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TAKING STREETS SERIOUSLY

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Edited by

Jesse Harber, Alexandra Parker, Kate Joseph, Gillian Maree

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TAKING STREETS SERIOUSLY

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Edited by: Jesse Harber, Alexandra Parker,
Kate Joseph, Gillian Maree

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Taking streets seriously



REFLECTION D

Contents

Chapter 1	005
Streets as public spaces	
<i>Jesse Harber and Alexandra Parker</i>	
Reflection A.....	012
Streets as spaces for connection and memory	
<i>Rehana Moosajee</i>	
Chapter 2	015
The (in)Complete Streets of Emfuleni	
<i>Kate Joseph</i>	
Chapter 3	041
A research-based case study of Solomon Mahlangu Road	
<i>Siegwalt U Küsel</i>	
Reflection B.....	074
Princess Place	
<i>Guy Trangoš</i>	
Chapter 4	079
The conception and contestation of public space in Johannesburg suburbia	
<i>Alexandra Parker</i>	
Chapter 5	097
Context and utility cycling: The case of Springs in comparison to Johannesburg	
<i>Njogu Morgan</i>	
Reflection C.....	116
Why optimism is still an option: The battle for road space equity	
<i>Gail Jennings and Guy Davies</i>	
Chapter 6	121
Exploring high streets in suburban Johannesburg	
<i>Tatum Kok</i>	
Chapter 7	141
Contestations of street trading on De Villiers Street	
<i>Mamokete Matjomane</i>	
Reflection D.....	158
Open Streets Cape Town	
<i>Rory Williams</i>	
Chapter 8	163
Quiet encroachments on Braamfontein: A photo-essay	
<i>Jesse Harber</i>	



Chapter 1

Streets as public spaces

JESSE HARBER AND ALEXANDRA PARKER

What is a street?

‘Street’ and ‘road’ are synonyms in casual usage, but they differ in crucial ways. A road is primarily for movement of people or goods from one place to another; it is a “path, way or course to some end or journey” (Moughtin 2003: 129). In rural areas and neighbourhoods of low density, streets are the roads that connect buildings and places. Under certain circumstances, typically in built-up areas, a road becomes a street, defined equally by the path for people and vehicles and by the building edges and blocks. The street is defined by an edge that contains multiple destinations and shifts from being merely a connector.

Movement is the determining factor in street patterns, which, in turn, play a large role in shaping the urban environment (Carmona et al. 2003). The privileging of streets for (primarily) automotive movement established a hierarchy of roads based on the speed of travel and level of connection. Although intended to connect places along their routes, highways and wide, busy arterial roads often function as barriers, dividing neighbourhoods and communities or separating one part of the city from another. This barrier function of major roads and highways, with their hazardously fast-flowing traffic, was exploited by apartheid city planners to enforce racial divisions in South African cities.

Historically, streets were determined by the (slower) movement of people and animals, but from the mid-19th century, city streets were reconceived, redesigned and expanded. Archetypically, Georges-Eugène Haussmann bulldozed the narrow, winding medieval streets of Paris and in their place built straight, wide boulevards intended to alleviate traffic congestion, enable military parades, create vistas across the city, and – significantly – limit citizen revolt and enable its repression (Fyfe 1998). Haussmann used architecture to define his new, generous avenues as monumental spaces in their own right. The enduring result is one of the world’s most iconic streets, the Champs-Élysées.

The early 20th century ushered in new technology that would forever change the meaning of roads and streets. Just as bicycles were capturing imaginations and revitalising roads, the motor car nosed into the market. With its loud combustion engine and broad shoulders, the car soon dominated the space of the road that had previously been shared, if chaotically, among all users. With the advent of the fast automobile and modernism, streets that had hitherto been designed (often inadvertently) for walking and socialising became primarily used for movement and efficiency (Ellin 1997). In fact, ostensibly in the interests of saving lives, the roads needed to be made clear for the sole use of cars. In this period, between the 1930s and 1970s, public space was de-prioritised in general, and pedestrians and other users were encouraged to move to controlled, privatised spaces such as shopping precincts and malls. Freeways became the ultimate articulation of automobility as roads free from pedestrians, designed for the exclusive use of cars to travel at speed.

Modernist ideas in urban planning and architecture further shaped the urban form; free-standing pavilion buildings were set back from the street edge to float, separate and alone. The separation of functions was reinforced with zoning, road widths, servitudes, and daylight angles (Carmona et al. 2003). This move eroded the once-tight street edge that helped to define the street as a public space and was also accompanied by a shift in scale away from the human, which created vast, bland spaces, easily traversed by car but not so easily on foot.

Over the last 150 years of industrialisation and urbanisation, roads have also become sites for other infrastructure. Below the roads’ surfaces are stormwater drains, sewer pipes, water supplies, and conduits for electricity and fibre internet. Alongside roads run networks of telephone poles and wires. Where roads go below ground, tunnels are constructed, and where they traverse valleys or other obstacles, they become flyovers and bridges, with

the result that road and street design is primarily a product of engineering, informed by calculations to determine turning circles, loading capacity, traffic flows, and adequate service provision.

This engineered approach to roads and streets is in stark contrast to the function of streets as public spaces in urban areas. In cities, streets make up a significant proportion of such space and are an important symbol of the public realm (Mehta 2007). “People depend on streets for functional, social, and leisure activities; for travel, shopping, play, meeting, and interaction with other people; and even for relaxation” (Mehta 2007: 165). Streets that cater to social and public functions can boost local economies, physical health and social cohesion (Mehta 2007). The function of streets as public space is, therefore, valuable and important – particularly so in the context of Gauteng, where other forms of public space such as plazas, squares and parks are less prevalent than in the cities of Europe or North America. Even compared to other cities in the global South, especially in Latin America and Asia, South Africa’s history has been one of deliberate hostility towards public assembly and leisure for most of its people, an ideology reflected in spatial form. Johannesburg had “no boulevards, no monumental approaches, no interweaving parks, no city squares” (Hanson 1952, in Chipkin 1993: 151).

The streets of Gauteng

In many parts of Gauteng, streets are congested with cars, trucks, minibus taxis, pedestrians, and informal traders. In other parts, streets are quiet, underutilised and frequently underserved. The surface quality of the city-region’s streets varies widely – from the engineering marvel of the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project to those (relatively few) remaining gravel or dirt roads. Besides these contrasts, there are many other degrees of quality by which Gauteng’s streets vary.

South African roads are dangerous spaces; approximately 14,000 people die on them every year, 40% of whom are pedestrians. The engineered emphasis on the car, the lack of affordable and reliable public transport and the absence of pedestrian-friendly (or even -aware) design are all factors contributing to the pedestrian death toll.

The dominance of the car in the city-region’s streets has historical roots. In the 19th century, a network of roads connected the towns of the Transvaal, the northern of the two Boer republics, with one another and with the coastal towns of Cape Town and Durban. Unlike older cities whose streets might follow the ‘natural’ paths of pedestrians, both Pretoria and Johannesburg were laid out on rigid orthogonal street grids. Railways constructed in the 1890s provided efficient connections between mining settlements and the ports, but ultimately it was the arrival of the car in the early 20th century that determined the development of the region’s streets. By mid-century, the car was dominant in Gauteng – Pretoria’s tram system was dismantled in 1939 and Johannesburg’s lasted until the early 1960s (although buses and trains remained important across the city-region). A major highway system was constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, enabling an increasingly suburban, car-dependent path of spatial growth. Highways continue to be the focus of efficient transportation as illustrated by the large-scale upgrading programme in 2013 that introduced e-tolls – pay-to-use roads within the urban area.

In some parts of Gauteng, streets have become privatised and/or heavily securitised. The phenomenon of ‘gated’ communities either manifests as enclosed streets within private estates or as closed-off existing public-road networks in older suburban areas. Some streets are patrolled by security guards, lined with high walls and electric fences, and surveyed by CCTV cameras.

In busy areas, informal traders sell their wares on the pavement or at traffic lights, adding to the congestion on narrow sidewalks. These activities are subject to varying levels of control and police harassment, where by-laws dictating the use of roads and pavements are haphazardly enforced, with trading goods or café tables randomly confiscated across the city. As noted, like many other features of the urban environment, the quality of Gauteng’s streets is highly uneven.

What could our streets become?

The measure of a street lies in its functionality. A great street is busy, that is, well used and used well. And one needs great streets to make a great

[V]ery high traffic flow can contribute to the dying out of social life in adjacent neighbourhoods as residents retreat from public spaces

city, and this means creating streets where people like to be (Appleyard 1981; Dover & Massengale 2013; Jacobs 1961; Southworth & Ben-Joseph 2003). A key ingredient of good street design is that it is designed for people, whether those people are driving, biking, taking the bus, walking, or pausing within their surrounds. Inviting streets must typically be safe and comfortable for users, and interesting as well. In short, the street itself must become a place worth going to.

A good street is often one that moves people between discrete points. But a street that contains businesses as well must also make possible an enormously more complex movement of people, in infinite and unpredictable orders and combinations. And more than simply facilitating movement between destinations, a good street encourages the combination and recombination of these destinations. At the same time, a street meant for walking down (as almost every street is) can make possible, and even encourage, a whole range of other activities that have little to do with getting from one point to another. Streets can (and perhaps should) facilitate lingering, loitering, engagement, conversation, and myriad other interactions as potential uses. A good street can therefore encourage participation while balancing the competing needs of varied users; it should be easy to locate and access, relate well to its bordering uses, allow for continuous activity and connect the city at large; and it should provide a setting that brings together a vibrant mass of people (APA 2016; Jacobs 1993).

The best streets combine a multitude of complex engagements in a well-integrated and attractive fashion. Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich, for example, is a seamless hub of accessibility and mobility, though (perhaps because?) private vehicles are barred from most of its length. Numerous tram lines service the Bahnhofstrasse which, at either end, mostly

interfaces with rail, ferry or bus nodes. Equitable, clearly delineated path-markers smoothly integrate private vehicles (where permitted) with cyclists and pedestrians (Project for Public Spaces 2010). In another vein, the pedestrian-oriented Las Ramblas in Barcelona features a tree-lined aesthetic with ample seating that melds with a tremendous variety of adjacent enterprises: markets, eateries and pubs, traditional retail, music and cultural institutions, all complemented by idling people-watchers (Project for Public Spaces 2010).

Good streets can foster a sense of community; conversely, very high traffic flow can contribute to the dying out of social life in adjacent neighbourhoods as residents retreat from public spaces (Appleyard 1981). Since the time towns and cities began, social and economic activities have traditionally taken place in our streets (Kost & Nohn 2011). They are likely to be the first and the last public space with which a city-dweller interacts on any given day; streets are also probably the most frequented by, and in many places the only public spaces actually available to, city-dwellers. Good urban streets are occupied simultaneously by residents and businesses, providing appropriate space for these activities as well as direct paths of travel for commuters. A street that is lined with a variety of land uses and activities creates a varied streetscape, one that is likely to be at once interesting, physically comfortable and conducive to the safety of those who inhabit it. Multimodal frontage and mixed land use thus help to connect the city and extend the usefulness of a street over a shifting 24-hour day, making it a more viable and valuable piece of urban infrastructure than a plain traffic route (Jacobs 1961). A large proportion of what makes a good street goes far beyond the road's surface and its associated infrastructure, and requires the framing of the street as a positive space rather than as a negative space between buildings.

The proposition we set out to test is that our streets are designed with inadequate regard for their users

Taking streets seriously

This research report is entitled *Taking Streets Seriously*, and that is precisely what it does. Case studies of streets in a variety of different conditions interrogate how good urban design and liveable streets may shift in different contexts. While falling well short of a comprehensive survey, this report attempts to understand the various logics at play in Gauteng's streets – not only the logics of their designers and builders, but also of the people who inhabit, use or otherwise interact with them.

The proposition we set out to test is that our streets are designed with inadequate regard for their users, and especially those whose experience of the street is unmediated by the car. Instead, contrary to our expectations, the studies unearthed a complex interplay of actors in both the past and present use of Gauteng streets, with street users, property owners and the state each operating according to their own, diverse agendas, contingent on the particular street in question. The result is streets that are chaotic, contested and changing over time – and where, despite the dominance of cars, pedestrian activities proliferate.

Almost all the chapters in this report deal with informality in one respect or another. Several researchers use this as an opportunity to interrogate the concept of informality itself. Kate Joseph's chapter, for example, studies the 'informal space' of Moshoeshoe Street in Emfuleni through the lens of 'Complete Streets'. Despite an environment physically hostile to users not in cars, Moshoeshoe Street has been adapted, co-opted and turned to diverse purposes. Joseph, in keeping with other theorists, finds a complex relationship between 'formal' and 'informal' space and practices, and concludes that "Moshoeshoe Street reminds us that, originally and before the monopoly of motorised vehicles, streets were the paths, routes, tracks, or informal connections

between people, made tangible, and that these relationships are in a constant state of negotiation" (Joseph 2018: 36).

Similarly, Siegwalt Küsel's chapter, on Solomon Mahlangu Drive in Mamelodi East, finds that this important mobility spine has grown into a place of enormously mixed use despite the prevalence of physical infrastructure that is not, on the face of it, supportive of anything but high-speed travel. It is striking that in our two studies on more remote, less closely managed spaces in the city-region, street users have adapted the street to their own purposes – imperfectly perhaps, but with general success. They raise important questions regarding the degree to which formal design and management are necessary for the production of successful streets, and the degree to which they are in fact counterproductive.

Alexandra Parker's chapter, by contrast, looks at a place that is in some senses – although not geographically – as far from Moshoeshoe Street and Solomon Mahlangu Drive as it is possible to be, namely 1st Street, Killarney. This wealthy, relatively central Johannesburg street has some elements of pedestrian-centred design, the effect of which is highly attenuated by the actions of the owners of the surrounding apartments and their neighbourhood association. Parker's contribution shows a particularly visible example of the contestation around the legitimate uses of public space amongst the street's various users. The question of the management of space, and indeed of overt and covert conflict over that management, is a common one in this report.

Management and the role of the state is central to Njogu Morgan's chapter on bicycle lanes in Johannesburg and Springs in the 1930s. Rather than being a 21st-century affectation, bicycling occupies a significant place in the transport history of the then Southern Transvaal, and this chapter explores the

politics, economics and religion that led to the divergent histories of Springs and Johannesburg, where the former's bicycle lanes have been in use since that time, and the latter's recent and more modest pro-bicycling efforts were comparatively abortive – with important lessons for those who, like the city councils of eight decades ago, might seek to change how people travel.

Tatum Kok's chapter is a study of two Johannesburg high streets – 7th Street in Melville and 4th Avenue in Parkhurst – that stand out in a city with comparatively few of them. They occupy something of a paradoxical place in the wealthy neighbourhoods that surround them, attractive to residents and visitors alike for their busyness and 'vibe', but also bemoaned for those same reasons. Among other conclusions, this chapter shows that even successful public spaces are sites of conflict. And from this, we can infer that streets considered less successful in terms of public space and their mixed use are nonetheless valued by some – those street users who might resist change as a result of this evaluation.

Another site of conflict is De Villiers Street in the Johannesburg central business district, home to a garment market whose traders have a changing, and often turbulent, relationship with both the City of Johannesburg and the street. Mamokete Matjomane's chapter takes a close look at these traders' relationship with the street, one that is deeply political, not only in the formal sense through their interactions with municipal government structures, but also as a site of contestation and negotiation between traders, pedestrians, other street users, and their respective associational organisations. Matjomane finds that, while the street design and management are ill-suited to commerce, the traders have nevertheless adapted to the environment through a combination of self-organisation and negotiation with the City.

Finally, Jesse Harber's contribution takes a somewhat different approach. A photo-essay with accompanying analysis, it explores the streets and public space of Braamfontein, Johannesburg. This area has a higher density than most areas in Gauteng, and has also received more pedestrian-focused interventions than many. Harber's photographs and findings show that the degree to which diverse street users are able to turn the street to their purposes is somewhat independent of formal interventions by the

City; indeed, the close management of the area, and the constantly iterative 'renewal', prevents the 'quiet encroachments' of street users from having a lasting effect on the physical streetscape. He suggests some changes to policy and policy-makers' thinking that might allow for a less closely managed street, which may in turn encourage a more organic development, one driven by the various street users themselves.

In addition to these formal studies, we have solicited four short reflections from people who have worked on streets and public space. Each, in their own way, has tried to entrench street-centred thinking into formal urban design processes: Rehana Moosajee from within municipal government, Gail Jennings and Guy Davies via their participation in formal government processes, Rory Williams (with Open Streets Cape Town) through an innovative approach as an activist, and Guy Trangoš, an architect and urbanist, reflecting on the street on which he lives. Their reflections are valuable in their entirety. Notably, Moosajee as well as Jennings and Davies, all mention the need for greater ease of access to streets, and specifically wheelchair access. These considerations from actual practitioners – who are largely neglected in academic literature and otherwise neglected by this report – expose a further gap in the discourse around successful streets.

Without giving away how the report ends, as it were, we found that the streets we studied were far from sterile. While indubitably car-centric, they were nonetheless sites of diverse and vibrant pedestrian, and otherwise non-motorised, life. Gauteng's streets are indeed well used, and, by slowing down and observing them closely, this has been gratifying to learn.

Less commendably, we found that this vibrancy is typically no thanks to the designers and managers of our streets – at least, those people who in principle design and manage them. With only a few exceptions, Gauteng's streets are designed with hostility or a studied disregard – the two often indistinguishable in practice – towards anyone not behind a steering wheel. Other street users have only made their mark by contesting the territory of the street using a variety of tactics.

With this research report, we hope to prompt a re-imagination of our streets, not least as streets rather than roads, but also as public spaces. Streets

comprise by far the majority of public space in contemporary Gauteng, where other forms, such as plazas and parks, are woefully inadequate. Streets taken seriously – not by users, who have little choice, but by their designers, planners and managers – have enormous potential to enable and encourage public life in Gauteng's cities. Conversely, streets that are neglected outright – or designed with indifference or even hostility towards their non-motorised users – can constrain both the society and the economy of a city.

Ultimately, we hope to correct an official urban discourse that overlooks the multiplicity of uses to which streets are and could be put. In a time of enormous excitement and corresponding investment in our cities, we would like to see some of both these factors directed towards the development of our streets.

We and the other editors are thankful to Melinda Silverman, who, although not credited on any individual chapter, contributed enormously with insight and guidance. The entire report is better for her careful review.

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Photograph by Jesse Harber

Reflection A

Streets as spaces for connection and memory

Rehana Moosajee

When I was appointed the Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) responsible for transport in March 2006, I immediately felt the need to think about transport in relation to my own life experiences. As I reflected there were memories of visiting my aunt on 14th Street, Fietas – a street that was a marketplace, a sports field, a social space for community building. Also, a street that we often go back to in remembering the pain and devastation of the forced removals that turned a once vibrant neighbourhood – with distinctive sounds, smells and tastes – into a barren wasteland. I also recalled the obscure street in Lenasia, which was a gravel road during my formative years – Partridge Avenue, where I spent over 20 years – and how I take my children back there to share memories of the various street games we played with our friends. Yet, somewhere between those memories and my appointment as an MMC, I too had been socialised into the idea that roads/streets were for cars. My tenure at the City of Johannesburg was a time of intense learning about the politics of space, city-making and the deep power of relationship.

I too had been socialised into the idea that roads/streets were for cars

An initial introductory meeting with leaders of the minibus taxi sector in Johannesburg – their perceptions of the Soweto Gravel Road upgrading project (2000–2005) were very interesting – went something along the lines of: “So, we were good enough to carve

out roads and routes where none existed in Soweto. Now that the City of Johannesburg has surfaced all roads in Soweto, you deem it fit to bring your Metrobus service into Soweto and take bread off our tables. Get those Metrobuses out of Soweto or else.” In many ways that challenge was the genesis of the Rea Vaya/ bus rapid transport project in Johannesburg.

As we undertook study tours to Bogota and Guayaquil and embarked on many consultation sessions with stakeholders and engaged with professionals, a thread was unfolding. There was a deep injustice in the existing use of street space and the assumption that roads were primarily for cars – despite the fact that the vast majority of Johannesburg households did not have access to a private vehicle. Minibus taxis and buses were subjected to the congestion caused by the growing ‘one person, one car’ culture. Our streets had not been designed for the operational realities of our public transport system and little thought had been given to non-motorised transport users.

A project closely allied to the philosophy underpinning the work of the transport department was ‘Values in Transport’. This project entailed a long and consultative process to reach out internally and externally to understand the many challenges that plagued our transport system. It was agreed that we needed to jointly generate a core set of values that would inform, and be the foundation of, all that was done in department- and municipal-owned entities. Finally, five symbols, or symbolic values, were unveiled that captured the views of many participants: accountability, cooperation, respect, honesty, and ubuntu. Each symbol had been generated through a deep conversation with diverse groupings. At the heart of each symbol was the desire to have a transport system

that fundamentally transformed the way in which we connect with each other as well as with the space and infrastructure in our city.

If we wanted to build a public transport system that was truly people-centred, it would mean reimagining the use of street space in our city. The fundamental departure point was to note that everyone – whether a child on foot, a commuter on a bicycle, a person using public transport – had an equal right to city space. Dedicating lanes for public transport was the strongest statement that a city could make towards valuing the time of its citizens by being unashamedly pro public transport, by being concerned about the air quality in our cities and by creating a transit system that created social cohesion rather than literally forcing communities apart.

As we embarked on taking this vision to the citizens of Johannesburg, community members raised valid and valuable concerns. Architects and professional teams listened carefully to the things people asked for as they grappled with the idea of ‘stations in the middle of the street’. The final station design was very much the result of a co-created process as the architects and potential users engaged in debates and discussions about, amongst other things, the material, light, safety, public ablution facilities at stations, seating or no seating. Genuine and valid concerns were raised about pedestrian safety. There was much excitement around the art on station walls, with communities helping to name stations and choose livery for buses – birthing this project along with city officials and professionals.

Rea Vaya has now been a part of the city streetscape for eight years. There are those who love it for the way it has changed their lives, their neighbourhoods and the daily commute. There are those who hate it – finding the stations over designed, the dedicated lanes an irritation to others – and refer to it as an ‘ego’ project.

A few weeks ago as I travelled on a T3 Rea Vaya bus, I saw two commuters in wheelchairs on another bus, and I vividly remembered an outreach session we had held in Soweto many years before. A woman in a wheelchair, with tears in her eyes, had asked, “You mean I will be able to go to town in my wheelchair on a bus without anyone having to accompany me?” Her face remains etched in my memory.

When we visited Bogota with a delegation of public transport operators, we experienced two phenomenal projects – Transmilenio and Ciclovía.

“You mean I will be able to go to town in my wheelchair on a bus without anyone having to accompany me?”

Johannesburg still has a long way to travel before being able to build a culture the equivalent of the Ciclovía. Over 180km of streets are shut down to cars every Sunday and public holiday, transforming the streets into people-centred spaces. Perhaps the most instructive thing about that was the idea that a street’s use is not concretely fixed and can change with the time of day, the day of the week.

Streets are indeed important public spaces. When city officials and decision-makers begin to experience the city from the height of a child, or through the eyes of an elderly person trying to navigate, or through the eyes of a newly arrived tourist or migrant trying to find their way about, we have the potential to create streets that can make connections and leave memories. There’s a revolution happening across the globe that is bringing streets to life – by taking life into them.



Chapter 2

The (in)Complete Streets of Emfuleni

KATE JOSEPH

Many thinkers have critiqued a crude use of the informal as a foil to the formal (Bayat 2010; Dovey 2012; McFarlane 2012; Roy 2011; Roy & AlSayyad 2004) and have proposed “understandings of urban informality that question the divide between formal and informal” (Villamizar-Duarte 2015: 2). Similarly, I propose that observing and better understanding what I shall term ‘informal streets’ makes apparent the porous and mutually constituted nature of the formal–informal spectrum. In spite of this trend, Loukaitou-Sideris states that “while considerable urban design scholarship in recent years has focused on the dynamics and characteristics of informal landscapes, they remain contested and are often described in negative terms by planning authorities that wish to eliminate, control, regulate or transform them” (2012: 471). McFarlane points out that the idea of the formal–informal divide is constructed through, and saturated with, problematic binaries such as “structured versus unstructured; rule-based versus unruly; predictable versus unpredictable” (2012: 91). Nevertheless, and despite these by now familiar critiques, it remains a common, and even occasionally productive, exercise to think the ‘informal’ through relative absence. Dovey and King, for example, problematise how ‘the informal’ is negatively defined: “a squatter lacks land tenure; a slum variously lacks space, durability, water and sanitation; [and] informality implies a lack of formal control over planning, design and construction” (2011: 11). In this way, Dovey and King, among others, make visible the fact that this differential experience is both the lived reality of most people as well as co-constitutive of the whole.

Much of the work that has been done on the relationship between informality and streets has concentrated on street vending. Indeed, in this research report, Mamokete Matjomane’s chapter on The Piles takes a closer look at precisely this phenomenon in Johannesburg’s inner city. Siegwalt Küsel’s chapter focuses on transformations and interactions along a street where informal settlements have

burgeoned along a mobility spine, namely Solomon Mahlangu Drive in Mamelodi East. This chapter, by contrast, focuses on an area where many of the streets themselves might be said to be ‘informal’. In Sebokeng and Evaton, adjacent townships located in the south of the Gauteng city-region, a high number of the residential streets are dirt or gravel roads (Figure 1). In addition, these streets are spaces where unprescribed assemblages constantly adapt the uses, and usefulness, of the road. These streets therefore, to paraphrase Dovey and King (2011), lack the formal construction and design realisation usually associated with formal street planning.

The character of streets in this area, however, suggests a provocative relationship with concepts frequently associated with ‘Complete Streets’. The Complete Streets movement began in the United States in about 2005. Since then, it has snowballed internationally and become a key ideal underpinning urban transport policy in many quarters. Barbara McCann, one of the progenitors of the movement, explains it as such:

The complete streets movement initially arose within the bicycle advocacy community as a response to the absence of space for bicyclists and pedestrians along too many roads. But a sidewalk without curb ramps is useless to someone who uses a wheelchair (and is difficult to use for parents with strollers and travelers with suitcases). An awkwardly placed bus stop that does not provide a safe and convenient way to cross the street can endanger transit riders. A true complete streets policy does not simply call for the addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities but rather inspires a careful consideration of the needs of all travelers. Is there a senior center along the road? A school? A heavily used bus route? The consideration of such features and facilities can help identify the transportation needs of road users and the design elements that will be most useful to complete those streets. (McCann & Rynne 2017: 25)

Figure 1: Dirt street in residential area, Sebokeng

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



In Gauteng, the *Complete Streets Design Guideline* (City of Johannesburg 2006) and *Streetscape Design Guidelines* (City of Tshwane 2007) acknowledge these principles, at least in theory. This chapter provides an assessment of Moshoeshoe Street (Figure 2) and its relationship to the rudiments of a Complete Street at different points along its course: the developed, suburban stretch north of the Houtkop intersection in Sebokeng; the transient commercial/subsistence area of Small Farms between Adam's Road and the Golden Ward BP filling station; and Easton Road in Evaton where new roadside infrastructure is currently being

installed by the Emfuleni Local Municipality. Premised on the acceptance of Complete Street theory, I looked at elements understood as “objectives for good streets” (LDA 2014: 4–6) such as mixed development, safety of all users, pleasant to experience, and sound incorporation of functional traffic movement.

Locating Moshoeshoe Street

This case study centres on Moshoeshoe Street, a formal road in the area, and the adjoining informal streets which feed into it. Moshoeshoe Street is “the primary carrier for road traffic from Vereeniging/

Figure 2: Moshoeshoe Street and surrounding areas

SOURCE: Google Earth. 26°33'58.22" S and 27°50'04.09" E. 12 August 2017 [accessed 22 November 2017]



Van der Bijl to the Sebokeng area”, notes Broens (2016: n.p.). The road bisects the low-income, predominantly residential areas of Evaton and Sebokeng, respectively. It is one of the chief commuter connectors for residents, and is described by Broens as “important” with a “high to moderate” level of service, replete with a large quantity of vehicle (and pedestrian) movement (2016: n.p.).

Many of the major roads around Evaton and Sebokeng were austere designed. Their purpose, informed by apartheid spatial logic, was to ensure efficiency, functionality and control in shipping labour between racially segregated towns. Sebokeng, for instance, was developed as a labour reserve for the coal and steel mines of the neighbouring, and more affluent, ‘white’ towns of Vanderbijlpark and Vereeniging. Similarly, the design of the road system that adjoins Moshoeshoe Street was constituted in line with the apartheid state’s reinterpretation of Clarence Perry’s 1920s Neighbourhood Unit concept (see Trail 2006). Surrounded by arterial roads, but with a limited number of exit and entry points so as to discourage through traffic, the Neighbourhood Unit was intended to create a feeling of a cohesive community space (see Figure 3). In the South African case,

this spatial layout served to further the apartheid government’s desire for social control. The design in effect produced segregation between neighbourhoods while it also ensured that a neighbourhood’s population size was maintained (Trail 2006). In addition, the limited number of access points meant that if civil unrest occurred, the state could easily shut down township areas and impose order (Trail 2006).

The enduring street

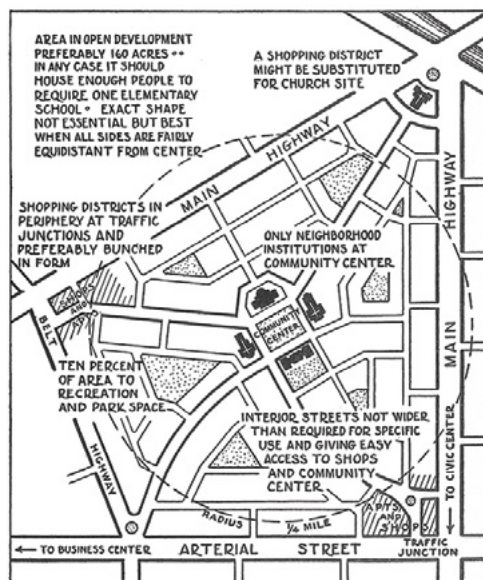
Carmona et al. (2003) note that the street plan tends to be the most enduring element of urban morphology. Moshoeshoe Street was conceived as an external edge to discreet neighbourhood clusters as well as a major traffic route in its own right. In many respects this nature has endured. The neighbourhood feeder streets remain underdeveloped and to this day are made up of incomplete dirt roads while the busy roadway of Moshoeshoe Street appears to divide the residential areas of Sebokeng. Despite this, the Emfuleni Local Municipality is engaged in upgrading projects across the area, several of which focus on streets and walkability.

McFarlane (2012) describes several ways in which informality has been imprecisely

Figure 3: Left, Clarence Perry's Neighbourhood Unit diagram. Right, section of Moshoeshoe Street in Sebokeng

SOURCE: Left: New York Regional Survey, Vol. 7 (1929).

Right: Google Earth. 26°46'46.22" S and 27°49'40.25" E. 12 August 2017 [accessed 22 November 2017]



conceptualised historically. Firstly, “[i]nformality is often assumed to be territorialised within ‘slum’ settlements on the legal, political, economic, social and environmental margins of the city” (McFarlane 2012: 91). Secondly, informality has been viewed as an organisational form which is unorganised and unregulated (McFarlane 2012). In line with these perceptions, the informal street is similarly set up as inherently underdeveloped and ‘bad’.

Parts of Moshoeshoe Street, notably a stretch between Sebokeng and Evaton, are evidence of the above. The persistent spatial legacy of apartheid means it is both vital and taxing for commuters to travel to external commercial hubs. Figure 4 shows that, although the street remains an animated mobility spine, neglect – in the form of potholes, a lack of street markings, the lack of a developed shoulder (which could allow taxis to pull over outside of the road proper while not interrupting the walking path),

coupled with the absence of formal sidewalks and no street lights for safety – has rendered the street inhospitable and unsafe. This material street represents a space outside of the general ‘rules’ of good street management.

Adjacent to Moshoeshoe Street in this part of Evaton Small Farms, the tightly packed, informal houses are without streets entirely (see Figure 5). As such, other types of infrastructure are most likely lacking:

Lack of streets in cities has various implications in people's lives. It means that cities' ability to provide services, such as safe water and adequate sanitation, is severely hampered. Water and sewerage systems are usually planned along existing street networks, and when these are non-existent, they make it difficult for authorities to provide these services. (UN-Habitat 2013: viii)

Figure 4: Stretch of Moshoeshoe Street between Sebokeng and Evaton

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



Figure 5: Informal houses in Evaton Small Farms

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



Given the low-lying geography of the area, there is often flooding along rural parts of the road, particularly as stormwater regulation and drainage services in the area have not been well maintained (Broens 2016). On my site visits, I observed that the natural servitude beside the road is in poor condition, and is peppered with litter. Associated infrastructure is also in a bad way. At this site a stormwater pipe was exposed and cracked. Some of the letter plates of the older street signs were rusting and the street names had peeled off while many newer roads were not signposted. Since place-naming can be linked to way-finding, this can become a real problem if there is an emergency like a flood, and outside rescuers are unable to quickly orientate themselves in the complex network of 'roads'.

As part of a general improvement strategy, Emfuleni Local Municipality contracted a consultant to produce a report on upgrading road infrastructure

in the area. This report concedes that "several tributaries" have "many potholes" and notes that, "[a] few major road corridors in the Emfuleni LM (connecting townships to major centres and other townships) are surfaced, while most road tributaries into the townships and to a lesser degree in Sebokeng are unsurfaced [and are] inaccessible after heavy rains" (Broens 2016: n.p.).

In addition to the fact that the dirt roads easily wash away, they present a visually stark break in the form of the street. This is true in more developed areas too. In Figure 6, one can see the tarred surface of Moshoeshoe Street (distance) and the bumpy, gravel track of a perpendicular feeder road (foreground). Only the last few metres of the feeder street are tarred, offering just enough surface to bear the white 'Stop' lettering ahead of entering Moshoeshoe Street.

Figure 6: Dirt feeder street perpendicular to Moshoeshoe Street

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



The street in Figure 6 is, however, an improvement on other streets. In some parts of Unit 14, the connector to Moshoeshoe Street, Houtkop Road, is separated from the residential blocks lining the street by sloped curbing. This is, generally, a sensible and protective form. However, the residential elevated vehicle paths which lead into Houtkop Road are disconnected from Houtkop Road by the high curb. In other words, the two sets of streets are on two different levels which have not been smoothly integrated. In practice, pedestrians have to step onto, and vehicles ramp up, the curb (precisely what a curb is meant to deter a car from doing) in order to access the paths to the houses. In this zone, we see not just simply the representation of a break, but a spatial disjuncture, a practical, though small, barrier that renders the perpendicular streets incontinent. It is worth pointing out that the environment here is otherwise relatively formal, with

clear boundary lines, formal housing and municipal services. Neat curbs frame these residential paths, although no part of these streets has been developed beyond a sand track. The road therefore is the negative space, the absence, between the curbs, which conveys the idea of a street. One can argue that the fact that the streets are unsurfaced does not in and of itself mean that the streets are informal, merely that some elements of a 'good' street have been neglected. I wish to emphasise, however, that while this articulation of absence does mark the street as 'not formal', it does not automatically mean that informality is a logical corollary.

Ehrenfeucht and Loukaitou-Sideris note that, by the late 19th century, "unobstructed movement [had become] the street's purpose" (2010: 461) on the global stage.

During the same time, municipal engineers became the purveyors of public infrastructure [...] Since that time, the emphasis on travel has persisted. Municipal engineers and transportation planners understand the streets through a form of traffic logic, where unobstructed movement is the objective, and obstructions, whether stationary objects or people, are seen as impediments [...]. (Ehrenfeucht & Loukaitou-Sideris 2010: 461)

The Complete Streets movement has emerged as a response to the above design logic. According to the National Complete Streets Coalition (2012: n.p.):

A Complete Streets approach integrates people and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of our transportation networks. This helps to ensure streets are safe for people of all ages and abilities, balance the needs of different modes, and support local land uses, economies, cultures, and natural environments.

A similar account from a Gauteng context states:

The majority of the city's public urban spaces are, however, still regarded merely as road reserves, i.e. motor vehicle and service conduits. Consequently, they are often designed in a way that other activities, such as strolling, sightseeing, enjoying refreshments, people watching, busking, window shopping and trading, become unpleasant or, in extreme cases, even impossible.

Furthermore, the public urban environment has traditionally been created by means of the numerous unconstrained, uncoordinated, and often independently undertaken, activities of different municipal departments and divisions, as well as some nonmunicipal entities. (City of Tshwane 2007: 5)

Focusing on streets seems important to Emfuleni's executive mayor, Councillor Mofokeng. In his 2015 swearing-in speech, he spoke of the failure of previous leadership "to do the basics like closing potholes, grass cutting, maintaining the street lighting", even putting these issues ahead of breakdowns in "proper financial management" (Mofokeng 2015: n.p.).

And in the Emfuleni Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2016/2017, Mofokeng stated, "We have heard the cries of our communities about the need for better roads in the Emfuleni Municipality" (Emfuleni Local Municipality 2016: 3).

In addition, the Emfuleni Local Municipality seems keen to embrace an understanding of streets which does not simply privilege the motor vehicle but, in line with a Complete Streets ethos, looks to integrate the needs of people and place. According to a subsequent report drawn up for the Emfuleni Municipality regarding plans for a new precinct in Sebokeng, "The proposed development is expected to generate substantial pedestrian activity. Therefore, adequate provision is to be made for pedestrian walkways and street crossings along the feeder routes" (Broens 2016: n.p.). Emfuleni IDPs from the last two years refer to the tarring and repairing of roads while also providing details on the advances in the number of sidewalks laid and street lights installed. From my observations, the creation of new sidewalks along selected residential roads was the major development currently under way (see Figure 7).

The contested relationship of (in)Complete Streets

In many ways, the socio-economic conditions in Sebokeng and Evaton make the site feel poor – a state not typically associated with the implementation of a Complete Streets design. Loukaitou-Sideris (2012) highlights three design elements representative of new urbanism which can relate directly to good streets, namely, mixed use, walkability and compact city design. With its sprawling, linear path, which routes through floodplains and underdeveloped areas, Moshoeshoe Street cannot be said to encourage a compact city, but the street does exhibit mixed-use activity and is well walked. Ironically, these two 'desirable' features most likely arise precisely because the residents and the street have historically been marginalised.

