

Monumentalization and the renaming of street names in the city of Durban (eThekweni) as a contested terrain between politics and religion

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Abstract

Responding to one of the key recommendations of the transition from apartheid to a democratic South Africa, the government promulgated the South African Geographical Names Council Act No. 118 of 1998.¹ The aim of this policy was to change the names of public places and roads. The City of Durban (eThekweni) started implementing this policy in 2006. However, the implementation process was dominated by political organizations with minimal participation by other civil society groups and a total non-participation of religious groups such as churches. For instance out of the 182 new names that were promulgated, only two of them (Denis Hurley and Diakonia) were drawn from the religious sector. The aim of this paper is to highlight the contestations and contradictions around the monumentalization of the history of South Africa through the geographical renaming process. It seeks to critically examine the implications for the non-participation of the religious sector in the geographical renaming process. The paper is concluded with a few propositions that can be embarked upon in order to enable effective and meaningful engagement in such a process in order to evince a generally inclusive and broadly accepted list of geographical names, representing most of the key sectors of society, rather than the dominant political organizations.

Keywords: Monumentalization; Geographical renaming; Religious sector; Politicization; Politics and religion; Municipality; Political history; Heroes and heroines.

Introduction

South Africa has many towns; most of which were built during the colonial era. As a result they bear English names of colonial leaders. Most of these

¹ Act No. 118, 1998, South African Geographical Names Council Act, *Government Gazette*, 2 December 1998.

towns have embarked on the geographical renaming process, which is not only South African but international.² Amongst the towns that embarked on the geographical renaming process is the City of Durban, popularly known as eThekweni, one of the most important and largest cities in Africa.³ It is the second largest city in South Africa and has one of the largest populations concentrated in one city in the country. It also boasts a very interesting history because of its association with the most popular African king of his time, *Isilo u Shaka Zulu kaSenzangakhona* (King Shaka Zulu the son of Senzangakhona). The city was founded in 1824, when 25 British settlers under the leadership of Lieutenant FG Farewell and Henry Fynn were granted a strip of land 25 miles along the coast.⁴ It is here that they built the trading town which, in 1835, they named Durban, after Sir Benjamin D'Urban who was the Governor of the Cape Colony. From there the city of Durban was under the British rule that formed the government of Port Natal. Almost from the start, Durban became an enclave from which the British attempted to establish their power and domination in the region. It is therefore not surprising that Durban has the biggest concentration of English people in South Africa.⁵ It is also not surprising that when South Africa transitioned from apartheid to a democratic government in 1994, after more than 160 years since the city was founded, almost all the geographical names (for streets, public building and other landmarks) were of British and Afrikaner heroes and heroines, and administrators. Yet the history of the African people in Durban is not without significance. African heroism associated with the city dates as far back as the time of uShaka ka Senzangakhona. Adrian Koopman has noted that most cities have an African name which runs parallel to the English name.⁶ He notes that the Zulu people had their own name for the burgeoning town of Durban as eThekweni or eBhodwe. Unfortunately all this history was ignored and marginalized, thus making the names unrepresentative of the population and citizens of the city, which included black, Indian and coloured people. The leaders of the colonial and apartheid governments over the decades skilfully

2 L Brockett, "The history of planning South African new towns: Political; influences on social principles adopted", *New Contree Journal*, pp. 160-179.

3 The first name of the city of Durban was given to it in 1600. It was *Rio de Natal*. The name was only changed in the second half of the 1700 to Port Natal. eThekweni is a Zulu name for the *bay or lagoon*. For more on this see, A Koopman, "The names and naming of Durban" (available at: <http://www.durban.gov.za/Documents>, as accessed on 6 August 2014).

4 J Stewart & D Malcolm, *The diary of Henry Francis Fynn* (Pietermaritzburg, Shooter and Shooter, 1986), p. xiii.

5 B Freund & V Padayachee, *Durban vortex: South African City in transition* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 2012), p. 3.

6 A Koopman, "Introducing 'My Old Dutch': Onomastic Attrition in Cockney rhyming slang and titles of nobility", *Journal of the Names Society of Southern Africa*, 23(1), April 2009, pp. 1-30.

avoided and isolated the legacies of black people who hailed from the city of Durban. In a way, Durban's history has been marked by the contestation for space by different groups. This point was observed by Maylam when he said that:⁷

Much of the history of Durban in the twentieth century has been about the contesting of space. The local state consistently tried to control space in the service of the city's predominantly white middle class. Residential space has been manipulated through various mechanisms with the view to banishing the black underclasses to the city's periphery and so insulating and immunising whites from the supposed dangers that accompanied the black urban presence. The closing down of physical space for the underclasses also served to limit their access to other forms of space, economic, cultural and political.

It is against this backdrop that the democratic government initiated strategies to rename key landmarks in the city, such as roads and public buildings, in order to build ownership of the city by its citizens, mark the transformation of the city from an apartheid one to a democratic city, and promote social cohesion and common identity amongst the citizens through monumentalization. The word monumentalization is used broadly in this article to refer to the creation of the physical images, symbols and presence, the naming of streets, the creation of figures using the names of outstanding leaders who contributed to the ushering of the democratic dispensation, so that people may preserve the memory of the history of the city and the political trajectories it has experienced. This may mean different things to different people but at least it has to be commemorated in an inclusive way, as much as possible. A number of scholars have written on the history and geographical names of Durban. Edmund Dawes wrote a book titled, *Landmarks of old Durban: A series of documentary programmes broadcast from the Durban studios of the South African Broadcasting Corporation*.⁸ David Dick, an academic from Napier College of Technology and Science in Edinburgh Scotland, wrote a comprehensive book on the street names in Durban titled '*WHO was WHO in the Durban street names*'.⁹ Paul Maylam and Lain Edwards wrote an important book on African life in the twentieth-century Durban, titled *The people's city: African life in the twentieth-century Durban*.¹⁰ Most recently and very relevant for this paper, NS Turner has published a paper on the street naming process

7 P Maylam, "Introduction: The struggle for space in twentieth-century Durban", P Maylam & I Edwards, *The people's city: African life in the twentieth century Durban* (Pietermaritzburg, Natal University Press, 1996), p. 26.

8 E Dawes, *Landmarks of old Durban: A series of documentary programmes broadcast from the Durban Studios of the SABC* (Durban, EP Commercial Printing CO, LTD, 1948).

9 D Dick, *Who was who in Durban street names?* (United Kingdom, Clerkinghton Publishing Company, 1998).

10 P Maylam, "Introduction: The struggle for space...", P Maylam & I Edwards, *The people's city...*, p. 26.

in Durban titled *The process of naming streets in Durban, South Africa*.¹¹ Adrian Koopman wrote three papers on the naming of streets in Durban. In his papers he concentrated on how the name Durban, together with the other Zulu names of the city such as eThekweni, were constructed and what their meanings are.

