



GCRO OCCASIONAL PAPER  
# NO. 14



# **Conceiving, producing and managing neighbourhoods**

COMPARING URBAN  
UPGRADING INITIATIVES  
IN JOHANNESBURG

MAY 2019

**Researched and written by**

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**GCRO**

Gauteng  
City-Region  
Observatory

**A Partnership of:**



**CONCEIVING, PRODUCING AND MANAGING NEIGHBOURHOODS:  
COMPARING URBAN UPGRADING INITIATIVES IN JOHANNESBURG**

**May 2019**

**e-ISBN:** 978-0-6399873-1-6

**ISBN:** 978-0-6399364-5-1

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**Design:** Breinstorm Brand Architects

**Cover Image:** Alet Pretorius

**Peer reviewer:** Gordon Pirie

**All images unless stated:** Alet Pretorius

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**Published by** the Gauteng City-Region Observatory

(GCRO), a partnership of the University of Johannesburg, the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, the Gauteng Provincial Government and organised local government in Gauteng (SALGA).

# **Conceiving, producing and managing neighbourhoods**

Comparing urban upgrading initiatives in Johannesburg

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors would like to thank all those who contributed to our research and kindly shared their time and experiences with us. This occasional paper would not have been possible without the cooperation of officials from the Johannesburg Development Agency, representatives of the Ekhaya Residential City Improvement District and the Norwood and Orchards Residents' Association, and several informal traders and car guards working in Hillbrow and Norwood. We are also grateful to Claire Bénit-Gbaffou who participated alongside us in the Norwood leg of the

research project, as well as to Richard Ballard for his encouragement and oversight. Particular thanks also go to our GCRO colleagues Samy Katumba and Mncedisi Siteleki for creating the maps which appear in this report.

GCRO would like to thank Dr Gordon Pirie who, as anonymous peer reviewer, provided valuable input that helped shape and sharpen the content. We also thank Hazel Cuthbertson for her careful copy editing of the work.

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>BID</b>	business improvement district
<b>BRT</b>	bus rapid transport
<b>CID</b>	city improvement district
<b>GAPP</b>	Grant Avenue Precinct Plan
<b>JDA</b>	Johannesburg Development Agency
<b>JMPD</b>	Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department
<b>NBF</b>	Norwood Business Forum
<b>NORA</b>	Norwood and Orchards Residents' Association
<b>RCID</b>	residential city improvement district
<b>TOD</b>	transit-oriented development



A photograph of a street scene in a developing area. In the foreground, a man wearing a white headwrap and a dark jacket is standing next to a stall. The stall has a wooden table with various items on it, including a large blue plastic bottle, a black plastic bag, and some food items wrapped in red and white checkered cloth. There is also some green leafy material scattered on the table. In the background, a white pickup truck is parked on the street. Behind the truck, there is a building with a sign that says "FLUX". Other vehicles and buildings are visible in the distance. The overall scene suggests a busy, informal market or street food area.

## Executive summary

# Executive summary

This occasional paper examines two instances of urban upgrading and neighbourhood improvement in Johannesburg, Gauteng. It is primarily concerned with exploring different strategies and approaches to urban governance and upgrading adopted in the vastly different sub-regions which make up Johannesburg's urban landscape. Using the case studies of the Ekhaya residential city improvement district (RCID), located in Hillbrow, in the heart of the inner city, and the Grant Avenue Precinct Plan (GAPP), which was developed and briefly implemented in Norwood, a wealthy suburb located to the north of the inner city, it illustrates the various ideals, ambitions, visions, challenges, compromises and creative strategies required to make interventions at the sub-local level. It also outlines the fault lines, points of divergence and conflicts that exist in different settings, and that frequently hinder or frustrate state-led efforts at urban improvement.

This report is organised into three main sections. The first, 'Conceiving neighbourhoods', outlines the visions and ideals that have shaped neighbourhood formation, planning processes and urban upgrading initiatives in the two case-study sites. It demonstrates that Johannesburg's vastly unequal landscape makes it difficult to articulate a single, unified vision for the city. Improvement in Hillbrow has entailed dealing with day-to-day deprivations, service delivery failings and basic urban management. The visions that informed the urban regeneration agenda being pursued in the Ekhaya RCID are therefore mundane, but capable of making significant improvements to the area and to the lives of its residents. In contrast, the visions that informed the precinct strategy developed for Norwood were far more ambitious and aimed at generating drastic change in the built environment and social landscape. However, financial constraints, organised opposition from affluent residents and lack of support from the private sector, have meant that these broad ambitions have been difficult to realise. The section therefore presents the divergent priorities, agendas

and spatial visions that characterise Johannesburg's landscape, as well as some of the pitfalls and obstacles that the local authorities encounter when trying to formulate visions for neighbourhoods and bring about social and spatial change.

The second section, 'Producing neighbourhoods', examines the various tactics, strategies, planning mechanisms and material objects that are used to bring visions to life and give form to neighbourhood improvement schemes. It demonstrates how different security infrastructures are mobilised in the Ekhaya RCID to give form to the neighbourhood and separate it from the general disorder and decay that characterises Hillbrow. While these infrastructures have had significant effects on the neighbourhood and contributed to improved feelings of safety, they have also introduced inequality into the area, as some areas enjoy improved safety and levels of policing, with crime being displaced to surrounding neighbourhoods that have yet to attract private investment. The different tools, planning strategies and material interventions used in Norwood are highlighted and demonstrate the range of tactics and techniques at planners' and the state's disposal.

The section further shows that while physical infrastructure is important, it is not sufficient to generate neighbourhoods and associational life. Rather, the formation of neighbourhoods and the realisation of visions for improved forms of belonging and social cohesion rely on the creation of social networks, infrastructures and opportunities for socialisation and shared recreation. Based on experiences of upgrading two parks, Ekhaya Park in Hillbrow and Norwood Park, the report emphasises the importance of public space, and the shared ideals and commitments to social inclusion that should inform planning processes and urban interventions at the local level. However, the section also documents the prejudices, fault lines and exclusionary attitudes that frequently emerge during such processes.

The third section, 'Managing neighbourhoods', describes the institutional arrangements, day-to-day activities, forms of partnership and adaptive strategies used to manage urban interventions and regulate neighbourhoods. It demonstrates contrasting viewpoints and approaches to dealing with various urban challenges, particularly around the role and place of informal activities in the two neighbourhoods. In Hillbrow, the official position is that informal trading is not permitted. However, in reality, actors with degrees of authority and power in the area recognise the need to be tolerant towards people engaged in this practice, and they frequently cooperate with some informal traders. The section shows how urban governance requires the formation of arrangements and partnerships of convenience at the sub-local level, and that adaptive, tolerant urban management practices are required, particularly in stressed neighbourhoods characterised by high levels of poverty. In contrast, although the official plans formulated for the GAPP stipulated that vulnerable groups such as homeless people, car guards and informal traders were to be protected, in reality,

intolerant attitudes were evident and powerful residents and businesses used a variety of tactics to marginalise these groups and attempted to remove them from the area. The section therefore shows how practical governance, and power and resource differentials, can often supersede or subvert good intentions. Despite the tolerant attitudes displayed towards informal traders in the Ekhaya RCID, research revealed other forms of exclusion and intolerance in the neighbourhood, directed towards homeless people and people residing in derelict buildings in particular. The report emphasises that everyday practices can subvert inclusive goals and that the realisation of visions for urban upgrading and improvement necessarily generates new forms of exclusion.

This paper concludes by presenting some key findings and recommendations based on the research. It emphasises the difficult compromises, uncertain partnerships, place-specific strategies, creative thinking and commitment to social inclusion needed to inform future urban upgrading interventions throughout the city.





A vibrant street scene in a developing country. In the foreground, two young girls in green and white school uniforms are walking towards the camera. The girl on the left is looking directly at the camera, while the girl on the right is smiling. Behind them, other children and adults are visible, though slightly out of focus. In the background, a large sign for 'OneCell' is mounted on a building, with the text 'Public Phone' visible below it. The scene is set on a busy street with various structures and a blue and white striped awning on the right side.

# Introduction

# Introduction

This paper focuses on the different meanings of community, neighbourhood, public good and self-interest in two different settings around Johannesburg. It examines the ways in which these competing conceptions manifest in and around public spaces and work with or against state-led projects and processes of urban transformation.

In a number of instances around Johannesburg, local government is actively attempting to restructure urban space. Spatial restructuring in South Africa centres on the need to transform urban areas and promote racial and class integration, as well as create denser and more sustainable city forms. However, there are several obstacles that make these ambitions difficult to realise. The powerful vested interests that coalesce around property ownership, patterns of exclusive community formation, actions driven by self-interest and the abilities of powerful groups to actively resist state processes are crucial impediments that have to be negotiated if change is to occur. In addition, local government has to contend with very real resource and capacity constraints.

Historically, the state's limitations created opportunities for wealthy property owners and communities to implement their own private solutions to urban management issues. These steps frequently aggravated forms of inequality and exclusion. There is thus a pressing need for new forms of public-private partnership to emerge. These should ideally allow state resources to be stretched and alternative funding streams to be realised, while still working with broad definitions of 'the public' and protecting vulnerable groups. In this paper, we examine two fundamentally different urban regeneration projects that are good examples of innovative approaches – the Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme and the Grant Avenue Precinct Plan (GAPP).

In comparing the two cases, this paper explores the various dynamics that affect the formation of neighbourhoods – ideals, aspirations, visions,

prejudices, challenges and obstacles – as well as the processes through which these manifest socially and spatially. It raises questions about the extent to which there is a shared spatial vision across different neighbourhoods, and the capacity of the state to plan for the city as a whole, in a context of deeply divided and fragmented localities. A comparison of the two initiatives allows for a clearer understanding of the various interests and forms of civil society that are present in different parts of the city, and the extent to which these create both obstacles and opportunities for transformation. Comparing the two case studies draws attention to particular local dynamics and challenges and demonstrates how these need to be understood and grappled with in order for wider visions to be realised.

## Key research questions

For this research, the priority was understanding how particular urban spaces are conceived and produced across a variety of scales and through various techniques and practices. This paper identifies, describes and discusses the divergent socio-spatial visions underlying the two improvement districts. Our research also examined the processes through which visions are translated into spatial realities. The paper thus explores the various techniques that actors have used in different settings in Johannesburg not only to envisage, but also to actively produce neighbourhoods. In attempting to understand these issues, the following broad research questions were devised:

- What types of neighbourhoods are being envisaged? By whom?
- What ideals inform these visions?
- How do these visions fit into broader, city-wide priorities and ambitions?



Figure 1: **Location of Hillbrow and Norwood.**

**SOURCE:** Google Maps (2017)

- What capacity does the state have to mobilise diverse citizen groups towards realising broader spatial integration and transformation?

In attempting to frame the research as well as deepen the investigation, we posed several subsidiary questions:

- What mechanisms does the state possess to realise its visions?
- To what extent are the local state's ambitions divergent from local interest groups' visions and aspirations?
- To what extent do vested interests disrupt – or alternatively promote – transformation efforts in South African cities?
- How do local interests and dynamics fit into city-wide dynamics?
- What negotiation processes need to take place in order for the state to transform cities? What are the implications of these negotiations for transformative visions?

## Methodology

This paper is based on qualitative fieldwork. It combines several years of research into processes of urban change and everyday governance in Hillbrow, with more recent studies of community formation, planning processes and consultation practices in Norwood.

Research was conducted in Hillbrow between 2012 and 2017, first as part of the authors' respective postgraduate dissertation research, and subsequently under the auspices of a Gauteng City-Region Observatory research project. It entailed a series of interviews with various people engaged in urban

revitalisation and housing provision, including the management bodies of housing companies; government officials; members of civil society organisations; urban management personnel, including security guards; operations managers employed by various housing companies and neighbourhood coordinators; building managers;<sup>1</sup> and tenants living in social and affordable housing developments. Formal interviews were augmented by ethnographic observation, including shadowing housing supervisors as they went about their daily routines, accompanying the local community policing forum on patrols of the neighbourhood, and spending time on the streets of the Ekhaya residential city improvement district (RCID) observing everyday interactions.