From Evaton to Sebokeng, Moshoeshoe Street is a rather vacant commercial strip where people can buy livestock, such as sheep, or trade in their scrap for cash. But the commercial character of the street runs through Evaton too, in close proximity to houses, schools and churches. Formal retailers, like Shoprite Usave and Evaton Hardware and Spares, are

Figure 7: New sidewalk and street light infrastructure in Evaton

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



located on this road. These shops are set back from the streets by a wide and well-laid sidewalk. In this area around Easton Road, the Emfuleni Municipality has been dedicatedly constructing bricked sidewalks. These pavements double up as a semi-formal strip mall. Clothes, firewood, live chickens, and fruit and

vegetables are busily traded along the pedestrian walkway, in the space abutting the street in front of the formal shopping centres (Figure 9). Besides the pavement and self-rigged scaffolds, the stalls are devoid of amenities, such as electricity or water. These local vendors are an important part of the

Figure 8: Roadside between Evaton and Sebokeng

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



economic fabric of the community, and are often able to sell smaller amounts of produce at lower prices to customers than the respective bulk purchases that they may make inside the shopping centres. The atmosphere is relaxed and jovial. Some hawkers even provide entertainment (in the form of music from stereos or parked cars). I noticed several people, who

didn't seem to be concerned with buying anything, stand or sit along the road edges, engaged in leisurely conversations with traders or other people.

Similarly, in the more residential area of Sebokeng, the environment exhibits a variety of mixed-use development and land use, both formal and informal. In front of many of the houses, there are

Figure 9: The sidewalk doubles up as a trading space outside formal retailers in Evaton

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



temporary stalls offering services and wares, ranging from vegetables to haircuts, airtime to wheel rims (see Figure 10). The street front echoes Abrahams's description of Main Road, Delft (an economically similar space in the Western Cape), "The architectural character [...] is one that adapts. Homes become shops during the day and revert back to private use

at night" (2015: 20). There are also anchor points of unchangeability: schools, a hospital and large-scale warehouses. Community activity in the area is vibrant. In addition to people in cars, the streets are alive with people of all ages, walking, trading, sitting and talking, and engaging in leisure activities like skateboarding.

Figure 10: Makeshift shop in front of a Sebokeng residence along Moshoeshoe Street

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



This mixed use between closely set commercial and residential space creates economic and social points along the street which, in turn, transform the street from a simple transport route into a place worth going to, a space where people want to be. As Dover and Massengale (2013) point out, this is a vital element of a good street.

Walking is a common transport mode for accessing Moshoeshoe Street and its surrounds. In addition, a number of people use minibus taxis to travel greater distances. Known taxi stops give rise to informal meeting hubs and transform inconspicuous space along the road into places of social engagement and vitality, frequently encouraging informal businesses to spring up in these spots where lots of people gather. However, taxi stops are for the most part spontaneous. The vehicles pick up or drop off

commuters at undesignated spaces anywhere along the length of road, and from there people walk to their destinations. This dynamic creates a porous transport route, where walking is inherently part of the traffic matrix. Walking may be the only available option for economically disadvantaged people. As Jennings (2016) observes, South African national logic interprets walking not as a choice; rather, it is seen as a socio-economic imperative forced on some by the inequities of our past. Therefore, Moshoeshoe Street is walked even where no formal provisions are made for walking (see Figure 4). And while the new pathways put in by the municipality are well used, people are also just as likely to ignore these and walk down the middle of the road in quieter streets. The number of people walking in areas where sidewalks have been planned for and installed does not seem

higher relative to areas where sidewalks are absent. The fact remains that necessity made the street walkable before and despite these much needed additions. McCann and Rynne point out that “beaten paths are often indicators of routes that pedestrians find convenient to use despite their lack of safety” (2010: 29). Attesting to this are the various single-track footpaths worn along the curbsides and criss-crossing the empty land adjacent to parts of Moshoeshoe Street (Figure 11).

Encouraged by walkability and mixed use, other rudiments of Complete Streets like swerving, stopping and about-turning (these being the antithesis of a road logic designing for quick, direct vehicle motion) are done with ease along Moshoeshoe Street. This is due not to formal travel paths or designs for such, but because the lack of designation allows for informal movement in ways that suit the users. Near a derelict petrol station at the corner of Moshoeshoe Street and Ward Street, the slow traffic pace coupled with the absence of formal curbs, pavements or official road edges of any kind essentially enables drivers

and pedestrians to move across the road at will. Taxis might U-turn or stop indiscriminately. Pedestrians, too, zigzag haphazardly between cars, taking no notice of crossing markers. In effect, people are able to ‘break the rules’ for their convenience as there is no hindrance to doing so since said rules have not under the circumstances been upheld.

This example shows up the main tension between the enacted ‘good streets’ foundations seen at Moshoeshoe Street and a coherent Complete Streets rationale. As the National Complete Streets Coalition explains, “A Complete Street in a rural area will look quite different from a Complete Street in a highly urban area, but both are *designed* to balance *safety and convenience for everyone* using the road” (National Complete Streets Coalition 2012: n.p., my emphasis). The absence of clearly defined safe spaces for particular users – such as separate on-street trading space, sidewalks, bike lanes, sidings, and vehicle traffic flow areas – runs counter to the embedded logic of safety and accommodation propounded by Complete Streets design (see Figure 12).

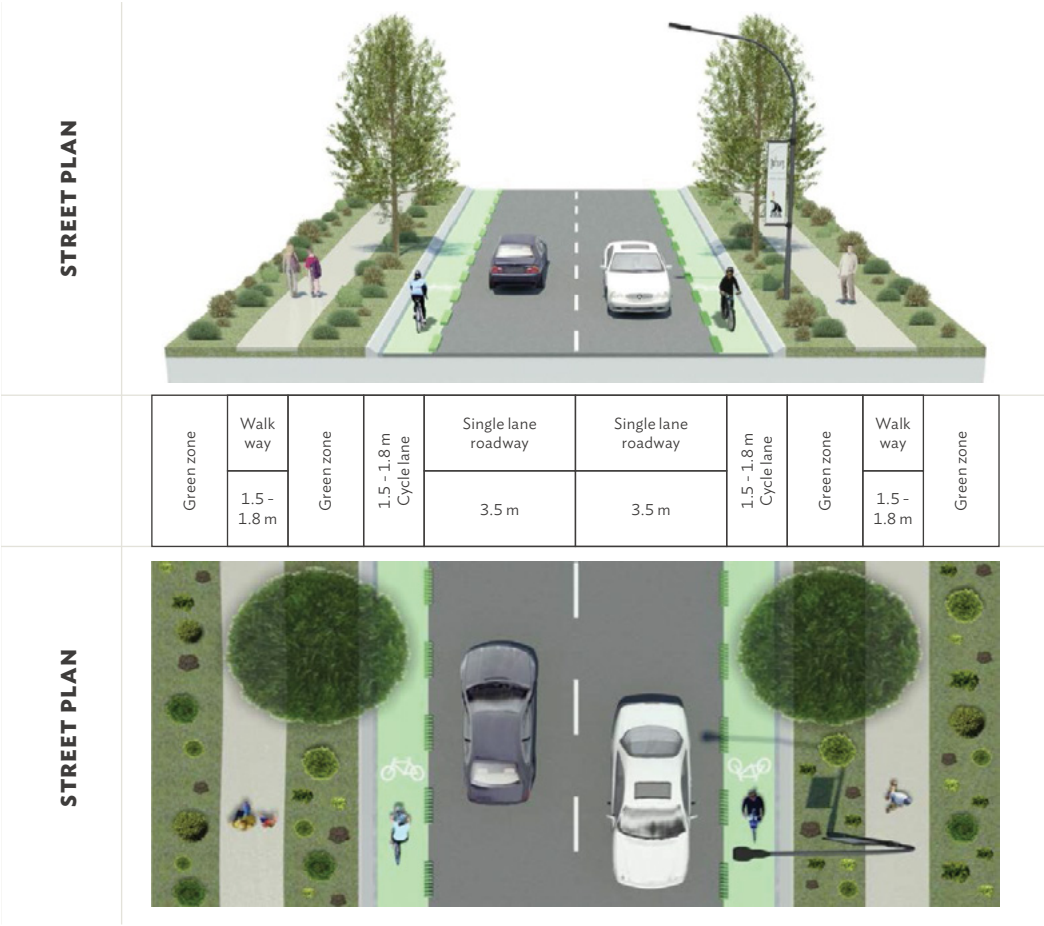
Figure 11: Informal movements represented through walking paths and vehicles stopping spontaneously

SOURCE: Google Earth. 26°32'22.75" S and 27°49'57.91" E. 12 August 2017 [accessed 02 November 2017]



Figure 12: Impression of a Complete Street where different users are safely accommodated

SOURCE: City of Johannesburg (2006)



Additionally, in neither the case of mixed use nor walkability were these elements expressly designed into the structure of Moshoeshoe Street (although adaptations to promote them are under way). Rather, walking paths and using public-private pedestrianised space for trading areas were organic adaptations which made sense within this particular historic and economic context. While Complete Streets, more than traditional planning, recognises and tries to accommodate the difficulties of “[plan-ning] for spontaneity and messiness in a profession oriented towards order and structure” (Ehrenfeucht

& Loukaitou-Sideris 2010: 461), it does so, I suggest, through a design of ensuring a place for everything and the assumption that everything will stay in its place. I say this not as a blanket critique of the Complete Streets idea, which I think can benefit streets significantly. Rather, it is a caution that people are difficult to order about, and that this is particularly apparent when interpreting a so-called unruly informal context. Aside from that, a Complete Street rationale is explicitly mindful. As stated above, it seeks to “[integrate] people and place in the *planning, design, [and] construction*” and not only

Figure 13: The sidewalk of Unit 13 in Sebokeng adjacent to Moshoeshoe Street

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



in the “operation” of the street network (National Complete Streets Coalition 2012: n.p., my emphasis). In many ways, the genuine vitality of the informal street, that which sets it alongside the positives of the Complete Streets movement, was not included in the plans or designs. By definition then, can these two logics sit side by side? Furthermore, while the organic and impromptu activities of the informal street are literally vital for the community and provide a space for (economic) alternatives, at the same time, these stopgap measures reinforce the atmosphere of deprivation (because, in a lower-income South African

context, street vending and walking are preconceived as ‘informal’ activities) and add risk to people’s already precarious lives.

Designing (in)Complete Streets

By contrast, the design of the built environment around other parts of Moshoeshoe Street in Sebokeng presents a reliable and carefully constructed form. Houses are being remodelled at impressive scales and there is a tangible air of investment. These spaces are not reminiscent of stereotypical informality, but appear considered and mindful (see Figure 13). The

street is evidently a major mobility artery – as a dual-lane, well-surfaced road with clear sightlines – yet it also seems to make provisions for its suburban nature. A concrete barrier safely separates the vehicle traffic from the sidewalk. Overhead lighting means that at night the street is safer for both pedestrians and drivers. Given that this is a significant transport route, the traffic speed is surprisingly patient. There are a number of traffic halting and calming measures in place, such as traffic lights, stop signs and speed bumps. Pedestrian crossings also appear at regular intervals (although they are underutilised).

The feeder streets running into Moshoeshoe Street west of the Houtkop Road intersection are predominantly residential, and seem to be a community-orientated, lively section of roads. Streets are lined with stand-alone brick houses. Wide berths between the house-fronts and the main street make room for public space. Some of these roadside buffer areas are attractive while others are not. For example, near Zone 14, the verge is a dusty, barren swathe running alongside the street. Further north, around Unit 13, the verges are deep areas of lawn where one can imagine children playing.

A good street should include large trees and landscaping. These elements have been identified as being of value to street users as they provide shade and shelter for pedestrians, can offset environmental stresses and add to the aesthetic of the streetscape (City of Johannesburg 2006; City of Tshwane 2007; LDA 2014). While there are trees bordering some streets adjacent to Moshoeshoe Street, there has been a misalignment between the benefits trees can offer and the way the trees have been positioned. Trees are more prevalent where the verges are bare earth and unmanicured. The trees themselves may actually be contributing to this barren aesthetic. Although the Emfuleni Local Municipality seems to remove them regularly, the fallen needles from the pines and conifers that dot the streets around Zone 14 suffocate other plant growth and, more problematically, offer minimal shade. Where there appears to have been investment in verges and neat pavements to better accommodate pedestrians (see Figure 14), ironically, fewer trees have been planted (with even fewer effectively buttressing the sidewalk) and no benches or formal stopping points have been built. As Ehrenfeucht and Loukaitou-Sideris argue, benches

and trees do increase project costs; however, “they do so marginally if undertaken at the same time as other street improvements” (2010: 463). Science journalist Sarah Wild calls a lack of trees on South African streets “anti-social” (2017). She points out that it is necessary for people to have shade against the hot conditions and explains how this was recognised as early as 1880, when massive tree-planting exercises took place between Johannesburg and Pretoria in order to provide shade for travelling ox wagons.

The composed street scenes in Figures 13 and 14 obfuscate other problems too. Most crucially, the road design, likely as a result of the Neighbourhood Unit structure, actively leaves out some houses. The houses pictured in the two photographs have no direct access to any street (Figure 15). Directly behind them is another row of houses. Only this second row of houses faces onto the street. The residential street which turns from the suburb towards the pictured houses peters out almost immediately, giving way to the verges and yards seen in the image. From Moshoeshoe Street, the way is blocked by the continuous concrete barrier and the sidewalk. Yet cars evidently reach the plots and driveways. The barrier is quite impenetrable, which implies that vehicles are expected to purposefully drive over the yards and sidewalk to reach their destinations. Clearly this design endangers people. Far from being a Complete Street, this streetside environment has been designed with crucial parts missing – in the form of vehicle access either to Moshoeshoe Street or to an alternative service route – and is similar to the residential dirt roads pictured in Figures 1 and 6, which are located not far from this area.

These examples of designed streets with formal infrastructure – such as tree-lined sidewalks or protected verges – only partially embody the elements of a Complete Street. In actuality, this progress towards a good street makes explicit the missing elements of the streets. Therefore, even as the design attempts to improve the street, it renders the street incomplete or lacking, a quality more usually associated with informality. By extension, these streets help to problematise the dynamic relationship between formal/informal (Dovey & King 2011). This limitation of the designed is not new. As stated before, the Complete Streets movement grew out of a critique of the kind of design which prioritised the car-centric

street. In this case, the design neither measures up to the Complete Streets ethos of accommodating all users, nor does it encourage efficiency by privileging vehicles. To reiterate, although these streets appear formal and set, they are fragmented and unfinished, in both their conception and form. I argue that

these almost picturesque streets are also, ironically, representations of the informal. And as in other informal streets, living here necessitates a degree of regulation-skirting and transgression against the apparent order.

Figure 14: Detail of residential driveways along Moshoeshoe Street

Photograph by Kate Joseph (2017)



Figure 15: The appearance of well-designed space, but houses along the left side of Moshoeshoe Street have no direct street access

SOURCE: Google Earth. 26°35'05.76" S and 27°50'39.11" E. 12 August 2017 [accessed 02 November 2017]



The vital street

A particular history and spatial design has been concretised in the shape and form which gave rise to incomplete streets in Emfuleni. Alongside this, however, organic survival patterns of impromptu informal activity have also emerged. Sometimes it was precisely in the space where formality ended, where the tarred road simply stopped and gave way to a dusty track, that the spaces to reclaim the street as a vital part of social life were reinstated (Figure 16).

In Figure 16, the street is all but blocked, although it is not formally cordoned off. A large tent

is visible in the background. The street is thick with people. While the street has not been designed for this, with its incomplete character it can transform more easily than a more established street could. Closing off a formal street for a special event requires legal permission and, because the aesthetic of formally designed streets is more rigid and moulded into the built fabric around it, its function (residential/ industrial) remains recognisable.

Here it is more difficult to say precisely what is taking place or what kind of street is pictured.

Figure 16: People gather for a social occasion in a residential street off the tarred space of Moshoeshoe Street

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



There are houses, a salon, possibly a tavern. The tent could be a religious space or erected for a secular celebration. What is notable is that the roadway has been reclaimed as public space for a specific social moment. People move through, as well as gather in, the space. Different people will congregate; they will all eventually ebb away, again altering the street's function and appearance. The informal street therefore has an aesthetic of impermanence and changeability; however, this particular street constitutes the base for maintaining vital social networks which scaffold people's lives in the long term. The

ideal Complete Street arguably needs to provide a comprehensive range of infrastructure which, rather than being prescriptive, should allow for different possibilities, enabling people to use the street with a high degree of freedom.

Several authors have drawn on the assemblage theory derived from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to understand informality in relation to urban spaces (Dovey 2012; Hannigan & Richards 2017; McFarlane 2012). Hannigan and Richards note that "a street, neighbourhood or city is not a thing or a collection of things – it is the assembled connections between

them that are crucial” (2017: 485), and that these connections are dynamic. Dovey (2010; 2012) convincingly argues that the range of twofold concepts deployed by Deleuze and Guattari, like rhizome/tree, are useful for understanding the relationship of informal/formal practices. He postulates, “Informal practices are rhizomic in contrast with the tree-like strictures of urban regulation and planning; they involve minor adaptations and tactics in contrast to the major strategies of master planning; they involve informal network connectivity” (Dovey 2012: 354).

I argue that this concept can be illustrated and applied through our case study. The breaks in the street flow mean that Moshoeshoe Street and its connectors are not precisely formal. They do not adhere to what can be thought of as the “tree-like strictures of urban regulation and planning”, which have a decisive logic of linear progression, an order of what follows next – such as roots, stem, branches. The streets are barred, or their fabric unravels. They do

not convey straightforward ease of motion from point A to B. And yet, through dynamic and unpredictable patterns, through the tactics and adaptations of the people utilising the street for various ends in “contrast to the major strategies of master planning[,] they involve informal network connectivity”. In this way the streets around Moshoeshoe Street are like a rhizome, “in which each point is necessarily connected to each other point, in which no location may become a beginning or an end, yet the whole is heterogeneous” (Clinton 2003: n.p.). Despite the hindrances to convenient movement, the inhabitants get where they need to go. People step over barriers. They follow undesignated pathways. The sidewalk morphs as home-front stalls are put up and taken down. The street oscillates between meeting space and transport route. Through necessity and invention, the incomplete fabric of these streets breeds connections.

Arguably, Moshoeshoe Street can be said to provide a meaningful stage for public life for the

Figure 17: Local spaza shops off Moshoeshoe Street

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



community in which it is embedded. These informal streets boast crowds of pedestrians; they are a shared public space which features implicit local negotiations and caters for local life. By and large, Moshoeshoe Street has adequate transportation strategies in place, and is a point of attraction in itself, allowing for stopping and swerving. Although much of the fieldwork description has delivered a dynamic account of the area, detailing both the advantages and disadvantages of informal streets, there is without a doubt an atmosphere of popularity, vitality and viability when on Moshoeshoe Street, elements extolled by *The 2002 Designing Streets for People Report* (ICE 2002).

Another important aspect of Deleuze and Guattari's twofold pairs, as Dovey points out, is that, while the paired concepts are defined in terms of each other, the focus is on the dynamism between them: "They cannot be seen as separate nor as dialectic relations but rather as overlapping and resonating

together in assemblages" (2012: 354). This too links to the complex and organic interrelationship between informal/formal streets, and in turn resonates with their shifting nature as complete/incomplete streets.

There is an interstitial character to Moshoeshoe Street: the formal slips into the informal. The tarred road and sidewalk barrier of Moshoeshoe Street in Sebokeng reveal an incomplete understanding of safe streets in the way they force unauthorised driving practices. While informality galvanises vibrancy – like commercial opportunity and shared public space – it simultaneously carves out an indelible disadvantage in the way that makeshift spaza shops and walking is consistently interpreted as an embodiment of a lack of capital and minimal social mobility. In turn, other elements that project an informal atmosphere persist, such as limited maintenance in the form of cracked pipes and litter (see Figure 18), and a reciprocal indifference towards the rules of the road.

Figure 18: A culvert strewn with litter alongside the road

Photograph by Darya Maslova (2017)



“The informal city persists; its inherent strengths resist and defeat efforts to impose order. The totally planned city is, therefore, a myth”

Despite its well-intentioned street investment infrastructure, the local municipality has neither augmented informal practices nor got rid of them by offering better or Complete alternatives. Guha-Khasnobis et al. (2006) conceive of informality “as that upon which the government has little or no impact” (in McFarlane 2012: 92). In contrast, Roy (2009) argues that “informality does not ‘lie beyond planning; rather it is planning that inscribes the informal by designating some activities as authorized and others as unauthorized’” (in McFarlane 2012: 92). Both of these interpretations suggest an interesting puzzle in relation to Emfuleni’s street upgrades and the persistence of the informal, which Hernando de Soto (1989) famously described as a “survival strategy” (in Villamizar-Duarte 2015: 5).

Many policy investments in the informal environment still conceive of the problem as needing to either bridge the informal and the formal, or to help malfunctioning informal areas move along the linear trajectory towards progress as per a developmentalist understanding (Pieterse 2008). To a degree, this is why roads that give a strong impression of order have been built in Sebokeng (Figure 13). They are conceived of as a literal and figurative pathway to prosperity.

[However, the] planned city can neither eliminate nor subsume the informal qualities and practices of its inhabitants. The informal city persists; its inherent strengths resist and defeat efforts to impose order. The totally planned city is, therefore, a myth [...] The present-day city calls for a profound reorientation in the manner in which we study it [...]. (Informal City: Caracas Case, in Pieterse 2008: 119)

Rather than reading the informal as that which is outside of the urban, the preceding quotation

reminds us to recognise that the informal, in its various manifestations, is always constitutive of the urban. As Pieterse (2008) suggests, this offers us a chance to decentre the formal and rethink the city (or the street) starting from the vantage point of the informal, and to read the street differently through this lens. This interpretation supports my assertion that the designed suburban streets of Sebokeng can be thought of, in a certain sense, as actually informal, while the informal activities and strategies of the street can be taken as the base from which to develop designs that will support livelihoods.

It is hoped that this knotty reading of informal streets might help us sharpen our thinking around Complete Streets, and press us to interrogate how informality might lend a more comprehensive understanding of people’s relationship to streets. Planners need to consider what practices and activities are already taking place on the street, and how these can be accommodated and enlarge our understanding of a safe and aesthetic Complete Streets design. This principle needs to make room for a number of ‘stubborn’ practices – some more antithetical to the Complete Streets agenda, like headstrong drivers who will access driveways by any means necessary, and some compatible but as yet not fully recognised as ‘good’ practice, like people’s unruly walking paths. Moshoeshoe Street reminds us that, originally and before the monopoly of motorised vehicles, streets were the paths, routes, tracks, or informal connections between people, made tangible, and that these relationships are in a constant state of negotiation. Being conscious of such, we can begin to more fully appreciate and accommodate the vital practices of the street while simultaneously encouraging municipalities to guarantee social benefit at street level.

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Photograph by Clive Hassall



Chapter 3

A research-based case study of Solomon Mahlangu Drive

SIEGWALT U KÜSEL

Introduction

Within the local context, finding a place where the street is still the soul of the city or the community is becoming harder and harder. In fact, the one thing that is glaringly missing in our towns and cities is the heartbeat of the community, the vibrancy of the street, the collective social capital of robust urban communities.

Somewhere in the making of our towns and cities, we have exchanged or forsaken the human element and relegated human needs to a number of township zoning classes: residential, commercial, educational, open space, and municipal. String these together, structure around the logistics of private transport, design speeds, optimal geometry, add basic services to the mix and we have our city structure of today.

Yet there are places where the community transcends the limitations of place. Knowing where to look and not being limited by our own biases are key to finding and understanding these places. These are dynamic, vibrant places, places that remove barriers, adapt and change, where people see opportunities and understand the needs of their communities. Here experiments in urbanism are second nature, with people taking charge and transforming the environment to the collective benefit of those that pass through or stay in the community.

In this case study, I illustrate the dynamics of one such place, Solomon Mahlangu Drive in Mamelodi East, City of Tshwane (Figure 1). I explore how it developed and how we need to reconsider cities as places that should encourage community well-being. In such places the street is multidimensional, a movement corridor, the economic driver, and a place of social exchange and recreation. As engineers, planners, city officials, or policy-makers, our decisions affect communities and the cities we create in profound ways. If we are to create vibrant cities

with integrated communities that promote healthy behaviour, entrepreneurial opportunities, and provide ample employment and recreational space for our children, we need to think differently about the design and development of public space in the city.

The street as a public place is what defines a city and its people. It has been described as both an urban form and an institution by various scholars (e.g. Kostof 2005), and most notably in the words of the American architect Louis Kahn (1973: 47) more than 40 years ago:

In a city the street must be supreme. It is the first institution of the city. The street is a room by agreement, a community room, the walls of which belong to the donors, dedicated to the city for common use. Its ceiling is the sky. Today, streets are disinterested movements not at all belonging to the houses that front them. So you have no streets. You have roads, but you have no streets.

Streets are public, robust, multifunctional, and dynamic environments that are at the heart of the city as places of leisure, commerce, community, identity, and so much more. Without the street there is no city, no community. Cities are made up of a place-shaping continuum of public and private space. City streets form a fundamental component of the public space of the city. They serve as the primary network of the city and the people that link public to public and public to private space (UN Habitat, 2013).

The street functions as the primary conduit for social exchange in the city. Streets can give coherent structure and beauty to our communities, neighbourhoods and cities (Childs 2012). Streets and other open spaces in the city play a critical role in the quality of life of the citizens. The various elements that make up the street define the areas in which we

Figure 1: Solomon Mahlangu Drive at sunrise

Photograph by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



live, provide legibility to, and influence, the social cohesion of the city. Although it seems that there are no specific empirical studies or data to quantify the impact that poor streets can have on a community, it is generally accepted that poor-quality streets have a direct negative impact on the associated communities (UN Habitat 2013).

In the history of towns and cities, much has been written about cities and great streets. Every citizen, traveller and resident knows and recognises them in some way. Unfortunately, the same cannot always be said of people and institutions responsible for the planning, development and management of our cities. In the South African context, we very seldom develop streets (City of Tshwane 2007). Locally, urban and streetscape design guidelines and also normative and qualitative standards abound yet the result remains the same: we mostly build roads and townships that are driven by optimised geometry, traffic efficiency and service infrastructure requirements. Somewhere between the bureaucracy of planning environments and the egos of the designers, we forget about the people. As Jane Jacobs notably said, “There is no logic that can be superimposed on the city: people make it, and it is to them, not buildings, that we must fit our plans” (1958, in Birch 2009: 127).

It seems that streets, as public spaces, have lost their importance in the modern city; historically, streets have played a prominent role in shaping the culture and identity of cities, a function largely lost in modern cities (UN Habitat 2013). No city, township or settlement develops instantly; every one is the product of a complex set of interdependencies shaped within a socio-political context. Our cities have been and still are being shaped and moulded by historical planning practices and the dominant socio-political ideology. Cities are inadvertently centres of political power and reflect the many processes that shape physical, social, environmental, and economic transitions (Roberts et al. 2017).

Within the local context, much has been written on the impact and legacy of apartheid on city form and function (Dewar & Uytenbogaardt 1991; Harrison et al. 2014; Harrison et al. 2007; Rogerson 1989; Schensul & Heller 2011; Smith 2003; and others) and correcting the imbalances of this legacy. Today, more than 20 years after apartheid, its legacy remains over much of the country. The cities

in Gauteng mirror those of much of the developing world: inadequate and deteriorating transport infrastructure, and limited or no infrastructure for non-motorised transport (walking and cycling). Some data indicate that as much as 6% of the street networks in African cities do not have pedestrian sidewalks (UN Habitat 2013). In most of our cities the sidewalks are non-existent and limited to only a few streets in the city’s central business district (CBD) or core. Where they do exist, sidewalks are poorly planned, maintained and managed. Although some cities have made a concerted effort to address this, others lag behind.

Internationally, the urban environment has regained centre stage with the advent of the global economic downturn, worldwide austerity measures and increased competition between cities to attract investment and develop vibrant communities. Currently, issues that confront the developing and the developed world are much the same. During the last decade or more, there has been a steady build-up around making cities more sustainable, liveable and resilient. These days urbanism has a palpable excitement with a new generation of urban stakeholders boldly experimenting with ways of redressing past imbalances, building communities, encouraging new typologies and mixed use (Wolfe 2013). With this new-found energy, a number of ambitious strategies and policies have emerged. Locally trending amongst these is the notion of transit-orientated development (TOD) (Bickford & Behrens 2015; Bishop 2015; Brendel & Friday 2010; Mees 2014) which aims to maximise the amount of residential, business and leisure space within walking distance of public transport. TOD typically includes a central transit point (e.g. bus stop) surrounded by a high-density, mixed-use area within a walkable distance of the transit point. In TOD, the fundamental underpinning is the street.

But then again, these ambitious new strategies and policies need to be holistically understood and grounded in the local context. We have to understand the active, close-knit space and spontaneous human interactions across the various scales of community. In the words of Wolfe, “precedents implicitly live on with once-considered – but often forgotten – core principles ripe for rediscovery” (2013: Introduction, paragraph 4).

Through deliberate and structured enquiry, we must unpick the nuances of community and place before we impose yet another trendy, over-subscribed option top-down onto our communities. To do this, we need to understand our own biases and change the way we look at the city (Roberts et al. 2017). The great American or European examples may not apply here. The textbook model we know and the real world model we seek may be very different from one another. These places may not be well known or immediately apparent, but they lie in wait for the interested, perceptive or discerning observer.

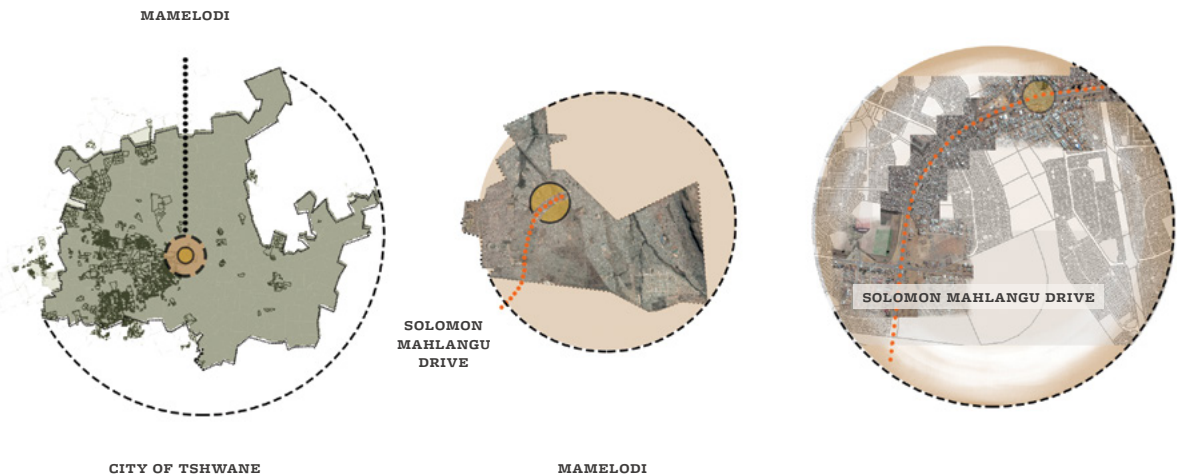
The case study: Solomon Mahlangu Drive, Mamelodi East, City of Tshwane

For the purposes of best illustrating the dynamics of the road-street interplay in the local urban context, a team from Habitat Landscape Architects

investigated a section of Solomon Mahlangu Drive in Mamelodi East. This section, as an extension of the M10, was constructed in the early 1990s. The road formed part of the PWV (Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Vereeniging) road network planned in the 1960s. From the late 1970s onwards, several new cores were developing in the erstwhile City of Pretoria (Figure 2). The new residential townships of the east rapidly expanded in the 1990s up to the present. The M10 became a vital north-south link between work opportunities in the east and the township of Mamelodi. Mamelodi Township expanded organically and rapidly in an easterly direction and soon a number of informal settlements enveloped the road. Since around 1993, the road has served as a major mobility spine with thousands of commuters moving along the corridor connecting people in Mamelodi with work opportunities within and east of the City (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Study in the regional context

SOURCE: Habitat Landscape Architects



In every sense development here is transport-orientated, comprising strong nodal interchanges that connect the vast informal transport network with a sprawling pedestrian network.

Within the context of prevailing socio-economic conditions, non-motorised forms of transport along the corridor account for a substantial proportion of

the movement. With the relatively high cost of motorised transport, people get off these modes as quickly as they can and walk. There is also a very high incidence of cyclists along the route, especially during the early morning and late afternoon — a long-term urban transport solution (Rogerson 1999).

Figure 3: Study area relative to the CBD, Menlyn core and work opportunities in the east of the City

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth, 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects



Context

Mamelodi East has not only expanded rapidly but also densified significantly in the last ten years (Google Earth 2004 to current). Public transport in this section is currently limited to taxi services only. The new commuter rail station Green View (recently constructed along the east–west rail link to the CBD) that will serve this community is not yet operational.

Based on the 2011 census, the total population of Mamelodi is estimated at 334,577 persons with a population density of 74.03 persons per hectare. The actual population numbers are estimated to be much higher considering the influx of people to the township since 2012. The area has also witnessed extensive land invasion post the 2016 local government elections, adding to the ever-increasing density. A residential character dominates the area with most business or commercial activities being informal. The initial desktop phase of the project focused on understanding the local context in terms of urban form, structure and dynamics. This involved exploring locally available data sets, plans and frameworks on the one hand, and, on the other, the changing face of the area with the use of aerial photographs and other digital media on offer.

Once we had obtained an understanding of the area and the dynamics that shape the various urban processes, the next phase of regularly visiting, observing and documenting the study area at various times of the day and night commenced. The initial focus was at the macro scale and at a later stage on understanding dynamics at the local scale.

From a number of previous projects working in these communities, we have found that the only way to understand the local context is to become immersed in it by engaging with the locals. To best experience the community, we walked and explored the area. In this process, we were greatly assisted by locals who took an interest in us and acted as guides. During the field survey, specific emphases were on understanding how people interacted with, modified or otherwise transformed the street environment. A key focus was finding local replicable examples and lessons that have application beyond the local context.

The street as a movement corridor

Travelling to Mamelodi East along Solomon Mahlangu Drive, the spatial mismatch of the City has always been apparent. The constructed idea of the ideal urban environment steadily gets stripped away as you drive along Solomon Mahlangu into the heart of Mamelodi. Initially, the presumptuous notion of what the perfect community and city should look like is so removed from what you are faced with that the mind cannot fathom the functioning of the dynamics of Mamelodi East. This seemingly chaotic, dirty, crowded space is intimidating and overwhelming. Yet the atmosphere is vibrant and rhythmic in the nodes, tranquil in the residential streets. As an outsider, when you start to notice the underlying structure, the rhythm, movement, the open acknowledgement in the faces of people, you begin to realise that many of the constructed theories on which we base our city design ideals may be flawed. The sense of community is tangible. Space is at a premium, every piece of vacant land an opportunity. This is a small piece of the City that functions 24/7, perhaps more so than the CBD. This is a place of ‘tactical urbanism’ (Courage 2013; Mould 2014), people constantly taking charge, experimenting with space, ideas and social interchange. The space has fluidity, vibrancy and character.

Early on, we noted the stark differences between formal and informal. In this context, formal and informal do not denote two typologies but rather a continuum of typologies (Carmona 2014). An understanding of the range and variance of this continuum only became apparent much later when investigated at local level. But this difference in formal and informal space also profoundly impacted urban form and function at the street-grid level. Street pattern impacts permeability, a quality only apparent if you are walking the streets (Figure 4).