This paper will draw from the material gathered by these scholars, for most of them give the historical development and meanings of the street names. Therefore they provide the foundational information for this paper. This will be done by analysing the information gleaned from the books and papers to draw insights on how the streets had been named and to see if religion had ever been considered in this process. None of the books and papers written on this subject has concentrated on the role of religion and religious communities in the renaming process. This paper is unique because it seeks to examine the role of religion in this process given that Durban has a number of active religions and it is said to be the most pluralistic city in the country. For instance, in terms of population figures, 68.30% are Black Africans, 19.90% Asians, 8.98% are whites and 2.89% are coloured. As far as religion is concerned 85.90% of the population profess to be religious.¹² Only about 15.5% of the population profess no religion. Therefore religion should be represented in major processes that seek to determine the identity and names of the city. It must also be noted that this paper is located in the *war about history* itself. It is about the contestation in the process of remembering, capturing, symbolizing, and recording history through monumentalization. It analyses the dynamics around power, politics, inclusion and exclusions in the process of recording history in a community by taking a closer look at the process leading to the geographical renaming in the city of Durban. It focuses on the role that was played or should have been played by the religious communities in this process. It attempts to analyse the process that was undertaken and to see if there are lessons that can be derived from it. The paper is divided into five parts. Part “one” looks at the renaming process. Part “two” looks at the politicization of the whole process, which led to it being dominated by political organizations and agendas. Part “three” discusses how politics and religion interface in monumentalization. Part “four” will look at the marginalization of the religious community and what it could

11 NS Turner has published a paper on the street naming process in Durban titled “The process of naming streets in Durban, South Africa”, *Nova, Journal of the Names Society of Southern Africa*, 23, April 2009, pp. 113-132.

12 Ulwazi, “Sharing indigenous knowledge” (available at: www.Lwazi.org/index+Durban, as accessed on 29 September 2014).

have contributed had it been fully integrated in the process. Part five looks at the relationship between the monumentalization as the canonization and stultifying of new and emerging history. Then the paper is concluded with a few lessons that have been drawn from this process, with the hope that they can be lessons for the future.

The renaming process

The process was initiated by the National Government when it promulgated the South African Geographical Names Council Act No. 118 of 1998.¹³ In 1998, Geographical Names referred to names that could be given to roads, streets, towns and provinces. The Council of the eThekweni Municipality started implementing this Act in 2006.

The aims of the process

One of the key aims of the Act was to promote social cohesion. Sociologist Andres Feige defined social cohesion as:¹⁴

The positive valence of the described phenomenon refers to the attractiveness of a social construction for individuals, which leads them into further affirmed interactions with individuals, which leads them into further affirmed interactions with other individuals in exactly the same social construction - and above all: which let them continue doing so. This attractiveness can be based on or motivated by personal sympathy for other group members; and/or by the attractiveness of the groups' activities (e.g. team, sports); and or by the prestige-profit, which membership brings to the individual.

In this sense the term social cohesion describes a positive state of social stability. Social cohesion is a precondition for political and even economic development, so it is critical for a country that is concerned with developing its democracy to maturity. Feige goes on to note that social cohesion "indicates a social, especially effective emotional binding of people to a social construction".¹⁵ From the context of the renaming of streets, social cohesion

13 Act no. 118, 1998 South African Geographical Names Council act, 1998 establishment, *Government Gazette*, 2 December 1998,

14 W Graeb & L Charbonnier, *The impact of global religious transformation on social cohesion and social development in cultural contexts* (Munchen, LiPZIG, 2013), pp. 13-19.

15 A Feige, "Social cohesion as the most important...", W Graeb & L Charbonnier, *The impact of global religious formation...*, p. 15.

can be encouraged or inculcated when people agree on the names chosen through a collective process that includes as many people as possible. The aim of the process was to “persuasively and democratically construct a new social order of which the outcome is to be sustainable transformation”.¹⁶ Through this it was hoped there would be the achievement of social cohesion, national identity and peace in the country. It was also aimed at the re-writing of the history of the country which had been marked by the move from apartheid to a democratic society. The country embarked upon the geographical renaming strategy because it was convinced that this would bring healing and reconciliation in a country that was emerging from a painful and divided past.¹⁷ Key to this process was the achievement of social cohesion. Social cohesion or coherence can be defined in this way:¹⁸

... coherence facilitates the organization of new attitudes about specific issues and the coordination of social practices by different members in different situations. That is, coherence is a condition of continuity and reproduction.

Elsewhere I have argued that social cohesion is concerned with a sense of self, solidarity and integration and community.¹⁹ In any society, a sense of identity and belonging influences the bonding and social cohesion at all levels of the community. This bonding in turn has an impact on the extent to which people or communities collaborate and cooperate for self upliftment, social, economic and political development.²⁰ Geographical renaming is an important process that any country that has just emerged from oppression and division can employ as a way of exorcizing the demons of its past and developing a common identity, symbols and monuments relevant for their future as a nation. The aim of geographical naming is to ensure that the vestiges of “cultural imperialism” are removed.²¹ In this sense, geographical names can be used as social capital, meaning that they can contribute to the formation of common identity and common history. However history has taught us that a geographical renaming process is not without problems and contestations. A number of scholars have noted that every naming process is

16 B Meiring, Geographical names and social cohesion, *Nomina Africana*, 23, April 2009, pp. 31-50.

17 Inkatha Freedom Party, Media statement, May 2007.

18 AA van Dijk, B Meiring, Geographical names and social cohesion, *Nomina Africana*, 23, April 2009 p. 32.

19 RS Kumalo, “The impact of global religious transformation on social cohesion and social development in cultural contexts with specific reference to the South African context”, W Graeb & L Charbonnier, *The impact of global religious transformation on social cohesion and social development in cultural contexts* (Munich, LiPZIG, 2013), pp. 57-72.

20 RS Kumalo, “The impact of global religious transformation...”, W Graeb & L Charbonnier, *The impact of global religious transformation...*, p. 58.

21 E Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, Vintage Books, 1993), p. xx.

driven by the political agendas of those who are in power at that particular moment. For instance Moaz Azaryhu has observed that:²²

In multilingual societies, not only the names in urban toponymic inscriptions display identity politics and reproduce nationalist discourses but also the languages used. This is clearly the case with multilingual street signs, where specific preferences underlie the choice and placement of languages and scripts, signifying the processes and relationships of political and social power.

They use these processes in order to preserve their own hegemony and propaganda. In short, there is hardly any renaming process that has been free from politicization and contestation.²³ In the context of Durban this has led to the marginalization of other civil society groups such as churches and cultural groups. Such processes tend to be marked by domination by the ruling elite, with ordinary citizens being coerced to support what those in power want to see, or be excluded. The domination of the renaming process by the ruling elite replaces the old domination with a new cultural imperialism. Therefore the renaming process is always a deeply divisive process, although when properly managed it can bring about a level of unity and social cohesion. It is with this awareness in mind that Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee have observed that this process should take cognizance of the contextual dynamics and must not be closed but be seen as a one that is in progress and transition. They noted that:²⁴

A hard look to the South Africa reminds us just how much the sometimes convenient formulations of postcolonial study need to be determined, finally, by context; and also that a transitional dynamic is essential: looking at an emergent nation it is clear that post colonialism as a critical field will need to be reformulated as the processes progress.

The contestations in the renaming of Durban cannot be treated in isolation from the naming of other places in the rest of South Africa or even in the world.

22 M Azaryahu, "Hebrew, Arabic, and English: The politics of multilingual street signs in Israeli cities", *Social & Cultural Geography*, 13(5), 2012, p. 28.

23 M Azaryahu, Hebrew, Arabic, and English..., *Social & Cultural Geography*, 13(5), 2012, p. 21.

24 S Nuttall & C Coetzee, *Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 1.

The guidelines

The South African Geographical Names Council serves as the advisory body to the Minister of Arts and Culture and is responsible for this process. It drew up the following guidelines for the renaming process.

- There was a clear process to be followed and principles governing and justifying the types of names to be changed that was decided by the South African Geographical Names Council.²⁵
- The process needs to be implemented and managed by the local municipality;
- Names must be submitted to the committee appointed by the council;
- The eThekweni Municipality facilitated the process;
- Some geographical names in South Africa have to change;
- Proposals for change must be community driven, not managed in a top-down manner;
- Everyone is allowed a point of view,
- Names must be drawn from across political, cultural and religious lines.