Research in Norwood was conducted over a shorter period, from 2016 to 2017, as the project being examined is a recent development in the neighbourhood. For this study, interviews were carried out with several key people involved in the process of precinct development. Among them were government officials heading the process; professional urban planners and architects who formulated the plans for the neighbourhood; local businesses; and residents. To obtain alternative perspectives and account for other experiences of change in the neighbourhood, interviews were also done with people in the neighbourhood who would be affected by the precinct development, but who have not necessarily been included in the formal planning and consultation processes. Several informal traders and car guards working along the high street were interviewed for this purpose. Additionally, the researchers attended several public meetings and formal consultations held to formulate the precinct plans. They also participated in private meetings between officials representing the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA), the Norwood Residents Association (NORA) and the Norwood Business Forum (NBF).

1. Building managers – also known as property caretakers or housing supervisors – facilitate the collection of rents as well as the flow of goods and people in and out of the buildings they manage. The managers are central figures in the governance of buildings in Hillbrow and other residential neighbourhoods in inner-city Johannesburg. They rose to prominence in Hillbrow as intermediaries between landlords and tenants during the late 1980s and early 1990s, a period that saw drastic demographic change, physical decline and increased tensions between landlords and residents (Morris 1999a, 1999b).

Threading  
Upper Lip &  
Eyebrows  
bo R100



Open

VISA



Decent

Hair



Art

Unisex



Gents

Ladies



## Background

### **Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme, Hillbrow**

The Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme dates from 2004. It comprises two clusters in Hillbrow, Johannesburg – the more established Ekhaya South and the relatively ‘new’ Ekhaya North (Figure 2). Situated in the southern section of Hillbrow, Ekhaya South occupies an area spanning approximately five city blocks. It formed sporadically and does not have any formal demarcations or borders. Rather, it came into existence through cooperation among various stakeholders, most notably the social and affordable housing companies that own properties in the area. This collaboration created an informal RCID run by a non-profit management board, which receives voluntary monthly contributions (levies) from participating members. Ekhaya South’s success in bringing physical improvements to the area has led to attempts to replicate the model in the northern parts of Hillbrow. Members’ financial contributions go towards improvement, maintenance and management of the area, and pay the salaries of full-time neighbourhood coordinators, supplementary cleaning services and the services of a private security firm. The Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement

Programme therefore has similarities with some of the city improvement districts (CIDs) established in other areas of Johannesburg. CIDs are South African versions of the business improvement districts (BIDs) created in many Anglo-American cities (Ward 2007), which focus on placemaking, image enhancement, public policing and improved service delivery.

BIDs and CIDs have generally been effective in creating cleaner, safer and more commercially viable urban areas, but they have also been criticised for imposing private solutions to urban management issues, exacerbating inequalities between different regions within cities, prioritising commercial interests and concentrating decision-making power among wealthy property owners and businesses (Didier, Peyroux and Morange 2012; Peyroux 2006, 2008). In South Africa, CIDs have also provoked concern about the selective and exclusionary policing practices oftentimes adopted – beggars, homeless people and informal traders are often removed from these spaces (Paasche, Yarwood and Sidaway 2014; Miraftab 2007). As this report demonstrates, although there are significant similarities between the Ekhaya RCID and other CIDs in Johannesburg, there are also crucial differences which make the Ekhaya case stand out as an innovative and practical solution to urban management issues and neighbourhood formation.



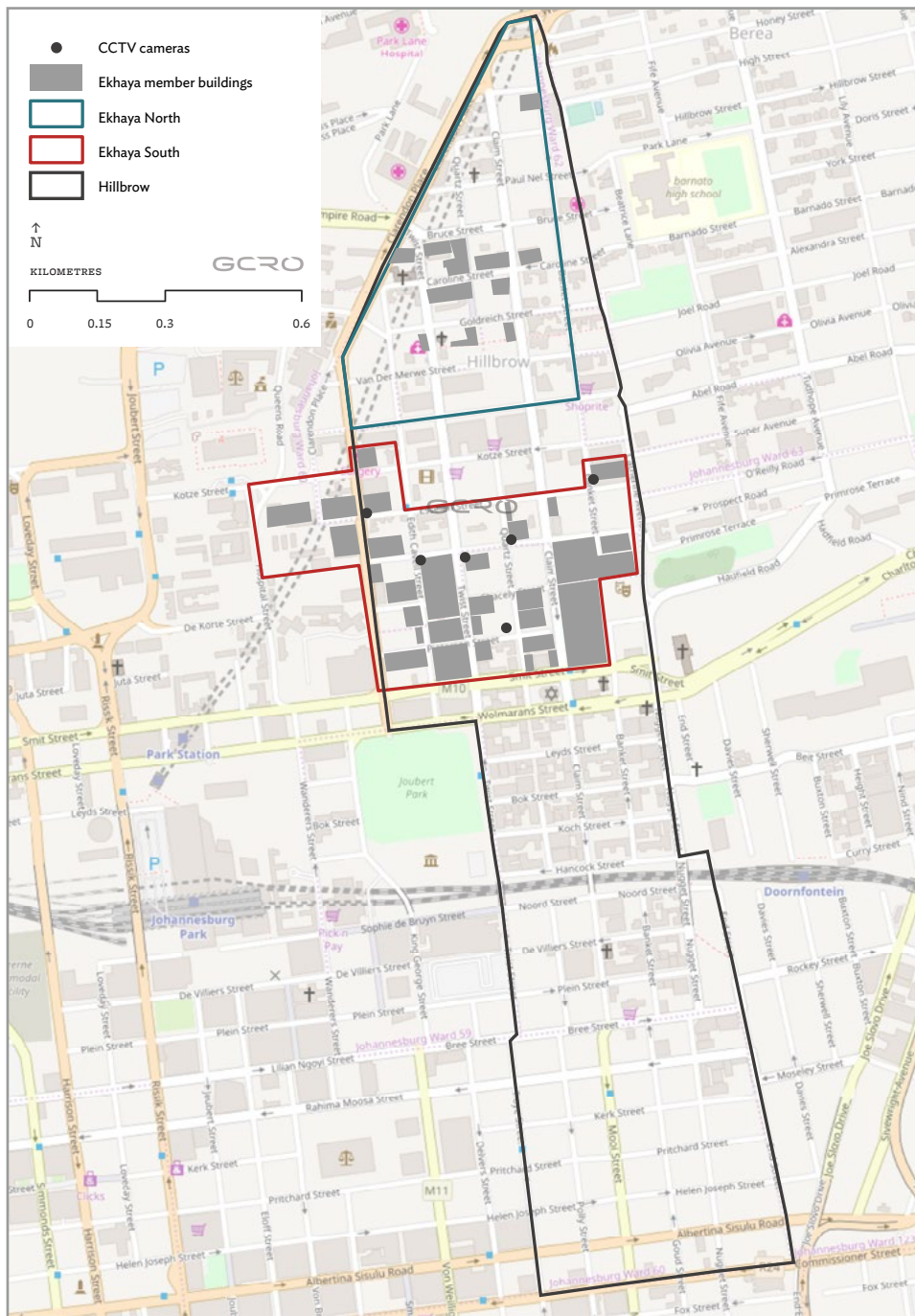


Figure 2: The Ekhaya neighbourhoods relative to Greater Hillbrow.

Map drawn by Samy Katumba

### Grant Avenue Precinct Plan, Norwood

Grant Avenue is the major commercial street in the suburb of Norwood, which is located to the northeast of inner-city Johannesburg. The suburb lies near Louis Botha Avenue (a major north–south transit route) and straddles Eleventh Avenue (which runs east–west). Historically, Norwood was a white, middle-class suburb, but it is currently undergoing rapid racial and economic change. The changing social landscape has set the context for precinct development. The Louis Botha Corridor is a major axis in the City of Johannesburg’s transit-oriented development (TOD) project, linking Alexandra Township to the inner city. In addition to providing enhanced, efficient public transport, the TOD project also aims to stimulate area upgrading and densification around key bus rapid transit (BRT) stations (Rubin and Appelbaum 2016). The suburbs of Norwood, Orchards and Orange Grove are significant to the plan since they are in close proximity to major transport routes and employment opportunities and have the potential for redevelopment and densification. Although Grant Avenue falls just outside the Louis Botha Corridor, the street’s location and existing retail offerings give it strategic and commercial value that could contribute to, and be augmented by, the TOD development.

A major housing development has also been initiated in Norwood, in Paterson Park, which was formerly a municipal public park. This development will increase the density of the area, creating 1 457 dwellings and accommodating 5 000 to 10 000 people.

Yet, it will also put strain on the existing commercial and public facilities (ASM 2016). The GAPP was formulated against this background. Officials at the JDA conceived of the GAPP as a tool to capitalise on a new economic and developmental impetus created by the TOD and housing development projects. It was also envisaged as a public engagement platform that would generate public support for the projects and help residents adjust to the major changes and disruptions in their neighbourhood.

For a variety of reasons (detailed later in this paper), the project stalled, and while the housing project and TOD development are going ahead, none of the neighbourhood upgrading elements are being implemented. The GAPP is currently dormant. Nevertheless, it is worth paying attention to the process of formulating and attempting to realise the precinct plan. It contains valuable lessons that could be instructive in future projects, both in terms of the successes that were achieved, and the reasons for its eventual collapse. The project was originally conceived and pursued as a partnership between the JDA, local residents and the NBF. The goal was to upgrade public space along and around Grant Avenue, and for these improvements to have positive knock-on effects for residents, businesses and properties on either side of the main street. It intended to create a precinct or local neighbourhood within an existing suburb and leverage state resources to form new partnerships to augment the area’s sense of place, commercial viability and social vibrancy.





Figure 3: **Location of the Grant Avenue Precinct.**  
Map drawn by Samy Katumba







**Conceiving  
neighbourhoods**

# Conceiving neighbourhoods: Envisioning urban change

This section describes the visions and aspirations that underpin the two neighbourhood interventions under consideration. It demonstrates that contextual factors play fundamental roles in determining the types of interventions conceived and the effects they can have. In Hillbrow, the ambitions for the neighbourhood were mundane and incremental, but because of the impoverished, run-down state of the neighbourhood, they have had noticeable effects and results. In Norwood, developing a vision and a plan for the neighbourhood was a more formal process involving detailed work by professional planners and architects. However, the plan proved difficult to implement as conditions on the ground, opposition from influential residents and a lack of resources, hindered the process. Implementing a vision evidently works best when it aligns with spatial and social contingencies.

## Upgrading process in context

### Ending inner-city decay

The Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme was formed in the context of inner-city renewal efforts in Johannesburg more broadly. Starting in the late 1990s, and gaining momentum in the early 2000s, there were concerted efforts to revitalise the inner city and arrest the stark decline that had affected the area in the preceding decade. Although there is no overall national or provincial strategy for urban regeneration in South Africa (Housing Development Agency 2013), a range of position papers, strategy documents and government commitments and initiatives define the landscape of urban upgrading. These include broad strategy documents such as iGoli 2030, the Inner

City Charter and the Inner City Roadmap, as well as targeted interventions such as the Better Buildings Programme, the Inner City Property Scheme and the Inner City Housing Implementation Plan.

Partly because of a lack of central coordination and planning, and partly as a result of the complex urban environment and competing agendas that define post-apartheid South Africa, the regeneration process has progressed in contradictory ways as an amalgam of developmental and market-driven agendas and practices (Mosselson 2017a). There have been admirable concerted efforts to make centrally located, affordable housing available and to improve spatial integration and densification in the city. At the same time, however, there have been discernible ambitions to stimulate the property market and achieve redevelopment through private-sector investment, the ultimate goal of which is to augment the value of inner-city properties. The various ambitions and subsequent practices that define the process are, therefore, hard to reconcile. While revitalisation has created an estimated 50 000 new housing units catering to lower-income households (RebelGroup 2016), rentals have increased dramatically and there have been scores of evictions. The development successes have thus often been undermined by market-driven concerns and approaches to redevelopment (Mosselson 2017b).

The Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme has been shaped by these dynamics. It emerged out of a partnership between social and affordable housing companies operating in a section of Hillbrow. This area is characterised by rapid urban transformation, decayed infrastructure, transient and sometimes hostile social relations, an ethnically diverse population and high levels of crime. The housing companies were strongly motivated to stop the decline and carry out palpable improvements to make the area safer, more hospitable and welcoming.