In setting out to understand the urban environment in the local context, we started at the macro scale to document and map a number of the urban characteristics of the street (Figure 5). Reference to the macro-scale functioning denotes the section of road from the intersection of Solomon Mahlangu Drive and the east–west railway line in the south to

Figure 4: Impact of street pattern on the walkability of the area – the more informal areas have a much higher permeability than the formalised areas

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth. 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017];
and Habitat Landscape Architects

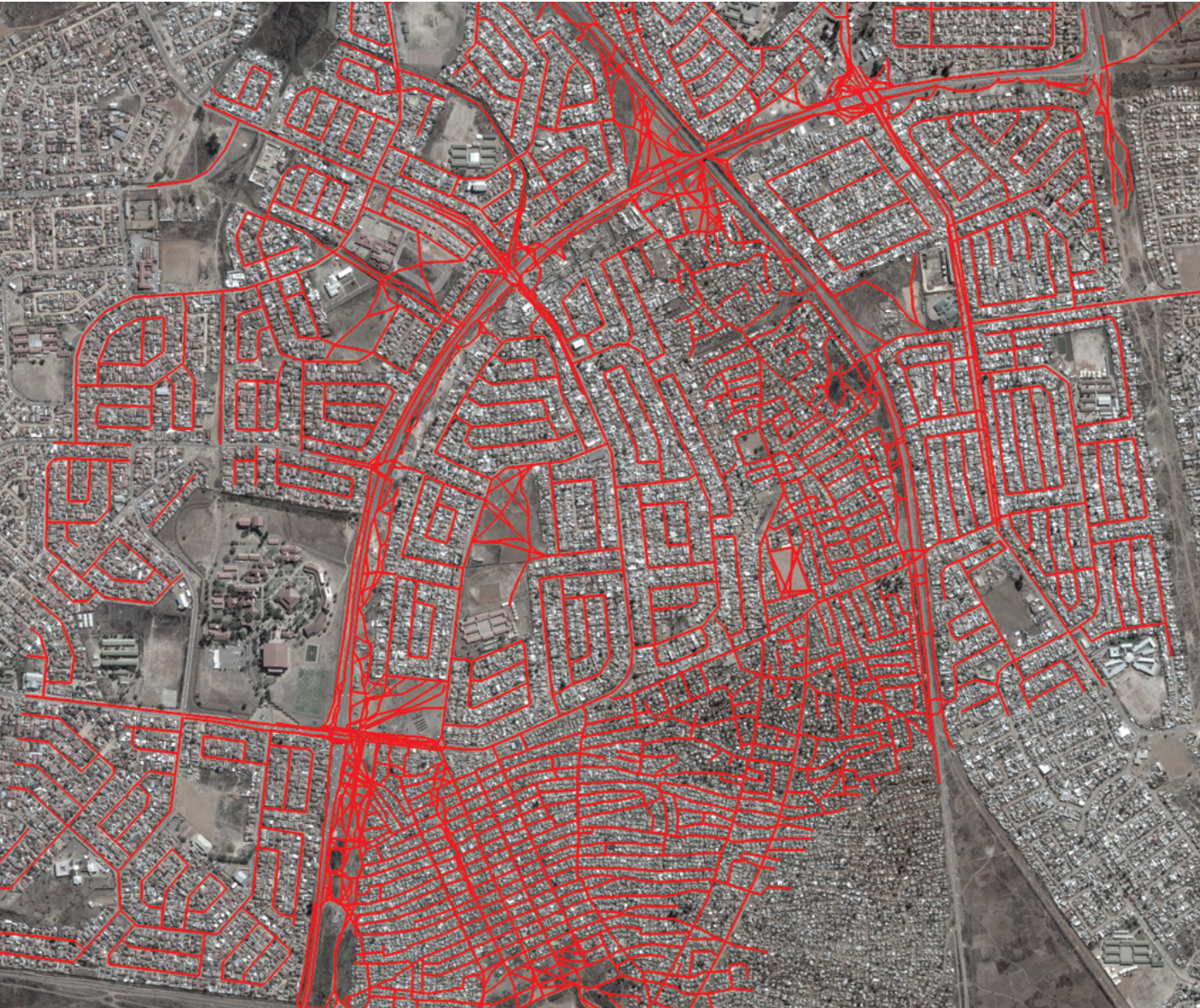
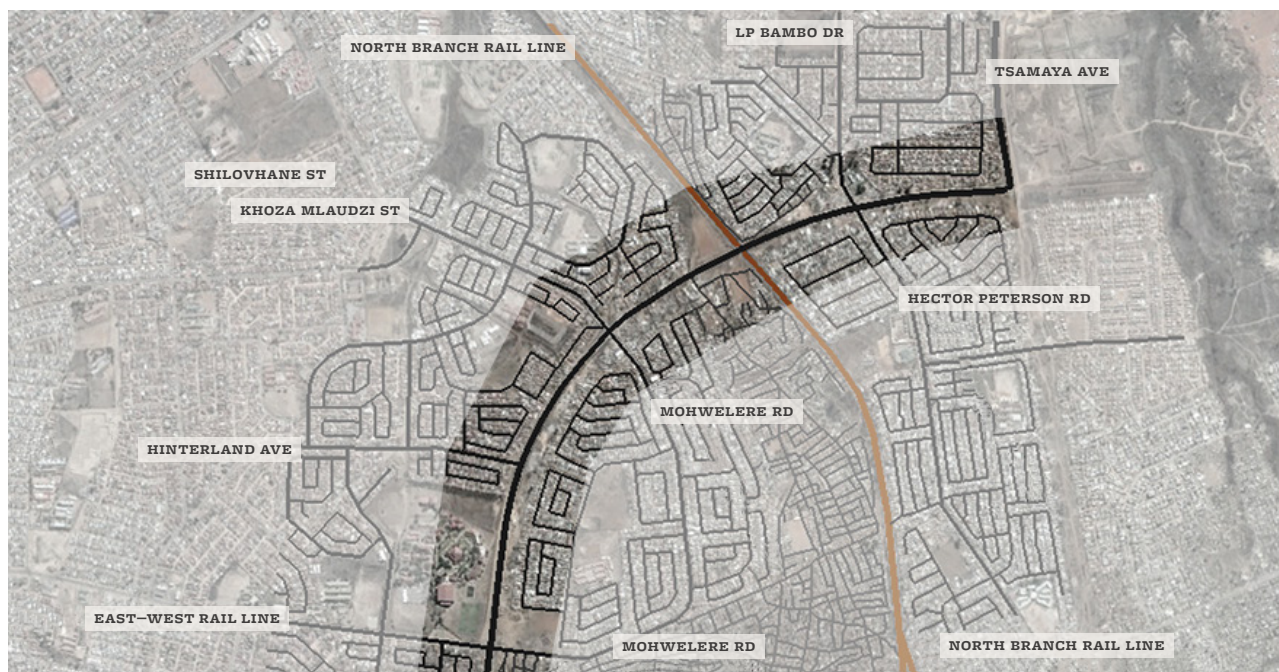


Figure 5: Macro-scale mapping

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth, 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects



the termination point of Solomon Mahlangu Drive with Tsamaya Avenue. The process of mapping the urban environment is always a subjective, biased and complex endeavour. In this setting (perhaps more than in others), the urban environment is highly dynamic and change is perpetual, to the degree where, by the time we have mapped and reduced this dynamic environment to a static representation (the map), it is dated. This problem is further exacerbated by the subjectivity of our timed visits since these places express strong and rapid temporal changes. To deal with this to some degree, the mapping reflected here expresses the general functioning of the street that captures or reflects our observations of the area over a series of visits at different times of the day, night, weeks, weekends, and months, augmented by a longer-term aerial photo perspective.

At the macro scale we mapped the edges, setting out to understand the role of edges and the way these influence the use, appropriation and ownership of

space at both the macro scale and at the local street level. Edges inadvertently always have an interrelationship with paths. Paths serve as conduits of social change and follow edges. The relationship between edge and path is often expressed as a threshold and defined as a small transitional space that sits between the larger spaces, the link, the entrance space, the rest space, points of anticipation or points of transition (Dee 2001).

Edges and associated thresholds are important elements in the language of urban space (Hayward & McGlynn 1993). Edges support diverse uses and have important experiential and cultural meanings (Dee 2001). Edges can be positive and negative, physical or implied, hard or soft, and multidimensional (Figure 6). A simple element such as a stormwater canal may function as dominantly as a 3m-high wall or as simply as a brick curb adjacent to a walkway that defines the threshold between public and private space.

Figure 6: Distribution of hard edges at the macro scale

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth, 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects. Photographs by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)

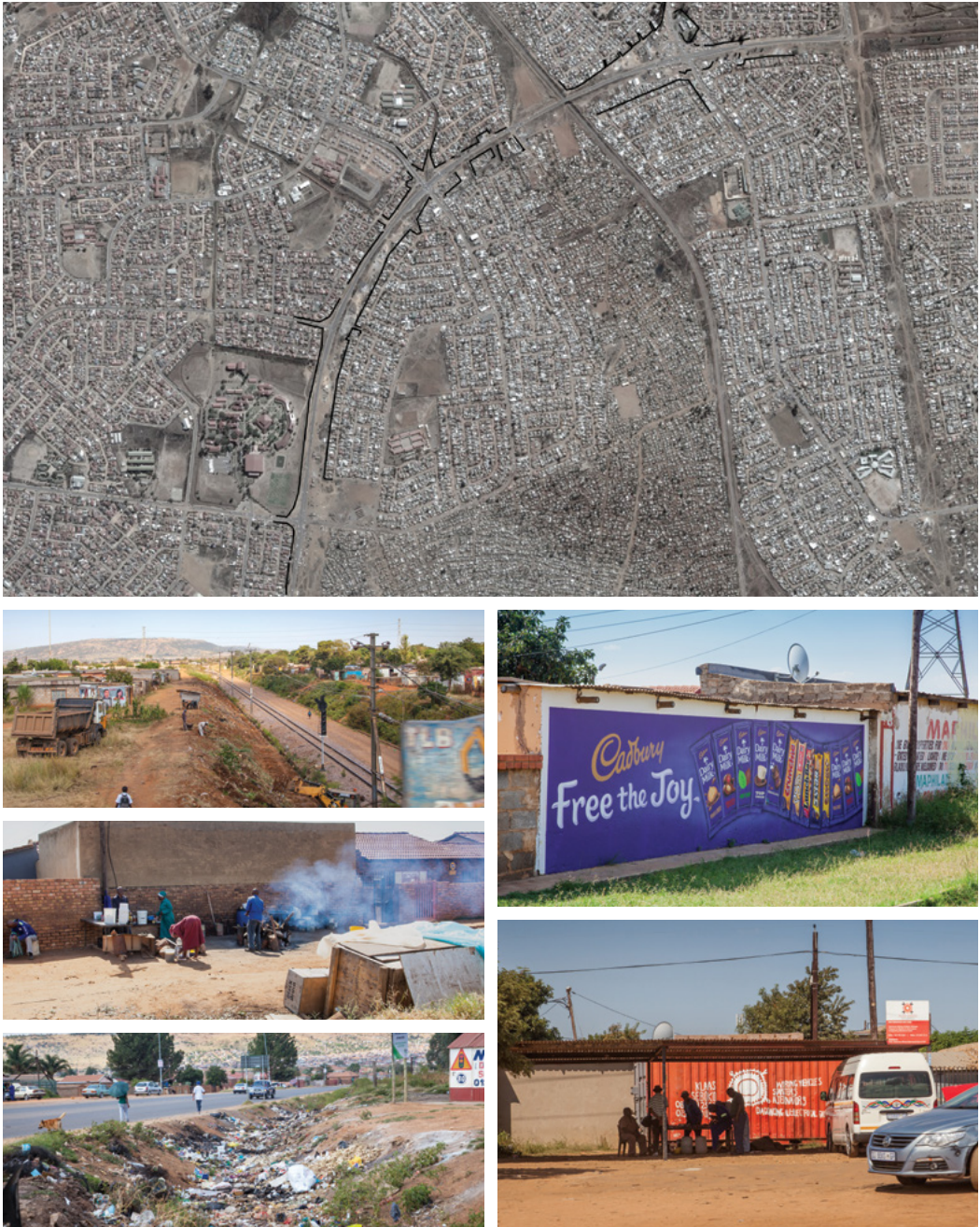


Figure 7: Implied edge along Mohwelere Road

Photograph by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



People more often than not interact with or along edges, which accordingly makes this an inherently complex element in the urban environment.

Edges need to be understood at various scales. Edges along the study area are greatly varied at both the micro and macro scale. In the south of the study area, the University of Pretoria–Mamelodi Campus (locally still known as the Vista Campus) as well as several of the formal neighbourhoods have essentially turned their back on the street frontage with resultant negative impacts. Directly opposite the campus, across the intersection of Solomon Mahlangu Drive with Hinterland Avenue–Mohwelere Road, the opposite occurs. There is no formal edge here: directly adjacent to and parallel to Solomon Mahlangu Drive is an extensive water servitude and council-owned

land parcel. The edge here is implied (Figure 7) and the space reduced to the human scale by the range of informal trade stalls, containers and makeshift shade structures arranged to form a pervious implied edge. Without this edge, the space would be disproportional and at a scale that would make the pedestrian feel overwhelmed. The edge or implied edge and associated structures bring the space down to the human scale.

Travelling north along Solomon Mahlangu Drive, the edges become more varied on both the eastern and western sides of the road. Along the eastern side, the hard edge is set back more than 50m from the road edge and this space plays host to a range of uses. Closer to the nodes, food is served from shipping containers or makeshift street kitchens.

Figure 8: The western street edge along Solomon Mahlangu – note how the dominant pedestrian walkway is located away from the road for obvious safety reasons

Photograph by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



During month-end, numerous mobile street vendors, food carts and other typologies occupy this space in responding to local needs. Further from the nodes, we see the space being occupied by suppliers of building materials, sand, aggregates, and some local cement brick-makers. These are interspersed by local tyre repair or mechanical repair typologies. Although these may not all be desirable uses, they are set back from the road so that the impact is positive rather than negative. These have also resulted in pedestrian uses gravitating to the edge of the road on the east but with people preferring to walk along the western side of the road (Figure 8). The edge here is varied and at human scale. In response to the relatively high speed of vehicles along this section of road, the pedestrian walkway has been set back to the property boundary,

prompting some of the local residents to respond and open up to the passers-by through the introduction of spaza shops, food outlets and taverns. The dynamic nature and interrelation of the different elements that make up the street play an important role in how we experience place and space.

It soon became apparent that the temporal changes of the street influence the spatial distribution of various elements at the macro scale and that we had to map these elements in more detail. Inherent in the understanding of streets as people places is the implication that some understanding of how people interact with each other and with street space is required. The first and perhaps most simplistic expression of this concept is how people take ownership of, modify or transform the streetscape.

Again, this aspect had both positive and negative impacts, although we saw more of the positive transformations in this space. A typical example of the negative would be where a section of the essentially public street space has been transformed into private space by individuals extending their property boundary and 'stealing public space'. In contrast, taking ownership of a section of the public space and rendering a service to the broader community is seen as a positive transformation that contributes to the collective social capital of the community. Rudimentary examples of this are evident throughout – at the most basic level, it is the informal hawker cleaning (sweeping and removing litter) the area directly adjacent to his or her stall or the residents in an informal section cleaning the front yard of their stand with the informal street section directly in front of the house. A more complex example is how the informal trade is structured and nuanced in the street space, how it introduces an element of human scale to the space, provides shade and refuge for pedestrians from the elements, facilitates social exchange, and builds social capital.

The street as an economic driver

While limiting our exploration of the street–pedestrian articulation to the larger order mobility corridor, it became apparent that we have to change the way we see informal and formal trade in this context and unpack the concept a little. Almost all business and trade in this area is illegal or unregulated from a land-use planning perspective, as is the case in many other cities (Skinner 2008). The general plan of the township shows that most of the commercial, business and trade activities either take place in the road reserve or on land zoned as residential (some rezoning may have taken place). Implicit in this is that all trade here is informal, a category too broad to help us unpack the role of this sector in the street.

To map these functions at the macro scale, we divided them into several categories. The informal trade–temporal category that reflects at the macro

scale is informal and impermanent in the sense that hawkers occupy and transform the space on a very temporal scale during the morning, midday, afternoon, fortnightly, or at month-end only. Typically, they clean a space, spread out a piece of cloth or canvas and display their wares on this. In some cases, it may be a table that serves tea or coffee and 'vetkoek' or scones during the morning peak, or electronic goods, fresh meat, offal, and vegetables in the afternoon (Figure 9).

The informal trade–covered category presents a more regular utilisation of the street space. These are hawkers that have been present for a number of years to the degree that they invest in a more formal structure, initially a structure covered with canvas or shade cloth and then progress to a corrugated structure (Figure 10). Interestingly, the nature of the trade may still be temporal in that the hawkers are often present only during a morning peak. In at least one or two cases, we have seen that different hawkers occupy the same structure during different times, thereby exposing the social networks that underlie and support this community. Eventually, this typology progresses to a point where the structure may become more formal (typically a shipping container) and, therefore, permanent.

Another semi-permanent and deemed formal use that occupies the street reserve is the trade of materials and goods that typically include brick yards and building material depots (Figure 11).

Formal trade refers to the multitude of commercial, trade and business activities that take place in buildings constructed for this purpose. These may be directly in the street reserve (for example between the Shilovane–Mohwelere Street intersection with Solomon Mahlangu Drive and the railway junction to the north) or the preferred option of converting a residential stand to commercial use (Figure 12). It is important to note that there is no formal land ownership as these commercial ventures are constructed on the same stand as the housing unit.

Figure 9: Distribution of an informal trade typology where the hawker makes use of canvas or material to display wares on a very temporary basis (yellow)

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth, 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects. Photographs by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)

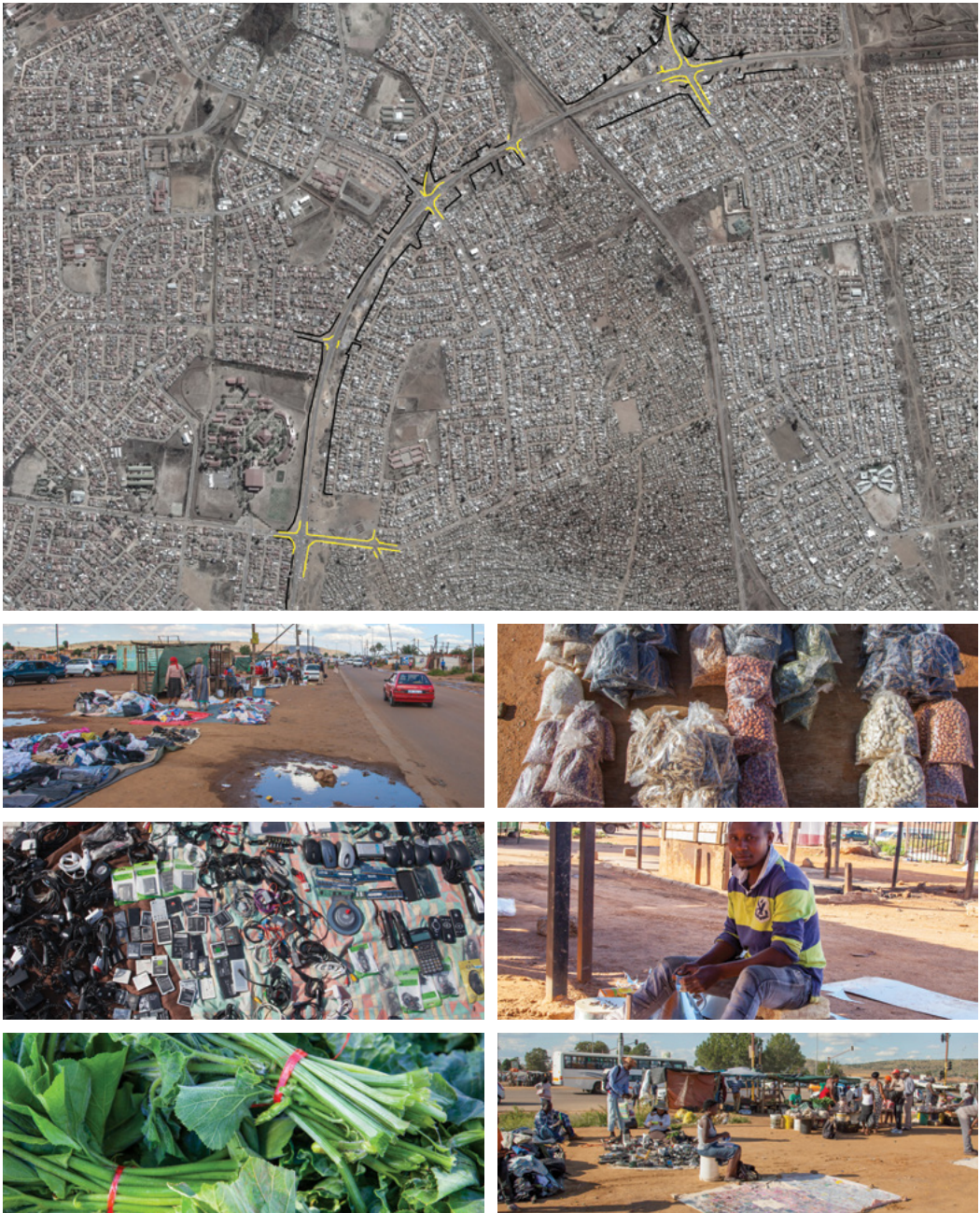


Figure 10: Distribution of an informal trade typology where the hawker makes use of a shade or roof structure (orange)

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth, 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects. Photographs by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



Figure 11: Distribution of material yards, mostly along the central part of the study area (brown)

SOURCE: Mamelodi. 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth. 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects. Photographs by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



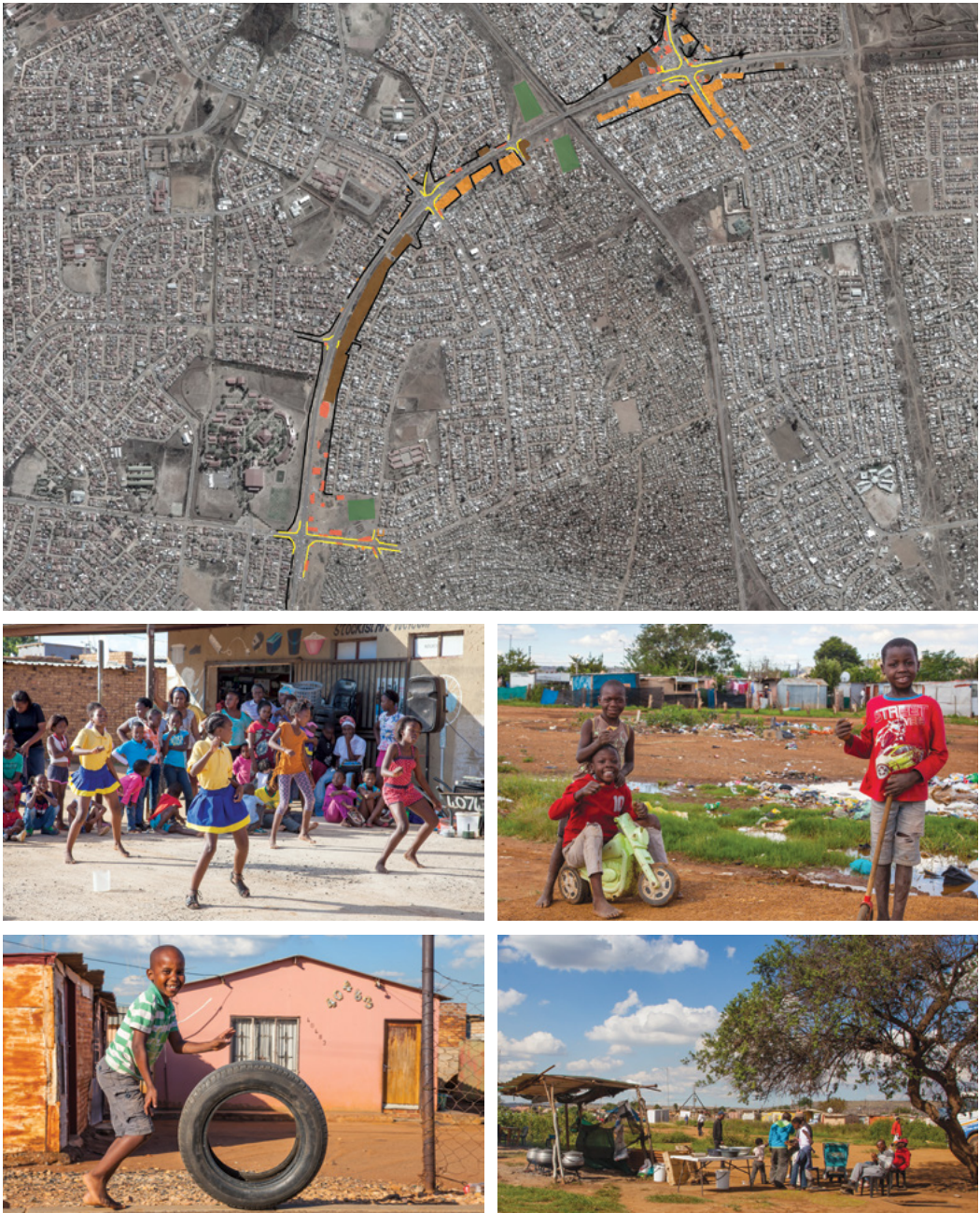
Figure 12: Formal trade structures and buildings, mostly clustered along the northern section of the study area (orange)

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth, 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects. Photographs by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



Figure 13: Distribution of informal recreational spaces (green)

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth. 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects. Photographs by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



The street as place of social exchange and recreation

At the macro scale, only limited large, open spaces used as informal soccer fields are present. In this context, streets are public open space by default and open space is appropriated for this use as and when required (Figure 13, on previous page). Open space use of high-order roads is limited to the extreme edges where it is deemed safe.

In the lowest-order roads, the streets are public space and pedestrian use is dominant over vehicular traffic (Figure 14).

Collectively, the combination of the informal trade typologies gives us a very strong indication of the distribution and clustering of activities within the streetscape and the relative intensity of use. The distribution of these nodes along Solomon Mahlangu

Drive is further clarified if seen in the context of the extensive pedestrian network that supports it (Figure 15). Walking here is the dominant mode of transport and has very important implications for the functioning of the area and the social networks that walking builds and supports. Through walking, the street becomes the primary conduit for social exchange in the community. Walking the city has social, economic, environmental, and political benefits that are mutualistic in nature and that accrue benefits to urban role-players across the board (ARUP 2016).

Much of the pedestrian network follows the roads (Figure 16). This may not be by choice but rather by default since the formalised township extensions have been designed for vehicular and not pedestrian use (Figure 17).

Figure 14: People in the street – lower-order streets are pedestrian-dominant, places of social exchange and recreational spaces

Photograph by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



Figure 15: The distribution of activity nodes and the relative importance of these nodes

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth. 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects. Photographs by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



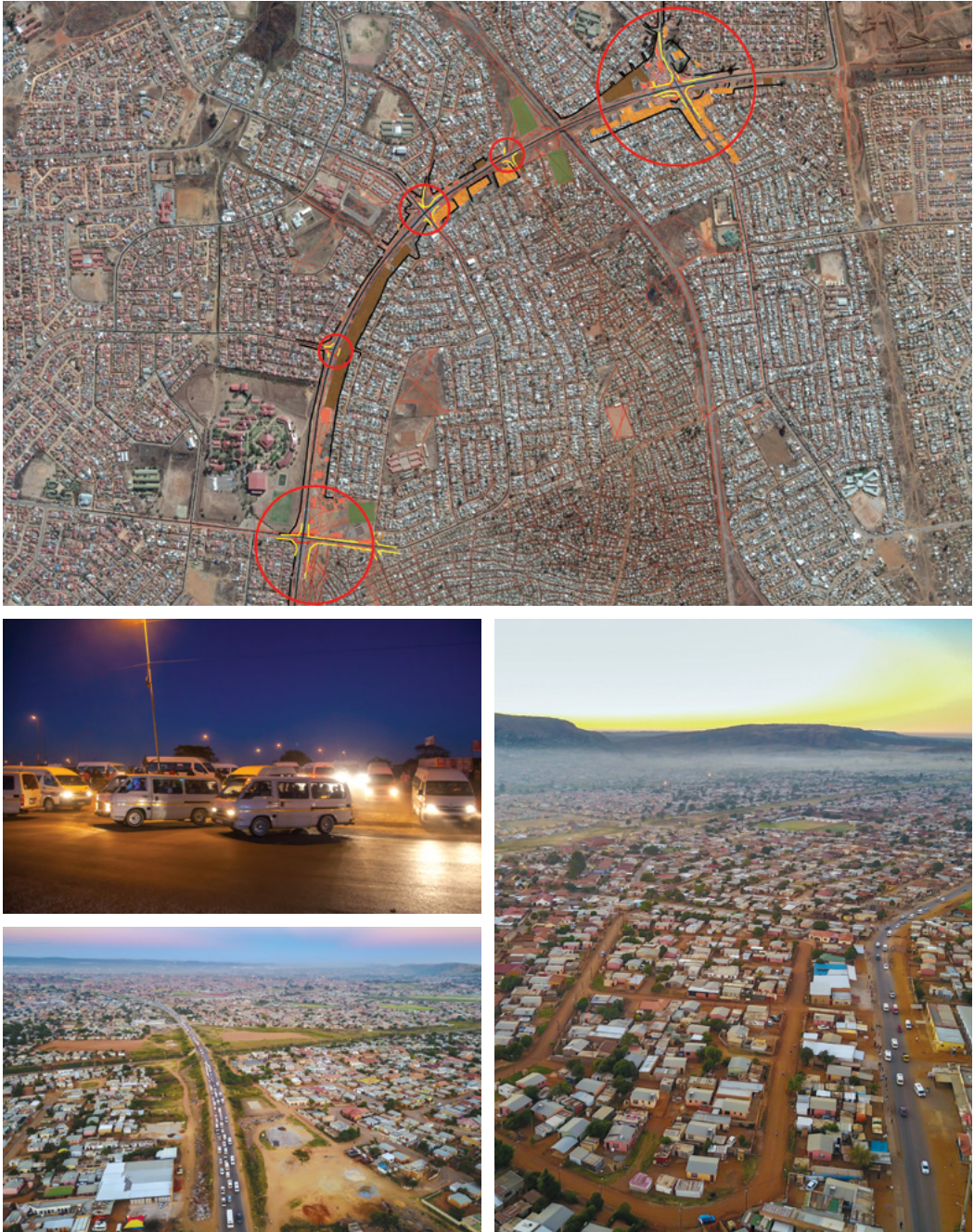
Figure 16: The pedestrian network

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth, 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects. Photographs by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



Figure 17: Overlaps between the pedestrian and road networks

SOURCE: Mamelodi, 25°43'19.30" S and 28°24'30.91" E. Google Earth, 29 August 2016 [accessed 28 March 2017]; and Habitat Landscape Architects. Photographs by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



Functioning of the street at local scale

Having gained a macro-scale perspective of the street function, we zoomed into one of the core nodes to map and present changes at the local scale (Figure 18). The investigated node (the intersection of Solomon Mahlangu Drive with LP Bambo Drive–Hector Peterson Road) was the most active of all nodes within the area. The node serves as an important intermodal transfer point for pedestrians to public transport in the form of taxis. The entire system is informal yet well structured and managed. This is one of the few places that has a 24-hour presence in the larger City context and that is always busy.

Activity in the node commences in the early hours of the morning (3am in summer) with the

street hawkers starting on their food preparation for the morning peak. By 4.30am the early morning commute is on and between 5am and 6.30am the area hums with activity (Figure 19).

Although most commuters arrive here on foot, the local taxis also gather commuters and drop them at a designated intersection for transfer to the regional routes (Figure 20).

Queuing for the regional routes has a distinct spatial footprint (Figure 21). Often the line of people is served by a specific group of hawkers, but in most cases sufficient space is left between hawkers and passengers to allow for comfortable walking and access to traders.

Figure 18: Early morning activity in the northern node

Photograph by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



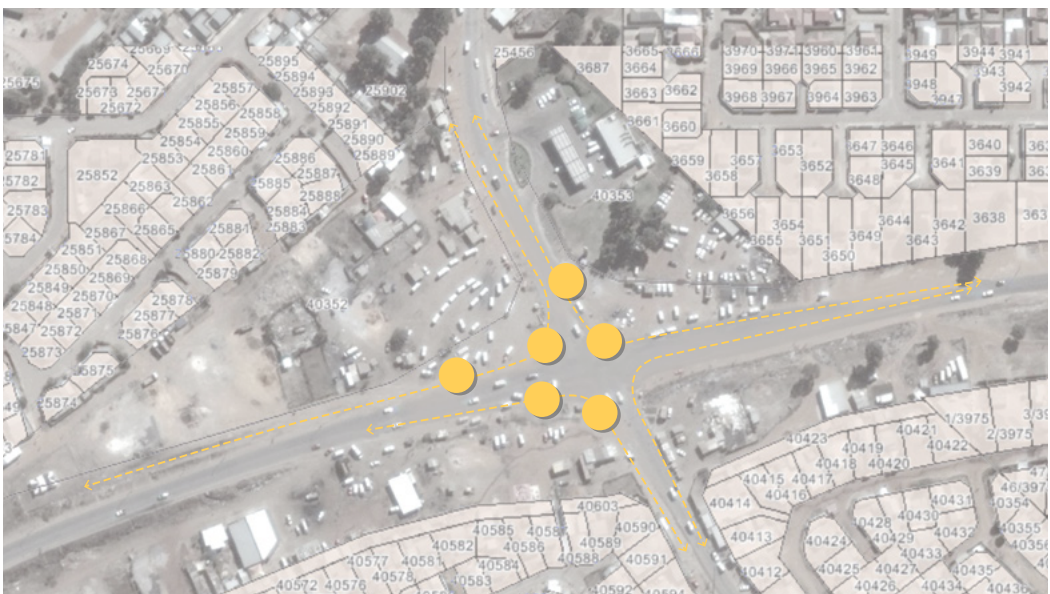
Figure 19: Morning activity

Photograph by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



Figure 20: Local taxi drop-off points

SOURCE: Habitat Landscape Architects



SOURCE: Habitat Landscape Architects



To limit congestion, the departure points for the various regional destinations are well spread across the available space in the area. This has a direct bearing on the distribution of hawking activities across

the space. As is expected, the morning hawkers concentrate on takeaway foods, breakfast options and, to a lesser degree, commodities such as airtime and cigarettes (Figures 22–24).

Figure 22: Morning distribution of hawkers (orange) with dominant taxi routes to the east (red), Centurion/Midrand (blue) and Montana/Pretoria North (brown)

SOURCE: Habitat Landscape Architects



Figure 23: Early morning activity

Photograph by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



Figure 24: Morning vendors offer a variety of breakfast options to commuters

Photograph by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



By 7am, the queues are past their maximum and most of the taxis are on the road. The midday food vendors now start arriving to prepare meals that will be served from around 12 to 2pm.

From around midday the flow of people has reversed and people start moving back into the precinct. The commercial activities are now distributed across the intersection and include a variety of services, commodities, prepared foods, meals, fruits, vegetables, and meats (Figure 25). Most of the formalised commercial activities associated with buildings operate between 8am and 7pm. During the afternoon, activities start building at 3pm and by 4pm the area is buzzing again. The diversity of goods, materials and food on offer is now the greatest. Spatially, the distribution of the goods shifts with the dominant direction of travel, which is now the route home and activates a shift to the south of the intersection. The bulk of the activities continues up to 7pm and then gradually reduces.

The types of informal trade also have a distinct spatial footprint, with the more temporary activities clustering around the areas of highest intensity (Figure 26). Notably, only during times of extreme activity, such as at the weekend closest to month-end, do these activities spill off the main movement or activity routes along the intersection to form clusters of informal markets.

Throughout the afternoon, people arriving back from work are dropped off in the intersection. This action is much less structured than during the morning peak and seems to happen at the most convenient point for the operator. As the congestion builds, people are often dropped further from the intersection (Figure 27).

By nightfall the hawking activities start tailing off. Social activities associated with *chisa nyama* (braai meat), informal food outlets and local taverns now become dominant. Throughout this period and up to midnight, passengers are dropped from their places of work or leisure, with the quietest period of the day being from midnight to around 3am in the morning, when the cycle restarts. This space is lively and active throughout. Despite being situated on the intersection of two high-order roads, this is a civic space of a street dominated by pedestrians. The design speed is not the official 60 km/h. This is

immediately apparent during the peak times when the average speed through the section is around 10 km/h (based on five visits during peak hours with the Waze app). Here is a place where the drivers actually recognise the pedestrians.

Unfortunately, the finer nuances of place cannot be mapped, although at least some of these were documented through photographs. This is a people place, a public space. It is a place where people meet, interact and get to know each other. We as outsiders were quickly noticed and, once the purpose of the visits was explained, word spread rapidly, so by the second visit noticeably fewer people asked what we were doing. After a while, the researchers were seen as regulars; people greeted and interacted with them, something rarely seen in other city contexts. The same street hawkers and customers interact across the space, thereby building a strong sense of community, social structure and social capital.

In an elementary way, this space has great freedom and, by being unregulated and informal, allows people to experiment, to own the street. People walk where they feel safe and transform the urban space to best suit their needs. This has resulted in a place with a great many diverse spaces and a range of typologies, from completely informal to formal. The relationships of design elements, namely edges, paths, thresholds, foci, scale, and structure, are plain to see. There is perhaps a modern vernacular present here that needs to be observed and studied in more detail.

Streets in this context have multiple functions, perhaps more than in other places because these are the only public spaces available. Streets matter as civic space; if people are unhappy here, they take to the streets. Street space becomes host to multiple activities or uses that have to co-exist and are reinvented at different times of the day. The people of the Mamelodi East community have continually been transforming this road into a streetscape. People take ownership of sections and make changes in the road reserve. There are numerous examples of the changing public-private interface along the street section. This public-private interface is clearly articulated and readable, which is a critical aspect of great places (Muminovic 2014). The interface changes in scale and hierarchy (Dovey & Wood 2015) but there is always a strong notion of defensible space.

Most spaces have a strong temporal aspect in the transformations that take place during the day and the night, as well as changes on a seasonal basis.

It is in this context that many aspects of this place challenge the misgivings we so often accept as fact. Design principles, theories and guidelines on which we base our designs and plans are called into question. Take the example of informal trade and hawkers that are often dismissed or brushed off as temporary, short-term transitional users that negatively impact place – not here (Figure 28). This is a place by the people for the people. The human scale of the space, the structure, the order, the robustness, the vibrancy is not the making of some fancy design team; rather, it is the product of countless experiments in ‘tactical urbanism’ spread over time.

The key role-players that are glaringly absent are the authorities. The local municipality is the missing partner. Since 1994, little improvement has been made by the City or provincial authorities other than to add more lanes to the road or to provide stormwater swales. But this missing partner (the officials and the consultants) needs to consider these spaces anew. In seeking to formalise the transport role of the node, the dominant design informants should no longer be the top-down historical approach of imposing sight distances, design speeds, optimum geometry, and the limiting of traffic conflict. Here in our midst is a prime example of robust streets that work; all we need to do is to hone our skills of observation, spend time in the community to see what is unique about their practices and then adopt inventive ways of working with the locals to take our cities to the next level.

Figure 25: Afternoon commercial activities – dark green denotes informal trade, orange is formal trade and light green denotes semi-permanent structures

SOURCE: Habitat Landscape Architects



Figure 26: Informal trade typologies – purple denotes informal trade, orange is formal trade, red is structural-informal trade, and light green denotes semi-permanent structures

SOURCE: Habitat Landscape Architects



Figure 27: Combined and overlapping activities in the intersection contribute to congestion at certain times of the day

SOURCE: Habitat Landscape Architects



Figure 28: Recycler doing his bit to keep the space clean – also note how the general area has been cleaned by the hawkers prior to setting up their stalls

Photograph by Siegwalt Küsel (2017)



Conclusions

If we are to become more serious about our streets, we propose that the following factors are important to consider.

The fundamental needs of the citizens must be supreme. Perpetuating our bad habits in planning leads to further marginalisation of the most vulnerable segments of society that mostly rely on public transport since they cannot afford private

alternatives (UN Habitat 2013). We need to develop liveable, walkable communities with the required support infrastructure. We have to provide for pedestrians and public transport since these are the key to better cities.

We must embrace mixed use and densities that are sustainable in the local context and integrate the informal sector into this. Mixed use is the key to cities that work. This is where we need to seriously

rethink our planning schemes, spatial development frameworks and integrated development plans.

In formalising existing townships or developing new townships, we need to look at the needs of the pedestrian and find new ways of integrating the informal sector. Basic urban practices such as walkability and permeability need to inform street patterns. Walking provides opportunities for informal trade, which is the heartbeat of these places. The informal sector is the entry point, the gateway to the formal sector of tomorrow, to economic growth and the employment opportunities we so desperately seek. We must start looking differently at this sector

and the people, and find new ways of accommodating them in our streets and townships.

Open space provisioning must be considered in a new way. Streets are public open space – this is where there are opportunities to build an inclusive multiracial society, integrated communities and vibrant but safe neighbourhoods.

Sufficient funding for streetscapes or open space, planning, development, management and maintenance, effective zoning by-laws, and a commitment to the long-term prosperity of citizens are all essential investments if we are to develop and sustain a healthy community.

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Photograph by Clive Hassall

Reflection B

Princess Place

Guy Trangoš

It was while living on Princess Place, in Princess Towers, that I began to realise that the urban form of the street, which once felt so foreign, is quite extraordinary within Johannesburg's history and growth. This short, wide street has a significant population density housed in apartment blocks. Apartments offer a diverse tenure mix that is uncommon in Johannesburg. Sectional title properties sit next to privately owned buildings. Rents and property prices fluctuate dramatically between these buildings. The tenant/owner mix also exhibits a range of income, race and origin.

The street is also highly connected, for cars, public transport and pedestrians. Within minutes, vehicles can access three onramps/off-ramps to the M1 freeway and major east-west and north-south arterials. In addition, the street is serviced by Rea Vaya, Metrobus, Gautrain Bus, Putco and Wits University buses. A ten-minute walk will take you to Braamfontein, Hillbrow, Parktown, a range of hospitals and university campuses. When considering the centrality of Princess Place, its population density makes sense. Neighbouring Hillbrow has a similar centrality but a much higher density.