Geographical names provide the symbols and visible images through which we can provide political language to ordinary people instead of having to use complex political and economic ones, for them to understand their history, environment and their freedom. A number of cities and towns have successfully embarked on this process. For instance Barbara Meiring further notes that:²⁶

The names of Provinces and Administrative Divisions, i.e. Metropolitan, District and Local Municipalities and some other geographical features reflect that since 1994 toponymical transformation towards Africanisation has successfully been attained. Out of the 9 Provinces and 52 Metropolitan and District Municipalities there are 38 African, 16 English, 3 Afrikaans and 3 Koi names. The local Municipalities have 170 African, 12 English, 24 Afrikaans, 17 Koi/Nama, 11 Dutch and 2 combined names.

The policy of geographical names is not so much meant for the monumentalization of struggle heroes by erasing the history of others but rather to monumentalize names and symbols that will encourage nation building and social cohesion. According to Barbara Meiring “the social importance of geographical names is important when we take into consideration that

²⁵ B Meiring, Geographical names and social cohesion, *Nomina Africana*, 23, April 2009, p. 32.

²⁶ B Meiring, Geographical names and social cohesion, *Nomina Africana*, 23, April 2009, pp. 31-50.

societies identify with a place name to the extent of claiming ownership to the place and the special meaning or significance of its name”.²⁷ However we cannot be overly optimistic by thinking that all people will be happy with the renaming process and will identify and have a sense of ownership of the renamed place. It is in the nature of renaming that some will lose their identity and ownership of the place as a result of the new name whilst others will gain. So the naming process is never a win-win situation but rather a matter of sacrifice for others, especially those in the minority groups. Therefore, like most democratic processes, the renaming process favours the majority, sometimes at the expense of the minority.²⁸ In that sense the cohesion that is achieved through this process has its own limitations, because it does not seem to protect the rights of the minorities to choose the name of their streets. For me the debate about the renaming of roads in Durban has been similar to the debates around this issue that have been raging throughout the country - e.g. Tshwane and the Eastern Cape. On the significance of changing the names of towns and cities, Jenkins, Raper and Moller have noted that “It acts as a mirror of the dynamic forces of changing historical relations, human sentiments, ideologies and attitudes towards change”.²⁹

The geographical naming process in Durban

The policy stipulated that the local municipalities needed to lead the process. For this reason, the process fell into the hands of politicians in the council who then politicized it. The African National Congress (ANC)³⁰ was in the leadership of the process since it is running the municipality. At first, the process was chaired by the speaker of the Municipality, Nomusa Dube. Later it was chaired by Councillor Zandile Gumede, who is also from the ANC. A call for the nomination of names was made and people made their submissions. Key to this process was that people who currently live in the vicinity of the streets needed to be part of the discussion around the changing of the names. They were expected to be the ones to submit a nomination to the renaming committee of the Durban metro. This was also after they had consulted with affected stakeholders of that street or road as widely as

27 B Meiring, Geographical names and social cohesion, *Nomina Africana*, 23, April 2009, p. 33

28 M Azaryahu, Hebrew, Arabic, and English..., *Social & Cultural Geography*, 13(5), 2012, p. 24.

29 E Jenkins, P Raper & L Moller, *Changing Place Names* (Durban, Indicator Press, 1995), p. 12.

30 The ANC is the organization that led South Africa to liberation from apartheid though not exclusively. It is also the ruling party.

possible. Civil society groups were also invited to make their inputs. Through the project of renaming of significant roads and public places, an important drive to change the names of streets and public buildings and stadiums was undertaken in the City of Durban. To date, more than 182 names of roads and public buildings have been renamed.

Lessons gained from the renaming process

Now we turn to the lessons learned from the process.

The politicization of the renaming process

There are three levels of alienation that I think were experienced in this process and I would like to focus the discussion on them. The first level of alienation was the fact that the process was politicized. So a political organization ran with the process, leaving behind other civil society groups, such as non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and so on. The fact that the process was driven by the municipalities, who themselves are political structures, made it difficult for them to distance the politics from it. It could have been better if they had appointed an independent body, led by a retired judge or non-partisan official to oversee this process instead of choosing politicians to run with it. KwaZulu-Natal is known for its political volatility, so people are cautious and even suspicious of political processes because they tend to lead to violence and conflict. Thus a number of people do not want to participate in political processes for fear of being affected by the violence. So there was very minimal participation of other groups that are not necessarily connected with political organizations. That was the first level of alienation. This cannot be blamed on the participants in Durban but rather to the leadership of the renaming process, and maybe the policy itself should have stipulated on how maximum participation of the community across political, religious, racial and other forms of boundaries can be achieved. Meshack Khosa has defined participation as “voluntary activities through which members of the public, directly or indirectly, share in the legislative, policy-making and planning activities of democratic institutions”.³¹ Khosa’s

31 M Khosa, “Real citizenship: Participation and Democracy”, R Callan & P Graham, *Democracy in the time of Mbeki* (Cape Town, IDASA, 2005), p. 128.

definition of participation emphasizes the agency of the public in the shaping of policy-making and planning. Generally there is a tendency of seeing public participation as only relevant and imperative during the elections. In his definition of participation Imraam Buccus resolves this dilemma by emphasizing the need for the participation of the public in democratic processes to be on-going. He defined participation as:³²

... a continuous democratic process that is rooted in the engagement of communities in a process of thinking, planning and deciding on their future. This is done together with their elected representatives and other key stakeholders and alongside the social forces instrumental in shaping their future.

Buccus highlights the importance of the continuous participation of the public and other stakeholders in the institution, planning and implementation of democratic policies as one of the key principles of democracy. That is because participation in decision making processes is key to democracy. Lukas Vischer has noted that:³³

“... democratic participation is the presupposition of authentic community and therefore essential also in the perspective of cultural identity. Only where individuals enjoy democratic freedom can they really develop their capacities”.

Therefore the fact that the renaming process was driven by a political structure, such as the municipality, and alienated a significant number of people and other stakeholders, such as the religious community, means that key principles of democracy such as public participation was flaunted.

During the renaming process there were four main political parties in the eThekweni Municipality. These were the ANC, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), Democratic Alliance (DA), and the Minority Front (MF). The organization that was active in this process was the African National Congress (ANC). The relationship between the DA and the ANC has always been difficult and sometimes acrimonious. The DA consisted mainly though not only of whites who had been running the City of Durban from the time of colonization. These were people who had been responsible for having named the roads after white heroes especially names such as Smith streets, West, Sydney, St Andrews etc. For the majority of DA members the renaming process was a threat to

32 I Buccus, “Community life and securing participation beyond elections”, S Booysen (ed.), *Local election in South Africa: Parties, people and politics* (Bloemfontein, Sun Press, 2012), p. 246.

33 L Mudge & T Wieser, *Democratic contracts for sustainable and caring societies: What can churches and Christian communities do?* (Geneva, WCC, 2000), p. 7.

the history of the city which was embedded in the street names, and this would be replaced with new names that are biased from the history towards the majority and ruling party which is the ANC. The third largest party in the metro was the IFP, which had previously been the majority party that ran the province and the city of Durban soon after 1994. Whilst in power in the early years of democracy, the IFP had facilitated the naming of streets and roads in Durban after its own heroes and members of the Zulu royal family. For instance it named the highway from Durban to Mlazi after its president, *Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi* highway and another road had been named Queen Nandi etc. The ANC is the ruling party with a huge majority in the province and the city of Durban. Therefore when the process fell into the hands of the municipality to elect a committee from amongst its councillors, it dominated the process. Therefore this led to the contestation between the three major political parties, each seeking to maintain their dominance and protect their presence, visibility and history in the city through the renaming process. What was lost in the process was the will and voice of other groups that represented members of society who were not political, such as churches, mosques and representatives of the African traditional religions.