These are laudable social goals, but they also serve commercial purposes. The ultimate ambition of the neighbourhood upgrading process was to protect the investments of contributing members. Enhanced management processes, a cleaner and better-maintained urban environment, and improved social relations make the area more attractive to tenants and help stabilise what was previously a rapidly changing, transient population. They also help attract higher-earning people to the area, who can afford increased rents that they pay regularly. The Ekhasya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme therefore exemplifies the contradictions and ambiguities that define the broader inner-city renewal process.

### **Changing suburban demographics**

Johannesburg consists of disconnected, fragmented settlement areas, with concentrations of wealth in the central and northern suburbs, and extensive poverty in the southern and eastern townships and the inner city (Götz and Todes 2014; Harrison, Huchzermeyer and Mayekiso 2003). Johannesburg's TOD project is a major government infrastructure investment initiative that intends to knit Johannesburg's fragmented spatial landscape together through improved public transport networks. The TOD project aims to make it easier for people to move between different areas of the city, reducing commuting times and improving access to employment opportunities. At the same time, the initiative has the broader ambition of restructuring the city away from its current fragmented, dispersed layout. State investment in transport infrastructure is envisaged as the catalyst for private-sector investment, particularly along strategic nodes and around transit stations. The overarching goal behind TOD is to stimulate private investment in new, denser forms of housing, which are situated near the main BRT stations, and for this investment to lead to the creation of new types of denser, walkable, multi-function neighbourhoods. The GAPP is not formally part of the initiative, but it is informed by and related to it.

Norwood has a strategic position in the TOD framework because of its close proximity to the Louis

Botha Corridor. Based on 2001 and 2011 national census figures, the population of Norwood and nearby Orange Grove, the suburbs most affected by the TOD and GAPP interventions, has grown from 7 063 to 10 829 in the past decade. The proportion of this population identified as 'black African' has grown substantially, as have the coloured and Indian/Asian proportions. In 2001, there were 2 740 black Africans living in the two suburbs, and in 2011 there were 5 284. A broad range of income groups is represented in the two suburbs, with a substantial portion earning monthly salaries of between R2 500 and R4 500, some earning between R4 500 and R8 000, and a smaller but nonetheless significant number of people earning more than R8 000 per month. The majority of the lower-income households are located in Orange Grove, which has a larger black population than does Norwood (Appelbaum 2016).

As more and more people move into the suburban houses in the area, particularly those closer to Louis Botha Avenue, Orange Grove is changing physically. Some property owners have sub-divided their stands or added additional structures such as 'granny flats' or garden cottages. Opportunistic landlords cram as many tenants as possible into individual houses on their suburban properties. The population increase is putting infrastructure in the area under strain and promoting decay, including in the public spaces. Growing unemployment results in informal living arrangements, which raise tensions. Intervention is therefore urgently needed. The Paterson Park housing project is a vital development, but building public housing is not sufficient – either to achieve neighbourhood change or to create the types of sociable, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods envisaged by city planners. Local government is therefore eager to promote other investment in the area and to protect and augment existing mixed-use functions (retail, entertainment and night-time economies). The GAPP is regarded as a catalytic project that will stimulate and direct further investment, management and upgrading in the area, making it closer to the type of development envisaged under TOD.

## Major actors

### **Private companies and inner-city improvement districts**

The initial impetus for the RCID process in Hillbrow was provided when two companies, one a social housing company and the other a for-profit, affordable housing company, began cooperating on security and policing matters. The two companies own buildings located diagonally opposite each other on Petersen Street. They stationed security guards inside the buildings as well as outside. From their positions, the guards were able to keep watch over the entire street, and they quickly became a powerful deterrent to potential criminals. The success of this initial experiment motivated other landlords with properties in the area to join the scheme and in early 2004 an association was formed. At the time, formal CIDs required the consent of 51% of the property owners in a designated area. As there are still a number of derelict, 'hijacked' buildings and slumlords in the area that became the Ekhaya RCID, the housing companies involved were unable to get majority consent, and instead pooled their own resources to create a voluntary association. A recent change in legislation has since re-classified all CIDs as voluntary associations.

Like other CIDs, the Ekhaya neighbourhood association pays for private cleaning and maintenance services, and the services of a private security company. It has also engaged in some forms of branding and placemaking. The security company, in particular, has become a major actor in the neighbourhood, participating in maintenance and cleaning activities and contributing financially.

It operates CCTV surveillance cameras in the streets comprising the RCID and thus plays a crucial role in regulating the area's public spaces. Although the neighbourhood is permeable and there are no visible demarcations separating it from the rest of Hillbrow, unlike in other CIDs or enclosed neighbourhoods in the city (see Dirsuweit and Wafer 2006), it is also a private solution to public-space management and urban upgrading. The process has been driven by influential private companies. The lead actors are private developers protecting their investments, and the local state is a partner rather than the central authority in the neighbourhood. One result of this arrangement is that decision-making and management control are concentrated in the RCID's appointed employees. The neighbourhood coordinator plays a central role, liaising with different participants, including City of Johannesburg (henceforth, the City) service providers, the security company and local community organisations.

Housing supervisors and building managers also play crucial roles in managing the day-to-day intricacies of the neighbourhood. They are quasi street-level bureaucrats responsible for representing companies' interests and enforcing the type of social order that has been deemed desirable in the area (Mkhize 2014). Significantly, even though the Ekhaya RCID styles itself as bottom-up and inclusive, residents, informal traders and other community members are not included in management processes. There are no formal mechanisms for tenants living in rental accommodation to participate in the RCID's management structures, and a generally harsh approach is adopted in dealing with people who are deemed undesirable or a threat to the neighbourhood.

*The lead actors are private developers protecting their investments, and the local state is a partner rather than the central authority in the neighbourhood.*

### **The state comes to the suburbs**

In Norwood, in contrast, the impetus for precinct formation and upgrading came from the local state, which, while remaining the main driver, sought out partners and supporters within the local community. However, widespread support and acceptance were not readily forthcoming due to the loose social connections in the neighbourhood and different groups' divergent interests. When the plan was announced, reaction was extremely negative, with vociferous public opposition being raised by the Norwood and Orchards Residents' Association (NORA) to the Paterson Park housing development and in particular, and objections being raised in community newspapers, on social media and through formal written submissions. In total, over a thousand formal objections were lodged with the City. This response was largely from local communities and organisations playing a reactive role and objecting to state proposals in defence of their own interests.

The local business forum, the NBF, had been trying to institute a CID in the area for several years. However, there was insufficient interest from local businesses, many of which rent their premises and do not have enough capital to pay for additional services. Landlords are often absent, and are content to receive rental income without making further investments in the area. Thus, although Norwood is a far more prosperous area than Hillbrow, there has not been adequate capital to establish a CID or pay for supplementary services. NORA pays for a gardener to clean Norwood Park twice a week, but this provides basic maintenance, rather than large-scale, palpable change. There are also points of divergence between businesses and residents, with businesses complaining that the local resident population is apathetic and contributing to the decline of the neighbourhood, for instance, by dumping trash on the pavement.

In Norwood, the state has had to play a more active role in facilitating community engagement and encouraging public buy-in for the precinct upgrading process. Prompted by reaction to the Louis Botha Corridor and the Paterson Park housing development, local government recognised the need for greater community participation and a positive relationship between government and the community already living and investing in the suburb. In some ways, the Paterson Park development provided the impetus for community formation and engagement, as previously complacent suburban residents began to interact with one another and with local government. The GAPP was conceived by the JDA and presented to residents to build trust between residents and local government and alleviate some of the tensions. It remained largely a state-driven initiative, but with important instances of hybridised management solutions and networks. The plan envisaged that neighbourhood committees would take responsibility for day-to-day management once the precinct upgrade was underway. This hinged on an active, engaged and committed, not to mention well-resourced, community being in place. Concerted efforts were made to create such a community and establish partnerships between the local government, residents and businesses. While the plan did not receive widespread support, some residents and businesses were supporters and 'local champions'. They assumed responsibility for working with local government to realise the plan and ensure that the necessary management bodies would be constituted. During 2016 and 2017, some progress was made, but this was not seamless and necessitated hard bargaining and difficult compromises before residents and businesses would commit to the state's overall vision and plan for the neighbourhood.

*In Norwood, the state has had to play a more active role in facilitating community engagement and encouraging public buy-in for the precinct upgrading process.*

## Neighbourhood visions

### Everyday maintenance

The process of urban decay in Hillbrow has been severe (Morris 1997). In many buildings, even the most basic infrastructure – sewerage, electricity and water connections – is no longer available. Improving the area is therefore not about realising grand ambitions, but rather effecting incremental changes to make the inner city a more liveable residential area. Consequently, the Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme has focused on tackling maintenance and infrastructure problems, mitigating crime and creating a sense of security and belonging. Private security services are key in this process. CCTV surveillance cameras both monitor social behaviour in the neighbourhood and play a proactive role in maintenance, recording service-delivery backlogs that are then brought to the attention of municipal-owned entities.

While these efforts are mundane and concentrate on the everyday infrastructures and experiences of the area, in the context of local distress and disadvantage, they are ambitious and transformative. For a long time, Hillbrow has been synonymous with transience and impermanence, fear of crime and social tensions. Creating a more liveable, sociable environment is highly significant. As improvements have taken hold, a more stable resident population has made the area its home. The number of people living in family-type arrangements has increased significantly and there are now many more children living in flats in Hillbrow. The visions and ambitions at the heart of the endeavour, and the successes that have already been realised, are best summed up by the current coordinator of Ekhaya South:

*Ekhaya has been successful because it has now become the home where people live. The working people live here – schoolchildren with their families, actually. Families can now live in the Ekhaya buildings, not like before; before you'd never live with your family in Hillbrow. It was a place of someone who's working and [families] are at home.*

*It was never stable but now Ekhaya has made Hillbrow to be the stable home for people who live in it. (R1 interview 2013)*

Efforts to improve the levels of service delivery and maintenance in the area may seem mundane, but they are equally transformative. In the 1960s, Hillbrow was an affluent, bohemian suburb, home to young white professionals and European immigrants, with many successful businesses (Stadler and Dugmore 2017). However, as demographics changed in the 1980s and 1990s, capital fled and affluent white residents abandoned the area to be replaced by poorer black communities (Morris 1999a; Crankshaw and White 1995). The area was quickly overwhelmed by governance challenges including rising crime levels and infrastructure collapse, and it became a drain on the City's finances, with a vastly increased population left largely to fend for itself. Improving infrastructure and liveability and demanding improved services and responsiveness from the City in this context is a significant effort towards overcoming Johannesburg's spatial fragmentation and stark inequalities. As the head of the private security company that manages the RCID stated:

*[W]e will not tolerate them not giving the same service that the white people get in Sandton and Bedfordview and we get less service here in Hillbrow. That's always my two areas that I measure service delivery; that tannie [auntie] in Bedfordview won't take nonsense, that lady in Sandton won't take nonsense; why must we accept less?! (R2 interview 2013)*

### Ambitious spatial transformation

In contrast to the everyday visions and ambitions in Ekhaya, the GAPP was more aspirational and determined to achieve substantive change. While the Ekhaya RCID process is largely informal, reactive and takes place through somewhat mundane day-to-day activities, the GAPP existed first in planning documents and designs created for the City by professional architects, planners and consultants. It has grand ambitions which are formally stated as

'build[ing] a more inclusive and resilient local area, in support of the activation and improvement of the commercial potential and environmental conditions of Grant Avenue' (ASM 2015a, 5). While Ekhaya aims to cater for the people already resident in the area, the GAPP's architects envisage Grant Avenue becoming a 'vibrant destination of choice' (ASM 2016) that will attract consumers from the surrounding suburbs to its mixed-use, attractive environment and retail high street. The conception phase was therefore far more elaborate and ambitious than in the Ekhaya RCID, and it drew on a range of technical experts and creatives. The notion of an attractive high street was central and the architects and planners draw on several different sources, both local and international, for the type of high street and neighbourhood they wanted to create. According to one of the lead designers of the plan, they conducted studies of various high streets in Johannesburg, including Seventh Street in Melville and Rokeby/Raleigh Street in Yeoville, and looked at design ideas from the United Kingdom and Canada. They eventually settled on Fourth Avenue in the affluent suburb of Parkhurst as the most desirable model to replicate (R3 interview 2016).