Living on the edge of Hillbrow, I often pondered the differences between this edge of Parktown and the tall apartment blocks of Hillbrow just a stone's throw away. Both emerged from the early decades of Johannesburg's existence, but evolved into different urban conditions. Through a consideration of the differences between Hillbrow and Princess Place, I attempt to understand how this exceptional street came to exist, wedged between incredible density, iconic sprawling properties and significant institutions.

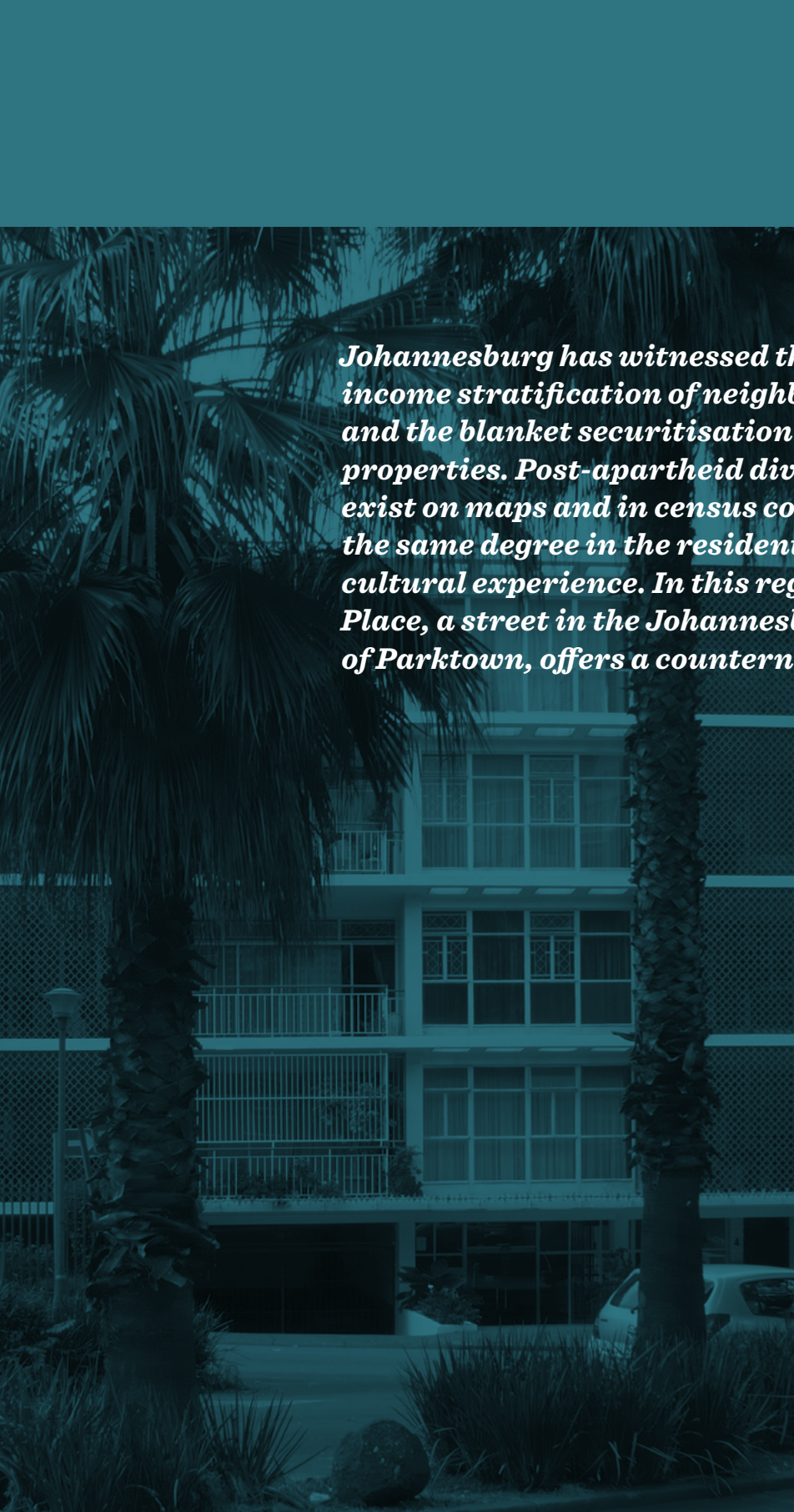
Old streets, new residents

Appearing on an 1897 map of Johannesburg, then without a name, Princess Place¹ was laid out in the southeastern corner of Parktown. The fact that Princess Place connects Queen Street to Park Lane, and is parallel to Empire Street, is a useful reminder of the suburb's imperial origins. Princess Place runs close to the western edge of the Randjeslaagte or *Uitvalgrond* triangle of state-owned land where the Transvaal Boer Republic first established

The tenant/owner mix also exhibits a range of income, race and origin

Johannesburg. The boundary line between the original Braamfontein Farm and the northern portion of the Randjeslaagte is visible today in the angle of Clarendon Place. From the start, Hillbrow on the Randjeslaagte and Parktown on the Braamfontein Farm were imagined and designed differently – the former as a highly rationalised, speculative and compact city grid, the latter as a meandering garden suburb.

Through the early half of the 20th century, Parktown remained the preserve of wealthy, white and English-speaking families. The 1960s and 70s 'high apartheid' moment saw significant property speculation and construction in Johannesburg, which was driven by sustained GDP growth. Large swathes of Parktown's residential fabric were replaced by enormous institutional complexes such as the



Johannesburg has witnessed the routine income stratification of neighbourhoods and the blanket securitisation of private properties. Post-apartheid diversity may exist on maps and in census counts, but not to the same degree in the residents' lived socio-cultural experience. In this regard, Princess Place, a street in the Johannesburg suburb of Parktown, offers a counternarrative

Johannesburg General Hospital and the Johannesburg College of Education. These memorialise deliberate attempts by the apartheid government to undermine Parktown as a stronghold of English wealth. Hillbrow also saw a fundamental transformation as multi-storey apartment blocks sprang up in quick succession, and its residential density soon became one of the highest in South Africa.

Princess Place, too, saw a radical change in its character. Its pavilion houses were replaced by five- to seven-storey apartment blocks as developers rode Hillbrow's boom into Parktown. Property sizes were more generous than in Hillbrow, but development heights were limited. Parktown's upper-income status saw apartments built that were larger than those currently on offer in Hillbrow. The Princess Place resident of the mid-1970s was able to live separate from the bustle of Hillbrow in a lower-density neighbourhood, but within a few minutes' walk from its many cafes, restaurants and cultural amenities. Princess Place was undoubtedly a white space during apartheid, while Hillbrow greyed increasingly from the 1970s onwards.

The last decade has seen sustained reinvestment in the inner city by both the public and private sectors

The 1980s and 90s saw radical change in Hillbrow. Its residential population increased 2.5 times² as many people took advantage of the slow collapse of apartheid and moved to the city centre. Dramatic overcrowding, a decline in public services and property values, and increases in crime served to pathologise Hillbrow as a dangerous urban slum.

On the other side of Clarendon Place, Princess Place also saw its own transformation. Property values stagnated through the 1990s, barely rising at all during the decade. This resulted in the weakening of property management and the upkeep of numerous Princess Place buildings far into the 2000s.³

The last decade has seen sustained reinvestment in the inner city by both the public and private sectors. New public transport such as the Gautrain and Rea Vaya has made the centre more accessible. As I experienced when looking for a place to live, well-located central suburbs are becoming increasingly expensive. These factors have seen a turnaround in Princess Place's fortunes. But what differentiates Princess Place from another medium-density street?

Change

Leaving my apartment to go to work, I often encounter a neighbour whose name I cannot recall. She is elderly, originally from Hungary, and always wears the same canary yellow coat. We often chat in the lift. I also bump into direct neighbours of ours, a young interracial gay couple, both with prestigious banking jobs. Their black BMWs give that away. Sometimes when coming home, I have a slow chat with one of the perpetually stoned guards who lives on the roof of the building. Often though, I share the lift going up with red-beret-clad students who all share one of Princess Tower's enormous apartments.

Next door to Princess Towers is a small jamaat khana, which the street's Islamic faithful visit regularly. Opposite the jamaat is an apartment block with blue plaques and brise soleils, Juliana. I know a few academics and artists who now live there. Down the road are a few rental-only buildings, and at the corner of the street is a privately-owned student residence.

The street is always active as residents walk to work, jog around neighbouring Pieter Roos Park or cut across from Hillbrow. Vehicles drive slowly and carefully, bored security guards chat with friends and passers-by, and a street trader shears strelitzia blooms to sell at an intersection. My partner and I sold our second car and now share one; the centrality, safety and density⁴ of Princess Place allowed us to do what seemed impossible to us merely months before.

Princess Place is a living example of the type of urban environment that the City of Johannesburg is trying to expand with its Corridors of Freedom projects.⁵ The medium density and economic centrality of Princess Place, when considered together with its mixed-income and mixed-tenure housing



stock, have resulted in a remarkable income and racial diversity amongst residents. For a city seeking to repair the lingering racial and income disparities entrenched by apartheid, a social reading of urban space is essential. Princess Place casually demonstrates that local social mixing outside of gated estates and shopping malls in Johannesburg is both alive and possible.

I arrived at Princess Place four years ago loaded with the preconceptions and biases that living in this

tough city forged in me. As many South Africans do when faced with difference, I sought to recoil into a safe, identifiable and predictable space. I hope those biases have crumbled. Living on Princess Place has shown me that the street can be an immensely powerful strategy for urban practitioners and local governments. 'Streets' foreground the lived experiences of their residents and, when allowed to change and grow within the right social and design frameworks, hold the potential to change a city.

Endnotes

¹ Which princess the area is named after is not entirely clear, although Mary, Princess Royal, was born in 1897, and the timing might indicate a street name in honour of her birth.

² Cox K, Viruly F & Bertoldi A (2015) *Inner City Transformation & Investment Trends 2009–2014 Presentation*. Available at http://www.jda.org.za/keydocs/inner_city_investment_trends_2009_14.pdf [accessed 25 November 2017]

³ <https://www.brandsouthafrica.com/investments-immigration/business/investing/opportunities/city-residential/> [accessed 22 December 2017]

⁴ Princess Place's population density is high enough to support a Gautrain bus stop and a Rea Vaya station nearby.

⁵ See http://www.corridorsoffreedom.co.za/attachments/article/1/corridors%20of%20freedom_s.pdf [accessed 22 December 2017]



Chapter 4

The conception and contestation of public space in Johannesburg suburbia

ALEXANDRA PARKER

Introduction

When I first moved to the neighbourhood of Killarney, I lived in the art deco block called Daventry Court. It was early 2009 and Killarney was changing. In the building I had a small garage which I shared with a street vendor, called Various, who used the back of the small space to store the structure of his stall and fruit and vegetables. His stall was located across the road in 1st Street at the base of the fire escape stairs in a building called Killarney Court and Gardens. It was an ideal location, sheltered by the stairs and set back from the pavement path in an alcove that provided generous space for his goods. First Street is a quiet one-way road for vehicles but a busy pedestrian thoroughfare. It connects the entrance of the Killarney Mall to Oxford Road, a main arterial, just one block from 1st Street. Employees of the mall's retail and office space as well as shoppers use the street as a short cut away from the busy Riviera Road.

I lived in Daventry Court for a year and I frequently interacted with Various in the garage we shared and in 1st Street. He gave me fruit and vegetables in exchange for the use of the space and I would pass his stall on my walk to the mall to do my own shopping. He always wore a tweed jacket and had some grey hair at his temples. I moved out of the building and the area for a period of nine months and when I returned I moved into Killarney Court and Gardens. I was dismayed to see that in that time the alcove below the stairs had been enclosed by fencing and was no longer accessible. My previous landlord had eventually sold the flat and so I do not know what became of Various's ability to store his goods close to his stall. Certainly both occurrences had combined to make it no longer feasible for him to operate in the area as he had not relocated to any other pavement or corner in Killarney.

This incident is an example of a form of passive aggressive control of the street space by residents

of the apartment buildings. I have since lived in the same building on 1st Street for over six years and have witnessed numerous instances of such latent and overt hostility to the users of the street. Residents within the blocks of flats have taken measures or made alterations to the boundaries or edges of their properties that have impacted on the space of the street and narrowed it – if not physically at the very least socially. These changes in the street space have occurred in parallel with efforts by residents to invigorate the pocket park just a few blocks away. The reactionary measures of residents to control behaviour and activities in the street have only exacerbated the issues and conflicts there. This contrasts with the largely inclusionary approaches to the space of the park, although these approaches are also informed by the need for control. The different approaches reinforce the need to frame streets as valuable public space even in suburban contexts. This chapter provides a discussion of the conflicting interests competing in this semi-suburban street and park that reflect the need for the street to be valued as a public space.

Streets as public space

Streets, alongside squares, have traditionally been considered to be definitive public space. During the 20th century a number of factors converged to shift the urban landscape. The invention of and subsequent devotion to the motor car altered the use of streets dramatically. "[P]rovision for vehicular traffic initially evolved by usurping pedestrians from large parts of the public space network" (Carmona et al. 2003: 72). The second factor to change the nature of streets was a shift in architecture. The modern movement shifted from designing buildings within a street context, where buildings abutted each other and defined the street edge, to designing

“[E]xisting public space is increasingly controlled by various forms of surveillance and increasingly invested with private meanings”

free-standing buildings surrounded by space (Carmona et al. 2003). Public space was no longer defined positively – framed by buildings – but became a negative amorphous space in which buildings sat as objects (Carmona et al. 2003).

In the late 20th century several scholars have written of the death of public space caused by increasing privatisation, securitisation, gentrification of and social withdrawal from public space.

Activities that once occurred in the public realm have been usurped by more private realms as leisure activities, entertainment, information centers, and consumer services are increasingly accessible from home via the television or computer [...] The contemporary built environment contains increasingly less meaningful public space, and existing public space is increasingly controlled by various forms of surveillance and increasingly invested with private meanings. (Ellin 1997: 36)

There is a rhetoric that stages the street and public space as the sites of fear, battles and wars. This is in response to the competing users of the street – pedestrians and motorists (Fyfe 2006) – but also to the fear of the other encountered in these spaces (Ellin 1997).

[B]ut descriptions of war in the streets are much more pervasive than actual street fighting. Ironically, advocates of more police on the beat and their critics both see urban public space as under siege, even if, in the contemporary city of antagonisms, they cannot agree whether the threat comes principally from crime, disorder, and moral decline or from unemployment and uneven development. (Lees 2006: 231)

Many of these scholars writing about public space and streets refer to an urban core with high

population densities and mixed uses. For example, Mike Davis analyses downtown Los Angeles; Jane Jacobs writes about Manhattan. However, fear and the fortified responses to it are equally pervasive in suburban areas (Flusty 1997), although there are different expectations of streets in these areas. In the suburbs, streets are the extension of the private family home, take on the meaning of sanctuary (Parker 2009) and as such are expected to provide safe havens of play and recreation to children and mothers (Low 2003). In many ways this has driven perceptions of fear and the response of fortification.

Increased security and control is the manifestation of shifting social relations in these city spaces, as Georg Simmel (1903) identified in the early 20th century. Community is no longer defined by a group of neighbours but “by job, a vocation, church, or some other institution, far more than by location” (Garreau 1992: 279). In South Africa, the transition to a democratic state prompted this insecurity in the suburbs, “transforming streets, parks, offices, shops, suburbs and entertainment areas into security enclaves with controlled access points” (Bremner 1998: 58). In particular, streets have been fenced off and securitised in many neighbourhoods in an effort to define and control these more porous spaces.

The issue of control of public streets links back to the metaphorical battles, but Loretta Lees warns against a dichotomous view of streets as either public and democratic or surveyed and controlled. “Public space is both at the same time. It is simultaneously a space of political struggle and expression and of repression and control” (Lees 2006: 233). “For the public space of the street is not pre-given, in either its form or its meaning. It is produced through contestation and social negotiation” (Lees 2006: 244).

The relative youth of urban development in Johannesburg and the Gauteng city-region means

that cars have played even more of a determining role in the creation of public space, as cars were prevalent within Johannesburg's first 50 years. In South Africa, public life was regulated under apartheid and "[t]here was little room for active participation in the public sphere except through a culture of opposition" (Herwitz 1998: 412). In addition, the apartheid government imposed controls over public spaces – much of which was segregated – and streets were frequently the site of conflict between anti-apartheid protestors and armed police. Therefore the city-region has a history of hostile and controlled public and street spaces.

Killarney

First Street in Killarney runs parallel to Riviera Road, which connects Oxford Road with the M1 highway (Figure 1). The street is only three blocks long, beginning at the Killarney shopping mall and ending in a cul-de-sac. The ends of the street contain commercial activities but the rest of the building fabric is 13 residential blocks. The street is one-way for vehicular traffic running west to east and has several on-street parking bays. The area is well located on major thoroughfares with a minibus taxi stop and a Gautrain bus stop at the eastern end of the street. Killarney has several good schools in the vicinity and is very close to the Charlotte Maxeke General Hospital and a number of shuls and mosques in the adjacent neighbourhoods. The shopping mall provides most of the immediate amenities for residents and there is a small park, known as Killarney Park, a couple of blocks to the south.

Killarney was proclaimed at the end of the 19th century but was very much on the outskirts of the mining town of Johannesburg. In the early 1910s Isidore Schlesinger established Killarney Film Studios on the site that is now the Killarney Mall (Gutsche 1972). In the 1920s he built Whitehall, a three-storey apartment block, the second floor of which he used as his residence. It was only in the 1930s, when Johannesburg was experiencing a building boom, that Killarney saw significant construction and occupation. As a result, many of the buildings are in the art deco style of the period and mostly five to six storeys in height. The area was popular with Jewish residents as two shuls were within walking distance of the neighbourhood; Schlesinger himself was openly Jewish.

Killarney experienced a second wave of building in the 1960s and 1970s, no doubt influenced by the resurgence in apartment living in Hillbrow. Several buildings were erected, particularly on the ridge, and many blocks attempted to rectify the increased demand for parking with large parking garages. Killarney Court and Gardens is a prime example of Killarney's history. Killarney Court was built in the shape of a 'u' in the 1930s. In the 1960s a second building, Killarney Gardens, was erected to enclose the 'u' to form a rectangle. Two levels of parking were installed within the courtyard, with a rooftop garden above. In 1972 the film studios were demolished and Killarney Mall was built, one of Johannesburg's first shopping centres.

In the 1990s Killarney experienced some decline during South Africa's democratic transition and a period of high crime levels. The neighbourhood had an aging population and younger residents were emigrating. However, Killarney has seen some shifts again in the 21st century. The erection of two mosques in the vicinity of Killarney has encouraged a Muslim population to move into the area. A new large apartment block was erected on Riviera Road in 2007, while generally the area has become trendy for those seeking loft living or the security that comes with an apartment. Killarney has also benefited from the provision of public transport – the Gautrain bus route connects Killarney with Houghton and Rosebank.

The popularity of the area has increased property values and rentals. Killarney is an expensive area in which to reside. However, Killarney has a very mixed population with regards to race and income. The majority of the buildings have substantial accommodation for staff, although the quality of accommodation is usually poor and reflects the openly racist era in which it was built. There are three to four buildings that are not being well managed and that offer rental accommodation at below the average for the area. This accommodation enables domestic workers, security guards, gardeners, street vendors, and other workers to live in the area.

This social variety may also be the cause of friction that manifests in the street space. The previous strict social controls of apartheid have been lifted, but, as yet, there are no new widely accepted cultural standards (Flusty 1997), leaving people with feelings of insecurity. This insecurity and fear is evident in

Figure 1: Map of northern Killarney

SOURCE: Google Earth. 26°09'52.06" S and 28°03'01.71" E. 10 May 2017 [accessed 30 October 2017]



the way that residents have responded to the shared spaces of the street and the park. Changes in these spaces also reflect differences in the way that these spaces are framed as public space or as an extension of the domestic realm.

Suburban environment

Most of the buildings in Killarney are sectional title with a body corporate management structure; however, there are two buildings (Lhenveolan and Martindale Mews) on 1st Street with single ownership and tenants in the individual apartments. These buildings are not as well maintained and

certainly make residents feel uneasy, although at the time of writing Lhenveolan was undergoing major renovations to the interior and exterior of the building.

On the northern side of 1st Street nearly all of the buildings face Riviera Road and none faces onto 1st Street, although Killarney Court and Gardens has vehicle and pedestrian entrances onto 1st Street. Therefore, most of the interface between private and public on the northern side consists of garages and blank walls. The southern side of the street is slightly better, with Hyde Court presenting a friendly facade with both vehicular and pedestrian entrances.



Lhenveolan once had a pedestrian entrance which has now been fenced off, and while Gleneagles only has two vehicular entrances on 1st Street, its northern facade is set back from the street with a garden which is visually permeable through palisade fencing.

The street is relatively wide for a one-way system and provides bays for on-street parking along most of its length but the pavements are quite narrow, only about one metre wide. Although there is only one pavement tree, which is quite small, the street has quite a bit of shade provided by the trees in the gardens of the private buildings. The avenues that bisect 1st Street are lined with large old Jacaranda trees.

At intervals along the length of the street are protrusions of pavement to accommodate street lights and also demarcate the parking areas. There are a few sturdy concrete dustbins scattered on the corners of the street and most pavement corners have sloped edges to facilitate wheelchairs, prams and trollies. There is no other street furniture or elements of urban design provided for pedestrians. The street is part of an open grid, although a short street, but the vehicular traffic is relatively quiet (about 216 cars per hour during peak hour). There are few destinations on 1st Street and the open street network enables drivers to use other routes to access the amenities in the area. First Street in Killarney is very popular with pedestrians – the street acts as a connector between the Killarney Mall and the main road of Oxford Road but provides a quieter and more pleasant path for pedestrians.

The fabric of the street is not conducive to creating public space. Buildings are not oriented to the street and instead present blank, inactive facades or walls. This defines the street as a tunnel. The space becomes uncomfortable for lingering in, or 'prickly' (Flusty 1997). This is combined with the poor urban design which has not accommodated the pedestrian but is instead focused on moving and parked cars. Despite these physical obstacles, the street is an active space and is used by many people, as is the park. Killarney Park is well used by many of the diverse residents of Killarney. Children play and cycle, people walk their dogs, there are meetings of political parties, morning yoga classes, some informal trading and, on an annual basis, there have been formal fêtes or picnics.

Figure 2: First Street elevations

Photographs by Alexandra Parker (2017)



| Beverley Heights |



| Killarney Court and Gardens |



| Mentone Court |



| INFORMAL TRADERS |



| YOUTH HANGOUTS | Gleneagles |



| Lhenveolan |

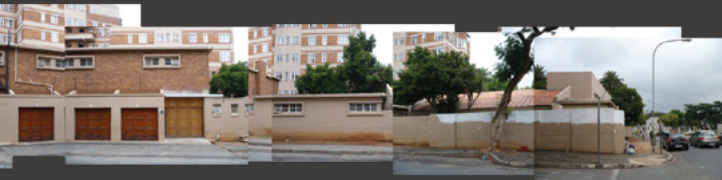


Daventry Court



Martindale Mews

Earls Court



TAXI STOP

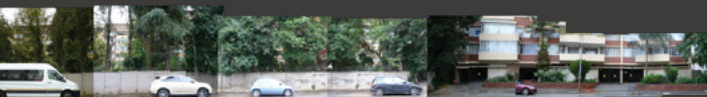


Dukes Court



St John's Wood

INFORMAL TRADERS



Cranwell Hall

Hyde Court

Not to scale

The park is a narrow space within a neighbourhood block and bordered by apartment buildings on either side (Figure 4). An avenue of Jacaranda trees down the centre of the park emphasises the simple layout of the park and is almost identical to that of a street.

At one end is a small toilet building and the path between the trees is paved. In the last six years, there have been a number of initiatives and upgrades in the park spearheaded by residents and estate agents working in the area. The New Killarney Residents'

Figure 3: A view of the informal taxi stop and traders in 1st Street, adjacent to Killarney Mall

Photograph by Alexandra Parker (2017)



Association (NKRA) employs a gardener to maintain the park and the security guards from a neighbouring building ensure that the park is locked overnight. To celebrate Killarney's centenary in 2013, a blue plaque and olive tree were erected in the park. Since

then, some of the flowerbeds have been cultivated for a small vegetable garden, children's playground equipment has been installed and a water drinking fountain built.

Figure 4: Killarney Park

Photograph by Alexandra Parker (2017)



Activities and conflicting interests

On any given morning or afternoon, Killarney Park is in use by dog walkers, joggers and strollers. The park may not be large or offer a wide range of amenities but it is well used and enjoyed. Whilst many users are individuals, there is also much socialising that takes place as people congregate to walk their dogs together or children gather to play games. Most of the activities are informal but on occasion there are more formal activities, such as political meetings or annual picnics. These activities have been fostered by residents through the residents' associations and through support from local businesses. Although the park space is controlled through the locking of access gates at night, several 'illegal' activities such as ball sports or informal trading are tolerated. The park is intended and treated as an inclusive space.

First Street is an active public space. I walk frequently on the street – sometimes to go shopping in the mall or to walk to the park and enjoy that space. I walk on my own mostly and most often in the early evenings or on the weekends. Occasionally I walk at night to visit friends in the neighbourhood. At these times there are always people on the street – many of them passing by and a few lingering. Despite the lack of pavement trees, the buildings and trees in private gardens shade the street so that it is nearly always comfortable to walk along and occupy. On the corner opposite my block are informal traders selling snacks and mielies (sweetcorn). Further along, particularly in the early evenings, there are always young people, mostly men, who play soccer and loud music in the street space. However, many residents view the activities on the street in a negative light.

Figure 5: Informal traders in 1st Street and 4th Avenue

Photograph by Alexandra Parker (2017)



And the other funny thing is, there is a group of kids in First, here, who basically just hang, they just fucking hang. They play football sometimes. And also it's just a weird combination of firsts in that there are these deep parking bays which no one really uses so they just sort of hang there. And I know that drives the north-facing residents in this particular building fucking wild, they hate it because it's just a constant source of noise all day. (Killarney resident)

Many of the activities that occur on the street also take place in the park. It is not necessarily the activity itself that is objectionable but the space in which it occurs. There is some informal trading around the park and the young men who hang out in the street frequently play soccer in the middle of the road. However, what takes place in the park is more acceptable than the same activity in the street. One resident expressed that sport should take place in a field:

things like sports, we know our, most of black [people], they like playing soccer, yes, so unfortunately around here in Killarney there is no field where they can go and play. If there was a field, they would have, they would have spent most of their time on the field playing. As like on Sundays, they go to, uh, Zoo Lake for the garden there and then they play there. So, ehm, if there was a field around here in Killarney we wouldn't have that kind of thing. (First Street resident and security guard)

Gleneagles building has employed a security guard to patrol 1st Street in that area in response to the young men who play soccer, socialise and drink in that section of the street. The response is largely driven by the nuisance of noise as the young men also like to play music from their phones, which disturbs those residents whose apartments face onto the street. Despite the availability of the park just a few blocks away, the street is the preferred space for these activities because the park is even more heavily controlled. Whilst younger children playing with a ball are tolerated, officially there is a ban on ball sports. The park is closed after dark around 6pm and is therefore not conducive to the needs of these young people.

In the next block over there is a cluster of informal traders centred around the informal taxi rank

also on the street (Figure 3). The traders and the mall attract cars that park in the street and on the other side taxis and commuters line up along the length of the block. As a result, this portion of the street is the liveliest and noisiest as the taxis or commuters play loud music as they pass the time. The informal traders generate social spaces as people gather to exchange goods and chit-chat. However, the traders also sell marijuana, and traders and customers frequently drink beer on the street. This behaviour has caused tension for residents, particularly for the people in Mentone Court, as the men frequently urinate against the garage doors on the street, drink alcohol, and sell and smoke marijuana.

Both 1st Street and Killarney Park are active public spaces and active in similar ways. Many of the activities that these streets support are typical activities of good residential streets: dog walking, kids playing, socialising, prayers, and even some informal trading. However, the activities around the taxi stop and informal trading are viewed by residents as conflicting with the residential nature of the area and the associated activities. The activities that occur in this block are not different but the responses to these activities, based on their locations, are very different.

To discourage and exclude the activities of the traders, taxi drivers and commuters, the adjacent property owners have resorted to various measures to protect their private spaces. On the southern side of the street, Dukes Court erected a 2m brick wall with electric fencing above that creates a very unengaging interface and unfriendly environment. On the northern side, Mentone Court has placed spikes on several surfaces (Figure 7), cut back concrete overhangs to eliminate possible shelter from rain or sun and filled a flowerbed with large sharp rocks and prickly aloes. It would also appear that the Jacaranda tree on the pavement under which commuters queue for taxis has been severely pruned and trimmed in an effort to reduce the shade and comfort that it provides the users of the street. In other buildings in the area, low walls have been topped with metal barriers or spikes to prevent them from being used as seats (Figure 6).

Any potential permeability between public and private has been barricaded and demarcated by the private residential buildings.

Figure 6: Fourth Ave in Killarney – an informal trader sits at the only place where a barrier on the wall is missing

Photograph by Alexandra Parker (2017)



Figure 7: ‘Prickly’ space – spikes on external sewerage pipes on the street edge

Photograph by Alexandra Parker (2017)



In 2017 Killarney Mall began to explore the possibility of relocating the taxi rank to a portion of internal parking within the mall property close to the 3rd Street entrance. At the May meeting of the NKRA, tensions were high as residents close to 3rd Street expressed their fears and concerns about the relocation in a manner that started to emerge as a conflict between the strained residents of 1st Street and the fearful residents of 3rd. Some residents raised the issue of trying to address the problems of the taxi rank and informal traders in situ by engaging with the users of the space, but the chair of the NKRA cited a fear of engagement with taxi associations in particular. The meeting made audible the fears and insecurities of residents of Killarney and demonstrated the issues with simply relocating a problem to another space. It is a microcosm of what occurs in the city at large.

This street space was not designed to accommodate all-day trading and the informal taxi stop in 1st Street. There are no public toilets for traders or commuters and as a result men urinate against boundary walls and garage doors. However, there are toilets available in the mall and in Killarney Park. The urination seems to be in part a protest against the lack of facilities but, at the same time, it mostly occurs against the row of garage doors of the one building and therefore has an element of retaliation against the measures of private property owners. The urination and the illegal consumption and selling of alcohol and marijuana are seen to jeopardise the street as a space for quiet recreation or walking. In some cases people will even bypass this section of the street in walking to the mall so that they do not have to encounter this behaviour:

ehm, the problem is, that I see, on 1st Street when you walk to the shops, and they busy there, the guys who staying around, they busy there drinking, smoking, and it doesn't feel good. Well we know people they drink and they smoke. But sometimes on the street, with a group of people that's making noise, and then they smoking they drinking. Then it's

more uncomfortable, when you are walking because sometimes when people they are drunk they do funny things. (First Street resident and security guard)

In 1st Street the border between the private space of the residential block and the public space of the street is fiercely defended through a variety of control measures. This has a significant impact on the quality of public space that the street can provide for all users. Many of these measures extend control beyond the borders of private property into the public domain to create street spaces that are hostile to all users. Despite mixed uses and medium-density housing, residents impose residential and suburban standards of activities and noise levels onto the street spaces. As a result, the street diminishes as a true public space and becomes an extension of private property, thus blurring ownership and rights to the space.

These are literally and figuratively Flusty's 'prickly' spaces (1997) – the spaces that cannot be occupied comfortably. Many of the spaces in Killarney could be described as 'prickly'. These are the result of multiple minor responses by individual buildings that cohere in the street space to create a singular hostile environment. This contrasts with the approaches of residents to the neighbourhood park. Recognised as a public amenity, the park has been the site of numerous interventions intended to foster an inclusive space in the neighbourhood. In the park, strictly illegal activities such as ball sports, informal trading and public drinking are tolerated and to some extent accommodated through formal gatherings. Although the park is an ordered and controlled space through the presence of security guards and gates, activities are not actively controlled (Figure 8). Formal interventions in the park emphasise the space as public and promote the use of the space for leisure. In 1st Street, and in many other streets in Killarney, interventions are aligned to the protection of private property. On the streets, the interventions of residents have contributed to making the space a hostile environment.

Figure 8: Killarney Park contains a security watch tower that is only occasionally used but indicates the presence of private security in the space

Photograph by Alexandra Parker (2017)



To the detriment of the street, residents have created hostile spaces in the interests of private property but this does not mean that all activities should be accommodated in all streets. Not all users or activities on the street make for good public space and not all eyes on the street make the space safer.

[A] taking to, and of, the street is not an inherently democratic or emancipatory act. In the wrong circumstances it can destroy the 'publicness' of public space just as surely as excessive police control and surveillance. (Lees 2006: 232)

This is the case with the informal traders and the informal taxi stop. Although informal trading is tolerated elsewhere in the neighbourhood, the traders' and taxi drivers' drinking, smoking and urinating contributes to a hostile environment. These users are participating in illegal activities and have made people, particularly women, feel uncomfortable using the street, as the resident security guard highlighted. It is difficult to pinpoint the moment these conflicts began but both parties are now engaged in passive aggression towards the other. The activities of both residents and the users of the street reflect the

conflicts of ownership, claim to and meaning of the street. Whilst this is not a full-out war (Lees 2006), it is a form of social negotiation and contestation of the meaning of public space in the context of the suburb.

The social codes are more clearly defined in the park and therefore cause far less tension, although this comes at the expense of excluding some groups and activities (the youth and their soccer). In the street, the ambiguity of meaning between an extension of the domestic realm and a utilitarian public path have resulted in this non-verbal tussle. Fyfe argues that this occurs precisely when attempts have been made to purify a street “of disorder and difference” (2006: 7). This can disable the possibilities of conflict resolution without resorting to extreme reactions which may be violent (Fyfe 2006). This could apply to both the park and the street to varying degrees. In the park, conflicts between users are not evident and there are elements of the purified environment. However, there are marked differences in the types of interventions in each space. The initiatives in the park have been to encourage inclusive use by residents, whereas interventions in 1st Street have been to reduce the quality of that space and in some cases these interventions have been openly hostile, for example spiked fencing and security cameras.

Conclusion

The park is a clearly defined space that can be more easily improved and controlled. There are also rules specified at the entrance by Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo. This has enabled residents to invest and intervene in the space because activities and social interactions are limited to between sunrise and sunset and norms of behaviour have been established through the park regulations. As a pocket park, the users of the park are clearly intended to be residents of the area, which also adds to the simplicity of the space. The park is an amenity for all residents and the initiatives of residents have reinforced the service that this space provides.

The street cannot be so easily defined. It is porous and has no defined points of enclosure, although the streets in many Johannesburg neighbourhoods have been fenced and boomed. The street is ambiguous in its meaning and intended purpose. The amenity that the taxi stop provides is not for residents directly but enables workers in the mall to

commute to their place of work. The primary purpose of the taxi stop is to serve people outside of the neighbourhood, and thus the anxiety that residents feel is also indicative of fear of the other.

This chapter has shown that the physical form of both 1st Street and Killarney Park are not obstacles to the way that these spaces are used by people in the neighbourhood. The environments are flexible enough to accommodate a variety of uses and users. However, there is a significant difference in the meaning of these spaces. The park is viewed as legitimate public space and interventions in this space have recognised the need for the space to function openly for many people and many activities while also making it a safe space. On the other hand, the meaning of the street is ambiguous. For some residents it is an extension of the private domestic realm while other residents and users exploit the street for its utility in recreation, socialising and illicit trading. The conflict on the streets arises from the need to frame the street as a public space.

Although this chapter has shown that streets function as public spaces despite their design, introducing specific elements of furniture and material into the street space can foster different uses of the street as well as change perceptions of what a street should be. Benches that allow for relaxing and socialising, furniture that enables street trade, and road elements that signal to drivers that the street is a space of people and potentially play makes the road a safer place for both vehicles and pedestrians. This would also reinforce the street as a public space for a variety of activities and users.

Streets are considered by the Johannesburg City Council by-laws to be public open space and are protected as such. But as a road with requirements of traffic management there are also strict restrictions. This means that many of the activities taking place on 1st Street are illegal, such as the taxi stop, the informal trading, using the street for games or recreation, and even the ambiguous loitering which encapsulates any form of socialising or relaxing on the street. On the one hand by-laws should be enforced with the aim of protecting the public space for all to use but, on the other, the full enforcement of these by-laws would leave the street a dull utilitarian space and quite possibly a less safe space. More nuanced by-laws, perhaps aligned with the different classes

of road, may enable more public space functions to occupy the street.

At the same time, social codes need to be developed so that private property owners recognise the value of the street as a public space and amenity rather than as an extension of the private residential domain. In essence, the work of organisations like Open Streets Cape Town is about rewriting the social codes of street spaces to create more inclusive public

streets. These social codes would need to enshrine the street as a public space which everyone has the right to use and enjoy. The social codes would recognise other activities on the street beyond the utilities of walking and driving. The adoption of expanded social codes would reduce the appropriation of public space through security measures and enable people to use streets in a variety of ways. The first step is to view the street – like the park – as a public amenity.

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Photograph by Alexandra Parker



Chapter 5

Context and utility cycling: The case of Springs in comparison to Johannesburg

NJOGU MORGAN

Introduction

Streets in Gauteng are dominated by people using automobiles. This means that other users and types of uses are, in the main, subservient to those of driving. This is in spite of the low levels of car ownership. The 2014 National Household Travel Survey revealed that only 38.5% of households in Gauteng either owned or had access to a private car (Statistics South Africa 2015). In the democratic transition, there was heightened policy attention on the needs of people walking, cycling, using public transportation, as well as other forms of locomotion (Morgan 2017). One approach, called Complete Streets, seeks to transform streets in Gauteng into spaces with multiple uses and where different users can co-exist (see for example City of Johannesburg 2014). What might such a transformational process entail?

How would users respond to invitations for new ways of inhabiting and moving about streets? How would the nature of street design shape user responses? This chapter considers these and other questions by examining a historical moment in the 1930s when policy-makers in towns and cities along the Witwatersrand mining belt were grappling with road use. With growing motorisation, questions arose as to how to accommodate all road users – not only those in private motor cars. At about the same time, two municipalities, Johannesburg and Springs, decided to separate road users by offering them their own spaces. However, while Johannesburg, as far as records reveal, created cycle lanes on one road – namely, Louis Botha Avenue – Springs created a network of cycle tracks. Johannesburg's cycle lanes were separated from motor vehicle space by white paint while most of the tracks in Springs were physically separated by space and barriers.