The renaming committee under the chairpersonship of an ANC councillor had the responsibility of setting up the guidelines and driving the process by receiving the submissions, tabling reports to the municipal council, presenting these to the national minister for approval and implementing the renaming of the roads once the process has gone through the relevant government structures. These parties made their submissions to the committee. Secondly, in spite of the fact that the process was, by policy, aimed at being as representative of the people of South Africa as possible, there was a level of alienation for ordinary people. There is no evidence that the level of representation of all the key stake holders was checked in the process. As a result most of the names were accepted, without having been approved by the majority of the citizens. That is why when the IFP and the DA took the council to court for lack of consultation and domination of the process, the court ruled in their favour.

There is a sense in which the ruling party saw the process as an opportunity to build support and record their partisan agenda of mobilizing their members and recording the narrative of their history. This was asserted by Ronnie Kasrils, a leader of the ANC and a former minister of Water Affairs

and Intelligence who resided in Durban for a long time. He noted that:³⁴

Geographical naming is so important because from the perspective of the movement it is a way of educating our people politically, to understand the story of our nation. So the renaming of the streets by using the names of heroes of the struggle would enable us to educate or remind people about where we are coming from as a nation, enable them to appreciate the critical role that was played by some of their leaders in the liberation of the struggle, with the hope that they can treasure the freedom.

In spite of the common agreement and agenda on the aims and objectives of the process by the ANC however, the disagreements on the names to be monumentalized were not only inter-party but also from within. There was disagreement on whose names from amongst the cadres should be used in the renaming process. Older members of the party were more inclined to vote for the names of their contemporaries who died in the struggle but the youth rigorously campaigned for younger members such as Solomon Mahlangu, Problem Mkhize and Andrew Zondo. Kasrils has further noted that:³⁵

From within the organization, one sometimes feels that the list of names that were used has not been through a thorough process. There are a number of strong cadres who made huge contributions in the struggle who have not been honoured. This links to the fact that some of them have been forgotten, not a lot of people know anything about them. I have from time to time encouraged the comrades to consider some of the names that have not been used in the geographical naming process.

The problem was exacerbated by intraparty politics. Of significance also is that the use of people's names was motivated by politics, so it did not emphasize the other contributions that some leaders made in the development of the city and its people. That on its own alienated groups who are not necessarily interested in the political reasons for the process but for other reasons. A case in hand is the reasons for using the names of Archbishop Hurley and Diakonia. Both these names are associated with religious groups. Archbishop Hurley was the most popular leader of the Catholic Church, a bishop for over forty years, a respected activist who fought in the struggle against apartheid,

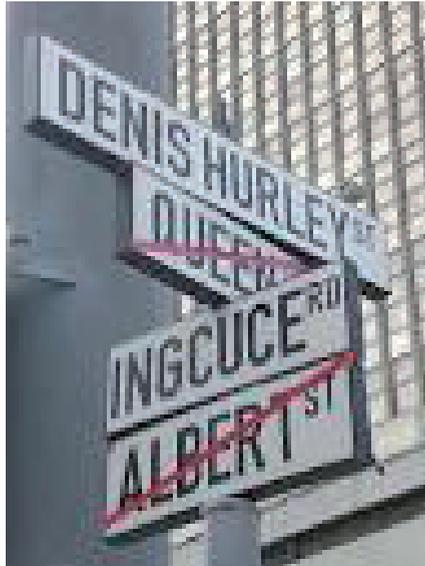
34 Ronnie Kasrils is former minister of water affairs and intelligence in the Mbeki cabinet. Of significance for this research is that he was a member of the National Executive of the ANC, who was born in Durban and lived there for a long time before he went into exile. Therefore he had strong views of the ANC in the city and had worked with a lot of leaders during and after apartheid. Thus he had an opinion on how the process could have been driven in a more inclusive way and who some of the leaders whose names deserved to be monumentalized. Kasrils was interviewed by Simangaliso Kumalo at the OR Tambo Airport on the 17 June 2014.

35 R Kasrils (former minister of water affairs and intelligence), interview, RS Kumalo (Professor, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal), 17 June 2014.

a respected leader in the Catholic Church during the reign of Pope John Paul 11 and a respected church leader in South Africa especially during the difficult years of apartheid.³⁶ The Diakonia Council of Churches is remembered for its work in the struggle against apartheid especially by assisting those who were imprisoned. However when these names were monumentalized there was no emphasis on the significant role played by their faith or religious conviction in relation to the struggle against apartheid. The emphasis was on the political role itself, negating the role of religion here.

For instance, members of the religious community felt that the process had become a political one. Even the leadership of Diakonia, the Archbishop Bishop Denis Hurley Foundation and the Kwazulu-Natal Christian Council (KZNCC), were not invited to the process. This is in spite of the fact that the names of Diakonia and Archbishop Hurley were used to name two roads in the city.³⁷

Image 1: The sign of what was known as Queen Street which was unilaterally changed to Denis Hurley Street



Source: The Cronan, “Durban street name changes” (available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cronyn/galleries/72157624851627606>, as accessed on 30 September 2014).

³⁶ For more on Bishop Hurley see P Kearney, (ed.), *Denis E. Hurley: The Memoirs of Archbishop Denis E. Hurley OMI* (Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2006).

³⁷ Cyril Mwandla (Programme Co-ordinator, Diakonia), telephonic interview, RS Kumalo, 26 June, 2014.

Instead the renaming process was dominated by political parties who saw it as an opportunity to monumentalize their heroes and this led to intense political contestation. For instance the DA was opposed to some of the names that the ANC used. The IFP felt that their own history was being undermined by the ANC which was removing names of IFP leaders and replacing them with names of ANC activists. A case in point is with regard to the proposed changing of the major road from Durban to kwaMashu, which was known as the Prince Mangosuthu Highway. The ANC proposed that it be changed to Griffiths Mxenge Highway after its activist lawyer who was murdered by the apartheid security forces on this road in the mid-1980s. In the process of renaming, some important sectors of society were totally marginalized. Although there is ample evidence of the intentional replacement of some historical names with those of the heroes of the struggle who were aligned with the ruling party, there is no evidence of rigorous attempts being made to bring on board civil society groups like churches, Islamic groups and others.

The fact that some members of society felt alienated from this process can be seen from their response to it. They wrote in protest in papers against it and accused the ruling party of dominating the process. A coalition of opposition parties held marches in the city protesting against this domination and alienation. There was intense disagreement on the fairness of the process and the ANC was accused of using the process to preserve their own history and to distribute party favours to its cadres. Noleen Turner observed that:³⁸

The proposed name changes in the eThekweni municipality have come up against a lot of opposition from both the public as well as political parties. One of the major debates is around the names that have been chosen, which consist mainly of apartheid freedom fighters who are affiliated with the ruling party, the ANC. Comments have been levelled which accuse the ANC of marking their territory and literally painting what they see as their town, red - dishing out name changes like party favours.

Indeed when one goes through the list of geographical names in the city, one realizes that the majority of these names are by far dominated by cadres of the ruling party or of organizations that were allies of the ANC. Therefore names that are successfully chosen to be used in streets “are homogenous and exclusive to a specific identity and tradition is often ideology driven”.³⁹ There is a need to include the community in the writing of history; suppressed

38 NS Turner, *The process of renaming streets in Durban...*, *Nova, Journal of the Names Society of Southern Africa*, 23, April 2009, p. 116.