The plans for the Grant Avenue precinct feature a variety of street and housing design typologies and are expansive in articulating the changes they aim to bring to the area. Since the process was more formalised than the one in Hillbrow, it also drew in a larger range of participants. The visions formulated

by the professional team were presented to the local community in a series of meetings where they were debated before being endorsed or rejected. The resulting plans are therefore a composite of a range of views, desires and needs. Suggestions made during the consultation phases ranged from traffic calming measures, wider sidewalks, improved security and pavement maintenance, to the addition of nightclubs, entertainment venues and more interesting retail offerings on the high street.

The scope of these visions, ambitions and suggestions is in sharp contrast to the Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme's plans. There, the ambitions and desires of housing companies, acting on behalf of their tenants, but also in pursuit of their own interests, are the driving forces behind the upgrades. There is little accountability or consultation in the Ekhaya RCID; a few powerful voices propose and pursue visions as they see fit. In Norwood, because the state committed itself to building consensus as a result of the initial strident opposition to its plans, the process included a wider variety of actors, but nevertheless, the predominant voices there were also business and property owners. Other communities, including informal traders, the homeless population and informal parking guards, remain largely marginalised. The vision that emerged for the precinct was an amalgam of the state's political and spatial ambitions and affluent residents' interests and desires. As will be shown later, these visions do not



always diverge, and there was meaningful cooperation between local government and residents in Norwood. Yet, the political dynamics and power relations in the neighbourhood are such that narrow interests and organised resident and property-owning associations were able to shape the state's plans and practices in significant ways, and assert their dominant positions in the neighbourhood envisaging and upgrading process.

### **Whose neighbourhood vision?**

In both Hillbrow and Norwood, the visions indirectly neglect or actively exclude particular residents and users of the spaces. For instance the formal position adopted by the Ekhaya RCID is that informal trading is not permitted. The expressed desire is to have a regulated, stable and clean neighbourhood (although the practical reality differs greatly, as subsequent sections will show).

Similarly, in Norwood, residents and local businesses take exception to the presence of those they deem 'undesirable' in their neighbourhood. The residents object to homeless people sheltering in Norwood Park, and have contemplated hiring private security guards to police the space. Businesses take exception to informal parking attendants who guard cars parked in the street in exchange for tips. Some of these guards are considered to be vagrants and criminals and the antithesis of respectable, desirable members of the

community and neighbourhood, and attempts have been made to remove them from the area.

Fortunately, the state's vision distances itself from these hostile positions. The professional team which formulated the GAPP worked hard to include informal traders in their consultation process. The final precinct plan mentions 'an opportunity to provide employment through a coordinated parking management system to include and train car guards operating in the area' (ASM 2015a, 29). Unfortunately, it is short on details of how this can be achieved. Most importantly, the final plan does not engage with the hostility and suspicion that local residents show towards these guards, and seeks to resolve this conflict in a technical, rather than social, way.

The divergence here demonstrates the different scales at which the two competing visions operate. On the one hand, the businesses and residents formulate visions based on their everyday experiences of the neighbourhood and the difficulties that characterise their lives in it, as well as in accordance with their prejudices and suspicions of others. On the other hand, the professional team, while making more concerted efforts to envisage an inclusive, diverse neighbourhood, does so at a distance from its lived realities, and thus sometimes overlooks stubborn often intractable problems (such as conflicts over space) and struggles to determine who belongs and who does not.



## Implications

Both projects are informed by contexts of urban transformation and decay (albeit at different scales and with varying intensities) and the fundamental necessity of restructuring the city. They can, therefore be regarded as forming part of wider efforts to build a better city and react to processes of degeneration, capital flight and increased demands on infrastructure. Both initiatives also conceive of, and aspire to create, inclusive, welcoming, liveable environments. Interestingly, however, they are also both outcomes and products of small, elite groups' visions – absentee property owners in the inner city and architects, planners, middle-class residents, business and local government in Norwood. However, a shared commitment to forms of public space and ideal urban environments is discernible in both cases, implying that private or narrow interests are not necessarily inward-looking or unrepresentative of broader urban settings. At the same time, it is also important to note that other populations and users of these spaces have been left out, and therefore alternative desires and needs do not influence the visioning processes.

Differences also emerge in terms of what these aspirations mean in each context. A more welcoming environment in Hillbrow means more visible policing, decent levels of maintenance and improved cleanliness. Given the high levels of crime and violence in the area, safety is arguably the biggest concern. In Norwood, a better environment includes improved branding, more vibrant street life, pedestrian-friendly European-style pavements, and a more comfortable environment for consumption. Therefore, the two visions, while having some similarities, also embody the differences between the neighbourhoods that already exist in the levels of service and quality of life. It therefore emerges that a combined, collective vision for the city, while important, is not feasible given stark pre-existing socio-spatial differences. It is rather more important to articulate shared principles that are realisable in different contexts. Issues around minimum levels of safety, service delivery from municipal authorities and notions of inclusion are perhaps the key fulcrums around which these can

revolve. Nonetheless, even the notion of inclusion is determined by context.

In Norwood, planners and officials understand 'inclusion' as mixed-income residents living alongside one another, although not necessarily in the same types of dwellings; middle-class property owners may continue to live in their own suburban houses, while lower-income communities have access to rental accommodation in high-rise, multi-storey blocks. Although this vision still differentiates between income groups, it is arguably more broadly inclusive than the vision articulated in Hillbrow, as it actively promotes different classes residing in the same suburban space. In contrast, the demographics and effective ghettoisation of Hillbrow mean that 'inclusion' implies being able to house the most destitute members of the population alongside less poor, but not middle-class, residents. While this approach to inclusion in Hillbrow is realistic and responsive to the prevailing socio-economic realities of the area, it also effectively leaves it as a low-income neighbourhood and recognises that social mixing between classes and races is not likely to occur there. In this case, while pragmatic visions and aspirations are easier to realise and will yield more immediate results, the spatial fragmentation that characterises Johannesburg remains intact, demonstrating that undoing legacies of unequal apartheid planning and segregation, while simultaneously addressing immediate localised concerns such as poverty, high crime rates and poor infrastructure, is an exceedingly difficult task.

It is also notable that the state is more proactive and involved in the suburban context than in the inner city. In some ways, this is counter to what one would expect; the inner city is a far more stressed environment than Norwood and Orange Grove, and is also home to a poorer population in greater need of state support. It is, therefore, potentially contradictory that an area which already enjoys adequate infrastructure and services receives more of the local government's time and attention. One result is that wealthy suburban residents are able to direct local government and demand even more from it, while poorer residents in the inner city remain marginalised and neglected in many instances. On the other hand, there is a strategic purpose to the

state intervening in the suburbs and taking on a more interventionist role. Apartheid-era municipal structures ring-fenced wealthy white suburbs and ensured that rates contributions were spent in the areas in which they were collected, allowing suburbs to gain a form of autonomy from larger municipal structures (Tomlinson et al. 2003). The restructuring of Johannesburg's municipalities to undo this deliberately unequal system and create a larger metropolitan system enabling cross-subsidisation from wealthier to poorer areas is one of the major achievements of post-apartheid urban governance (Beall, Crankshaw and Parnell 2002; Lipietz 2008).

However, the disparities and inequalities inherited from apartheid have ensured that the fragmented system remains in place, and wealthy areas are still largely separated from poor areas of the city (sometimes literally, in the cases of fenced neighbourhood enclosures). The resources commanded by wealthy suburbanites also allow them to avoid reliance on the state, as they are able to supplement state-provided services, particularly security and landscaping, with their own private solutions (Dirsuweit and Wafer 2016; Clarno 2013). Thus, given the context of a divided city, there is significant need for the state to venture into suburban areas and assert its control; in the context of the

ambitions articulated by the TOD project, it is also vital that the local government brings suburbs into planning processes and utilises them as areas where spatial transformation and inclusion can take place. Poor communities continue to live in the peripheral townships or the inner city because there are few affordable options available within the suburbs. Therefore, the process of envisioning a different type of neighbourhood in Norwood is important, both in the context of the particular neighbourhood and in terms of providing an innovative model that can be learnt from and adapted in other suburban settings around the city.

The possibility of visions being realised is also contingent on the role played by private investors. Both cases rely on private investment to implement upgrading visions and regard state infrastructure spending as catalytic. The state, therefore, plays a smaller role and attempts to be a facilitator rather than the driver of urban change in both the inner city and the suburbs. The difficulty here is that, ultimately, visions for improved urban spaces then rely on the private sector, and if this investment is not forthcoming, or if private actors do not share the state's goals, the forms of envisaged and urgently required redevelopment that will not be realised.





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**LOGISTICS**



# **Producing neighbourhoods**

# Producing neighbourhoods: Bringing visions to life

Visions for urban space, while powerful structuring and discursive devices, are not sufficient to bring about change. In order to take effect, these visions need to be actualised and converted into material, lived reality. It is thus important to investigate the different strategies and processes through which visions are introduced and realised spatially. Doing so requires the articulation of complex networks of actors and material objects. Just as visions are never neutral, and always represent a range of ideological and cultural tropes and assumptions, space is never an 'empty' entity simply waiting to be acted upon. Rather, efforts to realise spatial visions intrude upon pre-existing socio-spatial environments. Producing space is therefore an attempt to order reality and exercise power. However, the process of converting visions into spatial realities is not seamless, and entails a range of negotiations, trade-offs and struggles. Furthermore, processes often unfold in convoluted, uncertain ways.

This section examines the various tactics, strategies and tools that have been used to implement the visions discussed above and produce neighbourhoods. It shows that neighbourhoods come into being through assembling different forms of materials, including security cameras and billboards in Hillbrow, and branding devices and traffic cones in Norwood. As the section will show, these different materials are combined to give form to the respective visions and neighbourhoods, and to supplant pre-existing socio-spatial dynamics in the two areas. However, material infrastructures are not sufficient for bringing visions to life and creating neighbourhoods. In both Ekhaya and Norwood, concerted efforts were made to provide platforms for social interactions. Without social relationships, and the infrastructures that support them, neighbourhood formation remains incomplete.

## Demarcating the neighbourhood

### Fluid boundaries

In a sense, both neighbourhoods can be considered to have been 'imposed'. Both were inserted into pre-existing spaces, whose social dynamics preceded the establishment of area-based management plans. Efforts to demarcate the Ekhaya RCID and the Grant Avenue precinct thus attempt to distinguish pre-defined areas and separate them from the wider contexts in which they are situated. The two examples make use of different tactics for achieving this, which illustrate differences in the processes as well as in the outcomes and types of spaces being produced.

Inner-city upgrading processes have drawn heavily on a 'project-and-precinct' approach (Beall, Crankshaw and Parnell 2002). Drawing on American models of inner-city upgrading, the City inaugurated several high-profile, geographically bounded regeneration initiatives in the early 2000s. These aimed at making interventions in the infrastructure of specific areas so that they could be better geared towards a range of predetermined economic functions. Precincts that were developed in the 2000s include the Fashion District, the Diamond District, the Newtown Cultural Precinct and the Ellis Park Sports Precinct (Beall, Crankshaw and Parnell 2002). Housing companies operating in the inner city have adapted this precinct-based logic and make concerted efforts to buy properties in clusters so that they have a marked presence and more control over the public spaces in particular areas. The Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme emerged through such a clustering strategy as housing companies acquired properties in close proximity to one another.

By doing so, they were able to pool their resources and find ways to extend their control into the public realm. As such, the Ekhaya RCID is defined and demarcated by geographies of investment. City blocks where participating companies have grouped their investments and emerged as the predominant landowners fall within the boundaries of the 'neighbourhood', and areas where the companies have not been able to acquire property fall outside of it. Figure 4 indicates the area occupied by the Ekhaya South RCID in 2017 and shows how buildings belonging to participating housing companies are located in close proximity to one another. The map indicates how the boundaries of the RCID are not fixed and can grow over time, and also shows buildings that have been earmarked as potential new additions.

Despite the demarcation lines drawn on the map, the neighbourhood does not have formal boundaries;

it is only distinguished from the surrounding area through the deployment of private services. Private security and supplementary cleaning and maintenance services are only provided in the area deemed to fall within the RCID.