How do we understand these different degrees of accommodation for utility cycling in the two municipalities? This chapter uses concepts from the literature on transitions to organise the analysis into the reasons for the different council decisions for Johannesburg and Springs in the 1930s. The chapter argues that in Johannesburg, because of socio-economic inequality and actor activities, bicycles and then-automobiles were seen as symbols of social status (in as much as they were practical transportation tools). This was compounded by rapid urban expansion within a hillier topography. In Springs, while there was inequality which might have produced the tendency towards conspicuous consumption, this was moderated early on by the influence of Protestant religious beliefs. In turn, these religious beliefs were supported by low levels of economic activity and compact morphology and level terrain. These dynamics shaped council decisions in allocations of bicycle infrastructure and use patterns. I conclude the chapter by drawing out lessons for the contemporary agenda to promote utility cycling. Data-collection methods were mixed, involving archival research, examination of secondary materials including photography and film footage, and ethnography.

Background

As in the contemporary period (for example Mamabolo 2015; Pressly 2006), in the 1930s there were growing concerns about road congestion and safety along the Witwatersrand reef. In Johannesburg, a newspaper article entitled “Motor menace to city” claimed that given the injury rates, “Johannesburg's streets are more dangerous than

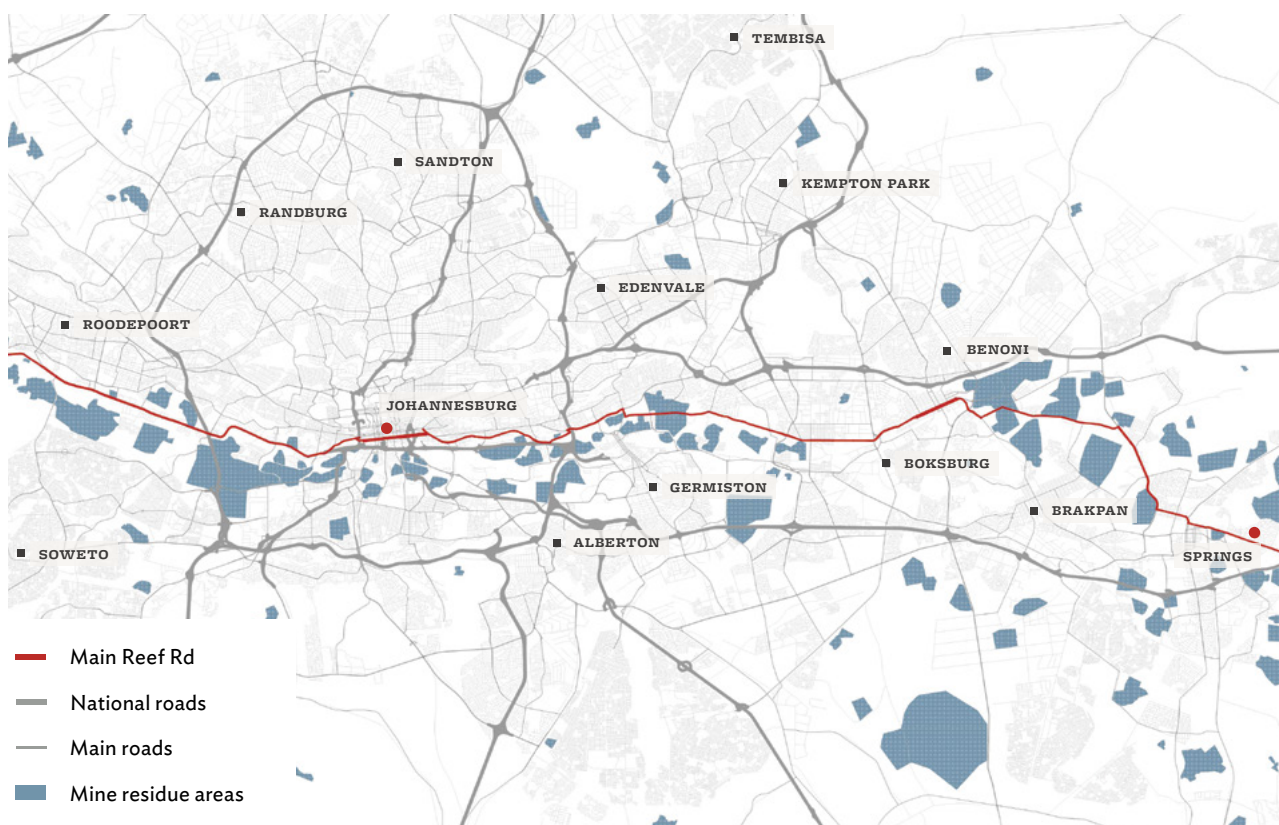
the Metropolitan area of London” (Unknown 1930). The number of road fatalities and injuries was apparently putting pressure on hospitals (*The Star* 1999). Mayors and deputy mayors also complained about driving practices (City of Johannesburg 1939; Unknown 1939a).

Road safety in Springs, about 5km due east of Johannesburg (see Figure 1), was also a matter of public and municipal concern (Unknown 1936). One intersection that typified these anxieties was

a railway crossing in the town which was a regular site of accidents involving trains, cars, pedestrians, and cyclists. At that junction, the railway line ran at the same level as the roads. After one accident when three people died, there was apparently such public consternation that a crowd, assembled in the aftermath, had “the temper [...] to burn down the old barn of the station and to dig up the rails, but saner counsels prevailed” (Editors 1938a).

Figure 1: Map showing the spatial and industry relationship between Johannesburg and Springs

Map drawn by Miriam Maina



0 5km

The two municipalities tried a combination of solutions. One strand was educational, involving showing films about traffic safety (see for example Brough 1936; Unknown 1938a), and lectures to children on how to cross roads (British Pathé 1939). Engineers introduced new technical solutions, such as traffic lights, stop signs, notice boards, concrete traffic islands in the middle of streets to provide pedestrian refuge, and white lines on streets to separate vehicles according to speed and direction of movement (Unknown 1935a, b; City Engineer 1936). That time might then be understood as a time of experimentation in how to manage the road environment. Indeed, a newspaper column observed this, writing about “innovations in Johannesburg” (Unknown 1935a) with respect to different solutions to increase road safety and address congestion. Throughout 1937, municipalities along the Witwatersrand reef, as

well as the provincial government, even held focused meetings on how to improve road safety (Main Reef Road Commission 1937). One conclusion of these deliberations (with regard to bicycle users and pedestrians) was to build “cycle tracks as well as footpaths where conditions render them necessary” (Main Reef Road Commission 1937: 13).

Springs municipality appeared to take the recommendations seriously and installed cycle tracks on several major carriageways in the town. It was reported in 1938 that officials from the City of Johannesburg were impressed with Springs’s implementation of cycle tracks (Unknown 1938b). These cycle tracks were “inaugurated” (Editors 1938b) in January 1938. They were reported to be “a sure measure of safety” (Editors 1938b). In design, the constructed cycle paths in Springs were barrier-protected (Editors 1938b) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Cycle track on Welgedacht Road, Springs, built in the 1930s

Photograph by Njogu Morgan (2017)



Johannesburg, on the other hand, took a different trajectory. On 21 August 1935, bicycle lanes were installed along Louis Botha Avenue (Unknown 1935c). They were described as “the city’s first experimental cycle track; a white line a few feet from, and parallel to, the left hand kerb, cutting off a strip of the road for the use of pedal cyclists” (Unknown 1935d). At the time, Louis Botha Avenue was one of the main corridors connecting Johannesburg to its northern reaches, including the national capital, Pretoria. It

also carried very high volumes of people on bicycles (Unknown 1939b). See Figure 3, which shows a stream of bicycle users to the far left of the north-bound section of Louis Botha Avenue. While Springs preferred cycle lanes separated by space and barriers from motor traffic, Johannesburg remained with the white line solution (Unknown 1938c). Furthermore, I did not, in the course of my research, find any other cycle lanes – other than the ones on Louis Botha Avenue – until the post-apartheid era (Morgan 2017).

Figure 3: Louis Botha Avenue, Johannesburg, 1936

SOURCE: Museum Africa



Analysing change and durability of socio-technical systems

How do we understand the different trajectories in commuter cycling between Johannesburg and Springs? In particular, why was it that the municipal councils took such divergent decisions in the allocation of bicycle infrastructure in the 1930s? As noted, the analysis conducted in this chapter is informed by insights from transition studies. One key concept is the notion of a socio-technical system (STS) as an alignment of different elements that are created by social groups to provide for a societal function, such as ground transportation (Geels 2012). In our case then, the cycle tracks discussed above would be but one element of a bicycle-commuting STS. Others would include symbolic meanings, knowledge on cycling, policies and rules governing bicycle use, practices of bicycle riding, and the bicycle industry, including manufacturing and repair. It is understood that these elements take time to form (Geels & Kemp 2012).

Another concept is that of a niche. Innovations as alternatives to incumbent STS develop separate domains – called niches. As they do, they encounter another STS providing for a similar function. This STS is produced and reproduced by cognitive, normative and regulative rules, known as a socio-technical regime – for example, ways of designing roads amongst engineering communities which are suitable to specific transportation modes. The socio-technical regime and its materiality present an obstacle to innovations. However, problems, such as supply shortages of essential components, can create gaps for innovations.

These insurgent and incumbent systems are understood as nested in particular contexts known as landscapes. Their fortunes can be shaped by the i) almost rigid properties of contexts (such as natural environment, topography and spatial form); ii) sudden events that occur, such as wars or droughts; and iii) trends over time, such as societal changes.

This three-dimensional mode of analysis, comprising a socio-technical regime, a niche and a landscape, is known as the multi-level perspective (MLP) (Geels 2002; Geels & Kemp 2007; Schot & Geels 2007). The rest of the chapter uses these concepts as a framework to analyse historical developments in

Johannesburg and Springs. Specifically, it explores why one element of an incumbent regime (utility cycling) develops at different magnitudes in the wake of innovation (car use) in the two contexts. Note that I employ single quotes to frame racial concepts, such as ‘native’ or ‘white’, to denote their non-essential nature as categories of human identity.

Regime dynamics

One reason for the poor allocation of bicycle infrastructure in Johannesburg was the changing symbolic value that the practice offered. In the late 19th century and early part of the following century, bicycles were status symbols. For example, when a Mr Albert Shimwell, one of the founders of a successful bicycle business, married in 1897, he and his bride rode away from St Augustine’s Church in Doornfontein on a special bicycle, sitting side by side. The bicycle had one set of handlebars but they could both pedal (Johnston 1976). They not only rode away on the bicycle, but they had their picture taken with it. Bicycles could be used to communicate wealth because they were expensive consumer goods (Learmont 1990), “with everybody who could afford [one] riding” (Kavanagh 1958: 48). As Learmont (1990) argues, in the 1890s bicycles were expensive items, with some selling for up to £20 each.

Scholars in consumer studies have argued that expensive objects within unequal contexts – as Johannesburg was, to presage a forthcoming discussion – can be used to connote belonging in a particular social class, and also prestige (Trigg 2001; Veblen 2009). Given their costs, they were mainly used by members of the ‘white’ population who, due to the racial capitalism of early Johannesburg, had the means. Examining incomes amongst the working class between 1894 and 1914, Van Onselen (1982) shows that the highest income that ‘black’ men working as domestic servants received (wages peaked around 1905) was less than £5 a month. In contrast, ‘white’ men in similar roles could earn up to £10 a month. Given that in this period bicycles could cost up to £20 each, after incurring other living costs, the working class, especially members of the ‘native’ population, would have been hard-pressed to purchase bicycles.

[M]embers of the 'white' population might have come to believe that bicycles were their exclusive preserve

In this context, members of the 'white' population might have come to believe that bicycles were their exclusive preserve. In an illustration of this, a group composed of mining magnates – called the Rand Pioneers – lobbied for travel modes to be separated by race. In 1905, they campaigned for a law restricting use of bicycles by 'natives', ostensibly in "order to check cycle thefts, and [control] reckless riding of native cyclists" (City of Johannesburg 1905a: 130). Their efforts prevailed for some time. Council approved a by-law, which required 'natives' riding a bicycle to wear a badge on their left arm.

The purpose of the badge was to communicate to everyone that the 'native' had acquired formal permission from the council to ride a bicycle, obtained at a deposit fee of two shillings and sixpence. The permit would last for six months and was not transferable (City of Johannesburg 1905a). However, the by-law was not legally enforced since it was overturned by the government of the Transvaal on the grounds that the municipality had overstepped its formal authority. The Rand Pioneers Association was disappointed (Rand Pioneers 1905). In this case, we see some fragility with the symbolic meaning associated with cycling in Johannesburg. Members of the 'white' community felt that they had to act to protect it, or it would fray.

Failure to protect the symbolic value of cycling, as well as price reductions (Learmont 1990), meant that 'native' populations could then use bicycles, as was observed by an upper-class couple on their return to Johannesburg after an eight-year absence (Gutsche 1966). The white working class, such as miners, was also able to acquire bicycles due to diminishing costs (Chipkin 1993; Kallaway & Pearson 1987). By the late 1930s, everyday cycling was transforming into a practice conducted primarily by 'native' males, as Maud (1938) observed in the process of writing a book for Johannesburg's, city council. Examination of historical photography and

film footage also shows that, with growing motorisation from the 1920s and 1930s, the 'white' population was drifting away from cycling (Morgan 2017).

This drift away from cycling by members of the 'white' population constituted a weakening of elements of the bicycle-commuting STS. Actors who had previously been proponents of cycling – as policy-makers and constituent parts of the retail system – drifted over to the system of automobility. For example, Frank Connock, a very popular cycle racer in the late 19th century (Gutsche n.d.) and a bicycle shop owner (Kavanagh 1958), became a lobbyist for car infrastructure and a successful car salesperson (Johnston 1976). A similar transformation occurred in the municipality. At the turn of the 20th century, the municipal council provided financial allowances for its employees to purchase bicycles. It also built bicycle racks in various places, such as public parks and cemeteries (City of Johannesburg 1905b, 1907). The municipal council moved from this enabling stance towards cycling to gradual neglect, weakening another element of the commuter STS: infrastructure. These processes would provide 'openings' for the system of automobility to break through in Johannesburg fairly rapidly.

In Springs, however, the incumbent STS was operating under different imperatives. Examination of narratives in newspapers covering developments in Springs – the *Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* and the *East Rand Express* – reveals an absence of high passions about utility cycling. This absence is important because, as Rimano et al. have argued, "News media are considered as a primary source of information that can reflect and reinforce the attitudes of a community" (2015: 31). While by the 1930s, cycling in Johannesburg was largely confined to the 'black' population, in Springs this did not occur at the time. Shifts towards car use in Springs – which increased markedly in the 1920s (Springs Municipality 1981) – did not lead to members of the 'white' population

abandoning bicycles. Records, such as descriptions by the municipal council and newspaper accounts into the late 1930s, refer to 'white' or 'European' cyclists (see for example Editors 1937), as do council records of demographics of bicycle users (Town Clerk 1938). An important point here is that bicycle users who were members of the social elite – the 'white' population – had not in the 1930s completely abandoned cycling in Springs. This suggests that there was limited or no stigma around cycling. As such, the symbolic meaning of cycling as one element of the cycling STS was not weakened in Springs as it was in Johannesburg.

Niche dynamics

We have seen that the symbolic value of bicycling eroded fairly early on in Johannesburg's history. How could the search for distinction amongst the 'white' elite then be satisfied? The answer was the car. Put another way, the car, as an expensive alternative to the bicycle, could better carry notions of prestige and racial superiority. Here, it is important to note that it was only in 1925 that the national government reclassified cars as "a national necessity and not a luxury" (Kavanagh 1958: 147) within tax rules. To maintain a racial distinction, some groups representing 'white' interests attempted to limit car use amongst the 'black' population. For example, an association representing commercial automobile operators – the Witwatersrand Taxi Owners' and Drivers' Association – at a conference on proposed motoring by-laws, put forward a resolution that would prohibit so-called 'native' people from being provided with driving licences (Jay 1919). However, this motion failed to muster the necessary votes, in part because automobile dealers were concerned that such a ban would deprive them of a large market (Editor 1919). While efforts within the organised motoring industry and user associations had failed to prevent 'natives' from car use, some sentiments in this direction persisted for some time. For example, in 1934 the then prime minister, General Hertzog, proposed that 'natives' should be banned from driving cars on the grounds of limited mental faculties (Schreiner 1934).

In Springs, however, as with the case of utility cycling, a similar nonchalant posture towards cars was evident. In the 1920s, automobile proponents undertook a range of actions, such as long-distance

rides to popularise car use in Johannesburg and the rest of South Africa (Johnston 1976; Morgan 2017). The editors of a newspaper based in Springs were not impressed by the excitement in Johannesburg surrounding one race from Cape Town to Cairo. They were aghast at what they saw as unnecessary hysteria and media hero-worshipping of the intrepid travellers, for what should have been an ordinary activity (Editors 1928).

Underlining the imperative towards modesty in Springs, in 1935 the editors of the same newspaper described the mayor's car as a "civic luxury" (Editors 1935: 29), given the costs associated with operating and maintaining it. While reluctantly acknowledging that a new car would have to be purchased for the mayor in the following year, since the one in use was damaged, they called for "the Council to exercise economy in every department, whether the item of expenditure be a car or sewerage scheme" (Editors 1935: 29). Further, unlike Johannesburg, where there were efforts to limit and even prevent the use of cars amongst the 'black' population, I could not find similar efforts in Springs. I make this claim based on an examination of Springs council by-laws from the late 19th century to the end of the 1930s (Springs Town Council 1903, 1921, 1926, 1938).

Landscape dynamics

What is it that allowed the non-use values of first bicycles and then automobiles to shape user and proponent actions in this way in both contexts? As stated earlier, consumption studies show that in differentiated societies, objects are sought out by individuals in order to signal at once both their belonging in a particular social class, and also their distinction. Expensive objects are particularly useful for these purposes, since they signal some form of individual competence (Veblen 2009). Bourdieu (1984: 66) also argues that "symbolic goods, especially those regarded as the attributes of excellence, constitutes one of the key markers of 'class' and also the ideal weapon in strategies of distinction". Moreover, since such objects have to be *seen* in order for others in society to form their appraisal of the user (Trigg 2001), conspicuous consumption is privileged (Veblen 2009). Here it is important to note that, as Trigg observes, for Veblen conspicuous consumption is not necessarily always a "conscious act, but rather a standard of

decency that exerts social pressure on the behaviour of individuals" (2001: 113). This links structure to individual conduct. In urban societies characterised by many anonymous encounters, portable objects are more useful in signalling wealth, since they can be seen by others (Charles et al. 2009). This theoretical lens partly helps explain why, in Johannesburg, bicycles and then automobiles became tools for communicating and asserting social difference.

Johannesburg in the late 19th century and turn of the 20th century was deeply stratified. Illustrating how different classes competed and collided with each other, "the wives of the Randlords [mining magnates] lived like duchesses in fine houses [and they] always showed themselves at their smartest in silks, satins, jewels, hats and bonnets to the lesser people who gaped and went home exhilarated" (*The Star* 1966: 3). Expanding slightly on the built environment, while houses and other structures initially had a temporary air, with some describing Johannesburg as "the mining-camp" (Beavon 2001: 2), this quickly changed. Pictures of the interiors of elites' houses, built from the late 19th century, show elaborate arrangements of expensive household items, many of which were imported (*The Star* 1966). The well-preserved interiors of some of these homes can be seen in images contained in Duncan and Proust (2016). Here the conspicuous consumption 'ethic' is evident in clothing and housing.

Springs, like Johannesburg, was also characterised by socio-economic inequality. This was intertwined in race relations. For example, an early call for strict spatial segregation by a former mayor of Springs received support in a town hall meeting. In this formulation, the different racial groups would live completely separate lives, not allowing for any interactions for any purposes, even with respect to labour (Unknown 1928). Less strident versions of this segregation were realised in the 1950s, with the establishment of a large township for 'natives' called KwaThema, 10km due west of the central business district (CBD) (Nieftagodien 1996). 'Natives' were allowed to work for 'white' employers.

It therefore follows that similar tendencies towards consumer objects would have developed. However, there is very little evidence of conspicuous consumption in the period of inquiry. For

example, unlike Johannesburg, the historical built environment contains muted signatures of extravagance. Housing structures built by the first coal-mining company were described as "humble [...] cottages" (Springs Municipality 1981: 17) or "tin shanties" (Springs Municipality 1981: 16). While initial rustic housing was certainly linked to the uncertainties about the future of mining, even after gold mining thrived from 1909 (see below), the "first two double-storeyed buildings" were only built in 1918 (Springs Municipality 1981: 16). Certainly, this two-levelled structure would have appeared opulent in comparison to the original tin ones. However, what is crucial is that for a period of almost 30 years there was a simpler built environment. Contrast this to Johannesburg where larger, more luxurious buildings were erected at an earlier date. To be sure, part of the reason for the lack of large houses in the early history of Springs is that some mine owners did not live there. For example, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, who had "controlling interests in five of the Springs mines" (Springs Municipality 1981: 25), lived in Johannesburg where "he built the greatest of all Randlord palaces" (Wheatcroft 1986: 253).

It was only from the 1930s that a more elaborate architectural style was recorded in Springs. Numerous glamorous buildings in the art deco style were erected across the town, mainly in the CBD. This is described as being one of the densest concentrations of low-rise art deco buildings in the world, just behind Miami (Ho 2017; Singer 2000). It is argued that the buildings evoke "the story of prosperity and confidence in the future at the time" (Brett McDougall, in Ho 2017). See, for example, Figure 4.

How then do we understand the different dispositions and practices towards transportation and consumption more generally? That is, if the consumption theory holds, as unequal contexts, Springs and Johannesburg should have both exhibited tendencies towards conspicuous consumption. Yet this did not occur in Springs. There are two possible explanations: one economic, and one religious. To the former first.

Consumption of luxury goods, services and experiences depends in part on availability of surplus. Economic activity in Springs up to the 1930s was less

Figure 4: Example of art deco building in Springs – a fire station built in the 1930s

Photograph by Njogu Morgan (2017)



dynamic than in Johannesburg, to enable widespread availability of high incomes that could facilitate the consumption of luxury. Johannesburg and Springs both have their origins as coal- and gold-mining

urban formations in the late 19th century. While it took more than two decades for the mining in Springs to generate bountiful wealth (Springs Municipality 1981; Springs [South Africa] Town Council et al.

1960), in Johannesburg the mines reached productivity rapidly. By the late 19th century, “the gold mines were flourishing and money was plentiful” (Robertson 1986: 27). Additional wealth (and sudden poverty with stock market crashes) in Johannesburg also occurred due to a high degree of financial speculation about the fortunes of mining (Hart 1974).

Therefore, in Johannesburg some residents had more wealth at an earlier stage (from the late 19th century), which would have enabled acquisition of luxury items, such as automobiles. For Springs, booming economic conditions started in the 1920s but were especially pronounced – as they were in Johannesburg – in the 1930s. As such, more residents in Johannesburg could have chosen to purchase automobiles at an earlier stage than those in Springs. We see this borne out in the historical record, where “in 1913 – a Dr Gerald Grace, also Mayor, made pedestrians scurry for safety when his Sunbeam car approached” (Springs Municipality 1981: 17). In this year there were reportedly only two cars in town, with the other owned by a “Mr Brice” (Springs Municipality 1981: 17). In the same year in Johannesburg there were 1,120 motor cars licensed by the municipality (Morgan 2017).

Thus, from the beginning of the town in the late 19th century to the 1930s, weaker economic activity in Springs would have constrained purchases of luxury items. High numbers of bicycles on the streets in Springs would have then supported the creation of habits and social norms about cycling – as elements of a bicycle-commuter STS. Furthermore, it would have created a context in which residents were encouraged to try cycling because of others around them (see for example Sherwin et al. 2014).

Yet following consumer studies theory, if the imperative for conspicuous consumption, as engendered by socio-inequality, had been established in Springs, in times of economic expansion there would have been an aspirational ethos. In other words, there would have been a flight towards luxury, such as in the 1920s and 1930s, as pronounced periods of economic expansion. The earlier discussion, where I recount records of nonchalant postures towards bicycles, automobiles and the built environment, does not bear this out very strongly. For sure, the late 1930s

turn towards art deco architecture may have been a turning point, but this follows earlier calls for provision of bicycle tracks (for example Town Clerk 1934).

How then do we understand the understated approach towards material objects in Springs? We arrive at a second reason why bicycles and then automobiles were not seen as status symbols – the influence of religion, in particular the influence of what Weber (2001: 51) calls the “Ascetic Branches of Protestantism” as propounded through protestant churches, such as Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist. These protestant churches, especially Presbyterian, had a strong early fingerprint upon Springs. The Presbyterian Church evolved out of Calvinist theology (Daniel-Rops 1963). As Nijman (1999) argues, the Calvinist ethic shuns luxury and ostentation.

These religious views would have been communicated from the pulpit through protestant churches in Springs and through practices of members. One particularly important church in this respect was the Presbyterian Church – established first in Scotland by John Knox (Daniel-Rops 1963). The Presbyterian Church opened its doors in Springs in January 1899 (Figure 5). The location of the church was right in the heart of Springs, on 1st Avenue (Springs [South Africa] Town Council et al. 1960). At the helm of the Presbyterian Church was a Reverend William McCulloch (Unknown 1938d) (Figure 6).

Reverend McCulloch was described as “a very successful preacher attracting large audiences” (Springs Municipality 1981: 12). He was someone “with an imposing personality” (Unknown 1979), and “was a good organiser, eloquent, and a powerful preacher” (Unknown 1979). Reverend McCulloch’s charisma would have helped to sway his congregation according to whatever sermon he gave, including the ascetic approach to material objects – a key feature of Presbyterianism, as Woodhead (2004) shows.

Reverend McCulloch’s sermons would have been supported by his practices. In 1938, the local newspaper argued for a public memorial that would celebrate and remind the public about the reverend. It observed that his mode of transportation as he carried out his tasks was the bicycle:

Figure 5: Early Presbyterian church in Springs. Notice bicycle leaning in background to far right

SOURCE: Springs Municipal Library

St. Michael's Presbyterian Church



1st Presbyterian Church
in Springs. It was
situated in 1st Ave.
The manse is seen on the
left.

Though he found his calling to be an ecclesiastical one, in pursuance of it never spared himself in carrying out his duties, travelling by bicycle as far afield as Blackhill and Witbank, the Rev Wm. McCulloch was withal a public man, eager to see Springs a city of the future. (Editors 1938c : 22B)

A newspaper report in the following year also referred to Reverend McCulloch's cycling (Editors 1939). Thus, as an important public figure, he would have modelled to Springs' residents Calvinist convictions against luxury.

A second avenue of influence that the reverend would have exerted is through council politics. The reverend joined the municipal council in 1904 and stayed on until he died in 1930 (Unknown 1985). During this period in the municipal council, he was elected to serve as mayor three times (Editors 1939). He would have thus had an opportunity to influence council deliberations on road design and attitudes towards bicycles and automobiles. For example, he was known as a vociferous critic of how cars allocated to mayors were used (Editors 1935). Scholars exploring reasons for high rates of cycling in the Netherlands

have pointed out that *one* factor that explains the historical success is the influence of Calvinism (see for example Jordan 2013; Pelzer 2010).

Does this suggest that ascetic religious ideas were absent from the early history in Johannesburg? On the contrary. From the late 19th century, protestant churches were certainly as present as they were in Springs. Indeed, protestant churches – St Georges Presbyterian Church, which opened its doors in Johannesburg in May 1887 (St Georges Presbyterian Church Johannesburg 1987), and the Wesleyan Methodist Church – had important roles in repealing

Figure 6: Reverend McCulloch in the Springs Town Council

SOURCE: Municipal Reference Library, Springs Library



the proposed by-law limiting cycling amongst the 'black' population discussed earlier (Bourne 1905; Burnet 1905).

Modesty in material consumption, as advocated through protestant theology, had limited influence in Johannesburg for two reasons. One was because of the urban morphology. Very early on in Johannesburg's history, it assumed an expansive urban form. For example, Hart (1974) documents a progressive movement of the social elite from the late 19th century away from the CBD eastwards and northwards. This affected the ability of the church to influence everyday conduct (Whiteside 1906). For example, a Presbyterian reverend was reported to have "been affected [by] the many miles of walking he had to do, visiting his flock in the ever-expanding suburbs" during his tenure between 1913 and 1917 (St Georges Presbyterian Church Johannesburg 1987: 11).

Springs, on the other hand, in addition to possessing a flatter topography making cycling easier, retained a more compact form for longer than Johannesburg. See Figures 2 and 3 for a comparison of these differences. Yet it is also important to point out that hilliness is not an absolute deterrent to cycling. In a review of the literature into determinants of utility cycling, Heinen et al. (2010: 67), while finding that gradients influence the adoption of utility cycling, also find that "it is interesting that an area's topography can be interpreted differently, depending on a cyclist's level of experience".

Up to the 1920s, most residential areas, even for the 'non-white population', were located close to the CBD (Springs Municipality 1981). Suburbs for the social elite, located further away from the central CBD, were constructed in the economic prosperity of the 1930s and 1940s. Further expansion took place in the 1950s (Springs Municipality 1981). Beyond shaping the influence of clergy on populations in the two contexts, these different morphologies certainly shaped the utility of cycling by the general population. In the cycling literature, there is consensus that lengthy travel distances discourage everyday bicycle use (Heinen et al. 2010), though it is not an absolute barrier (Oosterhuis 2014).

A second reason that Protestant injunctions against luxurious consumption failed to hold sway in

Johannesburg, is the asymmetrical struggle against the imperative to consume, given the more robust economic activity described earlier. Observing the fortunes of Calvinism in the 19th century in Europe, America and South Africa, Howe (1972: 323) writes that "it was in the cities, especially those on major trade routes, that Calvinism first began to lose its appeal". More aptly, "[w]here capitalism most flourished, Calvinism declined" (Howe 1972: 323).

Conclusions and discussion

This chapter has given an account of the reasons for the different trajectories in the construction of bicycle infrastructure in Springs and Johannesburg in the 1930s. From the MLP within transitions theory, it is understood that there is no single source of change from one STS to another. In Springs, Calvinist ethics, compact landscape form within a level topography, and moderate economic activity up to the 1930s, strengthened the incumbent regime of transportation cycling. That is, the symbolic meanings associated with transportation cycling remained robust. This led to the enhancing of another dimension of the transportation cycling system – infrastructure. I discussed how, from the late 1930s, bicycle tracks were built on a series of major road corridors. Continuing stability was also seen in another crucial element of the commuter cycling system – social groups. Proponents and users of everyday cycling, the municipal council and general population, respectively, remained affiliated to commuter cycling. This was demonstrated, for example, in continuing council provision of resources for cycle tracks and members of the 'white' population, as the constituency wielding social power in Springs by continuing to use bicycles. Consequently, the niche innovation with a potentially competitive relationship with cycling – the system of automobility – could co-exist, at least for some time, with commuter cycling.

In Johannesburg, dynamic economic activity within an unequal socio-economic context, compounded by rapid urban sprawl in the context of a hillier topography, worked as landscape processes to weaken the symbolic meaning of the incumbent system in the face of a competitor niche. That is, the value of cycling as a symbol of wealth and racial superiority was transferred readily to cars

as the more expensive consumer item. Their expense over bicycles, following insights in consumption studies, meant that they were better placed to signal power over other social groups. This led to the unravelling of a second element of the commuter cycling STS – social groups. Unlike Springs, I showed that in Johannesburg the demographic composition of users shifted from the social elite, the ‘white’ community, to other groups with limited social power.

What do these two different paths say about contemporary efforts to transform streets in Gauteng? For example, what might be learned with regards to efforts to promote transportation cycling? First, proponents would do well to assume a more systemic approach which builds up all the elements of commuter cycling, such as infrastructure, symbolic meanings, technology (bicycles), distribution system (retail outlets), knowledge (how to ride bicycles, for example), and policies and regulations. Secondly, while actors have agency in such an agenda, it is useful to pay attention to contextual characteristics that may have formed over time, such as religious beliefs, gender roles and social inequality. Other emergent developments, such as frustrations with road congestion, may offer “window[s] of opportunity” (Geels 2002: 1262) to grow utility cycling. Foregrounding agency in such contingencies, Geels

et al. (2016: 898) have recently emphasised that “the influence of landscape developments arguably depends not only on timing (compared to niche and regime developments), but also on interpretation and mobilisation by actors”. Landscape pressures, such as growing environmental awareness or health consciousness, may arise to de-legitimise auto dependency, but if proponents did not also act to support alternatives, there would be limited modal shifts.

Finally, this chapter has presented a relational account between different transport systems. The fortunes of cycling in Johannesburg were very dependent on those of car use. Promoting cycling therefore needs to be done in sequence with reducing the attraction of car use since the two exist in a competitive relationship in Gauteng. Urban contexts that show growth in everyday cycling do so in part because they implement measures that moderate automobility. For example, comparing the United States, on the one hand, and the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany, on the other, Pucher et al. (2010: S121) conclude that the higher rates of cycling in the latter are due in part to “the much higher cost of car ownership [...] combined with limited car parking, car-free zones, comprehensive traffic calming, and lower overall speed limits”.

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Photograph by Gail Jennings

Reflection C

Why optimism is still an option: The battle for road space equity

Gail Jennings and Guy Davies

Guy's reflection

The battle for road space equity will be won neither on the streets nor on the marked-up technical drawings that assign human value by the metre. It begins and ends – like most battles – in the hearts and minds of those who determine who matters most. Our experiences have not yet shown a clear route to victory, but for now, we can share why we're not giving up.

Since 1987, South Africa's National Department of Transport (NDoT) has published guidelines for designing bicycle, pedestrian and accessible facilities. Revised in 1993 and 2003, the most recent iteration was published in 2014. Universal access, and walking and bicycle planning, had already received a boost with the country's post-1994 policy focus on public transport. In the Public Transport Action Plan¹ (2007), both walking and cycling are indicated as key feeder modes to public transport. The Action Plan committed to providing for special mobility needs on all rail trunk corridors, and incrementally on phased integrated public transport networks (of which bus rapid transit [BRT] is one component).

Then there are the strategic objectives drafted by the NDoT in its 2008 Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) Policy. These include

to integrate NMT into the transport system; endorse and facilitate the use of NMT modes; develop infrastructure and maintenance standards; facilitate NMT as a feeder system to other modes; allocate adequate and sustainable funding; and promote NMT as a reliable, healthy, affordable, accessible and safe transport mode.²

Yet neither technical information about road and street design, policy statements placing people first, nor our constitutional rights, are sufficient condition for the creation of an environment that facilitates 'non-motorised'³ modes. We might look to Dutch and Danish infrastructure with longing, yet this is less the result of superb guidelines than it is the outcome of a particular attitude – everyone matters, and the collateral damage of a vehicles-first approach is simply unthinkable.⁴ Policies and visions are translated into bicycle, walking and accessible interventions on the ground by implementing authorities and their consultants – design engineers, planners and project managers. If those who 'sign off' on designs and proposals do not believe that walking, cycling and universal access have equal value to motorised modes, then guidelines will remain guidelines only, and interventions will remain desultory at best. My co-author and I discovered this to our increasing disquiet during the three-year course of a project in the North-West provincial city of Rustenburg, South Africa.

Gail's reflection

"Well as you can see, no one rides a bicycle in Rustenburg!" I had just introduced myself at our first project meeting,⁵ as the appointed NMT consultant to the new BRT project in the city, together with Guy Davies, universal access consultant.

For a small city, Rustenburg has a surprising number of wide, fast, high-volume vehicle lanes through its car-centric business district and beyond. Crossing by bicycle, wheelchair or on foot (with or



Universal access, and walking and bicycle planning [...] received a boost with the country's post-1994 policy focus on public transport

without a trolley-cart weight of recycling, or a shopping load) needs something of a siege approach and a cavalier take on mortality.

En route to that project meeting, we had casually started counting the number of people who, despite the hostile environment, choose the bicycle as their mode. Using old-school bicycles or the cheapest imports, they were selling ice cream or delivering newspapers and bread within the central business district; carrying water barrels and loaves to spazas on the periphery; or simply travelling to or from their daily tasks. They rode the crumbling road shoulders or muddy verges, and mixed with the motorised traffic, wearing store uniforms, working gear or blue overalls with high-visibility banding at the knees and chest.

Yet high-vis doesn't guarantee visibility to officials, planners or designers.

Rustenburg's BRT system (with the working title of Rustenburg Rapid Transport⁶ [RRT] for the duration of its first planning phase) was described to stakeholders as not simply a new service, but a project that would transform roads to better serve all their potential users.

As you cannot plan for those you cannot – or do not – see, our job was to (try to) make the invisible visible. Our proposed vision for walking, cycling and accessibility was one in which these modes were safe, enjoyable and respected, with a network of useful, direct, continuous, integrated routes. A range of policies, strategies and interventions would pay attention to the entire non-motorised travel chain: from leaving home, route planning and making the journey, to connecting and integrating with other transport modes and trip-end facilities and amenities. Nothing that motorised vehicle users don't expect or take for granted.

In an unusual approach, the project manager for RRT, Pauline Froschauer, had appointed Davies and I as both planners and advocates for the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and people with special mobility needs. We had input into plans and decisions, and a degree of oversight. We reported directly to the project management unit rather than to any design firm, contractor or local authority.

But, as anticipated, we were up against a largely conservative, quantitative, car-centric narrative of operational efficiencies, warrants, available road space,⁷ minimum levels of service and minimum lane widths. Where we proposed walking or cycling facilities on two sides of the roadway, the black felt markers of the design team crossed out one. Where we proposed contrasting tonality for people with poor vision, the urban design team argued aesthetics. Where we proposed intuitive intersections that accounted for the nuances of bicycle movement and vehicle interaction, geometrics argued professional liability and lack of precedent. The contest was over a few feet here, a yard there, a couple of inches of gradient. Compromises seldom went in the favour of the most vulnerable: the people who wheel, walk or ride. The continuous subtext of the design process was that motorised mobility mattered most.

Our proposed vision for walking, cycling and accessibility was one in which these modes were safe, enjoyable and respected

Our work had the backing of South Africa's Constitution, various national acts and strategies,⁸ the stated goals of RRT itself, and an evidence base gathered from the extensive stakeholder engagement and consultation commissioned by Froschauer. Yet it appears at times that the post-apartheid narrative sees 'motorisation for all' as an extension of the broader transformation narrative. Walking and cycling are often seen as 'second best' options that entrench the inequities of the past, and cyclists and pedestrians appear as symbols of the state's failure to triumphantly emerge into the modern world.⁹ There were RRT demand forecasters and operational planners, too, who were certain that the new buses would replace walking, wheeling or cycling.