39 B Meiring, Geographical names and social cohesion, *Nomina Africana*, 23, April 2009, p. 37.

memories and marginalized used voices have to be brought into the open. This can be done through the oral history project, which teaches us that history is incomplete until all points of view and sectors in society have been represented.⁴⁰ However there is no evidence that this was done especially considering the names that made it to the list of monumentalization. Those responsible for implementing the geographical naming process had to guard against the construction of unintended perceptions and beliefs that may work against the intended aims of social cohesion and national identity.

This is when naming authorities at all levels need wisdom and a spirit of unbiased decision making.⁴¹

The concern and disagreements rested on the fact that different organizations were not happy with the process, feeling that they were excluded. So the whole process remained at a political level as a political game, rather than it cascading to the local level for it to be owned by all the people. It could add value in the promotion of social cohesion, which is one of the key objectives of the policy. Barbra Meiring noted that “This ideal of a unified and coherent society would then lead to a continued process of transformation of the toponymical landscape of South Africa”.⁴² However the way this process unfolded in Durban did not seem to have promoted social cohesion but rather the opposite. There was resistance to the new names, with the IFP and the DA marching against either the removal of old names which they deemed to be deserving place in history or in opposition to new names which they saw as undeserving of monumentalization. There was a continuous renaming by spray paint of street names as a form of resistance by the aggrieved parties or members of society. Some names were defaced by people and the struggle between the political organizations over these names continues; however the names remain in place in spite of the contestation.

40 P Denis, *Orality, memory and the past. Listening to the voice of black clergy under colonialism and apartheid* (Cluster Publications, 2000), p. 10.

41 B Meiring, Geographical names and social cohesion, *Nomina Africana*, 23, April 2009, p. 44.

42 B Meiring, Geographical names and social cohesion, *Nova Africana, Nomina Africana*, 23, April 2009, pp. 31-50.

Image 2: Former Essenwood road changed to Stephen Dlamini road



Source: A Stuijt, "Durban residents object to ethnic-cleansing of white street names", November 2008 (available at: <http://censorbugbear-reports.blogspot.com/2008/11/20000-afrikaners-object-to-ethnic.html>, as accessed on 30 September 2014).

The resistance on some of the new names was seen through defacing - just like the names we can see in this photo where the new names of struggle heroes such as Felix Dlamini and Gladys Manzi, which replaced Essenwood and Marriot Street names, were defaced by people who disagreed with the process and the name.

Marginalized voices needed to be acknowledged. The main aim of this process was to promote healing, reconciliation and the re-writing of history. The end result created a rift and sharp divisions amongst members of society and posting a one-sided history in the streets of Durban, one that is biased towards a particular political organization.

Monumentalization of History as the meeting point between politics and religion

Monumentalization enables us to remember the names of figures that influenced society. These do not need to be politicians only. They must include cultural and religious leaders and ordinary people who have contributed to making life easier and possible for thousands of citizens, through their faith

convictions. They have run pre-schools, women's groups, and HIV&AIDS campaigns in churches. The values such people hold are important for the city of Durban so that their memories do not fade but remain in the memories of the nation, thus invoking a sense of pride, identity and patriotism. African culture recognizes and adores its heroes even those who are already dead; they are believed to be present in spirit.⁴³ The religious aspect of geographical names is significant considering that African people, being very religious in their orientation, identify with the narrative behind names to an extent of interpreting them from their religious perspective in order to derive meaning that is relevant for them. Religion provides people with the language and symbols they can use to talk about them and understand their world and how it impacts on them. Yet these leaders are political. Monuments espouse the values that hold society together - that is why people are always motivated to build symbols around outstanding figures. This leads to a form of civil religion, which cements the common vision of the nation or citizens of the cities. Viewed from this perspective it can be realized that the renaming process whose objectives were social and political extended to covering issues of experience and beliefs. This led to people solidifying the names and their meaning which results in invoking some religious attachment to them. This is not only in the South African situation but globally there is a sense that monumentalized names although having some historical significance are not only limited to that but rather extend to offer political and religious meanings.⁴⁴

In the South African situation it is noteworthy that it was not the religious sector that initiated the idea of monumentalization but was an act of government or politicians. In fact most religious communities did not play even a small role in this process. This is manifested in the lack of religious leaders' names - except for two streets which were named after a highly respected religious leader, Archbishop Denis Hurley, and a Council of Churches called Diakonia which has been prominent on issues of social

43 J Mbiti, "Foreword", I Phiri & D Warner, (ed.), *Handbook of theological education* (Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2011), p. xv; K Nurnberger, *The living dead and the living Christ* (Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2011), p. 121.

44 S Nuttall & C Coetzee, *Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 19.

justice in the city for a number of decades as already stated above.⁴⁵ However there is no evidence that these names were given in consultation with the rest of the religious communities. In fact when the relevant religious communities were asked if they had been consulted with regard to the use of these names in the renaming process, they said that they had not been consulted.⁴⁶ It is also noteworthy that these names were not nominated and supported by the religious community itself, so there was no proper consultation on why they should be used. Most of the people whose names were used in the street naming process were religious and had direct connection and involvement with the religious sector but the motivation for the use of their names did not highlight that aspect of their lives. It rather focused solely on their political work and impact. This means that the contribution of religion in the formation of political and social leaders was totally ignored or marginalized in favour of their political membership, motivation and contribution. For instance, Albert Luthuli was a devout Christian and offered his life both in the church and the struggle. He even gave testimony that it was his faith as a Christian that motivated him to be involved in the struggle. He wrote that:⁴⁷

For myself, I am in the Congress (ANC) precisely because I am a Christian. My Christian belief about human society must find expression here and now, and congress is the spearhead of the real struggle... My own urge, because I am a Christian, is to get into the thick of the struggle with other Christians, taking my Christianity with me and praying that it may be used to influence for good the character of the resistance.

However when his name was used first to name the International Convention Centre in Durban and a major road, this was not mentioned. Instead his political contribution was given as the reason for the honour. What was mentioned in his honour was that:⁴⁸

45 Archbishop Denis Hurley was the most respected Archbishop of the Catholic Church in South Africa and was based at the City of Durban. He was respected for his work in opposing apartheid. He was also present at the historical meeting of the Catholic Church known as Vatican 2 and was appointed as a cardinal, meaning that he was a member of the Pope's Council. In South Africa he was known for his work against apartheid and he occupied the position of Archbishop for over 40 years. His work was paralleled only by that of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It is interesting that his name was used to name a street, whereas Tutu's name was not used. The difference between the two churchmen was that although after apartheid Bishop Tutu continued his prophetic work, which saw him, criticising the government harshly, Archbishop Hurley changed his tone, he was more cautious and careful in his prophetic messages, and so he did not create enemies of the government unlike Desmond Tutu.

46 Mwanda (Programme co-ordinator, Diakonia) telephonic interview, RS Kumalo, 26 June 2014; P Kearney (Archbishop Denis Hurley Foundation), telephonic interview, RS Kumalo RS Kumalo, 26 June 2014.

47 A Luthuli, *Let my people go*, (Glasgow, Collins Fount Paperbacks, 1962), p. 138.

48 Department of Art and Culture, *My country South Africa: Celebrating our national symbols & heritage*, Updated 2nd ed. (Pretoria, 2006-2008, Department of Arts and Culture), p. 42.

Chief Albert Luthuli was the legendary liberation struggle leader and first African recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. Although he grew up in tribal surroundings, Chief Luthuli believed in and fought for full political, economic and social opportunities for the oppressed people of South Africa. Because of his conviction and desire to see all people participate and enjoy the fruits of a prosperous South Africa, he sacrificed personal gain and comforts, and dedicated his life to the cause and to the services of his fellow South Africans. He served as President of the National Congress from 1952 until his death in 1967.