However, Ekhaya's control over the territory it occupies is not total; not all the buildings in the demarcated area participate in the RCID, making effective organisation and management, particularly over public spaces, more difficult. Ekhaya's geographical delimitation thus remains indistinct and fluid since the neighbourhood might expand as more properties are bought by existing members of the RCID or new members are co-opted to join the initiative. Currently, efforts are underway to create an RCID in the more northern sections of Hillbrow, where investors are acquiring increasing numbers of properties.

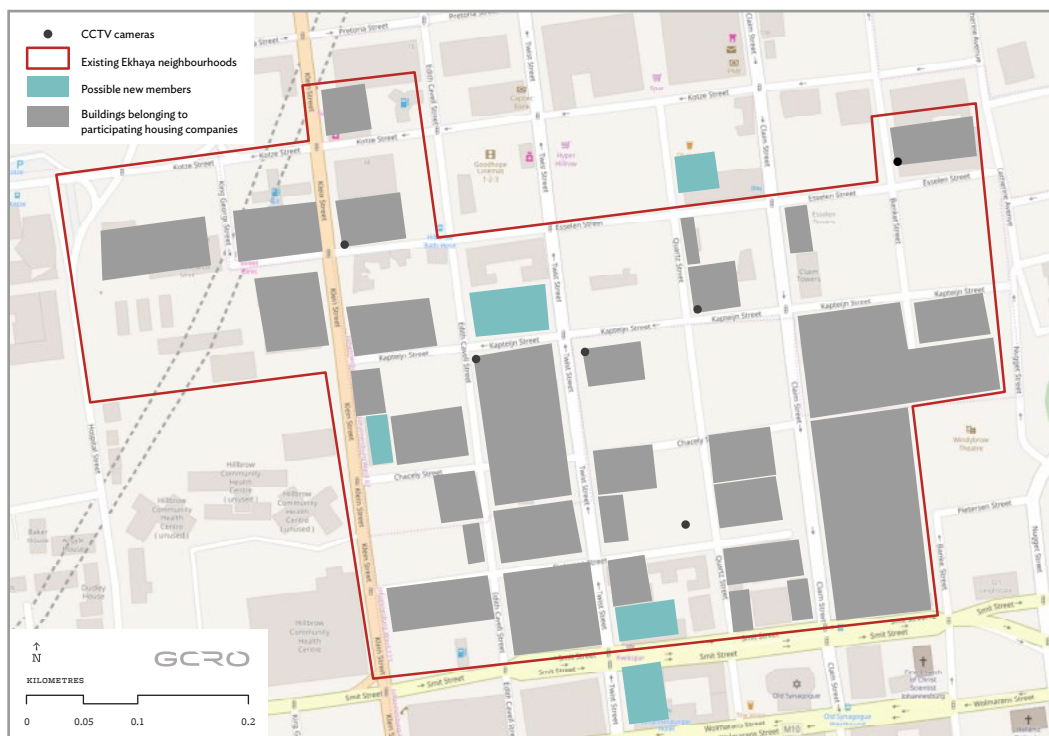


Figure 4: **Clusters of buildings forming the Ekhaya South RCID.**  
Map drawn by Samy Katumba

Concentrating improvement efforts where contributing members own several properties allows the RCID to focus its resources and activities and maximise their impact. This strategy has yielded significant results as levels of cleanliness have improved in the Ekhaya RCID and crime rates have fallen. Crime has not been totally eradicated, however, but simply displaced to areas where private security is yet to be deployed.

Although pursuing inclusive goals, this approach to urban upgrading has limited impact. The Ekhaya programme does not aim to improve the inner city or Hillbrow as a whole, but rather is restricted to the areas where property companies already have investments. Based as it is on privatised approaches, it may increase rather than diminish difference and inequality in the inner city, especially since areas where investors are concentrated flourish and those that have not attracted new investment decline further.

### **Creating neighbourhoods through planning processes**

If the Ekhaya RCID can be considered fluid, emerging as it has through contingent processes that unfold over time, the GAPP, in contrast, took shape through a rigid, planned process. The GAPP focused on the commercial potential of Grant Avenue as a high street and the strategic importance of the suburb of Norwood in relation to the TOD project in first defining the neighbourhood and then formulating interventions.

The boundaries of the area emerged out of, and in relation to, government priorities and projects. The neighbourhood was first demarcated in planning documents and strategies driven by the City's agenda of integrating the neighbourhood into the transport-oriented redevelopment and the need to enhance the image and desirability of the suburb while placating local residents and their resistance to change. Branding and design interventions were intended to create a distinct sense of place for the area and establish a neighbourhood by creating, among other things, 'a sense of arrival' (ASM 2016) that distinguished the area from the surrounding suburbs. The notion of placemaking included in the plans

(described in more detail below) has been crucial to the formation of the area's identity.

Part of the power afforded to planners and city officials is the ability to name and demarcate areas, and in so doing bring physical spaces into being. However, this power is not absolute and is often disrupted by alternative neighbourhood formations, ideals and socio-spatial dynamics, such as the association formed by residents from Norwood and the neighbouring suburbs, which existed prior to the GAPP. The residents' association (NORA) draws members from a wider area than is demarcated in the plan, and offers its own vision and interpretation of what and who should constitute the neighbourhood. As their website explains, NORA

*is intended to promote and protect the interests of ratepayers, residents, occupiers or licensed traders occupying premises within the suburbs of Cheltondale, Fellside, Forbesdale, Gardens, Norwood, Orchards, Victoria and suburbs adjacent thereto not already served by an existing ratepayers/residents association.<sup>2</sup>*

NORA describes the larger suburb it represents as having a 'distinctive cosmopolitan atmosphere', highlighting the 'diverse mix of cultures' that the association claims are present in the area, and emphasising important features such as heritage buildings that are overlooked in the GAPP and in the Paterson Park housing project.<sup>3</sup> There are, therefore, multiple – sometimes competing or overlapping – forms of neighbourhood and organisation. Competing understandings of what the boundaries of the area are, and visions of what is valuable in a neighbourhood and who should be included in it, bump against one another and shape the interventions that take place. NORA used the threat that redevelopment posed to heritage buildings to object to, and alter, the Paterson Park development proposals. Its claims to represent the wider neighbourhood emerged as central to the planning process and its influence ensured that it was a key actor with which the City had to engage in order to realise its own ambitions.

2. <http://www.nora.org.za/about-us/about-nora>

3. <http://www.nora.org.za/about-us>

The City's and NORA's visions of the neighbourhood operate on different scales. The City confines the neighbourhood to the commercial section of Grant Avenue and a handful of adjacent streets. This is a smaller, more manageable area, where it will be easier for state spending to achieve results. NORA, in contrast, represents the neighbourhood at a larger scale, since more members add to its financial strength and boost its claims to representivity. The City's plans for the precinct are, however, conceived within a much larger spatial process of city-wide change and densification. NORA, for its part, has a much more local sphere of interest and scale of operation. Residents' groups concerned with limited localities often adopt defensive postures as they attempt to insulate and 'protect' what they regard as 'their' territory from unwanted, outside interference, using the politics of exclusion and insulation to divorce their neighbourhood from wider city processes.

Local interests are powerful within sub-local regions, and their influence means that state actors have to involve and engage with them, as the Norwood case makes clear. Yet, engaging with divisive and disruptive residents' associations and other local power brokers cannot come at the expense of broader state-led processes and inclusive planning projects. These different scales and registers of state and sub-local interest groups pose significant challenges for initiatives and planning processes. If local government actors are not cognisant of the challenges and forms of disruption to be encountered, planning processes can be rendered ineffectual. Navigating between differing conceptions, spheres of influence and modes of engagement, and between immediate, local concerns and broader, city-wide processes and projects, is thus a crucial attribute of governance.



## Materiality

### Security equipment and neighbourhood formation

Spatial visions rely on material practices in order to take effect (Latour 2005), and a range of materials are drawn on and used to constitute newly formed neighbourhoods. The Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme first came into being through the purchase and upgrading of formerly derelict properties. Improvements to the buildings' facades and interiors not only made them better places to live, but also improved the quality of the area's overall built environment. It became more hospitable, desirable and conducive to communal life. The provision of security services, including foot patrols in the streets and CCTV surveillance monitoring, complements the physical improvements that have been made. The cameras play a crucial role in monitoring the activities taking place in public spaces in the neighbourhood and in effectively defining its functional boundaries. An employee of the private security company that polices the Ekhaya RCID indicated the role the cameras have in delineating the neighbourhood:

*As this is a neighbourhood, you find that the whole street, maybe from A up to D, all these building owners, they are our clients, they fall under the neighbourhood so we cover that whole street, plus 15 buildings around there, around that street there are four buildings along the street, that's what we do.*  
(R4 interview 2013)

Pointing to the wall of television screens showing feeds from the company's cameras, he continued:

*[T]hose cameras that side, it's another neighbourhood, you see the CCTVs there.*  
(R4 interview 2013)

He showed how the neighbourhoods are the products of surveillance technology and materials. An inner-city 'neighbourhood' comes into being through the assemblage of surveillance equipment, wiring networks, television screens and the people monitoring

and regulating behaviours. It is not a social entity defined by associational life or forms of conviviality and shared social space, but rather a defensible territory produced by the need and desire to protect commercial interests. Signage plays an important role in the process: while surveillance cameras are often inconspicuous and difficult to see, billboards and posters announce the presence of housing companies and private security in the area, and give the Ekhaya neighbourhood a physical reality. Housing companies use unique, colourful design and distinctive branding to identify their buildings, advertise their services and attract potential tenants. Signs informing passers-by that a building is a 'Member of Ekhaya' and that the area is 'Under Surveillance' by the private security company appointed by the RCID are scattered throughout the area, alerting people to the surveillance and policing mechanisms in place. These signs claim space and demarcate territory, giving the buildings and the neighbourhood as a whole a sense of identity that separates it from the wider inner city.

### Experimental strategies

Branding and the deployment of characteristic objects were also key strategies in the GAPP. Because the plan was considered to be 'imposed from the outside', the professional team implemented a number of initiatives to draw the public's attention to the plan, popularise the idea of redevelopment, test concepts in the planning documents and establish the vision behind the precinct as a viable reality. A series of test days provided the design and implementation team with the opportunity to experiment with different types of material interventions, and stimulate public interest in, and support for, the precinct upgrade. Although Grant Avenue itself stretches northwards for a considerable distance, only a short stretch of it is designated as 'the high street'. On one occasion, large balloon arches were installed at either end of the high street, marking it out, however temporarily, as 'the heart of the neighbourhood' (R5 interview 2016). These highly visible objects created a distinct sense of identity for that section of the street, demarcating the importance of the smaller area within the pre-existing, larger one. Orange traffic cones were used to regulate and calm traffic, extend pavement areas, and



Figure 5: **Objects and materials used to test planning and design concepts in Norwood.**

**SOURCE:** ASM (2015b)



test various parking systems along and adjacent to the high street (ASM 2015b). On one occasion, cones blocked parking bays along a stretch of the high-street, opening the way for a more walkable neighbourhood and enabling the vibrant sidewalk and café culture described in planning documents. The technique of deploying temporary, experimental objects, clearly demonstrated the types of material interventions that can be utilised to make neighbourhoods. The physical design and topology of spaces directly shape the way people engage with and experience them, allowing visions and experiences of space to be realised (Allen 2006). In this way, material interventions are also social interventions, facilitating and moulding social interactions and behaviours.

Interventions that utilise material infrastructures and objects can be significant in the way they send visible signals to the public. In Norwood, many residents and business owners are hostile towards the local state and sceptical of its perceived inability to deliver on basic services, infrastructure maintenance and urban management. The Paterson Park development, in particular, raised Norwood residents' ire. They saw it as an intrusion into 'their'

space, and a state ambition to alter the social fabric of the area radically and disrupt their largely exclusive way of life (R7 interview 2017). In order to alleviate some of the hostility that such communities harbour, and intervene successfully in middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods, the state has to earn credibility and legitimacy. Material interventions can be key components of such a strategy as they have the potential to alter people's experiences of space, make improvements to their everyday lives and deliver visible results. Although the interventions in Norwood were impermanent and part of a process that has not reached fruition, they were, nevertheless, effective ways of generating interest in, and stimulating conversations about, the proposed changes, and of giving of a sense of the types of developments that might be possible. The test day interventions thus helped people understand the concepts and visions being put forward, and fostered greater acceptance. Such techniques and tactics can successfully be applied to converting spatial visions into lived social and political reality, and by extension, earning legitimacy and governing effectively.