Six years later, in 2017, those Yarona buses are not yet running, but new brickwork sidewalks line the trunk routes – not quite as broad as our dreams, but broad enough for people to walk side by side. And even before those bricks were firmly cemented, we photographed wheelchair users, bicycle commuters, trolley-pushers, and a host of pedestrians on the route.

We weren't surprised. Our interviews with road users had revealed a narrative where NMT was frequently a mode of choice, despite the challenges.

On the streets we met with people who chose to cycle, who actively enjoyed walking, who were grateful for the independent mobility offered by walking, cycling or wheelchair access. Soccer teams used their bicycle commute to keep fit; platinum mineworkers built strength through riding; mothers and children walked six-across, sharing news with neighbours. And everyone noted that it's cheaper to travel using your own steam.¹⁰

Endnotes

¹ An outcome of the White Paper on National Transport Policy (1996).

² Draft National Non-Motorised Transport Policy (2009)

³ We are aware of the debate regarding the car-centric term NMT (rather than 'active mobility'). However, within the context of mobility in African cities, we prefer the term NMT, despite its inadequacies, as we recognise the key difference between NMT users in developing and developed cities. Cycling is already problematically seen as a sport (i.e. active) and not a legitimate transport mode. Further, cycling is proposed as a key way to reduce the amount of activity among the transport disadvantaged, in a shift from walking (sometimes 20km per trip) to cycling.

⁴ See further, Jennings G, Petzer B & Goldman E (2017) When bicycle lanes are not enough: Growing mode share in Cape Town – an analysis of policy and practice. In: WV Mitullah, MJWA Vanderschuren & M Khayesi (eds) *NMT Integration into Urban Transport Planning in Africa*. Abingdon Oxon & New York NY: Routledge

⁵ In 2011.

⁶ Now known as Yarona, from 'Ke ya rona', meaning, 'it is ours' in Setswana.

⁷ That is, what we can do with the leftover space.

⁸ The NMT guidelines, for example, are aligned to the Road Traffic Act of 1996, the National Land Transport Act of 2009, the Moving South Africa Action Agenda (2020), the Road Infrastructure Strategic Framework of 2006, among others. The 2014 revision – Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) Facility Guidelines – is also linked to other planning tools and standards such as the South African and SADC Road Traffic Signs Manual, the South African Road Safety Manual, and a number of other documents.

⁹ Jennings G (2016) Freedom of movement/freedom of choice: An enquiry into utility cycling and social justice in post-apartheid Cape Town, 1994–2015. In: A Golub, ML Hoffmann, AE Lugo & GF Sandoval (eds) *Bicycle Justice and Urban Transformation: Biking for all*. New York NY: Routledge

¹⁰ With thanks to my colleague Christo Steyn for this term.



Chapter 6

Exploring high streets in suburban Johannesburg

TATUM KOK

Introduction

Johannesburg has a history of spatial and racial segregation. For decades, public space in the city was strictly regulated and controlled by the state. State-sanctioned entertainment and leisure spaces were spatially confined and available to whites only. However, amidst the inequality, disparity and fragmented spaces from the apartheid era, new public spaces have emerged (Bremner 2006). The geography of social interaction and entertainment and leisure spaces in the city is changing. Today, some high streets that are situated within Johannesburg's suburbs have become popular entertainment and leisure spaces. These streets are a representation of social interaction and are sites where consumer culture is expressed in a suburban setting.

The high streets in 7th Street, Melville, and 4th Avenue, Parkhurst, are explored in this chapter.

Melville is situated west of Johannesburg's central business district (CBD) between Barry Hertzog Avenue and Main Road, between the M5 and M16. It was established in 1896 as a white working-class suburb. Today this area has many amenities and is subject to strong pressures for commercial, office and mixed-use development (Joburg 2006). Melville is regarded as well established and trendy (Dirsuweit 2009) and symbolises the changing city, with its original working-class history, gentrification and transformation into a cultural hub (Pre Brixton Community 2013).

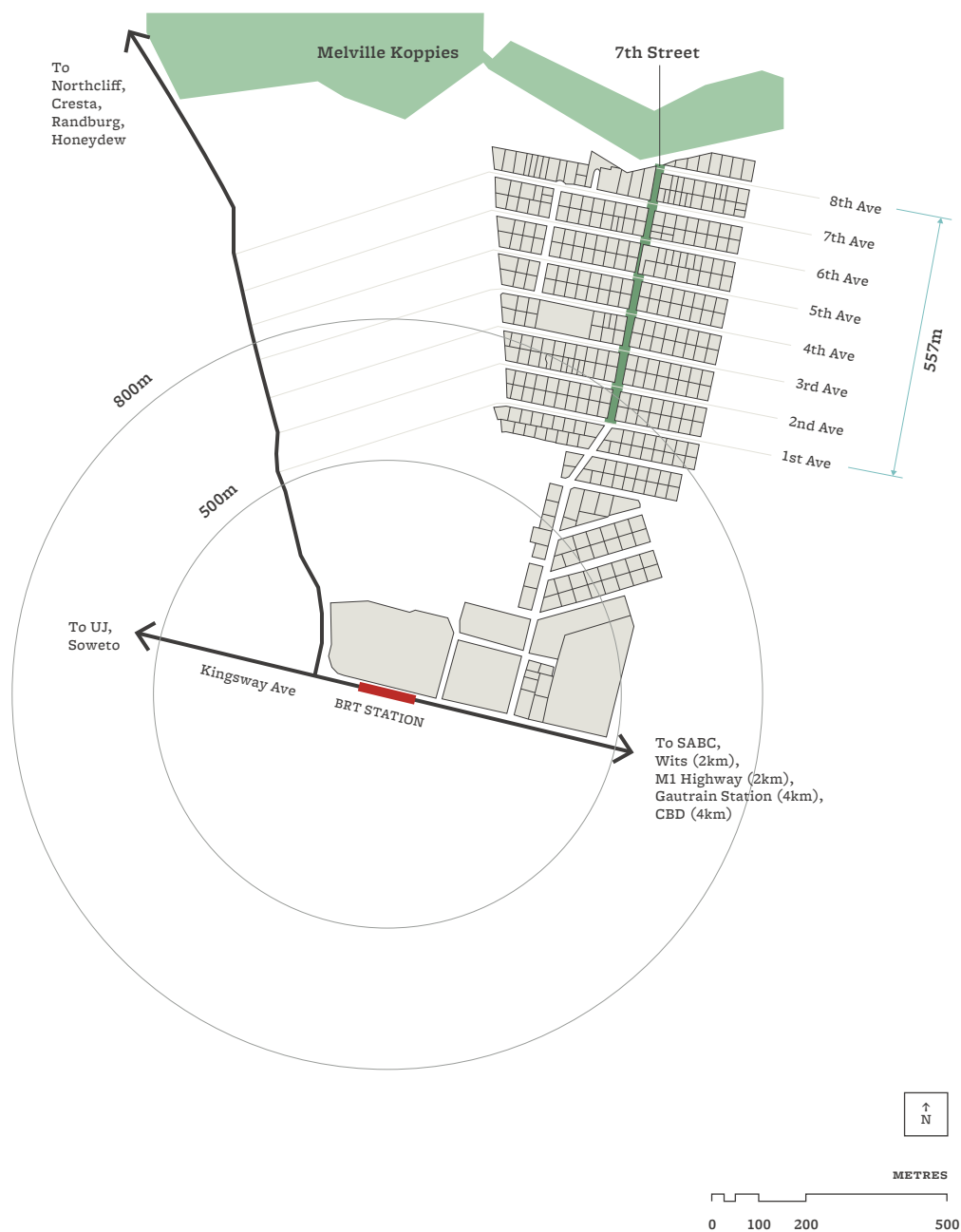
This area is easily accessible via public transport as it lies on the bus rapid transit (BRT) and Metrobus routes as well as on a major minibus taxi route. A Metrobus stop is situated on 7th Street and, approximately 800m away, one can find a 'Rea Vaya' BRT stop (Figure 1). There are established commercial precincts such as the South African

Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and Media24's offices. In addition, the area offers natural attractions. Melville Koppies is a nature reserve and heritage site, with important botanical and geographical features. Melville is also situated close to the Johannesburg Botanical Gardens at Emmarentia Dam. The suburb is within close proximity to both the University of Johannesburg (UJ) as well as the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). It houses Campus Square, a shopping centre catering to the students and residents in the surrounding area, with all the essential daily goods local residents could need.

There are two prominent streets in Melville. Main Road is situated just off Kingsway Avenue and is one of the busier commercial nodes in the area. It has a medical practice, some entertainment and leisure venues as well as more reputable shopping and grocery outlets (Spar included) than the other prominent street, 7th Street. On the other hand, the venues on 7th are more attractive if one wants to 'chill out' (Melville Resident 1, 2014). Melville is one of Johannesburg's trendier suburbs and its characterisation as a bohemian village is associated with 7th Street (Corrigall 2012). An interesting development, which some business owners believe might influence business activity on this street, is a shipping-container shopping centre: 27 Boxes is said to "inject life into the suburb of Melville" (Samakosky 2015) (Figure 2). Stores include a bookstore, patisserie, a boutique tea store, artist studios, and galleries, to name a few. This is a one of its kind type of development and the developers' intention is to encourage a culture of enjoying the city (Samakosky 2015). Another key informant envisages that this development will be beneficial not just for 7th Street but for the whole suburb as business filters through the area.

Figure 1: Melville context map

Map drawn by Mawabo Msingaphantsi



Melville also has several guest houses, which makes it a popular tourist destination. One establishment on 7th Street, Lucky Bean, is both a guest house and a restaurant. Seventh Street today has held the attention of many bloggers, authors and writers, who all write about the quaintness and special atmosphere of the street. And, while some respondents referred to 7th Street's decline, the street is actually sustained by a wide variety of entertainment and leisure venues.

Geographically, the suburb of Parkhurst is situated in the northern part of Johannesburg, just north of Rosebank, and boasts amenities such as Verity Park, where the residents' association has improved the children's play area and where residents walk their dogs – Parkhurst was jokingly referred to as Bark Hurst by one of the research respondents (Ward Councillor 117, 2014). Parkhurst includes the desirable amenities of a primary school, community clinic

and a library, and the Braamfontein Spruit flows through the neighbourhood (Figure 3).

Parkhurst, in comparison to Melville, is not as easily accessible or well located in terms of commercial nodes, universities or highways. The suburb is, however, within close proximity to Greenside, which also has a high street with an abundance of restaurants and bars, as well as being close to Rosebank, with its large shopping mall and proximity to the Gautrain. Public transport in Parkhurst could definitely be improved. Metrobus is the only form of transportation that comes to the area and even this service is soon to end (Chair of Parkhurst Residents Association 2014). What is likely to occur in its place are mini shuttles that will travel from the suburb to Rosebank and other surrounding areas (Chair of Parkhurst Residents Association 2014). This initiative will take time to materialise, however.

Figure 2: 27 Boxes development

Photograph by Tatum Kok



Parkhurst's appeal is its community atmosphere, which is preferred over the golf-estate environment, with its constraining rules and regulations (Chair of Parkhurst Residents Association 2014). Another appealing aspect of the suburb is the perception that it is safe, with residents able to "lock up and go" (Chair of Parkhurst Residents Association 2014).

Don't look for the stately mansions of the old Randlords – those exist closer to the heart of the city – but expect quaint cottages and small houses that have been lovingly restored by their present owners. Colourful walls, tiny cheerful gardens and narrow streets are the order of the day. (South African Tourism 2015)

Figure 3: Parkhurst context map

Map drawn by Mawabo Msingaphantsi



Fourth Avenue intersects the middle of the suburb and, in the past, it had a butcher, bakery, grocery store, and several antique stores. While some of these amenities are still prominent on the street, 4th Avenue has become an increasingly popular destination point for wining, dining and socialising. Although the entertainment and leisure activities on 4th Avenue and the crowds they attract are not always viewed favourably by residents, the street has added to the character and ambience of Parkhurst and has contributed towards the perception of the suburb's village feel.

Fourth Avenue is a unique street, the street is lined with unique craft shops, restaurants and boutique shops that are difficult to find elsewhere in Johannesburg. While the shops are very modern an old school way of shopping and doing things in Parkhurst has prevailed maintaining a village feel in the suburb with one storey shops still in original tin roofs, low densities, low traffic densities which allows restaurant patrons to dine in relatively low traffic noise which gives the street a different ambience from the other main streets. (Le Roux & Muindisi 2013: 3)

These suburban spaces in Johannesburg offer platforms for social activities and interaction. The entertainment and leisure activities that contribute towards a stimulating environment on the street range from restaurants to bars/lounges and sidewalk cafés. Patrons revelling in fun, pleasure and play on a high street consequently bring life to suburbia, contrasting with the normal perception of suburbia as embodying a monotonous lifestyle. Entertainment and leisure activities are associated with evening economies, or, during the day, with the sidewalk café culture.

For a comprehensive exploration of the high streets, this study used a mixed-method research approach. Firstly, the high street profile enabled a detailed account of the activities prominent on the high street. Secondly, key informant interviews were held with high street social contributors, namely patrons, residents and business owners. Thirdly, surveys were administered on each high street to gather quick responses from the people on them. Lastly, participant observation was incorporated throughout

the study. Through these two case studies, this chapter examines the changing activities of the suburban high street and their implications for residents and other users of these spaces.

The evolution of the high street

This section discusses the high street as an essential component of early 20th-century suburban development and the main function of the traditional high street. The displacement of the high street is discussed by looking at factors contributing to its decline. Lastly, the nature and shift of the traditional high street towards a street with an abundance of entertainment and leisure activities is examined.

The traditional high street

The term 'high street' derives from Britain, where it carries cultural connotations of a suburban neighbourhood characterised "by social stability and enduring local identity" (Griffiths et al. 2008: 1). The popular image of the high street is one of a communal hub; a place where neighbours run into each other on their way to the post office or where local gossip is exchanged at the bus stop (Griffiths et al. 2008). More importantly, the high street functions as a place providing easy pedestrian access to the everyday goods and services prominent on the street (Griffiths et al. 2008).

The high street is located outside the main city centre, where a mix of retail, business and public service uses intermingle with residential dwellings (Jones et al. 2007: 1). The high street is a fine-grain scale of development that "incorporates buildings of comparatively narrow width with different uses configured both vertically and horizontally" (Jones et al. 2007). The traditional high street was at the centre of community activity, attracting local residents. One of its most distinguishing features is how physically embedded it is within the suburb. And this is perhaps also one of its competitive advantages – its ability to support social interaction (Mehta 2006).

The high street as a component of early 20th-century suburban development enabled easily accessible points of exchange of goods and services for local residents, many of whom would have walked to stores to meet their daily needs. Small-scale convenience stores were typically arranged in a

linear fashion which catered for a smaller number of visitors. Trading hours would generally operate between 9am and 5pm, which was compatible with surrounding residential use.

Retail was the predominant feature of the high street. In fact, high street performance tends to be evaluated through the lens of retail, which ignores the diversity of activities on these streets (GENECON 2011). However, high streets around the world have started to incorporate more mixed uses so as to adapt to the consumer and citizen needs of the 21st century (Griffiths et al. 2008; Jones et al. 2007), indicating that high streets are well positioned to do so.

The decline of the high street

A high street is more than a shopping location, playing a crucial role at the heart of the community. As our communities continue to evolve, the High Street is likely to be a very different place to that of 20 or 30 years ago. (British Retail Consortium 2009: 6)

Developments of the late 20th century have significantly undermined the traditional use of the high street. These include the development of shopping malls and the significant change in means of transportation. Shopping malls have structures that are larger in scale, can accommodate air-conditioning, food courts, multi-brand and grocery outlets, and provide easily accessible parking for vehicles (Perennial Inc. 2013). For most shoppers, a mall is an all-in-one convenience. On the other hand, the high street can be more appealing for consumers that either can't afford a car or do not want to use vehicles for their shopping trips when they can just walk there and back (Teller 2008).

In Johannesburg, by the end of the 1950s, the most significant shopping nodes existed outside of the CBD in the middle and lower reaches of Hillbrow (Beavon 2004). Consumers tended to shop either in large departmental stores or in the city centre (Toffah 2008). In South Africa, the mall phenomenon picked up during the economic boom of the 1960s (Toffah 2008). Killarney Shopping Mall was one of the first

malls established in Johannesburg, in 1961 (Smithers 2013). Shortly afterwards, in 1969, Hyde Park was built, followed by Sandton City, South Africa's first regional shopping centre, which opened its doors in 1973 (Toffah 2008). Rosebank Mall was developed in 1976 (Smithers 2013). Sandton City influenced the economic and cultural decline of the CBD and was one of the catalysts for the city centre's decentralisation (Smithers 2013; Toffah 2008).

Car-ownership increased during the late 20th century, impacting on the traditional high street through increased car volumes (Jones et al. 2007). This resulted in town-planning policy and legislation favouring vehicle movement over pedestrians (Jones et al. 2007). This is in line with the traditional perception of the street as a traffic thoroughfare rather than a place or destination (Jones et al. 2007). Lastly, car-ownership and increased mobility meant residents were no longer spatially bound to their residential areas. The ability to travel to do shopping displaced the possibility of walking to the high street, which began losing customers to "out-of-town"¹ retail developments (Jones et al. 2007).

The continued popularity and significant number of retail activities offered in a shopping mall have prompted a shift in the nature and function of the high street. Most people do their shopping at the mall. High street economies are being displaced (Portas 2011). Where people once did their shopping and socialising on their suburban high street, they are now going elsewhere. Although the retail aspect of the high street remains an activity for users, high streets around the world are incorporating more mixed uses to adapt to the consumer and citizen needs of the 21st century (Griffiths et al. 2008; Jones et al. 2007). With more restaurants, bars and clubs, the high street is no longer directly competing with the shopping mall but instead meets other needs (such as entertainment and leisure) and purposes.

Contemporary role of the high street

The high street has immense potential for social interaction and provides a platform for public social life to take place. Redesigning plazas or parks and,

1. Out-of-town implying developments not on the high street or within close proximity to the suburb.

Noise from entertainment and leisure destinations causes conflict between residents and the nightlife visitors

more importantly, streets has been a focal point for urban designers (Oosterman 1992). These public spaces are intended to have a social impact by encouraging a more active social life in urban public space (Oosterman 1992).

Suburban high streets could be considered as examples of 'live centres', that is, public space that disproportionately attracts movement, whether pedestrian, vehicular or both, owing to a high degree of spatial accessibility within the urban grid. (Griffiths et al. 2008: 4–5)

Entertainment and leisure destinations, evening economies or '24-hour city' concepts are some initiatives that cities incorporate to 're-centre' cities or bring back their lost vitality (Carmona 2010; Kitsinger 2014; Montgomery 1997). In Binghamton, New York, new downtowns are being built with day-time attractions and night-time entertainment (Kitsinger 2014). "Restaurants and nightclubs bring life back to downtowns" (Kitsinger 2014: 1). The use of entertainment and leisure activities is a form of revitalisation for dormant areas in the city. The entertainment and leisure activities explored in this chapter include restaurants, bars/lounges and sidewalk cafés.

These types of activities are not always welcomed by residents who dwell in the same vicinity (Carmona 2010; Kitsinger 2014). They have caused tensions and conflict, more so if these activities are in close proximity to residential buildings. The main conflict arises around the "needs of local residents versus those of the revellers and local businesses serving the evening economy" (Carmona 2010: 126).

Noise from entertainment and leisure destinations causes conflict between residents and the nightlife visitors (Kitsinger 2014). Furthermore, these spaces have "brought with [them] forms of behaviour that even the perpetrators would feel is unacceptable in their own neighbourhoods" (Carmona 2010: 126).

Entertainment and leisure on the high street

This section first discusses the land uses on 7th Street and 4th Avenue and the need for a 'balance' of activities. Broadly speaking, and in line with traditional high streets, 7th Street and 4th Avenue are still dominated by retail activities, although entertainment and leisure contribute a significant proportion of commercial uses. However, the impact of entertainment and leisure activities is felt more strongly. Noise emanating from restaurants and the lack of parking have contributed to the changed perceptions of the nature and character of these streets. These points of conflict are explored in detail through an examination of licensing, crime, noise, parking, and sidewalk encroachment.

High street land use

The active high street of 7th Street in Melville is approximately four blocks, comprising mostly of business activities. Overall, 44 establishments were counted on 7th Street with an almost equal split between retail (45%) and entertainment and leisure venues (43%). There were 20 retail stores and five amenities/services on 7th Street. The 19 entertainment and leisure establishments included six restaurants, four cafés/sidewalk cafés, eight bars/lounges, and one club (Figure 4a).

Figure 4a: Seventh Street land use map

Map drawn by Mawabo Msingaphantsi

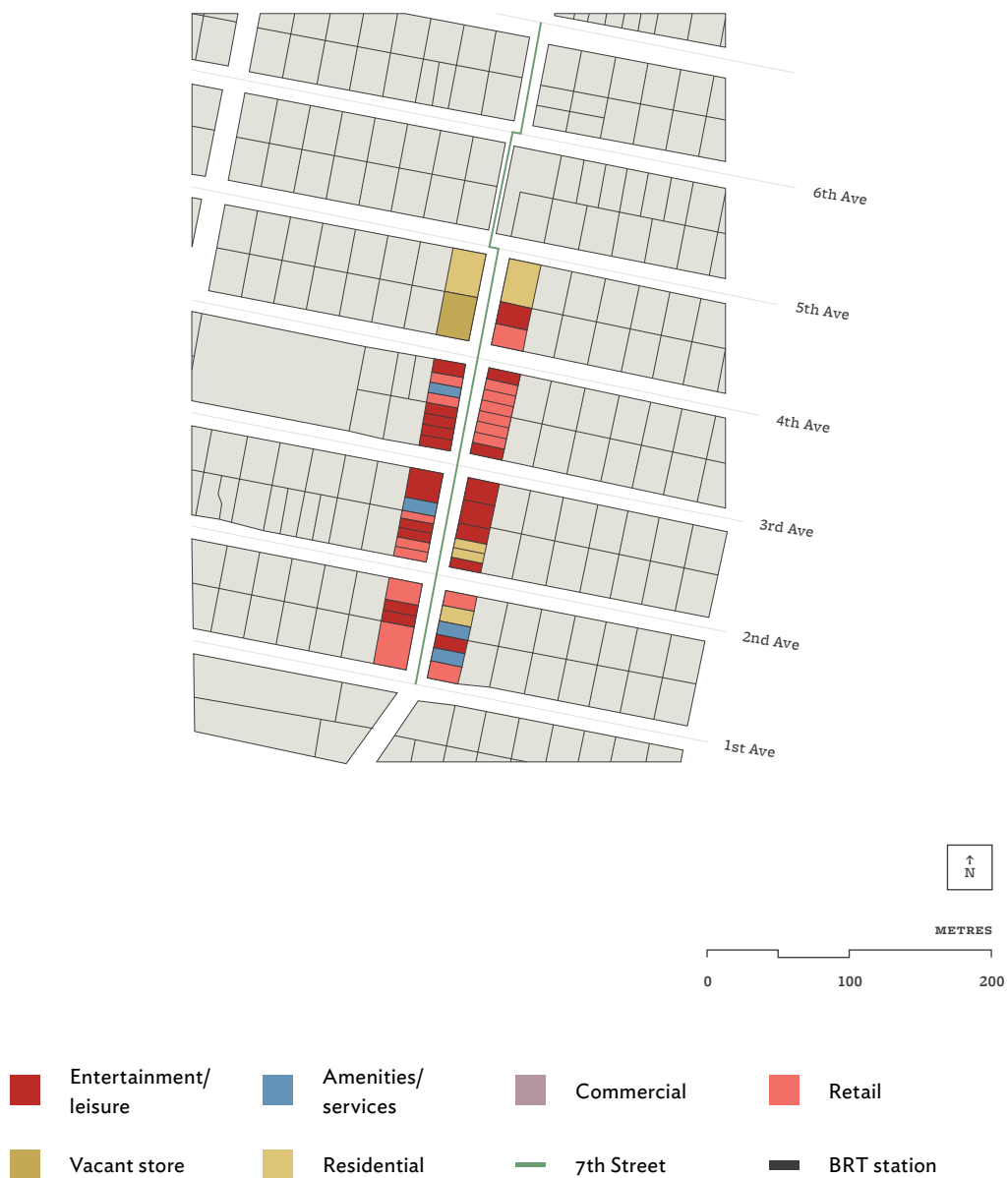


Figure 4b: Fourth Avenue land use map

Map drawn by Mawabo Msingaphantsi

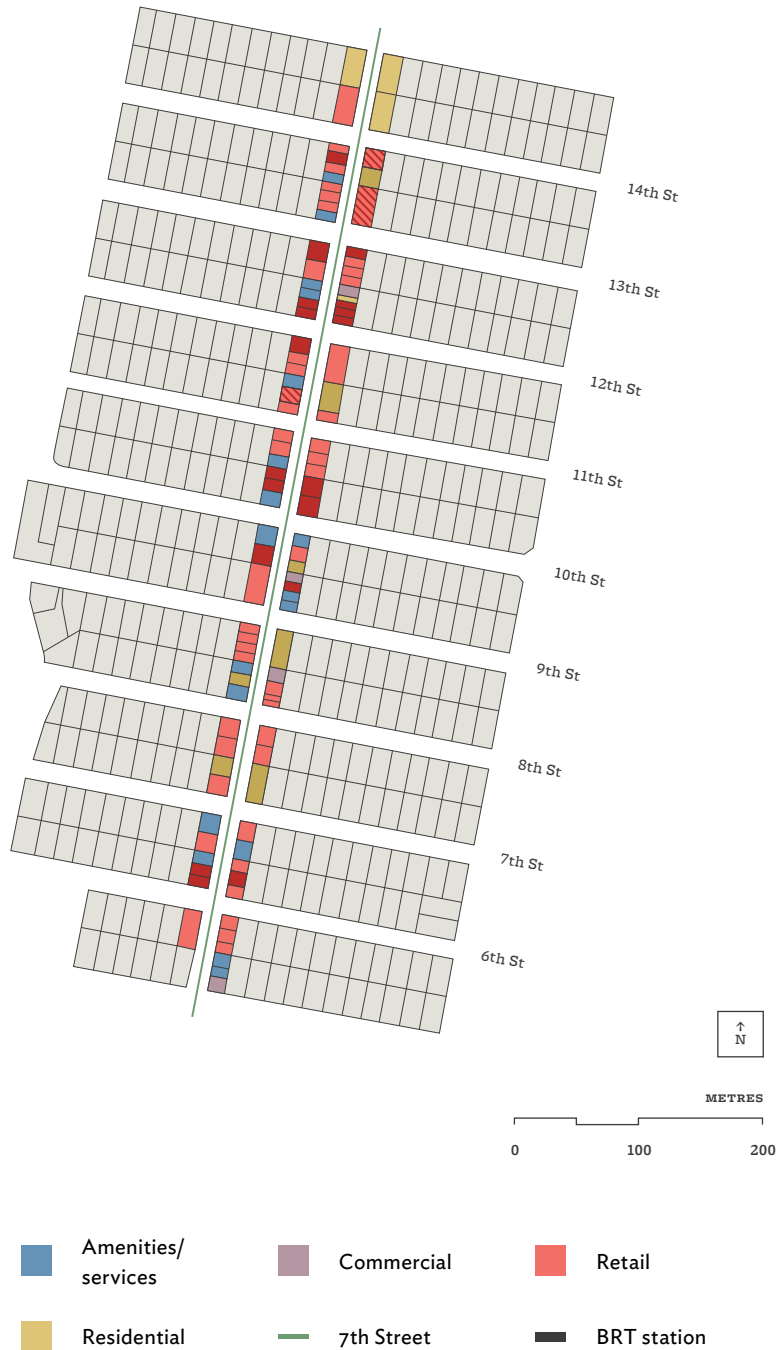


Figure 5: Parkhurst Square on 4th Avenue

Photograph by Tatum Kok (2015)



Fourth Avenue, Parkhurst, is almost double the length of 7th Street. There are ten blocks of business activity and overall the business activities comprised 84 establishments. The retail component forms the largest category, with at least 44 retail establishments documented, as well as 20 entertainment and leisure venues, four commercial activities and 16 amenities/services (Figure 4b). Fourth Avenue has two shopping centres, namely Cobbles Centre and Parkhurst Square (Figure 5). Cobbles Centre is situated on the corner of 11th Street as indicated by the mixed-use key on the map (Figure 4b). Parkhurst

Square is located between 13th and 14th streets, and is an attractive mixture of offices and restaurants designed to enhance the 'look and feel' of 4th Avenue (Hint 2010). Although some residents were concerned about these new developments interfering with the village atmosphere of Parkhurst and the impact they would have on the feel of the street, they have arguably enhanced the character of 4th Avenue (Ward Councillor 117, 2014). There is also a 'new' development made up of boutiques, an exclusive salon and a designer furniture store, which is situated on the block between 11th and 12th streets. Fourth Avenue,

with its eclectic mix of establishments, is therefore predominantly retail.

Seventh Street has more entertainment and leisure venues than other kinds, while 4th Avenue's entertainment and leisure outlets only comprise 23% of its total. Most respondents on both of these streets indicated that they were there, or liked the street, because of its entertainment and leisure venues despite there being far more on 7th Street. This indicates that the way these streets are perceived does not necessarily reflect the actual composition of activities on them.

The chairpersons of the residents' associations and ward councillors from Melville and Parkhurst both commented on the streets having an 'imbalance' of activities, or that the streets' activities are overly orientated towards entertainment and leisure. Several residents stated that the streets should be more 'balanced' in terms of the activities available (Chair of Parkhurst Residents Association 2014; Chair of Melville Residents Association 2014; Ward Councillor 87, 2014; Ward Councillor 117, 2014). The perception was that there are clearly too many entertainment and leisure activities on 7th Street. However, there are more retail outlets on both streets, and 7th Street has, in fact, the most 'balanced' representation of entertainment and leisure versus retail outlets. This indicates how significant the impact of entertainment and leisure actually is.

Hype surrounding the high street along with residents' complaints contribute to the perception that entertainment and leisure dominate 7th Street and 4th Avenue. Activity on both peaks during evenings and on weekends, with 7th Street being especially busy at these times. During the day, however, some establishments are closed, which makes the street seem empty: "You have closed premises and they only open later in the evening and they only open late at night. And that causes a bit of a problem because it makes the area look dead during the day – which is not good" (Chair of Melville Residents Association 2014).

Fourth Avenue, on the other hand, has more retail activities on the street, and this contributes to the street being busier than 7th Street during the day and then peaking in the evenings. Both the ward councillor for Parkhurst and the chair of the resident's association have commented that there

should not be any more entertainment and leisure activities on the street (Chair of Parkhurst Residents Association 2014; Ward Councillor 117, 2014). A simple reason for this is that there are not enough parking spaces to accommodate all the patrons of the entertainment and leisure venues (Chair of Parkhurst Residents Association 2014; Ward Councillor 117, 2014).

It is however one of the worst fears for most Parkhurst residents that 4th Avenue will end up like Melville 7th Street, which is now considered to attract the wrong kind of crowd because of the numerous clubs and bars which have replaced the more respectable shops and restaurants. Parkhurst however has in its favour a strong sense of community and its distance from tertiary educational institutions will to some extent protect it from the seedy bars and clubs which do attract the wrong kind of crowd. However, it should be noted a change in usage of the restaurants in 4th Avenue will change the feel and the character of the street. (Le Roux & Muindi 2013: 11)

This suggests that entertainment and leisure activities should be limited because they attract the 'wrong' crowd. Seventh Street in Melville is situated within close proximity to two universities, and is therefore more accessible to students, whom some Parkhurst respondents considered to be precisely this wrong type of crowd. "You need a healthy mix of tenants along your high street because it's not a food court ... it's a community high street" (Chair of Parkhurst Residents Association 2014).

In essence, conflict arises because these streets are in residential areas. This negative perception can be understood in terms of certain key issues discussed below.

Licensing

Drinking has generally been associated with the night-time economy, club culture, youth culture, pub life, post-industrial identities and lifestyles, and, more importantly, as a key accelerator of lawlessness and violence, a heightened fear of crime and, in response, zero-tolerance policing (Jayne et al. 2006). Alcohol consumption is one of the reasons people go out, or visit establishments. If this is not regulated, lawlessness and noise impact on the suburb. Liquor

and entertainment licences exist to minimise these negative impacts. For establishments to sell liquor in Johannesburg, national laws and municipal by-laws must be complied with (City of Johannesburg 2015). Before obtaining a liquor licence, regulatory requirements pertaining to town planning, environmental health, emergency-services management, and building plans need to be met (City of Johannesburg 2015). Liquor outlets can only be run legally if they are zoned for the type of liquor licence applied for (City of Johannesburg 2015).

With a valid 'on consumption'² liquor licence, establishments are permitted to sell alcohol between 10am and 2am, with nightclubs only being allowed to sell between 6pm and 2am. Holders of a restaurant licence may only supply alcohol where meals are regularly supplied to guests (Provincial Legislature of Gauteng 2003). To be eligible for a pub licence (bar/lounge), the establishment should ensure that liquor is sold and consumed on the premises together with the provision of snacks or light meals (Provincial Legislature of Gauteng 2003). A nightclub is licensed to provide light meals, dancing and entertainment – with alcohol prohibited from leaving the premises (Provincial Legislature of Gauteng 2003). Furthermore, to run a nightclub, an entertainment licence³ is required as well (Provincial Legislature of Gauteng 2003).

Liquor licences should only be granted to establishments that adhere to the above-mentioned regulations. Respondents in Melville and Parkhurst raised the issue of false or illegitimate licensing, in that business owners do not always comply with the stipulated regulations. Some establishments obtain restaurant licences but then operate as clubs (Chair of Melville Residents Association 2014). Active management and by-law enforcement need to be operationalised in order to prevent disorderly behaviour from negatively affecting suburbs and their residents.

Crime

Entertainment and leisure activities enable a '24-hour' high street, which leads to a busy street at night. Respondents discussed petty crime, stolen cars, break-ins as well as a murder that took place on 7th Street.

While this fieldwork was being conducted, the owner of a venue called Dollar Table allegedly attacked and stabbed a former Lions rugby player on the premises and dumped the body on the corner of the street (Chair of Melville Residents Association 2014; Gibbs 2014). Prior to the incident, a police raid on 7th Street had identified Dollar Table as trading illegally (Chair of Melville Residents Association 2014). This incident highlights how unregulated licensing can escalate into undesirable events. The establishment in question had a restaurant licence, but was not serving any food (Ward Councillor 87, 2014). In addition, loud music was played without the correct permit.

There had been moves for some time to try get the city and liquor board to do something about Dollar Table ... And I should also emphasise that it's not that Melville in itself is dangerous or anything ... because this incident took place in Dollar Table. Dollar Table had a bad name. (Chair of Melville Residents Association 2014)

Business owners also reported break-ins. On 4th Avenue, both the Italian restaurant and an antique shop were burgled.

It's just that we had burglar bars on the back window and two guards came in, it was a good computer and the guys went through the window and out very quickly ... they came and took the electronic equipment. (Parkhurst Business Owner 4 2014)

2. The main licence that is explored here is the 'on consumption liquor licence'. This type of licence allows liquor to be consumed on the premises.

3. For health facilities or, more importantly, entertainment facilities, you need a licence for: Turkish baths, saunas and health baths; massage or infrared treatments; male and female escorts; three or more slot machines and electronic games; three or more snooker or billiard tables; nightclubs and discotheques, where live or loud music is played; cinemas and theatres; and adult premises.

A business owner in Melville has witnessed hi-jackings. “There’s crime. We’ve had two hi-jackings in the last ... we’ve had English reporters get hi-jacked right outside the shop last Friday” (Melville Business Owner 3, 2014).

Petty crime is also rife in these suburbs:

because of the fact that there are restaurants everywhere, a lot of muggings have taken place, also because of at the end of this road, there’s a gate at the bottom of this road, and that leads to Victory Park, so, what they would do is that they would take a bag, they would run down, once you out through the gate out of Parkhurst, then you gone and they can’t find you. (Parkhurst Resident 2, 2014)

Social activity on the high street may mean that there are more eyes on the street (Browning et al. 2010) but this does not necessarily deter criminal activity. Infringement of by-laws, car-boot parties⁴ and, of course, the murder have had a negative impact on street users and businesses and the high street is now associated with serious criminal activity. The murder incident in particular highlights how unregulated entertainment and leisure establishments can be the scenes of events that lead to the negative perceptions of changing high streets.

Noise

In both suburbs, respondents identified noise from entertainment and leisure establishments as a nuisance. Entertainment licences are required for nightclubs and discotheques where live or loud music is played (City of Johannesburg 2015). However, most establishments are only registered as restaurants and are not necessarily even aware of entertainment licensing requirements.

To have a restaurant you need a restaurant licence. And a restaurant licence is not the same as a place of entertainment licence. If you have a place of entertainment licence, it means you’re allowed

to have live music. (Chair of Parkhurst Residents Association 2014)

Despite their popularity, jazz evenings have been cancelled on 7th Street and 4th Avenue because of noise complaints. Loud or live music attracts patrons and is therefore profitable for business. While some business owners are aware they are operating within a residential area, others are less cognisant but, in any case, are more concerned with attracting patrons and making money.

Attempting to regulate noise levels is a significant response from residents in the suburb. The chair of the Melville Residents Association mentioned that inspectors do visit establishments to regulate noise levels. However, this is not always effective, with inspections often made when there are no noise violations taking place. A solution that has been put forward is for the city to ensure that music venues are soundproofed as a requirement for obtaining an entertainment licence (Chair of Melville Residents Association 2014).

Parking

Parking constraints on both high streets show up both the traditional high street usage and the contemporary shift away from it. Parking problems have been amplified on both high streets during peak hours (weekends and evenings). Not having been designed to accommodate a large influx of cars and people, the traditional high street as a small-scale destination point has limited parking capacity.

Most patrons interviewed indicated that they were not from the surrounding suburbs (Melville and Parkhurst) but rather from other suburbs in Johannesburg and that they were on the high street for the entertainment and leisure activities there. This is significant because it indicates that these streets attract city-wide users and not just residents as per traditional usage, and also that more vehicles enter the suburb’s streets as a consequence. This can become a major irritant for residents – when parking becomes congested on the high street, patrons tend

⁴ Car-boot parties are when people park their vehicles on the road and drink alcohol taken from the boot of their cars and end up partying on the street (Chair of Melville Residents Association 2014). This is unregulated and illegal as people are drinking in public, not in the restaurants, but on the street, and causing havoc.

Figure 6: Parking down a residential street in Parkhurst on a weekend

Photograph by Tatum Kok (2015)



to park on the side streets (Figure 6), sometimes directly outside residents' gates.

Many respondents suggested that having sufficient parking would improve the high street experience. However, other respondents commented that finding parking on a side street and then walking to the venues was part of the hype of the high street and contributed to its vitality and liveliness.