John Langalibalele Dube responded to his appointment as first president of the ANC with the words “forward with Christianity and civilization”.⁴⁹ Nelson Mandela could be heard saying that “without the church, without religious institutions, I would never have been here today”.⁵⁰ For Albert Luthuli, John Dube, AB Uma, Nelson Mandela and many other leaders to be celebrated in a meeting that brings politics and religion together is fitting to their characters and legacies since the leaders brought the two into a creative synergy. This qualifies these leaders to have been monumentalized heroes and prominent members of the “cloud of witnesses” for they dedicated their lives and put their religious beliefs into practice by fighting against racism and ultimately becoming national heroes.

The primary effect of geographical names lies more in the identity, interpretation, meaning and ownership that people derive from them the moment they look at these names. This attests to the fact that geographical names have psychological effects on people. Being part of a highly religious society, the renaming committee cannot prevent people from attaching religious notions and meanings from the geographical names and the spaces they occupy.⁵¹ This is even more important when we consider that geographical names are “national symbols” which are continuously evoked during national ceremonies and prayers. The ruling party, whose heroes dominate the geographical names, has always emphasized its close relation

49 H Hughes, *First president: Autobiography of JL Dube the first president of the African National Congress* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2011), p. 121.

50 N Mandela, *Mandela: The authorised book of quotations* (United Kingdom, McMillan, 2011), p. 229.

51 For instance it has been noted that the vast majority of the population in South Africa is Christian. According to the 2001 census, some 85 per cent of the population are religious. Laurence Piper has observed that “About 80 per cent of these are Christian, with 33 % belonging to mainline churches and 32 % belonging to Zionist churches. ... However the main point remains that South Africans remain a religious nation and therefore we cannot build democracy without including the religious sector which forms the biggest part of our population.” L Piper, “Faith-based organizations, local governance and citizenship in South Africa”, D Brown, *Religion and Spirituality in South Africa: New Perspectives* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009), p. 54.

with the religious community. Time and again leaders of the ruling party are heard attesting that the ANC was founded by priests and religious leaders.⁵² For instance at a meeting of the African National Congress (ANC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Lusaka in 1987 the then banned and exiled organization expressed its commitment to working with the religious community for the liberation of South Africa. The then president, Mr Oliver Tambo challenged the religious community by saying that:⁵³

The African National Congress has a long history of association with the church. Our founders were church men and women, throughout the 75 years that link has never been broken as we enter the final stages of our struggle, and we believe that you too have responsibility to contribute to the maximum to remove a regime which offends the very principles on which the church was founded.

Tambo moved further to demonstrate that his organization's commitment to interfaith presence and collaboration was so strong that they had no intention to sever the ties with the religious community, in spite of the fact that in their midst they had communists. He said that:⁵⁴

As in the past, we shall resist all attempts to inject any anti-religious notions into our midst. Indeed proceeding on the basis of old traditions within the movement, we are in the process of establishing an interfaith chaplaincy within the movement to ensure that all members of all faiths have ready access to such religious counselling and assistance as they may require.

When one considers Tambo's statements and the fact that he himself was a deeply religious man and was at the helm of the exiled movement for over thirty years, one can conclude that there is a genuine commitment to religion found in the tradition of the ruling party that can be traced from as far back as its founding and its time in exile.⁵⁵ This has been clearly stated in the constitution of the country which has declared South Africa to be a religiously neutral one. This demonstrates that South Africa has a government that is committed to taking religion seriously into the future. It is with that in mind that the discussion on interfaith dialogue should be approached and

52 N Etherington, "Religion and resistance in Natal", A Lissoni (ed.), *One hundred years of the ANC: Debating liberating histories today* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2012), p. 55.

53 Oliver Tambo's Address to the WCC in Lusaka from the 4th to the 8th May 1987, M Motshekga, *The genesis of the interfaith movement in South Africa*, Address to the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature, Bishop, 30 July 2010, p. 1.

54 M Motshekga, *The genesis of the interfaith movement in South Africa* (Paper, Sitting of the religious parliament, Eastern Cape legislature, Bisho, 30 July 2010), p. 1.

55 It is said that Oliver Tambo, who was a committed Anglican, sometimes forced his bodyguards to get into the church with him instead of waiting outside and would insist that they pray before eating.

we should be encouraging the religious community to embark on strategies of how they can grow themselves and the contribution they can make to develop our democratic society.

A number of presidents of the ruling party and the government have unequivocally committed the government to working with the religious community. For instance President Mandela called for the religious communities to be involved in partnership with the government. He said that:⁵⁶

The transformation of our country requires the greatest possible cooperation between religious and political bodies, critically and wisely serving our people together. Neither political nor religious objectives can be achieved in isolation. They are held in a creative tension with common commitments. We are partners in the building of our society.

The same sentiments were expressed by President Zuma when he called for the religious communities to work in collaboration with the government in order to enable development. He said that:⁵⁷

We need the support of the church and all faith-based organizations so that together we can release our people from the slavery of poverty and its manifestations. Government should open its doors to enable interaction with faith-based organizations on policy and implementation. There are many programmes that require collaboration with faith-based organizations.

Often increased religious rhetoric and support has been a precondition for political support which manifests itself in the crucially sought after political votes during elections to maintain political dominance. Why is it important for us to study the interface between religion and politics and to even talk about these two in the same line? The answer is simply because the two are inseparable, especially in the African context where life is viewed as holistic and interconnected. Secondly, because religion “matters” in Africa sometimes more than politics. Africans in general are “incurably religious”. In the African context generally speaking religion is political and politics are mostly shaped by the religious orientation of the participants. It is for that reason that some scholars have argued for religion to be taken seriously in political processes. Generally there is agreement that religious organizations play a constructive role in the development of society.

56 Nelson Mandela's, Address to the National Religious Leaders Summit (Organized by the Commission for Religious and Traditional Affairs, Johannesburg, 1997).

57 Jacob Zuma's Address to the Rhema Church Prayer Service, 15 March 2009.

Paul Gifford noted that:⁵⁸

A religion provides definitions, principles of judgement and criteria of perception. It offers a reading of the world, of history, of society, of time, of space, of power, of authority, of justice, and of ultimate truth. Religion limits or increases the conceptual tools available, restricts or enlarges emotional responses, or channels them, and withdraws certain issues from enquiry. It inculcates a particular way of perceiving, experiencing and responding to reality. Religion can legitimise new aspirations, new forms of organisation, new relations and new social order. Every religion involves struggles to conquer, monopolise or transform the symbolic structures which order reality.

It is with the understanding similar to Gifford's thinking that Vadiet Bader has warned against the exclusion of religious organizations during political deliberations. He said that:⁵⁹

The extreme exclusion of religious reasons and arguments in liberal democracies is morally arbitrary, unfair and practically counterproductive.

For instance in South Africa over 96% of the population professes to be religious. They follow one religion or another including what they call secular spirituality. 85% of the population is Christian. These are your voters, members of political parties and even politicians. When they engage in political activity they do not leave their religion at the door, but rather they go with it. They take religion with them into political meetings, to their voting booths and sometimes they take their politics to church meetings, rallies and so on. There is a certain type of civil religion that is accepted. It is one that does not critique the state but rather supports it. Prophetic forms of religion do not sit well with governments. This means that the geographical names must suit the socio-religious and cultural conditions of South Africa. This contribution argues that transcending the political, social and cultural meanings that are created by the geographical names there are religious meanings that are created which lead to a form of civil religion that is held by the people. This civil religion is linked to the names of the people who are being celebrated and extend to the political organizations to which they belonged.