## Interventions

Although intricate, palpable material interventions and ambitions are sometimes envisaged in both Ekhaya and the GAPP, the neighbourhoods are actually established through relatively mundane, incremental processes. Interventions into material infrastructure are vital for bringing neighbourhoods to life, but the social infrastructure is equally important. In both the neighbourhoods studied in this research, extensive work has gone into shaping communal relations and establishing some basis for collective interaction and engagement around interventions.

### **Building social infrastructures in Hillbrow**

Hillbrow has long been notorious for its hostile, strained social relations and high levels of violence and crime (Götz and Simone 2003). Under strained circumstances, a 'safe, clean, friendly community' does not materialise spontaneously, it has to be actively moulded and mobilised. Upgrading the physical environment was not sufficient for realising the ambitions of the neighbourhood project. Interventions into both the built environment and the public realm were central to the process. The coordinator appointed by the housing companies that initiated the RCID worked rigorously in the neighbourhood, establishing connections among residents and with other people (R6 interview 2013). This helped create spaces for socialisation and allowed people to develop feelings of attachment to the area.

One of the most notable and successful interventions in the neighbourhood has been the establishment of Ekhaya Park, which, until recently, was the only green space in Hillbrow. The park was built on a derelict lot that had previously been occupied by taxi drivers and drug dealers. Through a combination of communal initiatives including lobbying the City and forceful policing, the land was reclaimed and converted into a temporary football pitch. This process was not without conflict, and the drug dealers, in particular, defended 'their' territory, with one apparently even attempting to ram his car into the crowd that had gathered for an informal soccer tournament.

### **Building suburban coalitions**

In Norwood, the implementation of the GAPP also rested on the formation and mobilisation of a new definition of community. In this suburb, it was pursued through a coalition between local state actors, organised residents and the local business forum, the NBF. This was an elite coalition, which excluded non-organised residents and businesses and, most significantly, poor and marginalised members of the community. This limited the extent to which the intervention was inclusive or democratic, and there are very real concerns that the realisation of the precinct (should it eventually occur) might lead to urban cleansing, with vulnerable people, particularly the homeless, being forced out of the neighbourhood. However, as in the case of the Ekhaya RCID, pragmatism and commitments to socially sensitive and inclusive visions of community also shaped the process and its potential outcomes.

Norwood Park is a plot of public land located at the intersection of Grant Avenue and Ivy Road. In 2016 and 2017, when the research was conducted, it was not completely unkempt or neglected, but its state was far from desirable, according to NORA. In multiple meetings, residents complained that it was unsafe and unsightly, and made particularly strident complaints about the homeless people residing there. Because of its central location in the neighbourhood, the importance residents attached to it, and the importance of public space in cultivating community, Norwood Park became a focal point in the GAPP. The City contracted a team of architects to design an upgrade, and a series of collaborative workshops between the architects, government officials and residents produced a negotiated final design.

The approved park design includes improved signage to brand the park and give it a sense of identity, as well as material upgrades intended to generate greater usage of the park, more communal activities, and an enhanced sense of community and shared public space in the neighbourhood. The design provides a play area for children and a multi-purpose open space to be used for sports activities. There are also designated spaces for organised events, such as market days, urban agriculture, stalls for informal traders, an office for a park manager and ablution



Figure 6: The amenities, recreation activities and management partnerships of Ekhaya Park.

**SOURCE:** Mkhize (2018, 82)

facilities (GAPP 2017). The ablution facilities are a pro-poor intervention designed for the area's homeless people, and were included in the more affluent vision for the neighbourhood that NORA and the GAPP endorsed. The inspiration for the ablution facilities came from the architects' work on upgrading End Street Park in the inner city. Adapting a design from another context, in this case a stressed urban environment, links Norwood conceptually with poorer parts of the city and exemplifies ways of preventing suburbs from being isolated, or homogenous, wealthy spaces.

Although the GAPP was an important component of the wider Paterson Park and TOD strategy, it did not receive a generous budget allocation. Therefore, innovative ways had to be found to pay for the upgrades that were envisaged for the park. Strategies were proposed for monetising the park space, including

renting it out for market days and running an urban agriculture project to supply herbs and vegetables to nearby restaurants. Additionally, NORA was persuaded to accept that money would only be provided on condition that provisions for homeless people – ablution facilities and a homeless shelter – were included in the final approved design. Through a series of negotiations and compromises, which were not without tension, NORA agreed. In this way, the state played an interventionist role, insisting that expenditure be directed towards achieving developmental, socially inclusive goals, while also satisfying the demands of wealthy residents. The conditions attached to the park upgrade were a novel approach to precinct upgrading and neighbourhood formation, which, as an essential negotiating tool, enabled the state to earn legitimacy and build trust with the local community.





Figure 7: **The current state of Norwood Park (aerial view).** Norwood Park is currently an uninviting, closed-off space. The trees block sight-lines and make residents wary of walking through the park at night. During consultation processes, it was agreed that several trees would be removed and branches of others would be cut back to introduce more light and improve visibility in the park. However, the trees also provide a resource for homeless people who hide their belongings in the branches during the day. Cutting back the trees will therefore have negative consequences for these vulnerable people. These contrasting objectives exemplify the struggles and competing interests at the heart of the neighbourhood and its upgrading process.

**SOURCE:** Google Maps (2017)

People in wealthy communities in South Africa frequently disengage from public life by retreating into private spaces such as shopping malls or their own houses, many of which, including in Norwood, have gardens and even swimming pools. When they are forced to engage with the state, as occurred with the Paterson Park housing development and the GAPP, they frequently do so with palpable levels of suspicion and hostility, showing little faith in the local state's ability to deliver effective services and look after their interests. It was therefore vital for the local state to overcome this animosity and generate legitimacy.

The park upgrade served this purpose as it placed the community at the centre of the upgrading intervention. The process empowered NORA and gave the association members decision-making powers. It encouraged them to participate in the design and take ownership of the ongoing management of the park, assuring them of control of the space. Members clearly enjoyed the authority conferred on them and, in one public meeting, a participant observer witnessed a NORA member exclaiming with relish, 'We get to decide!' By conferring this power on NORA, the local state co-opted the association into its broader ambitions for the precinct.



Figure 8: Initial design for upgraded Norwood Park. An architect's rendering of the initial design for upgrading Norwood Park, including a play area, spaces for urban agriculture and ablution facilities.

SOURCE: GAPP (2017)

It was envisaged that the park would generate income and employment opportunities for local homeless people, who were to be housed in the proposed shelter. The planned urban agriculture space would raise revenue for the running of the shelter and provide skills development and training opportunities for the homeless. NORA would oversee these processes and raise money to help support them. The state therefore succeeded in gaining agreement to manage inclusive change in the neighbourhood.

This innovative approach to forming coalitions and gaining community buy-in to processes of change succeeded by granting concessions to the previously oppositional NORA and injecting public funds into the neighbourhood. Building coalitions, even with partners who demonstrate oppositional attitudes, is a crucial element in bringing about and managing the process of change in suburban South Africa.

## Implications

In the Ekhaya and Norwood districts, public space and improved urban management were shown to be essential for neighbourhood development. Public spaces allow for a collective life and shared experiences (Koch and Latham 2013), and become the conduits through which social infrastructures and collective identities can be built. Upgrading the built environment is an essential component of improving social relations and enhancing forms of community, but it needs to be accompanied by extensive efforts that bring people together, foster shared senses of responsibility and inclusion, and protect the needs of vulnerable communities. In both the cases studied in this research, although the production of the neighbourhood is based on clear commercial imperatives, the desire to enhance the attractiveness and value of space is also based on catering for the people who are present in the neighbourhoods to begin with.

The Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme represents the interests of private actors and is informed by their commercial imperatives, but it aims its interventions at the community already living in the space, and hopes to make the area more liveable, safer and more enjoyable for them, thus improving social cohesion. Because of the demographics of the neighbourhood, the upgrading process has also been more pro-poor and responsive to the needs of low-income communities. Any positive changes will benefit lower-income groups, because they are the ones residing there.

In Norwood, the GAPP aligned its ambitions with the NBF and wealthy residents. It sought to effect change that would largely be to their benefit, but it also maintained a commitment to protecting vulnerable communities in the neighbourhood and ensuring that powerful residents recognise them as members of the neighbourhood with rightful claims to space. Again, then, there is a commitment to pragmatic solutions and interventions that are sensitive to the social and spatial realities of the area in which they are implemented.

Neighbourhood upgrading in Hillbrow concentrated on smaller scale, everyday issues, and

has achieved more palpable change. This has been possible because the conditions were such that small changes would have large impacts, but also because dominant groups with shared interests have been more effective in mobilising and asserting their control over the space. The dominance of companies with significant financial resources and shared interests in Hillbrow made it possible to form an RCID (even without the consent of the majority of property owners in the area). The RCID consequently concentrates power and resources in a few hands, making intervention more feasible but also limiting the scope for participation. The Ekhaya RCID increasingly plays a coordinating role and it is private businesses that hold municipal agencies to account and push state entities to deliver on their responsibilities.

Although visions in Norwood were more ambitious and elaborate than in Hillbrow, the scale of achievement has been less to date. In Norwood, requirements for partnership, support from different actors and a lack of available resources meant that the changes and visions were harder to realise. Even though the state played a larger role in driving the process in Norwood, collective interest and a failure of consensus meant that change was slower and smaller because of the process of pushing the local community to engage proactively. Consultation processes, while essential for democratic and inclusive planning, can also hold up or hinder processes of change. State representatives pushed local property owners to play a more proactive, assertive role and to exercise their rights as concerned citizens. The JDA encouraged residents to form a committee responsible for managing Norwood Park, and worked alongside the NBF (consisting of two active members) to take on the task of monetising and managing public on-street parking around Grant Avenue. The result was the formulation of hybridised management models. These initiatives were essential devices for building trust between the community and the state, and for affirming the state's competence as a developmental actor. In order for ambitious urban restructuring projects to gain support, communities need to be convinced that the state is effective and reliable, and can deliver on its ambitions without causing unnecessary disruptions and complications (Rubin and Appelbaum 2016). The process behind the GAPP



also shows how communities need to be given a stake in the changes that take place in order for them to be accepted and supported.

In a context of ongoing deprivation and inequality, it is reasonable to expect the state to concentrate resources and efforts in more neglected and marginal areas of the city. Given the severe inequalities in South Africa and the state's limited resources, spending on poorer areas and people is generally prioritised (Seekings and Nattrass 2005). It is not immediately apparent, therefore, why a park upgrade in a wealthy, well-resourced area, where many residents rely on private spaces for recreation, is actually necessary. First, it is important that wealthy communities do not continue to exist in isolation from the wider society around them, and instead they should be co-opted into the state's plans and given reason to support them. Given the levels of antagonism, racism and segregation that mar South African society, plans for inclusion do not necessarily gain acceptance easily. It is important, therefore, to

leverage the resources that the state has at its disposal to encourage communities to accept and buy in to restructuring processes. This is partly dependent on the state placating them, but it also depends on the state committing to, and trying to enforce, broader conceptions of the public good and inclusive forms of neighbourhood.

Second, securing the support of wealthier suburban residents is vital as it allows the state to do more within its financial constraints. In this instance, a wealthy, well-resourced community helped facilitate the state's plans, but this was only possible once their cooperation had been secured and they had accepted the negotiated plan. The strategic importance of the local state building trust and earning legitimacy within a local community comes to the fore. The eventual collapse of the project unfortunately served to confirm negative perceptions and ultimately delegitimised the local state in the minds of Norwood residents, undoing much of the good work that had gone before.





