditional parties: the planners and state officials on the supply side, and the target community on the demand side. In many communities, it is essential to differentiate between new in-migrants and established residents.

REFERENCES

Chetty S (1994) 'Conversation with Mr Chetty from Practical Ministries, Port Shepstone.