Marginalization of religious sector

The marginalization of religion in the process of monumentalization was a

58 P Gifford, *African Christianity: Its public role* (London, Hurst & Company, 2001), p. 26.

59 V Bader, "Religious diversity and democratic institutional pluralism", *Political Theory*, 31(2), pp. 265-294.

serious oversight on the part of those who are responsible for managing the process. There are two reasons why religion has to be taken seriously in this process. Firstly, monuments invoke religious interpretations and meaning for people, beyond the political ones that were intended. Secondly, most of the people who are monumentalized were products of religious institutions. For instance, most were educated by institutions such as the church, protected by these institutions when they were being persecuted by the apartheid government and others found their motivation for fighting for freedom from their faiths. This is not Christian religion alone, but Islam, African Initiated Churches and others. These churches and faiths produced leaders such as Nehemiah Tile, Enoch Mgijima, Isaiah Shembe etc. who mobilized the African people to resist colonization and apartheid under the banner of religion.⁶⁰ Some Muslim leaders drew resources and inspiration from their religion to fight firstly against colonization and later apartheid. Farid Essack has noted that:⁶¹

Speaking as one who has made some contribution to our struggle for justice, I am also aware of the enormous strength that many of us (Muslims) have derived from our religious traditions. Many of us have earned the right to argue for the consideration of our religious values in our country's constitution. For example, as a Muslim, I believe in comprehensive faith with comprehensive morality.

African Initiated Churches also made a tremendous contribution in resisting not only apartheid but colonization. In his work on Shembe, Gerald West has observed that Isaiah Shembe, who is the founder of the Shembe Baptist Church, founded it as a response to oppressive readings of the Bible. For Shembe, mainline Christianity was consistent with the laws that supported the subjugation of black people and this manifested itself in the way that scripture was interpreted and the hymns that were sung in churches. It was for these reasons that Shembe decided to re-interpret scripture in a manner that affirmed African (Zulu) culture and composed new hymns.⁶²

It is important to note that in spite of the ambiguous role that was played by religions during the years of oppression, there is general agreement and ample

60 M Ngada, & M Mofokeng, *African Independent Churches* (Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 1994); B Sundkler, *Bantu prophets in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (London, Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 100-161; M Daneel, *All things hold together* (Pretoria, University of South Africa, 2007), p. 361.

61 F Essack, *On being a Muslim: Finding a religious path in the world today* (Oxford, One World, 2009), p. 170.

62 Gerald West echoes the same sentiments in J Cabrita, *Text and authority in the South African. Nazareth Church* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 32; L Garner, *The Man of Heaven and the Beautiful Ones of God* (Pietermaritzburg, UKZN Press, 2004), p. 14.

evidence that some religions also played a liberative role. Writing from an African Initiated Church's perspective Archbishop Ngada noted that:⁶³

Black Christians in ever greater numbers were throwing off their white masks and preaching Ethiopian message of Arica for the Africans. These new churches were saying that they would not rest until Africans were freed from their hardships of British rule. What was developing was a spirit of African nationalism.

Then the question is why were they excluded? Some churches were sites of struggle and there were bishops who fought in the struggle but there are no names remembering them in public places and on roads. These are churches like Central City Mission yaseThekwini under the leadership of Bishop Norman Hudson, who used to accommodate meetings, conferences and even funerals by the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) when the City Hall was not opened for black people and organizations. Having educated the first black elites, supported them in the struggle against oppression, bought land on behalf of black people, and opened places of worship as sites of the struggle, one expected the religious sector to be represented in this process and even allowed to raise names of the struggle heroes who came from this community.⁶⁴ However this sector was totally ignored and instead the whole process became a political one

As a result, there has been a commemoration function throughout the country, which has included the renaming of roads, towns and public buildings after these heroes, most of whom are children of religious institutions. This has led to rigorous debates and contestations, sometimes even protest marches from dissatisfied groups. Such commemorations have been marred by vigorous contestations from different sections of society, thus making it difficult to achieve one of the principal aims which is to unite the nation and contribute to its healing and reconciliation. Instead the opposite has been the reality. In some cases instead of bringing about healing these commemorations have opened up the wounds of the past and promoted further divisions and

63 NH Ngada, & KE Mofokeng, *African Christian Witness: African Indigenous Churches* (Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2001), p. 6.

64 Here one is thinking of missionaries like James Allison of the Wesleyan Church and William Wilcox, Adams Newton, Daniel Lindley, and Aldan Grout of the American Board, who organized black people and helped them to own land, trained them to be successful farmers, built schools and hospitals for them. It was the work of such pioneers that laid the foundation for the liberation movements that produced the heroes that are now to be monumentalized.

anger.⁶⁵ The religious sector has not been spared this confusion. Religious communities have the greatest number of followers in the population and should have been at the forefront of this process but their role has been non-existent.

Monumentalization as the canonization of History

Canonization is a moment in history where a community agrees on a people who represent their values, aspirations, and identity. The canonization process has to be people-driven because it is their history. It involved all people and is representative of all people groups and races. It needs to be vetted by all and it is the people not the politicians who must be involved in the dialogue. If you canonize without this due process you have marginalized other voices. Will there be an opportunity in future to update the history? An unfortunate conclusion can then be reached that attempts have been made in some cases to maintain the dominance of the ruling party in the street names, thus marginalizing smaller or less popular community leaders. This means that history is repeating itself when those who are in power are writing it to suit and maintain their own political narrative. Indeed history is written from the perspective of the winner and the powerful. This means that history is now told from one perspective and all the others are lost, because as time goes on people will depend on the geographical names to learn the history of the struggle against colonization and apartheid. So while the aim of the renaming process is to tell the story of the nation as a whole, it ends up telling the story of the ruling elite so that they can perpetually remain in power. Thus the monuments themselves are used as tools of maintaining dominance by a particular group in society. Therefore it is clear that the renaming process is not an innocent process that cannot be manipulated and is self-correcting. This has two important implications for history. Firstly, it means that now history is contested and seen by others not to be complete, but rather biased towards a particular political narrative. But it has been cast in stone as 'The' story of liberation in the city of Durban. Whilst genuinely committed to the proper representativeness of the geographical names, the ruling party is concerned that their narrative must not be forgotten and therefore the opposition parties represent a threat to their hegemony. Therefore the party

⁶⁵ In the process of building the nation the Christian church has an important role to play because it influences a significant number of the population in the country and since over 82 % of the population claims to be religious and over 72% is Christian.

is happy to push forward the naming process. It has become very clear that due to the power that it commands in the province and especially in the city of Durban, both in the municipality and in society in general the ruling party cannot be prevented from having names of its heroes and cadres dominating the geographical names. That means the dream of using the geographical names as a tool of developing social cohesion has not only failed but rather has achieved the opposite - social exclusion represented by the unhappiness caused by the geographical names which will be always in the faces of people as they walk the streets. For this incoherence to be remedied there is no need not to stop the process, but to continue it and find ways of bringing the opposing parties into dialogue and collaboration. This may even lead to compromise where more spaces can be created for other geographical names to be used; these should be given to the aggrieved parties.

History and justice

One of the key questions that comes to mind when one looks at this process is what happens to the names of those who were proponents of colonization and apartheid? Should their names be removed because they are irrelevant in a democratic dispensation? If yes, does this not mean wiping an important part of history away? A case can be made that for history to be complete it needs to present both the heroes and villains of an era of a particular society. A good story has its roots from a bad story, or every historical fact has two sides, good and bad and therefore, for history to be complete both sides of the story need to be presented. The names that existed were telling the story of the people. For instance Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi is amongst the most vilified leaders, and then his name was removed and replaced with that of Griffiths Mxenge a hero and martyr of the struggle aligned to the ANC. The IFP differed from this by supporting a huge march against the removal of Buthelezi's name.