## **Managing neighbourhoods**

# Managing neighbourhoods: Everyday governance

This section of the paper deals with the everyday governance and management of public and private spaces in the Ekhaya and Grant Avenue improvement districts. It starts with a discussion of the everyday politics and practices that make the visions for the two areas come to life. It then examines the extent to which the 'official visions' outlined in the previous two sections correspond to, or conflict with, persistent challenges on the ground. Particular emphasis is placed on the strategies and tactics that have been adopted by the main on-the-ground actors to realise their visions, as well as the compromises they have made to cope with the everyday challenges in each precinct, including issues such as homelessness, joblessness and informality. The following sub-sections reflect on the implications that management arrangements, everyday politics and practices have for sub-local governance in Johannesburg. The final sub-section makes the case that everyday urban governance does not follow a set of written rules, but is very much contingent on the self-governance, discretion and micro-practices of the various actors. Following a prescriptive path would make it difficult for on-the-ground actors to effect neighbourhood change and achieve everything that is needed.

## Institutionalising management

### Managing public and private space

On the surface, perhaps because of the number of different stakeholders operating in the RCID, the

everyday governance of space(s) in Ekhaya appears fluid and haphazard.<sup>4</sup> Yet, upon closer inspection, the management arrangements and activities undertaken by the various actors can be grouped into three categories:

1. Public space management (through monthly walkabouts).
2. Internal public space control in residential buildings (through the housing manager forum).
3. Promotion of safety and orderliness (for example, the Safe New Year's Eve campaign).

Management in the neighbourhood relies on a series of institutionalised arrangements between local actors, service providers and the state. These structured engagements create platforms for the daily management of the neighbourhood and establish neighbourhood management as a shared responsibility involving several different actors and agencies. The Ekhaya RCID emphasises regular and open communication among its various stakeholders, and achieves this through frequent gatherings and forums organised by the coordinators at the heart of its management structure – monthly housing managers' meetings, monthly property owners' meetings, and monthly neighbourhood walkabouts with housing managers and City stakeholders (including City officials and the ward councillor). For instance, to ensure the cleanliness of the neighbourhood and continuity of management, the Ekhaya management team has monthly ground surveys (walkabouts) intended to identify and compile a list of service-delivery issues – potholes, burst water pipes, dysfunctional lighting and any other problems around

4. The stakeholders include tenants, housing supervisors/managers, the Ekhaya coordinators, the community policing forum, Bad Boyz Security, security guards from different security companies within the respective buildings, homeless people, informal traders and the Hillbrow Health Precinct.

each Ekhaya member building. The coordinators consult all the housing managers and compile a report for submission to the Region F management forum, for the attention of municipal-owned entities such as the Johannesburg Road Agency, Pikitup (responsible for refuse removal) and Johannesburg Water. The appropriate entities are then expected to respond. In meetings between coordinators and property owners, levy payments, profitability of the precinct, new member buildings, and new sub-projects to be introduced within the area are discussed, among other topics. These different management arrangements create platforms for broader visions and ideals of neighbourhood management to take shape, leading to practical engagements which give form and direction to the interventions underway.

Although Ekhaya only intervenes in public space management, it is worth noting that the norms and institutional rules governing the RCID also penetrate the buildings making up the neighbourhood. The intention is to shape the ways in which people live and conduct themselves inside buildings as well as in public. Building managers are key as they live in the buildings they govern. The housing manager forum is made up of property caretakers who are familiar with their respective tenants and who also have strong personal relationships with each other. They meet the Ekhaya coordinators and representatives of the private

security company overseeing the RCID at least twice a month – during monthly housing manager meetings and monthly walkabouts. Participant observation in the caretaker meetings showed that they serve as platforms for Ekhaya coordinators to inform housing managers about internal activities that impact on external space management. Housing managers then relay messages to tenants and sub-tenants.

In these ‘invited spaces’, housing managers are expected to educate their tenants on the house rules of Ekhaya buildings and manage social relations within and around the buildings they manage. The rules include, for example, not throwing rubbish out of the windows of the high-rise buildings. These forums also enable the Ekhaya housing managers to air their grievances with regard to management issues around their respective buildings and, to some extent, within the buildings, even though the RCID supposedly intervenes only in public spaces. The meetings also allow housing managers from different property management companies to compare management issues outside and within their buildings as well as give and take advice on how best to deal with difficult tenants. Clearly, day-to-day management of public and private space in the Ekhaya RCID is facilitated by social networks and is realised by negotiating rules, formalised regulations and relationships.

*The Ekhaya RCID emphasises regular and open communication among its various stakeholders, and achieves this through frequent gatherings and forums organised by the coordinators at the heart of its management structure.*

Another way in which Ekhaya management permeates the internal space of buildings is through the campaigns aimed at ensuring safety, orderliness and cleanliness in the precinct. One of the most effective of these is the annual 'Safe New Year's Eve' campaign. To ensure peaceful celebrations, Ekhaya housing managers distribute posters throughout their buildings, urging tenants not to engage in violent or potentially dangerous activities over the festive period (see Figure 6). They also work hand-in-hand with officials from the Hillbrow Police Station to control access to member buildings and movement through the neighbourhood on New Year's Eve. These strategies prevent residents from gaining access to buildings if they are carrying harmful items. These campaigns, conducted by the Ekhaya housing managers since 2004, have gone a long way towards maintaining order in Hillbrow, which, prior to the institutionalisation of the Ekhaya RCID, was notorious for its excessive New Year's Eve celebrations when fridges, televisions

and couches were sometimes thrown from apartment windows, endangering pedestrians' lives and causing general chaos (Mkhize 2018). Ekhaya building managers can therefore be considered as conduits between the tenants of the buildings they govern and the other stakeholders – Ekhaya coordinators, City officials and absentee property owners.

The role building managers play in disseminating norms throughout the neighbourhood and institutionalising visions and practices is evident in the preparation and planning of social events for the neighbourhood's children – Ekhaya Kidz' Day and the Ekhaya Street Soccer tournaments. These events are organised by the Ekhaya coordinator, but because the housing managers live in the buildings they govern and are familiar with their tenants, they organise the participants from each building and are entrusted with the children's safety. These activities help to realise the vision of Hillbrow as a safe, stable, family-friendly neighbourhood.



Figure 9: Safe New Year's Eve campaign poster displayed inside a residential building in the Ekhaya RCID.

Photograph by Aidan Mosselson

Ekhaya housing managers play an influential and active role in the growth of each Ekhaya cluster, especially the recently established Ekhaya North. They actively encourage property owners of non-member buildings to join the Ekhaya improvement programme. The coordinator of the relatively new Ekhaya North precinct explained that her tasks include persuading owners of neighbouring buildings to join the RCID. While some property owners show interest, she considers the many sectional title properties in the area to be a major obstacle to the expansion of the RCID (R8 interview 2016). As a sectional title property can only become a member of the RCID if 50% of its body corporate votes in favour, her quest to get the numerous owners of such properties to agree to join is not easy. The individual building managers are her entry point as they provide information on where to find the sectional title building owners and how to approach them (R8 interview 2016). The Hillbrow and Ekhaya building managers are therefore involved in various types of decision-making and everyday space management and have close working relationships with the Ekhaya coordinators.

Social capital is regarded as the ‘*sine qua non* for a healthy city’ (Adler 2009) and the Ekhaya RCID’s success is largely attributable to the successful development of social cohesion and social networks of various entities – City agencies, property owners, management companies, the housing manager forum, private cleaning and security service providers – working towards one goal, namely physical and social urban regeneration and change. What is most interesting about these interdependencies and social networks is how personalised they become on the ground. For instance, according to several building manager respondents, the Ekhaya housing manager meetings and events are a forum for meeting, mingling and making connections with the City’s service delivery agencies. One building manager stated that, through the Ekhaya meetings, he has got to know the City Power official who does the monthly or fortnightly electricity readings for his building (R9 interview 2013). The Ekhaya North coordinator described how she mentions her personalised networks as motivation when attempting to co-opt some of the neighbouring non-member buildings into joining the cluster:

*I tell them that, ‘Your area will always be clean because, if let’s say you have illegal dumping in your area, you stay with it maybe for a week and you see that Pikitup is not doing anything. But I have contact with people that I personally speak to so that the issue will be resolved very quickly’.*

(R8 interview 2017).’

These networks shed light on Ekhaya’s relationship with the City and the various ways in which the ‘active governors’ of the RCID encounter the local state. Individuals and organisations generally have limited ability to hold the City accountable, but Ekhaya’s institutionalised meetings and management forums strengthen ties between the managers of Ekhaya’s internal and external spaces and individual officials from different City agencies. These personalised relationships and networks are important for the everyday governance of the neighbourhood, particularly when there are challenging management issues on the ground.

### Hybrid management coalitions

The GAPP was an alternative for finding on-the-ground management solutions and fostering local partnerships in the high street and suburb. It was initiated against the backdrop of several failed attempts at establishing a CID in the Norwood area ‘to take care of the things that the City wasn’t doing’ (R10 interview 2017). The initiative – which involved the local business forum (the NBF) and residents’ association (NORA) and the JDA as its primary stakeholders – drew lessons from innovative approaches to managing crime and grime in other parts of Johannesburg, including the Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement Programme (R5 interview 2016). Some of the management arrangements that corresponded to Ekhaya structures included the proposed hiring of a coordinator and the formation of a management forum to oversee governance of the high street and the upgrading of the derelict Norwood Park. Other management proposals included the blending of privatised, ‘pro-growth’ solutions (monetising parking, generating income from public space) with developmental, ‘pro-poor’ social concerns (creating employment opportunities for car guards, providing space for homeless people

in the park, and building a homeless shelter in close proximity to the precinct). Attempts were made to create institutional arrangements that would bring different groups of stakeholders together to realise the visions behind the precinct upgrading plan.

A hybridised plan was devised to find a solution to traffic and parking management along the high street, combining both privatisation and developmental concerns. The Norwood Revitalisation Partnership was formed, consisting of the JDA, NORA and the NBF. Each member would take responsibility for certain elements and contribute particular assets and resources. The JDA would make public spaces available for use by the NBF, which would, through a service level agreement with the JDA, assume management responsibility for public parking along the high street. The NBF would contribute expertise and financial resources to the project, employ the car guards, and work with the proposed homeless shelter, which would provide counselling (particularly for substance abuse) and training services. Income generated from parking would pay for ongoing maintenance of the high street, the homeless shelter and the park. The proposed solution would enhance the public environment, compensate for the state's lack of resources and capacity, and ensure that vulnerable communities were recognised and could benefit. It aimed to mobilise existing communities and resources in the area and draw them together in formalised relationships and management structures.

It is evident, from the Ekhaya example, that neighbourhood management requires groups of stakeholders coming together and working towards shared goals and ambitions in strong coalitions. The details of the plan in Norwood were not entirely thought through, however, and it was marked by strong elements of paternalism. In both Ekhaya and Norwood, these shared visions are not entirely inclusive and certain groups within the idealised neighbourhoods are at best excluded and at worst, vilified.

Despite the goodwill and hard work that went into formulating the parking management plan and the GAPP as a whole, the neighbourhood upgrade did not proceed as planned. Shortly after agreement had been reached between the JDA, the NBF and NORA, funding for the park upgrade and parking management system was withdrawn. The plan fell victim to its own

in-built conditions. It had been agreed that funding for the park upgrade and parking scheme was contingent on a homeless shelter being built; if the shelter was not built, no money would be made available for the other amenities. The City official steering the process had included this proviso to ensure that wealthy residents and businesses could not capture the process and receive upgrades to their neighbourhood that would not benefit the wider public. The Department of Social Development, the entity responsible for overseeing homeless shelters, was not satisfied with the process that had been followed and refused to agree to the plans. This then meant that money for the other developments was no longer available. Despite all the hard work, compromises and professional expertise that went into the GAPP, it is unclear whether any components of the plan will ever be implemented.

When assessing the capacity of the state to plan for inclusive urban change and to effect interventions at a local scale, it is imperative to be cognisant of the internal workings of the state and the relationships between the state and civil society. The fate of the GAPP is an object lesson in how poor institutional systems and lack of coordination across departments can thwart creative efforts and practices, which require responsive, efficient and carefully coordinated urban planning and management across and between all levels and departments of government.

## Adaptive everyday governance

### Working with informality

Formalised, institutionalised relationships and management structures are important, but the realities and constantly shifting dynamics of urban space mean that management also has to be based on adaptable, contingent practices in order to be effective.