Sidewalk encroachment

One of the main features of entertainment and leisure prominence is the prevalence of sidewalk cafés. Regulations on how sidewalks should be used are ambiguous and not always complied with, often causing tension between business owners, the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD), patrons, and residential associations. The property by-laws state that

'encroachment' means any physical object which intrudes on or over municipal property, or property which the council has control over or other property

in respect of which a servitude or other property right has been registered in favour of the council [...] no person may, without prior written permission of the Council, make or construct any colonnade, veranda, balcony, bay window, pavement light, showcase or other encroachment on or over any part of a public road, and pavement opening in or under any public road. (City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality 2004: 2, 3)

A ward councillor, Tim Truluck, has investigated the issue of trader and restaurant encroachment onto sidewalks in Parkhurst and sums up the issues succinctly:

What became clear is that the City has no clear policy or simple set of by-laws/rules regarding this encroachment by registered businesses. By-laws are cherry picked or 'interpreted'. Some businesses have tried unsuccessfully to obtain city permission by filling out various applications to use the sidewalk. And sometimes, either in ignorance or defiance, the

Figure 7: Tables and chairs encroach on the sidewalk

Photograph by Tatum Kok (2015)



traders and restaurants just colonise the sidewalk outside their property and wait for the City to do something about it. Thus, for years the City has abrogated its responsibility, and, apart from the occasional bully boy JMPD blitz, has condoned the current situation. But with the proliferation of, especially, the restaurants in Fourth Avenue and businesses in Sixth Street, the issue of sidewalk use needs to be addressed. And this situation repeats itself throughout the City. (Truluck 2013)

On 7th Street and 4th Avenue, sidewalk cafés adorn the pavement (Figure 7). Sidewalk cafés increasingly appeal to patrons, who get to enjoy their meal outside in the sun as well as immerse themselves in the street experience and, for some, to reminisce about sidewalk-café culture abroad (Estate Agent Parkhurst 2014; Parkhurst Resident 2, 2014).

Pavement furniture can also become a contested terrain when envious business owners report their competitors' encroachment to residents' associations and force them to remove their property (Melville

Business Owner 3, 2014; Parkhurst Business Owner 2, 2014). However, fines are affordable and, in many instances, the encroachment continues once the fine has been paid.

Tables and chairs that encroach on the pavement can force pedestrians to use the street instead.

Even though places still do put out tables and chairs, there's not enough space and often people have to walk in the road. And that's dangerous, that's the reason why the by-law exists to protect the pedestrian space on the pavement so that people don't endanger their lives walking in the road. (Ward Councillor 87, 2014)

You have a certain amount of space that you need to put the tables. But I mean, if you look at the decency, we leave a huge space for people to walk past. We cannot do anything if people feel embarrassed about walking past, and choose to walk on the opposite side of the road. (Melville Business Owner 3, 2014)

Conclusion

One of the most significant features of high streets, and what distinguishes them from other streets, is their suburban aspect. This feature becomes especially important when considering the role of entertainment and leisure on the high street. High streets used to be retail-orientated, catering for local residents. Nowadays, the prominence of entertainment and leisure activities creates the perception of a less retail-dominated street and, moreover, attracts patrons that are not just residents. More people enter and exit the suburb and high street, indicating that these activities are changing how high streets are used and perceived.

Seventh Street and 4th Avenue are entertainment- and leisure-orientated high streets and as such fulfil a new function. Shopping malls in Johannesburg already fulfil retail and shopping functions by providing convenient and comprehensive shopping spaces. Entertainment and leisure opportunities on high streets fulfil a different need, one that enables social interaction between people by providing a space for people to meet, eat, socialise, relax, people-watch, walk, talk, and just engage with the public aspects of a street. In a city historically characterised by racial separation and spatial barriers, these high streets offer a space for greater social interaction and integration. Despite the legacy of apartheid and the criticism of suburbs as anti-social spaces, these high streets bring people and diversity into them. They have become destination points in their own right, and are more than just routes of transportation, representing “places of pleasure and anxiety” (Fyfe 1998: 1).

The ‘anxiety’ referred to here emerges when these new uses become associated with several negative issues affecting residents in particular, and

are characterised by weak by-law enforcement, rising crime, parking violations, sidewalk encroachment, and noise. Noisy patrons and loud music damage the residential atmosphere more than high street retail does. Entertainment and leisure activities take place in the evenings, contrasting significantly with the traditional use of the high street, whose day-time trading hours were compatible with the residential surroundings.

Parking constraints on these two high streets peak during evenings and on weekends, causing congestion and affirming the newer orientation towards entertainment and leisure. The use of the sidewalk, particularly the encroachment of sidewalk cafés, is also indicative of the positive and negative impacts of these activities.

Inconsistent by-law enforcement and infrequent licence inspections were identified as an issue by multiple respondents on both high streets. The current by-laws and liquor-outlet and entertainment-venue licensing requirements need to be revisited and updated in order to address the different and various needs of patrons, business owners and residents, while still enabling these public spaces to thrive.

Seventh Street and 4th Avenue are successful public spaces and the advent of entertainment and leisure activities contributes to this by attracting people from all over the city. The local high street is becoming less local and, as a result, more effective mechanisms need to be implemented to regulate the increase in entertainment and leisure venues. The challenge involves mitigating the negative impacts of high streets’ new function while allowing local businesses to prosper and patrons to enjoy the high street and its activities.

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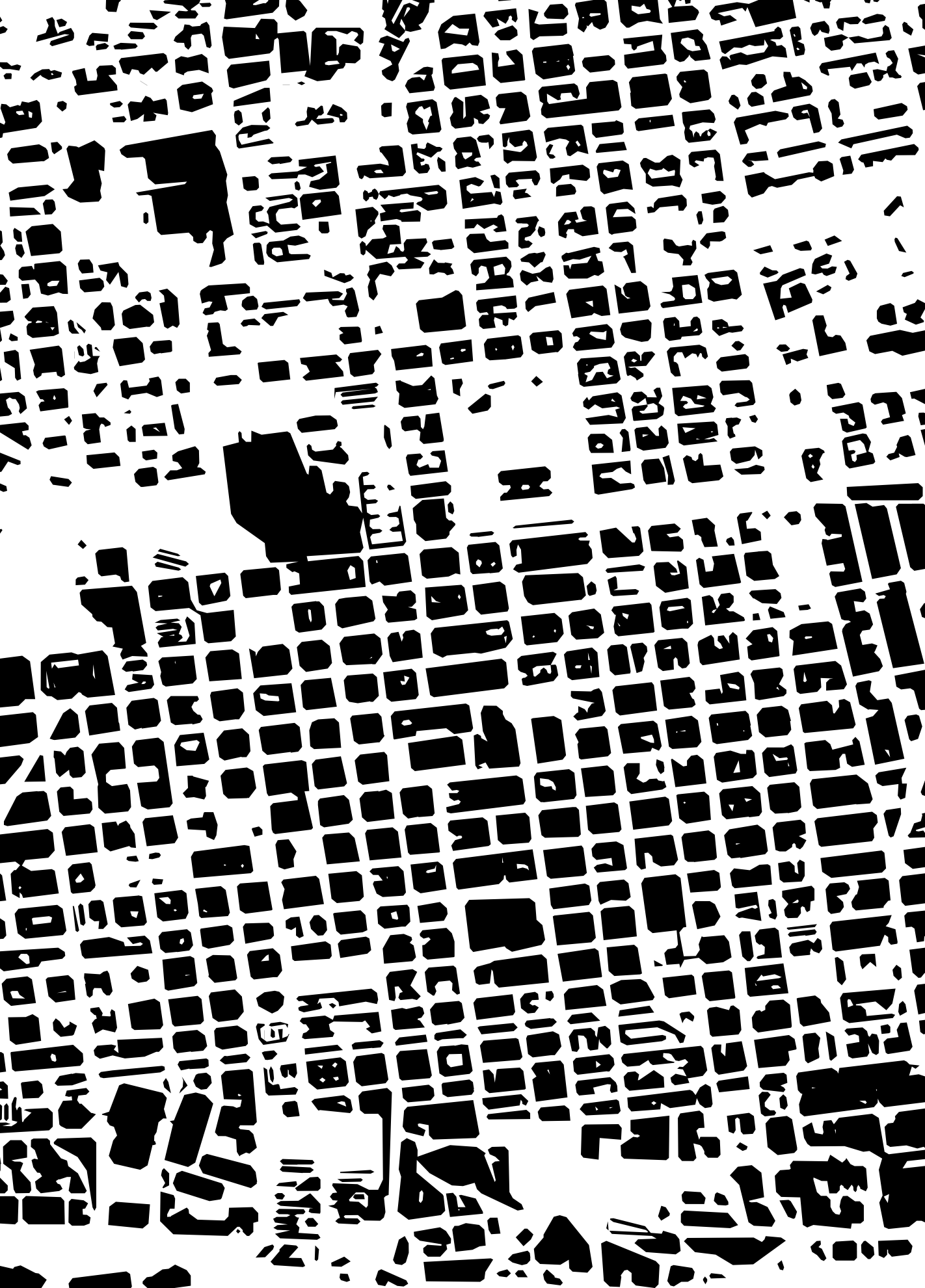
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FIRE EXIT
KEEP CLEAR





Chapter 7

Contestations of street trading on De Villiers Street

MAMOKETE MATJOMANE

Introduction

'Street trading' has many definitions, all of which differ according to their context. However, underlying all these conceptions is the use of urban public spaces – such as streets – as trading sites. Therefore, sidewalks, especially busy and vibrant ones with high volumes of movement, are physical assets where traders conduct their business and, as such, play a central role in facilitating their livelihoods.

However, these sidewalks have been designed primarily as pedestrian walkways, resulting in their use for trade being contested by a variety of stakeholders. Contestations also arise because the policies and by-laws geared towards regulating and managing these spaces neglect the role of the street as a resource and asset used by the urban poor to make a living. As such, street traders are regarded as a nuisance, a threat to public order and as contributing to crime and grime. These negative perceptions have generally manifested in contestations over the use of streets among street traders, municipal authorities and other users. As will be seen, street traders employ micro spatial practices to respond to these contestations over their use of streets for economic purposes.

De Villiers Street (between Hoek and Klein streets) in the inner city of Johannesburg was mainly created as a pedestrian walkway but has been turned into a second-hand clothing market. This chapter investigates and presents the everyday practices on De Villiers Street; analyses the spatial actions and practices adopted by the street's users, including street traders, pedestrians and municipal agents; and explores the interactions between these various users and the contestations that arise as well as how

these relationships shape and impact on the way the street functions.

Brief history of street trading in Johannesburg

The history of street trading in Johannesburg dates back to the colonial era where it was highly repressed and controlled through measures such as issuing limited trading licences (Rogerson 1988). The limitation on 'legal'¹ traders was a strategy to maintain order and control, as street trading was associated with chaos and believed to have a negative impact on streets' general functionality. This simultaneously led to an increase in the number of 'illegal'² traders. Their illegal status meant that traders were subjected to persecution and harassment, and regularly had their goods impounded by city enforcement agents (Rogerson 1988).

The apartheid era saw the continuation of this repression and strict control of street trading activities (Rogerson 1988). Skinner (2008: 14) argues that "[i]n South Africa the apartheid state's complex web of national and local laws effectively banned street trading".

The move from colonialism to apartheid did not result in any change in the perception or treatment of street traders. The number of trading licences issued decreased dramatically as a deliberate measure to curb the growth of trading. The decrease was justified using town planning notions of order and control, as street trading was still associated with chaos, crime and grime. This era introduced the demarcation of restricted areas for street trading, implemented to discourage the further growth of trading. However,

1. Traders that possess (valid) trading licences and/or trade in designated sites.

2. Traders that do not possess (valid) trading licences and/or trade in areas where trading is prohibited by city policies and by-laws.

traders evaded regulations and continued trading without licences and in restricted areas.

In the early 1980s when apartheid rule was weakening, the council introduced ‘move on’ regulations where traders were allowed to trade in one location for 20 minutes and move to another when that time had expired. During this time, government attitudes towards street trading slowly shifted but only at a theoretical rather than an implementation level (Beavon & Rogerson 1986; Rogerson 1988). Even during this apparent shift in official attitudes, street trading was still repressed, which is evident in the focus on regulation *enforcement* as opposed to *management*. However, the shift in attitudes, especially at national government level, manifested in the Business Act, which urged municipalities across the country to develop by-laws to regulate street trading. By the late 1990s, the City of Johannesburg was the only municipality in the country to have developed an informal trading policy.

After the development of this policy, the Metro Trading Company (MTC)³ was established to manage informal trading, with the Department of Economic Development maintaining its oversight role (Malemagoba et al. 2012). The MTC focused on the creation and management of markets, which are mainly off-street and enclosed, in an effort to limit and, in extreme cases, eradicate street trading. The city’s approach has historically been focused on formalisation and relocation to markets (Manoko 2012). Since street trading was considered a negative aspect of development, the idea was to create markets that would effectively reduce it. This point is illustrated by Morange (2012: 7), who argues that the “municipality endeavours to contain street trading within formalised, spatially bounded areas, planned and managed by the City planners”.

From the colonial era to the contemporary context of globalisation, there are various similarities in the perception of street trading as an economic activity. The creation of scarcity⁴ has prevailed from the colonial era to the current context, where the city is still concerned with limiting the number of traders

and trading spaces (Pezzano 2012). The scarcity has led to conflicts and contestations among street traders, especially between South Africans and foreigners. Regulations, even in the context of globalisation, still emphasise the maintenance of order and cleanliness, a vision that is unsympathetic to street trading. The city mainly highlights the undesirable aspects of street trading that contradict the image of order, management and efficiency that the city wants to portray. Together with this concern for order, municipal authorities are also concerned about the negative impact of street trading on the city economy (Pezzano 2012). Some authorities argue that property values depreciate in areas that accommodate street trading, preventing the municipality from raising its rates tax base.

Economic role of streets

The design of streets is influenced by narrowly defined concepts emanating from cities of the global North that influence the ideology underpinning municipal policies in the South (Brown 2006). Concepts of aesthetics and public order lead cities of the South to pursue clean and controlled public spaces while neglecting the reality on the ground. Jacobs (1961: 37) argues that authorities assume “city people seek the sight of emptiness, obvious order and quiet”. Coupled with the above, there are also interests, discourses and perceptions, mainly negative ones, associated with the economic role of the street. These include the assumptions that, for instance, traders take over space that is primarily designed for pedestrians; that streets are too narrow to accommodate street trading; and that traders contribute to crime and grime.

A pragmatic alternative reading is beginning to emerge and urban scholars have started introducing into the debate the idea of public spaces as assets for the livelihoods of the poor and as resources for the urban economy (Mendelsohn 2015). Some scholars writing on street trading have begun to conceptualise streets as economic spaces (Brown 2006; Brown & Mackie 2017; Solomon-Ayeh 2011). These scholars

3. A municipal-owned entity mandated to manage informal trading. This entity was disbanded and replaced with the Johannesburg Trading Company in 2014.

4. Mechanism used by the city to limit the number of street traders by limiting trading spaces.

argue that literature on public spaces, particularly on streets, adopts a focus on physical and social qualities of space while effectively overlooking economic ones.

The economic role of streets is crucial because it calls for a response to what is already happening on the ground. Conversely, overlooking the economic role of streets has largely contributed to streets not being designed to accommodate economic activities such as street trading, resulting in traders appropriating space (Lefebvre 1991) to ensure their needs are accommodated (Manoko 2012). Street traders in Johannesburg, for example, have appropriated sidewalks so that they not only cater for pedestrians but also for the traders' economic activity (Abed 2010). Traders' appropriation of space is contested by a variety of stakeholders, including city officials, who respond by evicting or relocating the traders (Brown 2006; Solomon-Ayeh 2011). The contestations arise because the general perception is that the economic role has taken over the street at the expense of other users and uses. This is attested to by Goldstein (2016: 5), who argues that

the competition for livelihoods spills out onto sidewalks, street corners, median strips, parks, doorsteps – vendors convert any open area into a place of business, stripping urban public spaces of their intended purposes and colonizing them for buying and selling.

Ironically, however, street economies thrive in areas with other uses and users, and so do not seek to completely displace them (Abed 2014; Solomon-Ayeh 2011).

'The Piles'

Advantageously located within the Park Station precinct in Johannesburg's inner city (see Figure 1), De Villiers Street between Hoek and Klein streets, commonly known as 'The Piles', is a second-hand clothing market (Abed 2014; Jamal 2011). The Piles "is the biggest and most chaotic second-hand market in downtown Johannesburg. Piles of clothes run along either side [...] on the widest part of the street up to four vendors can be set-up next to each other" (Jamal 2011: n.p.).

Figure 1: The Piles in context

SOURCE: De Villiers Street. 26°11'52.51" S 28°02'45.81" E. Google Earth. 11 May 2015 [accessed 07 December 2017]



De Villiers Street, between Wanderers and Klein streets (highlighted in blue, Figure 1), was pedestrianised in the early 2000s and already accommodated illegal traders selling a variety of goods and services. The pedestrianisation resulted in an increase in the number of illegal traders and the street was eventually designated as a trading site by the MTC in 2005. Officials drew demarcation marks a year or two later. The area currently accommodates an undetermined number of illegal traders and approximately 300 legal traders, with the majority belonging to the African Traders Organisation (ATO)⁵ (Khambule et al. 2014). The traders are predominantly non-South Africans, who sell second-hand clothing, with a minority of South Africans, who sell cooked food, fruit and vegetables.

Everyday practices and contestations

Jacobs (1961: 29) argues that “city sidewalks – the pedestrian parts of the street – serve many purposes besides carrying pedestrians”. Indeed, streets in many cities of the South are characterised by a range of activities that take place in or around them (Brown 2006). However, these streets are often sites of contest among authorities, formal shopkeepers, pedestrians, and street traders. Brown (2006) notes that there are competing interests that fuel contestations over the use of streets: traffic police are concerned with improving traffic circulation, business investors seek a conducive environment that portrays order, pedestrians seek to use the pavements without obstruction, and street traders seek to conduct their business. These contestations are unpacked in detail below using De Villiers Street as a case study.

Location and positioning of traders

Even though sidewalks were not primarily designed to accommodate traders, they have been gradually adapted to suit the current needs, a phenomenon which Abed (2010) describes as the functional activation of public spaces. In activating the functional aspect of streets, location becomes crucial for the

viability of street traders' businesses. The number of potential customers in the area often influences the logic of location. Traders typically locate themselves in streets with high pedestrian flows, particularly those in close proximity to transportation hubs and shopping streets. The combined presence of all these activities can also constitute conflict zones (Brown 2006; Jennings et al. 1995; Setšabi 2006).

The Piles has high pedestrian traffic volumes and hence a pool of potential customers for traders (Jennings et al. 1995). The street accommodates legal traders in a linear market arrangement on both sides of the street, except between Hoek and Wanderers streets, where there is trading on only one side of the street (Figures 2 and 3). This is because there is a church located near Wanderers Street and, according to the prohibited-conduct section of the informal trading by-laws, “no person shall carry on the business of an Informal Trader directly alongside a church, mosque, synagogue or other place of worship” (City of Johannesburg 2009: 11–12). There are, however, illegal traders who often use this side of the street and who avoid confrontation with the Johannesburg Metro Police Department (JMPD) officers by being mobile.

The legal traders are accommodated within designated areas that are indicated by yellow markings on the sidewalk. The location and arrangement of the stalls, as well as the positioning of the traders in relation to the pedestrian walkways and formal shops, looks dysfunctional from a distance, but there is a logic and local order to these arrangements at street level. It sometimes appears as if some traders take up more space than allocated and encroach onto pedestrian walkways. This impression might be attributed to the disorganised-looking arrangement of heaps of second-hand clothes in baskets. However, this messiness and disorderliness is actually ordered, and traders maintain that there is no spillover onto other traders' stalls or onto the pedestrian walkways, and that everyone is within their allocated space. One trader stated that “they [traders] know where their

5. ATO is one of the formally registered street trader organisations operating within the inner city of Johannesburg. It was created in 2010 and formally registered as a profitable organisation (Pty) in 2014, representing approximately 280 street traders operating in The Piles. It has a predominantly non-South African membership.

stall is and use the same-sized baskets which are 2m by 2m” (Street trader 2017). However, some trading stalls clearly go outside the demarcated space, but this is due to the design and shape of the sidewalk, which is not conducive to the affected traders displaying their goods.

Illegal traders are scattered throughout the street in various locations, such as against the walls

and entrances of formal shops and other open spaces (Figures 4 and 5). There is often tension between these traders and city authorities, who harass them, confiscate their goods or collect bribes from them (Figure 6). These traders use makeshift structures to hold their wares, such as sacks and crates that can easily be rolled or picked up when the JMPD officers approach, and put back down when they disappear.

Figure 2: Trading on one side of the street between Hoek and Wanderers streets

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



Figure 3: Trading on both sides of the street between Wanderers and King George streets

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



Figure 4: Illegal traders in front of formal shop entrances

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



Figure 5: Illegal traders on empty space

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



Figure 6: Confiscation of illegal traders' goods

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



Authorities and some formal shopkeepers argue that the existence of traders alongside formal shops causes an economic drain. In some instances, traders block entrances, making it difficult for potential customers to buy from these shops. In other instances, traders cause unfair competition because they attract passing traffic and sell their goods and services at lower prices than formal shops, making it easier for them to grab the majority of customers.

Even though the above holds true, there are also positive and complementary relationships between traders and shop owners, with economic benefits that are not visible to outsiders. For instance, in some spaces, formal shop owners give their wares to street traders to sell on their behalf and traders make arrangements with shop owners to store their wares in their shops for a storage fee (Hebandjoko 2011).

The space between the traders' stalls is narrow, making it difficult for pedestrians to move through. Pedestrians have to create their own pathways on the sidewalks (Figures 7 and 8). One of the

street traders indicated that pedestrian access and use of the street is a challenge because

the initial idea was that the display baskets would be two metres by two metres with one metre in between to allow mingling between traders and customers. But this has not happened; instead the space in between is so small that it does not facilitate mingling with customers especially during peak hours. There appears to have been a miscalculation and disarrangement of the space ... There seems to be no logic for approving the street for a market without the arrangement on the pavement being considered. (Street trader 2017)

In this instance, the authorities did not ensure that the prescribed one-metre space, meant to allow for easy interaction between customers and traders, was maintained. So, in part, those in authority contribute to the limited accessibility of the street and to the very disorder that they condemn and attribute to traders.

Figure 7: Pedestrians move through space between traders

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



Figure 8: Narrow space between traders

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



Figure 9: Pedestrians use the road instead of sidewalks

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



The narrow sidewalks force pedestrians to use alternative routes, such as the space between the traders' stalls and the road (Figure 9). There are also vehicles parked on the street, which makes it difficult for pedestrians to use the road as an alternative. Khambule et al. (2014: 210) speak of the tension and conflict between vehicular and pedestrian movement as a result of the location of street traders by arguing that

[i]n De Villiers, pavements are often so crowded that pedestrians have to use the road to walk. Officials'

response would be to blame the traders for 'creating congestion' – others would say that the cars are the ones occupying most space, on both sides of the street, in unproductive ways.

Jennings et al. (1995: n.p.) argue that “[i]nformal trading has turned the pavements of the Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD) into overcrowded settings, as traders and pedestrians battle for limited space”. Indeed, pedestrians and other users of De Villiers Street complain about congestion, especially during peak hours.

One pedestrian stated that “the street is easy to access but using it is difficult because of congestion. Pedestrians cannot move around easily or even do window shopping” (Pedestrian 2017).

The constant complaints by other street users are best expressed by one of the ATO leaders (in Khambule et al. 2014: 209):

City officials and business people, even street traders located in the nearby more orderly Retail Improvement District, will complain how congested and messy The Piles look; how inappropriate it is, in their view, to put clothing ‘on the pavement’ and sell in ‘constantly overflowing heaps of clothes’.

One of the traders stated that the overcrowding cannot be attributed only to street traders but also to pedestrians and customers: “In De Villiers Street, it is not traders that overcrowd the street, it is customers!” (ATO leader, in Khambule et al. 2014: 209).

The congestion in The Piles makes pedestrians use other streets – such as Noord, Wanderers, King George and Plein – to get to their respective destinations. This is attested to by two pedestrians:

I normally use Wanderers and King George streets to avoid the congestion on De Villiers Street.
(Pedestrian 2017)

I do not use the street [De Villiers] that often, I only use it once in a while. I normally use Plein or Noord streets when going to MTN [taxi rank] or when in town. I prefer these two streets because they are not as busy as De Villiers and there is enough space to move. (Pedestrian 2017)

The use of alternative streets presents a threat to traders because street trading “is driven by the very pedestrians whose movement authorities often say vendors obstruct” (Setšabi 2006: 139). The diversion of pedestrians from De Villiers to other streets not only impacts negatively on traders and their businesses, but also on the formal shops, as they too lose the pool of potential customers.

Infrastructure, services and contradictions

As they were not intended for multiple uses, including street trading, sidewalks in Johannesburg are in a state of decay (Abed 2010). Furthermore, since the provision of trading sites in The Piles, there have not been any physical upgrades to maintain infrastructure and services. This has resulted in the decay of the urban environment, which makes it difficult for pedestrians to navigate the space as well as for traders to conduct their business (Figure 10). Demarcation marks are fading and it is not clear (to outsiders) where trading sites begin and end (Figure 11).

Figure 10: Decaying pavement and missing manhole cover

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



Figure 11: Fading demarcation marks

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



There are also tree rings and bollards on the street, signifying that the original intended users of the street were pedestrians. This street furniture affects the way traders position themselves on the street in relation to pedestrians, which ultimately impacts on the street's functionality. This arrangement hampers the linear arrangement of the street market because some traders' baskets have to be moved back, away from the street furniture obstructions.

Coupled with the decaying physical environment, the street also lacks the infrastructure and services that would facilitate street economies, which results in various vulnerabilities. The main threat

traders face on De Villiers Street is the weather. The space is not conducive to trading during harsh weather conditions, although traders have devised means to overcome these challenges. For instance, when it rains, traders erect gazebos as shelter, not only for themselves and their goods, but also for customers and pedestrians (Figure 12). The gazebo covers are removed when there is no rain or hot sun so that their stock is visible to potential customers (Figure 13). The display units and gazebos are identifying characteristics of the street and constitute the particular culture and identity of The Piles.

Figure 12: Gazebos erected for protection against the sun/rain

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



Figure 13: Gazebo tops down as there is no blazing sun/rain

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



However, even with the gazebos, traders pointed out that the street is not conducive to business, especially when it is raining.

Most traders have gazebos to erect when it is raining or the sun is blazing. The drainage system is out-dated and results in flooding when it is raining which has an impact on our businesses. The pedestrians find it difficult to access and walk on the pavements during this time. (Street trader 2017)

Another street trader highlighted the effects of wet weather conditions on their businesses by stating that “when it rains, we put up our tents and business becomes slow” (Street trader 2017). Another indicated that a water channel, which used to exist between the wall and the trading sites, was removed. This also contributes to the flooding on the street during rainy periods to the extent that traders cannot conduct their business and pedestrians cannot use the space. Wet weather conditions clearly have an immense effect on the functionality of the street. This lack of adequate infrastructure cripples the street’s economic function.

The general argument against street trading is that it generates grime, which is used as a justification for eviction and relocation (Skinner 2008; Solomon-Ayeh 2011). There is a huge pile of rubbish on the street (Figure 14). It is debatable whether this is the fault of traders and their customers, or if the refuse has built up because no municipal bins have been provided, and Pikitup⁶ allegedly does not collect rubbish in the area. In addition to the pile of rubbish, sewage seeps onto the street from adjacent buildings (Figure 15). The filthy conditions deter pedestrians from using the street, and traders thus lose potential customers.

It is argued that street trading, especially when unmanaged, causes a depreciation in property values. As a result, the city is therefore unable to raise revenue from property taxes that could be ploughed back into upgrading the necessary infrastructure and services as well as into urban management. Chaotic and unattractive streets also make it difficult for the city to solicit the private and international investments essential for economic growth and the development of the city (Morange 2012; Pezzano 2012).

Confronted with these challenges, traders have devised mechanisms to combat grime in their place

Figure 14: Dumping due to lack of facilities and services

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



6. A municipal-owned entity of the City of Johannesburg mandated to collect waste.

Figure 15: Sewage seeps onto the street

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



of business. There are daily cleaning services, paid for by traders through ATO, from morning to afternoon. According to the ATO leadership, the cleaning services were introduced because Pikitup no longer cooperates, complaining that the street is too busy and congested to clean. Again, it can be seen how the city contributes to the grime on the street by not providing a service to supplement the traders' efforts.

The city does not provide storage facilities for street traders on De Villiers Street. Accordingly, traders have developed their own informal solutions, with access to storage facilities depending on traders' ability to negotiate with various people and to activate informal networks (SERI 2016). A street trader states that "the storage spaces are at different places and each trader organises where to store their goods. Some traders store their goods within formal shops after arranging with the owner" (Street trader 2017). The lack of adequate and supplementary infrastructure and services in The Piles affects the functionality of the street. The trolleys that traders use to transport their wares are visible during the day and take up space that could otherwise be used to aid easier movement around the street. The trolleys are also pushed around in the morning and afternoon and, in certain instances, cause congestion.

As has been shown, and contrary to dominant discourses, traders cannot take sole blame for the grime on the street. The city also plays a role by not providing supporting infrastructure and services that would complement the micro-level initiatives.

Safety, security and contradictions

Setšabi (2006) notes that, in Maseru, Lesotho, streets accommodating trading are negatively portrayed as being conducive to criminal activity and that this argument is used to evict or relocate traders. The same argument is used in Johannesburg to contest street trading. De Villiers Street has a reputation as a space of criminal acts such as mugging, and this has deterred some people from using the street. Traders indicated that crime is rife on the street and in its surroundings, and people are indeed reluctant to use the street. However, they argue that, since 2005, crime has reduced significantly due to a variety of actors, including traders, the ATO task force (introduced in detail below), as well as the increased visibility of officers from both the JMPD and the South African Police Service (SAPS).

Safety on streets is not primarily guaranteed by the police, but by "networks of voluntary controls" that are enforced by users themselves (Jacobs 1961).

In this case, street traders have helped restore a sense of safety to The Piles. This contradicts the belief that streets with traders harbour criminal activity. Traders have become security operatives in their own right, monitoring what is going on in and around their stalls so that they can protect themselves, their goods, customers, and pedestrians. They are instrumental in noticing patterns of crime and reporting their observations to the ATO task force. This is illustrated by one of the traders, who states that “we are also our own security and ensure that our customers and pedestrians also feel safe and secure” (Street trader 2017).

One interviewee indicated that, before the presence of traders, the street was not safe for pedestrians. “Before they [traders] came, the street was a desert; it was actually dangerous to walk there. They have created the vibe; they have created the congestion by attracting customers” (informal discussion with trader leaders, in Khambule et al. 2014: 209). Although other users regard congestion as a negative effect of street trading, the same congestion is believed to play a crucial role in ensuring users’ safety and security. Jacobs (1961) argues that vibrant and busy streets constitute safe streets while relatively deserted ones feel unsafe.

Traders indicated that individual traders are responsible for the users of De Villiers Street, irrespective of whether they buy from them or not. Monitoring the street is a strategy to restore and protect the ‘good’ image of the street and attract pedestrians, who are also potential customers. However, a contrasting view claims that it is difficult to monitor the street during peak hours because of the high volumes of pedestrians and customers: “During peak hours there is a sense of danger where pickpocketing happens when it is congested” (Customer 2017). This illustrates how contradictory views can arise in the same space, with some people regarding the congestion as positive as far as security is concerned, and others seeing it as negative.

An ATO task force, made up of organisation leaders who are themselves traders, also monitors the street for disturbing activities. These task force members have stalls in The Piles and most have hired people to manage their stalls while they carry out their task force duties. Created in 2010, the task force mainly functions on the ground as a mediation

and problem-solving team (Khambule et al. 2014). When it was first introduced, the task force consisted of approximately 20 traders distributed across different sections of the street to better monitor all the traders. They move around the street monitoring the traders, resolving conflicts amongst traders and other users as well as tackling any issues that might arise in the trading spaces. This body also ensures that ‘street rules’ are adhered to at all times. For instance, traders should only use specified baskets to display their wares.

During the fieldwork for this study, the researchers were challenged by the ATO because we were not following the correct protocol of going through the ATO first to get permission to talk to traders. This clearly shows how the task force monitors the street for unusual activity, and how this restores a sense of safety to the street. The task force plays an oversight role that is unseen and unacknowledged by outsiders. The task force and the traders act as, what Jacobs (1961) would term, invisible ‘eyes on the street’ since their monitoring activities cannot be easily identified, unlike the far more visible SAPS and JMPD patrols. These ‘eyes’ are only visible to outsiders when the everyday order is threatened and street rules are broken.

The ATO patrollers were first hired around 2011 as private security personnel. There was conflict between the ATO, SAPS and JMPD, which led to the patrol service being disbanded in 2014. According to an ATO leader (in Khambule et al. 2014: 220):

SAPS and JMPD would pass and tell our security not to interfere with illegal traders. Yet, the main reason we hired the security is to make sure that nobody would come and create other stands. At this time, the main reason the patrollers were dispatched onto the street was to guard against illegal traders and not necessarily to monitor criminal activities. However SAPS and JMPD would tell patrollers, ‘who are you to harass the people’? You mustn’t do that.

It seems that the conflict between the JMPD and the patrollers arose because of the JMPD’s mandate to enforce by-laws, which includes dealing with illegal traders. This law is often interpreted as granting police personnel a monopoly on harassment, thus

Figure 16: Patrollers' uniform

Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane (2017)



conflict occurred when ATO patrollers were seen to be infringing on the JMPD mandate.

After 2014, and in consultation with the SAPS and the JMPD, the ATO leadership reintroduced the patrollers, ensuring that the different forces work together and do not encroach on each other's responsibilities. The patrollers are understood to be SAPS volunteers and have been incorporated under the banner of Gauteng Province Community Safety and as part of the SAPS Johannesburg Central Patrol Unit.

There is a special arrangement between the SAPS and ATO that permits a certain number of patrollers to specifically patrol The Piles. There are currently eight patrollers on De Villiers Street, who guard and monitor the space in shifts from 6am to 6pm, and who are paid for by the ATO. They wear easily identifiable orange and navy blue branded bibs, t-shirts and caps (Figure 16). The patrollers, working under the supervision of the SAPS, are allowed to

apprehend criminals and take them into police custody. One of the patrollers reported that

on Tuesday, I was in court to witness the sentencing of a cell-phone grabber that I caught in June 2016 and he was given two years in prison. Since there are patrollers on site, crime has gone down on the street and surroundings. (Patroller 2017)

Specifically dedicated to dealing with security issues and petty crimes, the reinstated patrollers seem to be working effectively. However, some JMPD and SAPS officers abuse their power and uniform to harass traders. They demand documentation, especially from foreign-national traders. During this fieldwork, JMPD confiscation of illegal traders' goods was witnessed on three different occasions. In one of the cases, the JMPD officers, employing intimidation tactics, took grapes from an illegal trader without paying for them. SAPS officers on the street search

By using streets and pavements as livelihood assets, traders make a living and thus contribute to society

‘suspicious’ people and check their documentation to determine whether they are foreigners and in the country legally or not, often to solicit bribes.

All these actors play a critical, and sometimes contradictory, role in creating a sense of safety and security for the street’s users. In addition, local conditions, such as street congestion, also play a role in creating safety and security, but can simultaneously contribute to feelings of unsafety and anxiety when too many people are on the street.

Conclusion

Streets are spaces that accommodate a multitude of activities yet authorities argue that pavements should be reserved mainly for pedestrians.

This argument does not take into account the economic role that streets can play. By using streets and pavements as livelihood assets, traders make a living and thus contribute to society. Similarly, pedestrians and consumers are often one and the same. Having street trading in these spaces is useful for customers as they are able to buy goods at their convenience and at affordable prices.

Nonetheless, there are tensions when traders, pedestrians, formal shops, and other users battle for space. Tension also arises because sidewalks are designed without consideration of economic realities on the ground.

The infrastructure and services needed in the streets that currently accommodate trading are overlooked – mainly because the street’s potential economic role is not taken into consideration during the design and planning stages. This lack of forethought fuels contestations between traders and other users because streets in their current conditions cannot accommodate such a diversity of activities, including street trading. These contestations mainly stem from characterisations of the street as a place of order and control.

Authorities also contribute towards the chaos and messiness in these streets because of their failure to upgrade the infrastructure and services

required, such as providing bins and refuse collection. This failure and neglect has led to traders devising informal and ‘chaotic’ spatial arrangements in contrast to official positions.

Contrary to the widely held view that traders are the main contributors towards disorder and messiness on the streets, and in the absence of official interventions, traders in The Piles have put in place measures to bring about order, not only for themselves, but also for other street users. They have hired cleaning services through an informal trader organisation to get rid of the grime on the street that authorities have not dealt with. By not providing street-cleaning and rubbish-clearing services, the city authorities are effectively contributing to the very disorder and lack of control of which they accuse traders.

A similar argument is made about the connection between crime and street trading. Streets with trading activities are portrayed by authorities as sites of criminal activity. However, in refutation of this one-sided discourse, this chapter has illustrated that traders can also contribute positively to security enhancement.

Traders in the study area contribute towards the creation of a safe and secure environment by organising both visible and invisible ‘eyes on the street’. The presence of traders on the street creates a sense of safety and security for pedestrians, customers and formal shops because the traders’ eyes on the streets discourage petty crime.

The presence of patrollers as well as JMPD and SAPS officers also contributes to street safety. It is also true, however, that in certain instances JMPD and SAPS officers commit criminal acts when they harass and take bribes from illegal traders.

These context-specific, micro-spatial practices might not be visible to city authorities, but they do in fact bring about a certain level of order and control through the self-provision of necessary infrastructure and services.

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Photograph by Mamokete Matjomane

Reflection D

Open Streets Cape Town

Rory Williams

We all know it is important for municipalities to spend wisely and provide what is good for the city's inhabitants. Less obvious is how to determine what is good.

It is perhaps easier to see what is not good, like sprawling low-density areas that are difficult to serve with public transport, and difficult for people to get around by walking or cycling – forms of transport that for many people are the only affordable options, yet extract a huge toll in time, risk or direct cost. It is not okay that so many South Africans spend 40% of their income on travel, or get up at 4am so that they can make it to work on time.

Yet even though these concerns are becoming clearer than they were years ago, we still face the challenge of figuring out how planning and design can reverse the negative trends. Planners need to be asking the right questions, and finding sources for the answers. It's not as easy as it sounds.