Image 3: Members of the IFP marching in the streets of Durban protesting the changing of the name of Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi highway to Griffiths Mxenge of the ANC



Source: Independent Online, "Thousands turn up for march against renaming", May 2007 (available at: <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/thousands-turn-up-for-march-against-renaming-1.351040?ot=inmsa.ArticlePrintPageLayout.ot>, as accessed on 30 September 2014).

Members of the IFP marching in the streets of Durban protesting the changing of the name of Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi highway to Griffiths Mxenge of the ANC.

The point that I am making in this section is that monumentalization must not be one-sided by the telling of the good story only. It must be balanced. It should not come from one school of thought; it should not be for the populous and powerful. The contesting voices, especially from those people from the streets, must be heard. That is why you need the most vilified names to be included - because they are part of the history. History has to be balanced by presenting both sides of the story and by giving an opportunity to all groups to preserve their part of the story, even if they are no longer politically correct.

Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to highlight a hidden aspect of the process of renaming streets in Durban from 2006 to date. The thesis of the article has been that the religious sector did not play a significant role, as they should have, in this process. It has argued that the religious sector should have played a pivotal role but it was unconsciously marginalized in the process. In the

year 2006, the City of Durban embarked on a street renaming programme which culminated in over 182 streets and major roads having changed their names from those of English and Afrikaner heroes, who marked the colonial and apartheid history of the town, to those of black heroes, in order to mark the democratic dispensation. The positive effect of this project is that it marked the political change that not only the city but the country as a whole had experienced. Through the monumentalization of the streets using heroes of the struggle, recorded a new narrative of the history of Durban and its citizens. The negative side is that the process was marked by tensions and contestations as a result of different views on the naming process. Amongst the potential key players who remained on the peripheries of this process, whereas they deserved serious consideration because of their contribution in the struggle for the end of colonization and apartheid, was the religious community. Linked to that is the fact that this community has the capacity to help with the re-interpretation and creation of a deeper understanding and meaning of monuments. However it is hoped that in the long term even these tensions will be healed and the real objective of this process which is the “promotion of healing and reconciliation” will be realized.⁶⁶ A few lessons have been drawn from this process and I would like to conclude this paper by highlighting each one of them.

Firstly, a “politicized” process. The monumentalization defeated the very purpose for which it was aimed, which is to enable healing, reconciliation and social cohesion, by having been too politicized. The renaming of geographical spaces - be they roads, buildings or public facilities such as stadiums - are not always free of the influence of the ruling elite. Whilst the policy may be open and calling for the participation of all interest groups in society to influence this process, there is a factor that sometimes is ignored which is the conscious attempts by those who are in power to influence the process in their favour. This is by ensuring that names they prefer are used in the process, be they their political heroes and allies, or at most even making sure that their opponents do not get an opportunity to include their preferred names in the list of geographical names. As already discussed above, the renaming process was dominated by political organizations that saw it as an opportunity to record their own narratives of the struggle by naming the streets using their heroes. This was possible because since the process was managed at the local municipality, the political parties were privy to the guidelines and process and

66 No. 118, Act of 1998, The Geographical Renaming Policy.

they formed the renaming committee. Although an invitation was extended to all members of the community to participate by submitting names, the process had already privileged political organizations by allowing the process to be driven by the municipality. The moment the political parties started squabbling over the names, other civil society groups including religious communities were engulfed by fear that this could lead to political violence, especially in a province that has a history of political conflict and violence. This discouraged the already apathetic members of the religious sector from being involved in this process. A good example is the implementation of this process in Pietermaritzburg, which was less politicized; the guidelines underlined the fact that the renaming process was aimed at promoting healing and reconciliation and social cohesion. Therefore the renaming process was to be celebrated and owned by various sectors of the Pietermaritzburg community, although admittedly they had held different stakes in the process and identified with the new geographical names of their monumentalized streets.

Secondly, “independence and transparency of the management of the naming process”. The degree to which geographical naming is entrenched or not in people’s minds depends on the levels and type of education given to them. Appreciation of the geographical names policy and process required a constant, thorough and rigorous process of education, where the objectives, processes and long term implications of this process were drilled into the people’s minds. The education process should have been conducted and driven by civil servants, activists from civil society groups and people from faith-based organizations. Had this been done, members of the community from all persuasions would have been better prepared for participating in this very important but fragile process of re-writing the history of their city through the names of their heroes and leaders. Since an involved process of education did not take place, the community was underprepared and unconscientized for the rigorous process of renaming. The contestations and the court judgements reveal the faltering of those who led the process, which shows that they also did not manage it properly. For instance in 2008 the court ruled in favour of the DA and IFP and ordered the eThekweni Municipality to start the process afresh, and to ensure that the process is representative of the IFP and other bodies.

Thirdly, “power issues in this process of monumentalization”. The geographical naming process has been affected largely by the policy, but the

implementation of this policy depends mainly on the attitudes and agendas of the ruling class and the amount of resistance by the opposition parties. The question that leaders of such a process must ask is not who is present, but who is not present and then find ways of bringing them to the table for dialogue. This includes women, religious leaders, and children and physically challenged people. Marginalized voices of women, differently abled people and minority groups have to be included.

Fourthly, “monumentalization as work in progress”. The process of monumentalization must not stop but rather be ongoing because we need to bring in new heroes, even the most recent ones, as we go. The owners of this process must keep going, so that when society recognizes a new hero, they must be free to honour them, just like others before them. This means that the process must be open-ended, allowed to continue to the future. It also means that money must be put aside to continue the work and even involve more people from all age groups. It must also be noted that this is work that is focused on recording the history of the nation, and will be handed over to future generations who will judge the process and the names that were monumentalized. This point was noted by Colin Gardner who was the Speaker of the uMgungundlovu Municipality which was responsible for the name changes in Pietermaritzburg, a city that was hailed for having handled this process with excellence, compared to many others in the country. Colin Gardner asserted that:⁶⁷

...the public was consulted, most objections came from a particular age group in one section of the population; the new names must fill out our local history and commemorate the people of different races who contributed in various ways to the ending of apartheid; people who want the changes are prepared to see money spent on them; there will be confusion, but it won't last forever; and although we do not know what future generations will do, they are unlikely to want to remove the names of heroes of the struggle.

The statement above makes it clear that the progress requires consultation, including broad-based involvement of people from diverse age groups. Of significance is the point to take into account the way future generations will view this history which is being handed over to them. The process is not just about the current leadership and how they would like to satisfy their political agenda, but it is re-writing the history of all the citizens, past, present and future.

67 E Jenkins, *Falling into place: The story of modern South African place names* (Claremont, David Philip, 2007), p. 140.

Fifthly, “history and justice must be balanced”. The telling of the narrative of a nation must be balanced, by representing both the ugly and good sides. That means keeping some of the monuments of the villains because they embody one side of the story and the heroes the other side. The completion of the naming process can be attributed to the inevitable changes brought about by the political dispensation. The changed names of the streets have to evince the conflictual history among some of the residents of the city who had enjoyed the earlier names and identity with the city; they were reluctant to adapt to the new version of celebrating the historical-political heritage of Durban.

This article makes a contribution in highlighting the significance of ensuring that all sectors of society participate in the renaming process, especially the religious community. Had the religious community been involved, the naming process would have been more inclusive and the monumentalized names would have been different. It contends that the process would have been more inclusive, leading to healing, a degree of reconciliation and social cohesion, as these were the key objectives of the National Geographical Names Policy of 1998.