Conventionally, streets are planned for optimum efficiency and safety. But both of these concepts are defined in limited terms. Where roads go, their widths and curves, methods of limiting conflict and accommodating travel are design questions that are answered for a specific set of technologies that favour people who own cars and live in houses that are served by piped water and underground sewers.

And the answers, not surprisingly, result in cities that take a particular shape that is reproduced over time rather than creating greater levels of inclusion and benefit for residents. Thus the city reflects the values and priorities of those who plan and design it.

At Open Streets Cape Town we are engaged in a project to explore and question these values, not simply as advocacy, but as a programme of exposing people's desires and needs related to streets. We believe that creating value from investment in streets

will depend on giving residents the opportunity to explore alternatives – not simply by expressing their ideas about solutions to difficulties they experience, but by actively getting out onto streets and becoming more aware of how those streets make them feel, how streets limit their lives, and why they interact with public space the way they do.

When we first started holding Open Streets days in 2013, some of us were concerned that people would get bored of them if they didn't offer new experiences each time. Why would people come back for more if all we did was clear a street of cars for a few hours? This misplaced fear didn't take account of the wonder people of all ages feel when they are allowed to occupy a space that is not designed for people, but for machines of metal, glass and plastic. Streets are not truly public space, because they are not designed for 'the public'. They are largely privatised, designed for cars as branded bubbles.

There are good reasons why municipal planners should want streets to support walking and cycling and opportunities for small-scale investment by micro enterprises. But designing for cars means making these activities harder. Pedestrians and other non-driving users of the street are allocated relatively little space, and their needs are secondary to the physics of how cars move and stop.

Curiously, though, some streets work for people despite bad design, while others with theoretically good design do not work. This is a reflection of the complexity and unpredictability of human behaviour in public space, but also of design standards and consultation processes that are inadequate for understanding what kind of design is appropriate in a particular situation.



Streets are not truly public space, because they are not designed for 'the public'. They are largely privatised, designed for cars as branded bubbles

In the temporary situation of Open Streets days, we have found that the ability to attract people is only peripherally related to street design.

Our very first one was on Lower Main Road in Observatory – a place that is well known and already attracts diverse people to its restaurants and clubs, and where businesses and homes are frequented and occupied by people from many different backgrounds, in significant numbers. The street is also conducive to public life: it is designed to ‘human scale’ with a narrow road surface lined by two-storey buildings with balconies so that people can watch the activity below. It feels comfortable and safe. And it did indeed exceed our expectations, attracting thousands of people on our first attempt.

In contrast, our final Open Streets day for the 2016/17 summer season was in Mitchells Plain on Eisleben Road, a massively wide and uncontained road slicing its way through the community in the most unkind way. This four-lane dual carriageway road has nothing going for it in terms of naturally attracting pedestrians – because of both its width and the absence of reasons to be there. Houses turn their backs on this road, and there are no businesses, resulting in a space abandoned by all but the vehicles it was designed for. And yet it also attracted thousands on Open Streets day – in fact, more than our inaugural day in Observatory.

If we are able to attract people to streets that they would otherwise ignore, then we can overcome design that is antagonistic towards public life. Even though the streets we use for Open Streets days revert to their former condition afterwards, we feel that there is value in creating the experience of transgressing on the car’s turf.

It doesn’t tell us directly how to redesign streets, but it creates the possibility of bottom-up input to the planning process. How? By making a different kind of public life more visible and legitimate, and by allowing people who experience it to consider that it might be possible elsewhere. Eisleben Road will never become a permanently pedestrian-focused street, but giving people a taste of something new and enjoyable gets them thinking about doing it on other streets.

There are, after all, many streets in Cape Town that are de facto playgrounds for children who do not

have backyards or safe public parks. On some of these streets, drivers understand that they need to exercise care. There is, of course, a safety risk here; but it is instructive to observe that a different culture of street use can, and does, emerge at a localised level.

Similarly, there are de facto cycle routes that are not identified as such on any map. They are streets where people feel more comfortable for the type of cycling they are doing, whether commuting or training.


Even when design is modified for the explicit purpose of giving cyclists or pedestrians a leg up, so to speak, it doesn’t always work. If it does not address the issue of street culture and power imbalances between different users of the street, then non-drivers will remain at a disadvantage, and they will feel it.

Frustration and even antagonism among people who use streets in different ways or for different purposes will continue if we don’t address this. People are smart. They know when they are being ‘designed out’ of a space, and they often respond by ignoring the rules or defying the intended patterns of behaviour.

We see this when drivers park on cycle lanes, when minibus taxi passengers ask to be dropped off in unsafe locations, and when pedestrians don’t wait for the signal to cross the street. Their needs are not being met with the design that has been chosen. Sometimes there are clever design elements that force safer behaviour, but in many cases these simply reduce the value provided by the street and its various related components, because they are barriers rather than enablers.

So we could ask people what they need, and indeed many planning processes require consultation, but this is generally inadequate. For one thing, statutory requirements and budget limitations mean that consultation doesn’t dig deep enough; but bigger budgets won’t necessarily solve the problem.

What people say they want, or what they will do with a particular space, is often very different from what they actually do when it comes to making their personal decisions. A campaign we are running as I write this in May 2017 asked people who use a particular railway station in Cape Town what they felt were obstacles to cycling to the station. Some said the cost of a bike was too much. We then offered them the



chance to try cycling, at a drastically reduced cost, but they responded with other reasons like “it’s not safe to cycle”. I do not believe that they were lying in the first instance – only that they had not really thought it through, which they did when the opportunity presented itself.

That is a concrete example of why we as Open Streets Cape Town believe in the power of action-based research, and of an experimental approach to planning and design that has come to be known by various labels, from ‘lighter quicker cheaper’ to ‘tactical urbanism’. It is very difficult for anyone to reimagine their life or their streets by simply thinking or talking about it, just as it is hard to know what it really feels like to turn a road into a temporary canvas for street art or to meditate on the tarmac.

Habits die hard, as the saying goes, and this is true whether we find ourselves walking on the sidewalk even when the entire street is cleared of cars, or we are trying to create change in how people move around the city. And habits, I believe, are a key to unlocking value that is latent in the spaces we call streets.

There are certain moments in people’s lives when they change habits because something else has changed – maybe they have a new job, making it possible to use public transport, or they no longer take children to school, opening up other possibilities. So one way to effect behaviour change in the use of streets is to ensure that when people make certain life choices, they are aware of their options for travel. And this can mean giving them the chance to at least try something once – perhaps by providing free train rides during stadium events, or organising a ‘walking bus’ for scholars on a particular school day, or a group bicycle ride to an Open Streets day. These and other initiatives, if planned carefully, can spur people to try something they might otherwise have considered impractical, and result in more permanent behaviour change.

They can also help people to see that it is possible for them to organise things themselves, which is not only empowering but also provides another means for municipalities – if they care to pay attention – to observe what people really want, and to modify designs or rules of the streetscape.

Taking ownership of public space (by creating activity that uses it) sounds good in theory, but people expect space to be managed for them, and it is not always obvious what is allowed or not, and how to turn an idea into a public activity. We have seen how difficult it can be to get permission to do relatively simple things in public space – whether building a ‘parklet’ in a parking bay or arranging an activity that becomes an ‘event’ triggering a plethora of requirements that make it too difficult or costly to carry out.

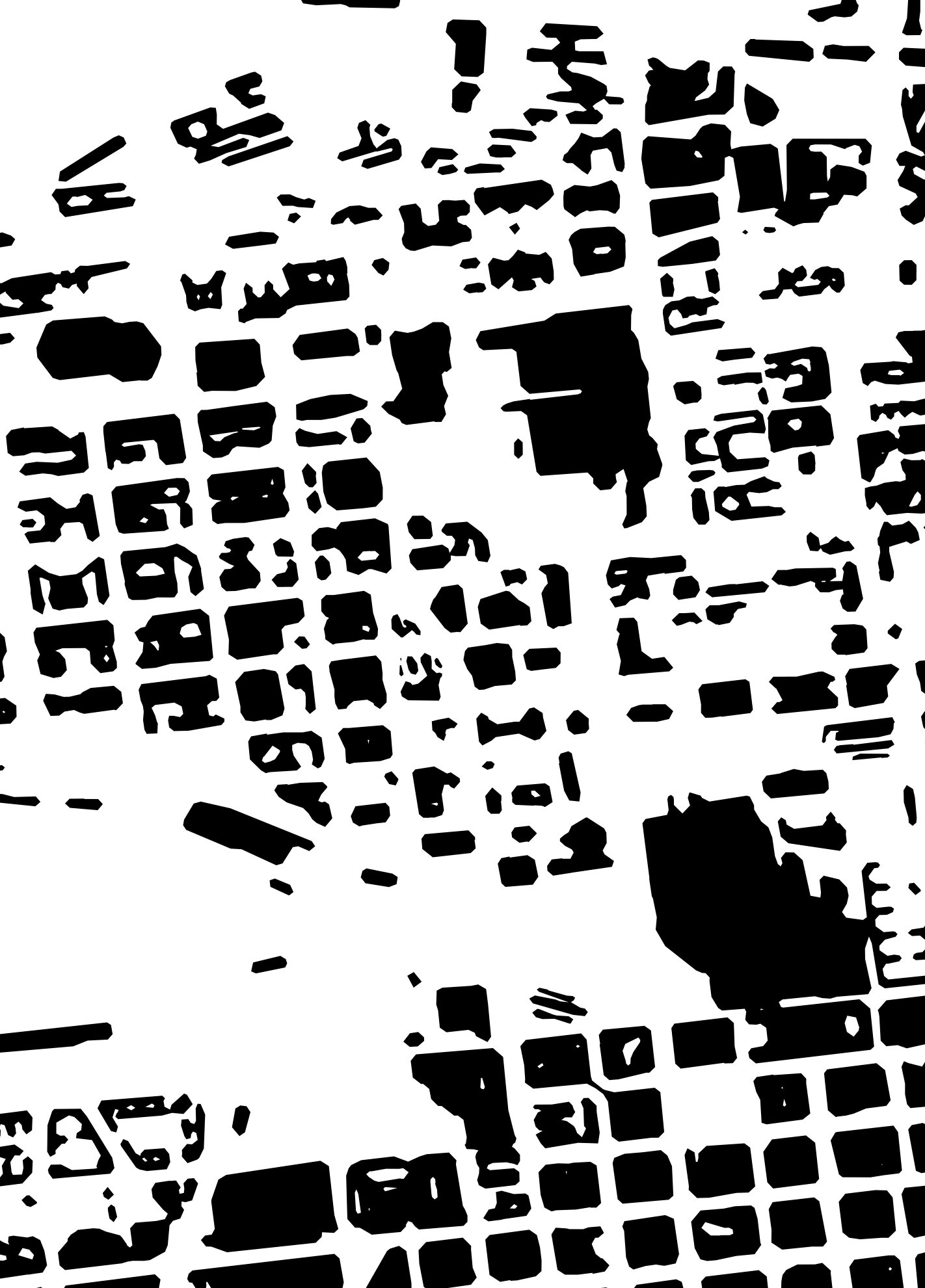
If we want to change the way streets work, we need to change how we see their potential value – and value depends on users. Small interventions by individual citizens or businesses or other organisations can have huge potential not just in changing a particular location, but in making others aware that their areas could change too. And if people begin to think like this, new solutions to old challenges can emerge.

Many Cape Town ward councillors spend their ward budget allocations on speed humps where residents want to reduce vehicle speeds or discourage traffic shortcuts. But this is a knee-jerk response that doesn’t consider what other functions streets can perform. It creates no new value and just makes everyone frustrated.

If we want to change the way streets work, we need to change how we see their potential value – and value depends on users

The well-known *woonerfs* in the Netherlands are one example of a more comprehensive response to similar traffic issues, where streets are more deliberately designed for street activities shared with vehicles.

They cost more, but that cost is creating new kinds of value. And there are cheaper alternatives. The challenge is to understand what is of value to residents and businesses, and adjust planning and budgeting processes to unlock it.



Chapter 8

Quiet encroachments on Braamfontein: A photo-essay

JESSE HARBER

For illustration, please look closely at real cities. While you are looking, you might as well listen, linger and think about what you see.
(Jacobs 1961: xiii)

Figure 1: Juta Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



Figure 2: Installing the smart city on the corner of Rissik and Smit streets

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



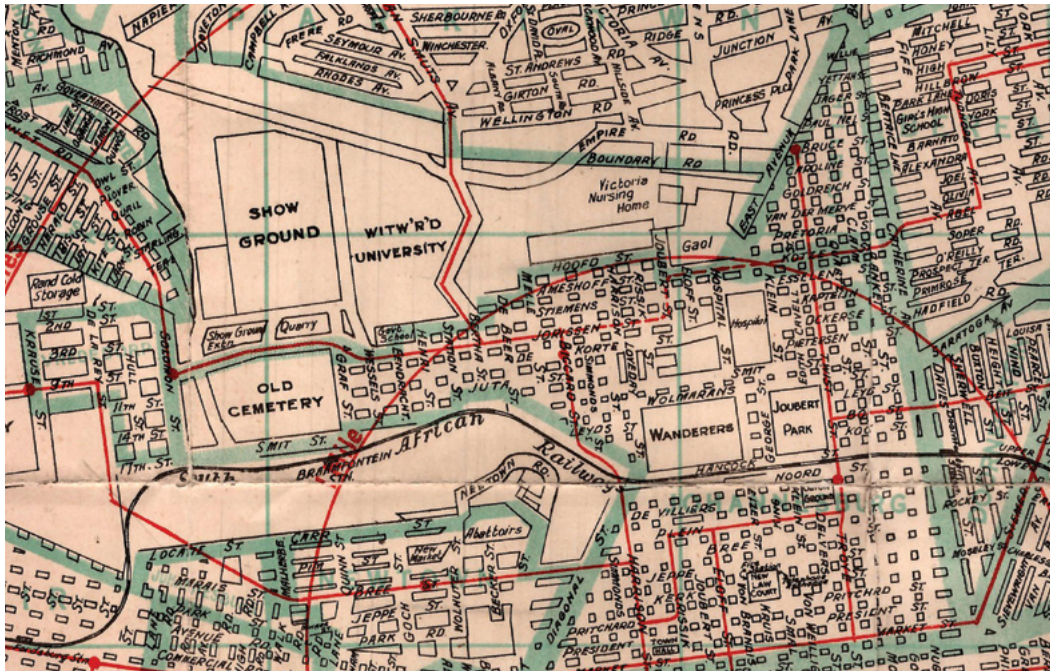
This photo-essay was inspired by two things: the frustrations of my daily walk between opposite corners of Braamfontein – Park Station and University Corner – and a book called *Seeing the Better City: How to explore, observe, and improve urban space* (2016) by Charles R Wolfe, a photographer and land use and environmental lawyer. Wolfe argues that “[a]uthentic human reflection should not be shortchanged by pundits’ voices and augmented realities (such as maps, depictions, and overlays) that come from observers unfamiliar with the nuances of a community” (2016: 16).

He argues for the urban diary as an approach to “authentic human reflection”: “The best way to experience and understand urban energy is to immerse yourself in these urban surroundings –

and, in the process, record what you experience” (2016: 17). By experiencing an urban landscape directly and personally, an observer can access it in a way that isn’t possible when mediated by maps, statistics or expert opinions. Wolfe’s preferred tool for experiencing the city and recording it is his camera, and much of the book is a useful guide to using photography to enhance one’s experience and understanding of the city. Nonetheless, the core insight is simple: that those of us who might be tempted to understand the city through statistics and sophisticated analysis, and most of all those of us who would try and change the city in ways large or small, should make sure to return to the human scale of direct perception and experience of the city.

Figure 3: Braamfontein, detail from a map of Johannesburg c. 1929

SOURCE: Johannesburg 1912 (2015)



The agricultural SHOW GROUND, QUARRY and GOVT SCHOOL are now part of WITW'R'D (Witwatersrand) UNIVERSITY along with two adjacent blocks; WANDERERS cricket ground was displaced by Park Station and moved to the northern suburbs; the GAOL did sterling service for successive oppressive regimes until being converted into a Constitutional Court and museum complex. The map, otherwise, remains largely accurate with regard to Braamfontein.

This is not far from Pieterse's critique of

mainstream accounts of the city [...] a litany of statistics to capture (physical and social) infrastructural and economic absences, stylized accounts of livelihood patterns to give one a sense of everyday economies and levels of dependency on mutual support and/or state investments [...] These informational coordinates are, of course, important and relevant, but they typically reveal a lot less than they conceal. (2008:111–112)

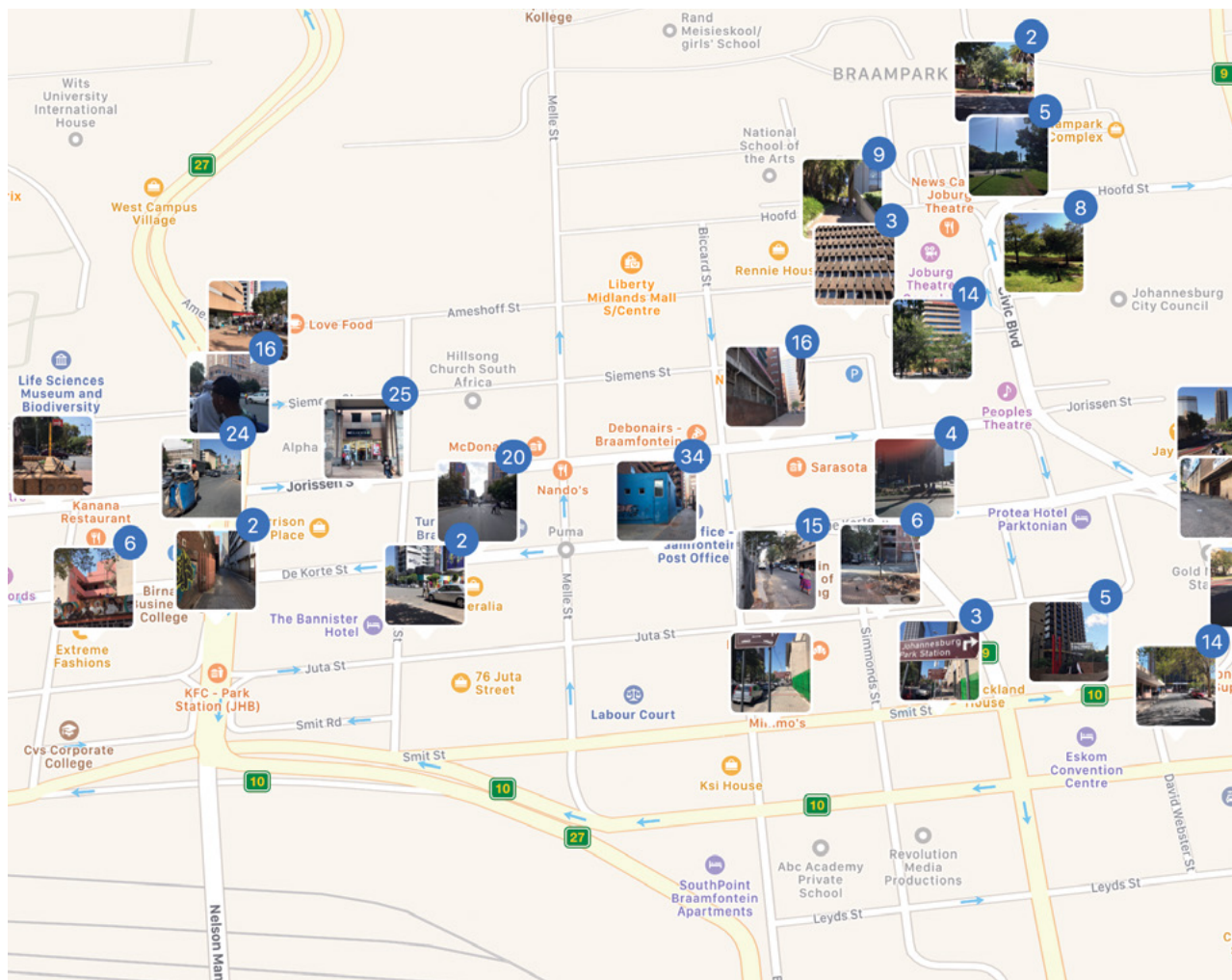
His response is “a nuanced exploration of social and psychic dynamics” (2008: 112). Another, perhaps, may be the immediacy of direct experience and photography.

What follows is neither comprehensive nor intended to be; it is a series of vignettes arranged neither by space nor time, but rather to tell something of a visual story of the research process. Wherever possible, I have tried to be cognisant of my ‘eye’ as a photographer although, inevitably, there will be absences that are invisible to me. Above all it is an exercise, perhaps not in seeing the better city, but in trying to see the city as it is.

Braamfontein, or Bramble Fountain, was one of the farms on which early Johannesburg was built. In 1893 the area that now bears the name was marked out in one-acre stands for houses (Lushaba 2013). It stood between ‘Johannesburg’, now the central business district (CBD), and the north-facing mansions over the ridge in Parktown. Braamfontein developed

Figure 4: Distribution of photographs taken for this research

Map compiled by Jesse Harber using Apple Maps, © 2012–2017 Apple Inc.

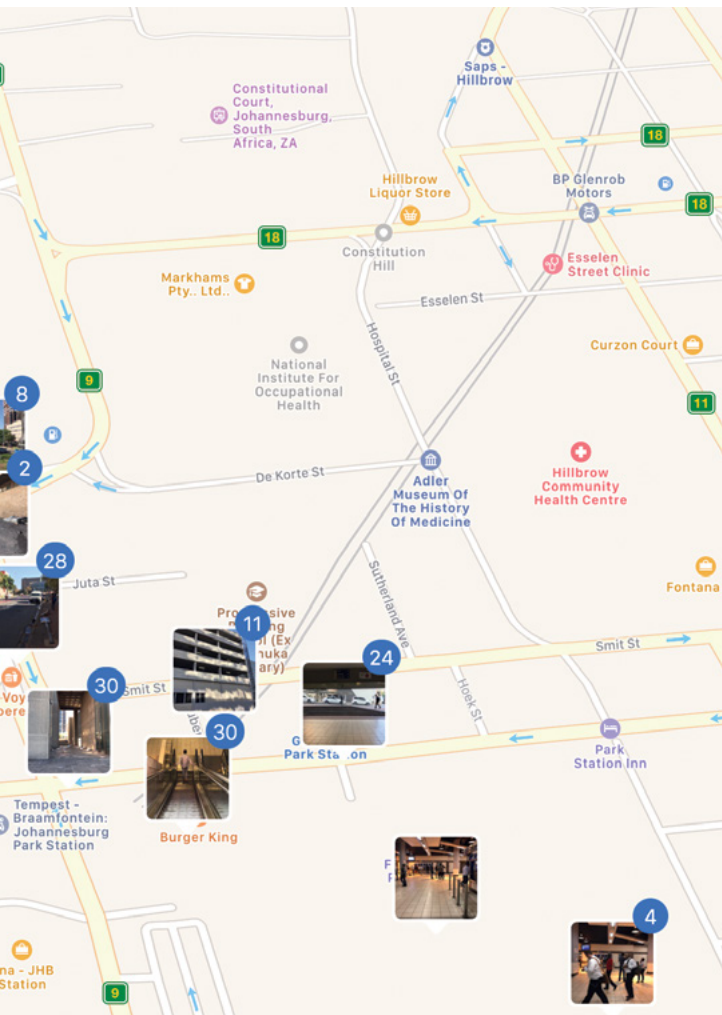


Despite my efforts to spread coverage of the photographs for this study, when mapped they show visible areas of focus and omission.

The clear concentration along various routes between the Gautrain station and University Corner is an unusually obvious example of a researcher's bias.

from east to west, reaching its current extent by 1909 (De Beer 2012); its street plan has barely changed since (Figure 3). For the subsequent half-century it housed the white, largely Afrikaans-speaking working class in “semi-detached cottages, small flats, cheap hotels” (Beavon 2004: 159), limited by law to four storeys high (Hart 1969).

Simultaneous post-war booms in the economy and the city's population led to northwards pressure from the CBD, which was enabled in the 1950s by the construction of five bridges over ‘Johannesburg's river’ – the railway tracks – and new commercial zoning in Braamfontein, and later by amended by-laws permitting construction of much taller buildings



(Beavon 2004). “The opening up of Braamfontein as a high-rise extension of the CBD is directly related to the development of the new station complex and the building of the series of new traffic viaducts over the main-line railway traffic” (Chipkin 1993: 259).

Johannesburg’s first major node outside the CBD, Braamfontein continued densifying until the mid-1980s. In the 1990s it was caught up in the exodus of businesses from the CBD to the northern suburbs, but kept enough major institutions – private and public

– to remain something of a commercial centre. The area nonetheless deteriorated, with many buildings falling vacant and then derelict.

A combination of interventions, including an urban renewal programme by the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) and the establishment of the Braamfontein Improvement District (now the Braamfontein Management District, or BMD), has resulted in enormous investment since the mid-2000s. The JDA’s work included restoring a number of the government buildings in the area, creating a public square and creating “distinctive street lighting designed to cater to pedestrians, unique paving patterns and street furniture to give the area a clear identity” (Peyroux 2008: 150). Today, Braamfontein is dominated by the the Civic Centre, the seat of the city’s government and “an overpowering bureaucratic presence above desolate, uncomfortable granite-chip piazzas, dissociated, as we would expect, from meaningful democratic life” (Chipkin 1993: 277); major institutions of tertiary education and their students; and a number of significant private and public institutions, with an assortment of street-facing retail and entertainment.

The choice of Braamfontein as a site for this study was obviously not strategic; nonetheless, it is an interesting place to think about streets. Its particular history means that most of its construction was in a period between Johannesburg’s determined turn towards automobility, and the widespread urban decentralisation and deconcentration that followed. As a result it is high density and mixed use, certainly to a greater degree than much of Johannesburg, but nonetheless shows a deep ambivalence to pedestrians in its urban design. First built in the space between Parktown’s mansions in the north and the industry of the CBD and ‘native location’ in the south and east, respectively, it has remained a space for hurried traversal despite becoming a major node in its own right. In these ways, as spatially, socially and otherwise unusual as Braamfontein is in Johannesburg, it embodies some of the paramount contradictions of the city. This study explores some of those contradictions.

Figure 5: The hazards of Jorissen Street, corner with Bertha Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



This research was inspired in part by the frustration of moving through Braamfontein as a pedestrian and user of public transport. Several sources of frustration are visible in Figure 5: dangerously unmaintained infrastructure; overwhelmed services; and a bicycle lane and bus stop foiled by a taxi. Figure 6 shows the plaza across the road from Figure 5, in front of Jorissen Place. A large open space, it lacks street furniture or other amenities and is almost unused except to access the building. 'Jittery space' is one of Flusty's (1997) 'exclusionary design strategies'

that drives people away through patrols or active surveillance, but what diverts people from here is closer to Jacobs's (1961) claim that open space itself is hostile to casual occupation: feelings of exposure are sufficient to keep the area vacant and unused. The plaza is wide open, sparsely punctuated by trees and dominated by Jorissen Place itself, a hulking post-modern pile that curves around the space on three sides and overlooks it with sinisterly dark windows. A pharmacy to one side and ATMs to the other are well subscribed, but convince no one to linger in the space.

Figure 6: Jorissen Place

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



Unlike the covered pavement across the street, which is well used, pedestrians mostly avoid this wide-open space.

Figure 7: De Korte Street, between Melle and De Beer streets

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



As is typical of Braamfontein and many of central Johannesburg's most-walked areas, roads are wide and traffic lights timed for cars to move at high speed. De Korte and Jorissen streets bisect Braamfontein, each a one-way zonal thoroughfare which, together with Bertha Street (the primary meridional thoroughfare) divides the area almost perfectly into four. Each of these streets is very busy at all times of the day, and positively congested at rush hour.

Moving progressively southeast into Braamfontein, however, it is possible to see the street being given over to pedestrians. There is a mismatched variety of street furniture, often ignored. One designer, part responsible for some avant-garde furniture on Juta Street, decries the fact that no one ever realised it could be sat on. But the schemes of the urban designers notwithstanding – whether to encourage or discourage stopping, sitting, sleeping, or otherwise living on the street – pedestrians have undertaken to do these things and more regardless.

Figure 8: Gautrain entrance, Wolmarans Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



The unusual pattern of wear on the sign puzzled me for a long time, until one day I came across some children in school uniform determinedly scraping away what little remained of the 'P'. The project must have taken them months.

Figure 9: Transnet building, Smit Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



You can design a bench for a man, but you cannot make him sit on it.

Figure 10: Transnet building, Smit Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



Figure 11: South Point, Melle Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



South Point actively curates the shops and restaurants in its buildings so as to create a student 'vibe'.

On Melle Street one can find something unusual for Braamfontein: a public space being used for its intended purpose. Despite oddly shaped furniture, this square is very well subscribed. It is the result of South Point, a private company, buying a cluster of buildings and demolishing one in the middle of the block to create a plaza. Most of the buildings surrounding the plaza have been converted into student residences, while the bottom floors are a mix of retail, restaurants and bars.

The officially nameless square is so well used for a number of reasons. For one, students are excellent urbanists: they walk to their place of occupation, and

depend on local shops for groceries and local bars for entertainment. Their schedules and the rhythm of their days allow for casual use of the street for other pastimes, whether sitting with friends or dancing on the street – both frequently seen in this square – and they have not yet retreated from the city into dwellings large enough to contain these and other activities. The square itself is visually and spatially interesting, with multiple levels and spaces of varying exposure; despite being privately owned and ringed with private restaurants, there is a genuine publicness to the space.

Figure 12: South Point, Melle Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



The curation of the experience is visible here, with prominent branding framing access to an alley in which a tree has been planted.

Figure 13: Alley between Melle and Biccard streets

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



This is the same tree as in Figure 12, from the other side. Here it is clear that the 'access' is only nominally intended as such: the alley is utilitarian, unkempt, smelly, and otherwise a disconcerting route to Biccard Street. The alley features some street art, but is little-used. Braamfontein's alleys are left over from the area's low-density suburban past, when they were used for collection of night soil by cart.

Figure 14: De Beer Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



Squarely in the student-centred area of Braamfontein, these businesses are more outward-facing than most – onto the narrow pavement.

Figure 15: Corner of De Beer and Juta streets

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



Advertisers have taken advantage of this orientation towards the street: here is the view from the businesses in Figure 14.

Figure 16: Corner of Juta and Simmonds streets

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



Few people in Braamfontein wanted their photo taken. In east Braamfontein, where there has been less physical investment in street life by businesses or the city, it is challenging to document the use of the street.

As one moves east and south through Braamfontein, the street becomes visibly less ‘managed’. This is especially striking as one leaves the BMD, a privately owned ‘City Improvement District’ that covers the area of Braamfontein between the University of the Witwatersrand and the Joburg Theatre. This area coincides with the major institutional employers and landlords in the area: outside it, both the businesses and the buildings tend to be smaller and the residents and workers less affluent. While part of the story

is that the property owners in the BMD dedicate resources to cleaning and guarding the district’s streets, there has also been displacement of poor people and their street-level activities to those parts of Braamfontein outside of private urban management. Even where there is visible private security outside of the BMD, it doesn’t seem to result in people vacating the street as they do inside the BMD: in effect, the whole district has been made ‘jittery’ (Flusty 1997), at least to certain classes of people.

Figure 17: Students outside Rosebank College, Bertha Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



Figure 18: Transporting waste for recycling, Bertha Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



Figure 19: The Miners' Monument

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



The people who work and sleep here are all but invisible from most sides. Recently, many more people than can be seen here have taken up occupancy.

Figure 20: Sleeping on Smit Street

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



I set out to document the stifling of pedestrian Braamfontein by people-hostile, car-centred urban design. What I found, instead, is a streetscape that is not stifled at all: it is buoyantly, exuberantly used and abused by the varied people who populate it. Although Braamfontein is as spatially hostile to pedestrians as much of Johannesburg is, there have been good-faith attempts to reduce that hostility, including through urban design. And regardless of these attempts of decidedly mixed success, the people of Braamfontein

get on with living regardless, sometimes in keeping with the intentions of the designers and planners, often subverting them.

This resembles what has been called ‘ordinary urbanism’ (see for example Tonkiss 2013), and, by Bayat, the “quiet encroachment of the ordinary”: “the silent, protracted and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on those who are propertied and powerful in a quest for survival and improvement of their lives” (2000: 24). This is in part a recognition

that the ‘designer’ is only one actor determining the urban form, which rests “not on the basis of conscious design objectives, but out of our intentions to do *other* things: to make a living, find a space to sleep, get from A to B and on to Z according to routes and along desire paths unanticipated by the transport planners” (Tonkiss 2013: 7). All this and more is visible on the streets of Braamfontein.

What is not visible in Braamfontein, for the most part, is any sign that the quiet encroachment has been consolidated by its actors. Bayat (2000) uses an illegal tap on a municipal power line as an example of this concept: a straightforward appropriation of state resources by the poor to improve their lives. This is commonplace in Johannesburg – indeed in areas that immediately neighbour Braamfontein – as is much more dramatic, even less quiet encroachment: entire settlements representing claims staked outside of the niceties of the law.

But in Braamfontein, the movement of encroachment is not entrenched into new positions. The built environment stubbornly holds to the vision of the architect, the designer and the planner. In Braamfontein the state is strong enough, and present enough – and capital is stronger and more present still – to prevent quiet encroachment from reclaiming ground from the formal, planned city.

As a result, the vibrancy of ordinary urbanism happens in the activities of the street, and – we might presume – behind closed doors, in those spaces that are strictly private. But the built environment itself is immunised against ordinary urbanism and quiet encroachment. The pedestrians and users of Braamfontein are not able to “bend parts of the city to their will by defending and consolidating the micro-gains they succeed in making by simply surviving the viciousness of the city’s economic reproduction” (Pieterse 2008: 115). Those micro gains remain micro.

Figure 21: Park Station

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



What is absent in Braamfontein is incrementalism – “laborious and historical accretion” (McFarlane 2011: 659) – and as a result the built environment reflects first the master plan of the urban designer, and second, the master plan of capital. However, this need not be the case: it is eminently possible for Braamfontein to be opened to incrementalism, to allow its quiet encroachment to take forms that persist through time. It would require an approach that does not come naturally to South African cities, one “comfortable with continuous change, partial control, pluralism, and participation” (Lynch 1984: 21).

Which is not to say that putting this approach in place would be easy. It would require attenuation of the current grip that property owners have on the use of the streets of Braamfontein, both directly and through organisations like the BMD. It would require the city to stop equating urban management with the ruthless persecution of informality, and indeed to take a more sympathetic view of informality in general. Perhaps most of all, it would require a definition of design that “raises questions about differential rights to make decisions over, and make physical interventions in, urban environments; and about variable claims to make, use and occupy city spaces” (Tonkiss 2014: 6).

Figure 22: Corner of De Korte and Station streets

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



It would also require resistance to the discourse of ‘renewal’ and ‘reclamation’. For all that Braamfontein’s public and private tenants have improved the fortunes of (some of) the area since the mid-2000s, they have done so partly by sweeping away everything that was not literally mortared down. The city would likely argue that it was necessary in order to attract private investment once again; that may well be the case. But renaming the Braamfontein Improvement District the Braamfontein Management District obscures the fact that ‘management’ is just renewal on an ongoing basis: the operationalisation of “the twin fantasies of order and omnipotence” (Koolhaas 1995: 29).

Having partly relocated the agency of city-making away from the urban designer and the planner to the ordinary city-dweller, the challenge

is now to enable that agency. In a political economy that marginalises the agency of the working class, the unemployed and the otherwise excluded – and an urban political ecology that marginalises the agency of pedestrians and public transport users – this may not be easy.

We might start by recentring the pedestrian in policy. This is not to reify walking: there is nothing inherently noble, or more authentically urban, about pedestrian life. But a policy focus on pedestrians can serve as a corrective to the current state of affairs, which is that in Johannesburg – as elsewhere – the car is paramount. Braamfontein, despite being a mixed-use, mixed-income destination suburb, serves the rest of the city as something like a highway interchange, cut through as it is by half a dozen major thoroughfares.

Figure 23: Outside the Joburg Theatre

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



One danger of a car-centred policy focus on mobility is visible here: that every part of the city becomes externalised, designed primarily to enable the efficient movement of people through it; and the only true terminus neighbourhoods become commuter satellite settlements, primarily by virtue of their remoteness – in other words, Johannesburg as it exists today. Pedestrian- and public transport-focused policy, on the other hand, requires the neighbourhood to function first on its own terms, with a liveable, functional local economy and spatial form.

The work of private developers of student accommodation, and the Re-Imagining Wits Properties Project (RIWPP), a project of the University of the Witwatersrand, are each in their way doing exactly that. The new private residences that are being developed, often densifying already dense blocks, concentrate students in key parts of Braamfontein. These buildings offer small, relatively affordable apartments, usually without on-site parking and

other typical Johannesburg amenities. They represent perhaps the most concerted effort by any institutional actor in the city to house people as close as possible to their place of occupation; to provide them with as complete a set of amenities as they need; and to do it while providing a liveable, walkable public environment. To the latter two ends, one private developer and – increasingly – the RIWPP actively curate the ground-floor commercial tenants of these buildings as part of the effort to create a student ‘lifestyle’. This model is not directly scalable to the rest of the city, but it represents a more comprehensive and cooperative approach to urban design than is typical for Johannesburg or South Africa.

More than recentring the pedestrian or the resident of an area, to serve the ordinary urbanists of Braamfontein, the policy – and the political economy – of the neighbourhood would have to be made more amenable to the slow accretion of influence by people who are neither urban planners nor property owners.

Figure 24: Outside Park Station

Photograph by Jesse Harber (2017)



In the short term, this could be as simple as a greater tolerance for informal trading, and encouraging street-level traders to establish themselves, build up their businesses over time, and gradually adapt the built environment and their stalls to one another. In the longer term, new zoning rules about what businesses may settle on the ground floor of Braamfontein's skyscrapers can encourage smaller businesses to displace the large franchises, and by-laws can encourage them to extend into the street. As for residents and passers-by, participatory urban

design might allow them to extend their influence into formal planning processes, and simply reducing the space currently dedicated to cars in the form of street parking and four-lane roads could allow pedestrians to come into their own.

The route to a more inclusive, less hostile streetscape is long, and not necessarily obvious. Photographs are an excellent way to see, and show, the city as it is – it is less clear that they can show it as it could be. The better Braamfontein, as it were, eludes us yet.

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Photograph by Siegwalt Küsel



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Photograph by Darya Maslova

GAUTENG CITY-REGION OBSERVATORY

6th Floor University Corner
11 Jorissen St (Cnr Jorissen and Jan Smuts)
Braamfontein
Johannesburg
Gauteng, South Africa

tel +27 11 717 7280
email info@gcro.ac.za
www.gcro.ac.za