One thing that sets the Ekhaya clusters apart from other city improvement districts or urban regeneration tools is the large number of 'informal actors' – street traders, hawkers, taxi operators, car mechanics, loiterers, the homeless and beggars – operating on the RCID's turf and co-existing with the formal businesses (rental residential properties and

businesses) (see Figure 10). City structures are often hostile to informal traders (Tissington 2009) and literature on improvement districts and other urban regeneration tools portrays such actors as frequent casualties of gentrification and urban revitalisation (for example, see Miraftab 2007; Mitchell and Heynen 2009; Steck et al. 2013). In Johannesburg, the stakeholders 'at the top' – the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD) and, by extension, the City administration – are intolerant of (unlicensed) informal trading as this contravenes City by-laws. In the Ekhaya RCID, however, street traders are tolerated, if not actively encouraged. It appears that Ekhaya's staff members are able to exercise their own agency and they adopt a nuanced position towards informal trading. They interact with informal actors on an everyday basis and have found ways of co-existing with street traders and the homeless. Leniency towards informal traders and tolerance of survivalist livelihood activities was articulated in interviews with some housing managers, and was confirmed (with provisos) by one of the coordinators:

*We are not like other CIDs. Other CIDs see street traders and chase them away but we allow them to operate, as long as they clean their trading areas. The Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department does not want them to be there because it's against the City by-laws but we have no problem with street traders, and it's up to them how they deal with the JMPD.* (R1 interview 2013)

Although some respondents were not actively supportive of informal trading and homelessness around their buildings, others expressed empathy and acknowledged that housing managers and the homeless can help each other at times:

*Sometimes when you look at a homeless person, you need to meet that person halfway. You have to become half like him and he has to become half like you. So then you will have an understanding, you know? Sometimes you find that those people are the ones that can protect you and your building from outside, while they sleeping there, eating there. But it's just they like to mess! So if you have an understanding with them to say, 'You can sleep*

*here, you can eat here but you must clean up', I don't think you'll have a problem.*  
(R12 interview 2013)

One manager, whose building environs are utilised by many informal traders, has a mutually beneficial relationship with them:

*I have nothing against street traders. Yes, they know that they are violating by-laws and they know that they will be harassed by the police people and their things will be taken from them if the police catch them. But one thing you must realise is that these people help me in my job sometimes. They bring us clients who then become tenants in this building and in my other building. They recommend people looking for flats to us, and then the people will call me and say, 'Oh I heard from one of the street traders outside your building that there is a flat to let in your building', and then we give that person a flat, you see?*  
(R11 interview 2013)

Olivier de Sardan writes of 'practical norms (or norms as practised), which differ markedly from the official norms and/or professional norms: they are "more often than not automatic and routine, existing in a vein more latent than explicit" and are used for, among other things, coping with the complex realities on the ground' (Galaty 2010, 22). Tolerance of informal activities in Ekhaya is not stipulated in rules or policy, but as stakeholders with a degree of influence on Ekhaya territory, housing managers and RCID managers use their own discretion to find ways of accommodating informal traders and homeless people, especially when they themselves have something to gain. This speaks not only to mutual recognition and the expression of empathy, but also to practical ways of making space manageable by drawing on the resources at one's disposal within a particular setting.

The unofficial tolerance of informality and the resulting mutually beneficial relationships are not just confined to hawkers, the homeless and building managers in Ekhaya and Hillbrow. Local government officials have a variety of complex associations with the unofficial norms that govern the street and deal with the persistent challenges on the ground. Participant



Figure 10: Informal traders in the Ekhaya RCID. Informal, unlicensed pavement trading contravenes City by-laws and is not tolerated by the JMPD. It is, nevertheless, very much present in the immediate environs of Ekhaya member buildings, suggesting that a mutually beneficial relationship exists between traders and some building managers within the Ekhaya precinct. The top two photographs show the same entrance to an Ekhaya member building: the top left photograph shows the entrance during the day, the top right photograph, at night.

Photographs by Thembanani Mkhize and Aidan Mosselson

observation in the Ekhaya precincts showed that street traders are constantly harassed by the JMPD, having to evade police patrols, and they sometimes seek refuge in Ekhaya member buildings. In one such incident, an informal trader ran into an Ekhaya member building to evade a passing JMPD truck. She was overheard asking the building guard on duty to tell her when the truck had gone, remarking that she was not about to give the Metro police officers 'an early Christmas present' (a bribe) (see Mkhize 2014). A 'cat and mouse' game is constantly being played by informal traders and the police: 'there are often bribes to pay to policemen [and all] traders run the risk of goods being seized, lost or stolen' (Simone 2004, 423; see also Kihato 2011 and Mkhize 2014).

Kihato's (2011) account of female traders' experiences in inner-city Johannesburg shows that clientelistic relationships between City officials and hawkers exist in these neighbourhoods. Hillbrow has, at best, an 'ephemeral police presence' (Gossman and Premo 2012, 2), patrolling in search of informal, unlicensed traders, undocumented individuals and others not in compliance with the municipal by-laws. In order to be released from custody, people who have been arrested by the police frequently have to use an intermediary, a South African national, to 'pay for protection' (Kihato 2011, 358). It is clear that some local government functionaries and street-level bureaucrats such as the JMPD officers misapply policy on informal trade for personal monetary gain. Stated policy and practical activities therefore vary greatly, and empathy, discretion, self-interest and clientelistic relations are part-and-parcel of on-the-ground urban governance.

### **Lessons in shared principles of inclusion**

In Norwood, the GAPP attempted a similar recognition and acceptance of the contribution informal actors might make to a neighbourhood. City officials insisted that existing parking attendants in the shopping area had to be included in any proposed plan and could not

simply be chased away. In contrast, the NBF wanted to hire an external private company whose employees would issue tickets and collect fees from motorists parking along Grant Avenue. The City opposed this proposal, which would see the current informal guards being displaced, on the grounds that revenue raised from the use of public space should enhance the neighbourhood more broadly rather than generate profit for a private company. The JDA and the NBF, which included some stubborn, hard-nosed business people, spent many hours in bitter argument to arrive at a shared position. The recognition that nothing would change, and none of the improvements outlined in the GAPP could materialise unless compromise was reached, prompted both sides to work towards an acceptable solution. Agreement was eventually reached because neither party could implement its solution in isolation – the NBF could not monetise parking without the City's consent, and the City did not have the revenue or the personnel for the ongoing management of the plan.

The agreed parking management solution was a compromise that allowed the guards to remain and continue to derive a livelihood from the public space, but also sought to include them in formalised arrangements. It was thus an attempt to blend privatised management mechanisms that commodify public space with developmental concerns. The state prioritised protection of vulnerable communities and worked to leverage state-owned assets – public space, control over planning processes – to realise inclusive goals. The state took responsibility for finding a way to accommodate different users within an urban space, and endorsed a position that put public space in the control of a third party. The NBF proved flexible and willing to buy into alternative arrangements and forms of partnership. The GAPP is therefore an important example of the types of creative thinking, strategic use of resources and difficult compromises that are likely to be required at the neighbourhood level to find common ground and a workable way forward.



## Social conflict and exclusion

### Targeting street children and ‘bad buildings’

Although Ekhaya coordinators and housing managers are cognisant of Hillbrow’s developmental context, they still tend to be exclusionary towards informal actors they consider to be harmful or ‘a nuisance’. Despite the tolerance for informal traders and recognition of the multiple needs in the neighbourhood, homeless young men, in particular, are singled out as threats that must be removed to achieve the vision of the neighbourhood as a stable, habitable home. For instance, one building manager (R11 interview 2013) was empathetic towards informal traders, but contrasted them with destitute people whom he considered criminals: ‘[Informal traders] are also trying to make a decent living; it’s not like they are committing crime like the homeless people close to [my building].’ Stereotyping plays a role in the attempt to create a neighbourhood that conforms to particular ideals.

Children living on the streets in Hillbrow are also generally singled out by residents and urban management personnel as undesirable. One resident demonstrated a lack of sympathy towards them and described how their presence adversely affected her ability to feel comfortable in the public space:

*There were more than 30 street kids at the corner of Smit Street – they’re no longer there, I don’t know where they are. Someone saw they’re a threat because you don’t know what they are going to do. But at least I’m happy that they’re gone.*  
(R13 interview 2013)

A building manager described the negative attitude people have towards street children and expressed his opinion that the urban regeneration process required removing them from public spaces:

*Street kids, most of the people, they don’t trust them because of this thing of stealing. You can leave them here and then they can steal your phone, they steal whatever it takes, they deceive. So that’s a problem. [...] But they are not many in Hillbrow anymore,*

*especially in our area [...] We are working very hard to make the street to be clear and nice.*

(R14 interview 2013)

The population living in derelict, ‘slummed’ buildings in the Ekhaya neighbourhood is also regarded with hostility and stereotyped as ‘criminal’. As a result of capital and residential flight from the inner city, and the collapse of body corporates in sectional title schemes in the 1990s, many buildings are dysfunctional, characterised by broken infrastructure and decay, and are in serious arrears in their payments to the City or fail to pay municipal rates at all (Morris 1999b). Despite regeneration efforts, there are still a large number of run-down and dilapidated buildings in Hillbrow, some of which have been ‘hijacked’ by criminal gangs that have taken control of rent collection. These buildings are health and safety hazards, generally not suitable to be inhabited, but given the expense and scarcity of accommodation, they provide shelter for those who cannot afford the rentals or fail to meet the entrance requirements demanded in formalised, upgraded buildings (Mayson and Charlton 2015). These buildings have a negative impact on the surrounding environment and image of the area and are regarded by management personnel in the RCID as obstacles that need to be removed. A local ward councillor emphasised that he and others in official positions make no distinction between buildings that are controlled by criminals and those that shelter destitute people:

*It’s one and the same. Some of the other ones you will find that one guy claims that he is the owner of the building and that he will collect rent at the end of the month. Others, some people, just get inside and stay in. It’s one and the same thing. Or we regard them as hijacked buildings.*  
(R15 interview 2013)

The stereotyping of all derelict buildings as hijacked leads to the stereotyping of all the occupants as criminals. As one building manager stated on the subject:

*That I feel very bad about it because that’s a situation that builds, that grows criminality.*

*Because in those kinds of buildings you don't have any kind of management, most of those buildings, when they rob people they run into those kinds of buildings, the criminals run into those buildings, and it creates criminals.*  
(R16 interview 2013)

The needs of poor people who cannot access other types of accommodation are ignored. The presumed association between derelict buildings and criminal behaviour is the primary concern. As one housing supervisor noted:

*Our company started to take buildings which were abandoned. By so doing we were starting to regenerate the inner city. And the other impact, by so doing we are trying to eradicate the hooligans and all those people who just maybe are doing things like pickpocketing and all those who just corrupt the place, because you can recall the abandoned building as it is, it's dark inside, if somebody grabs that person with a bag and runs into that building, it escalates theft. So by taking*

*on buildings we are also reducing theft around the inner city, so it is important.* (R17 interview 2013)

It is apparent that, even in instances where broadly inclusive principles are at work, the vision of a stable, clean, orderly and well-managed neighbourhood might not extend to all populations, but only to those 'deserving' of assistance and tolerance. The realisation of the vision might be considered by some to require the identification and eventual removal of people and situations that do not conform to the ideal. The developmental ambitions behind the RCID are important, but not only is it articulating the principles of inclusion, it is also vital for practical mechanisms and practices to be put in place to protect the most vulnerable communities.

In the South African context of extreme inequality, desires for homogenous, sanitised spaces should be discouraged. The importance of different sorts of people sharing the same urban spaces should be stressed. Pragmatic visions are required that accept diversity and less than ideal urban conditions while also stressing safety.



### Vilifying informal actors

Conflicts over space and processes of stereotyping particular groups and practices are also prevalent in Norwood. As one prominent business owner from the area highlighted:

*If you go to Brussels or Frankfurt or London, you're not gonna see a soup kitchen in some high street. Put it in a little building somewhere that's central enough but also not going to contaminate someone else's shopping experience. There's no reason why it should contaminate someone's shopping experience, is there? (R10 interview 2017)*

As previously noted, some of the management arrangements in the Ekhaya RCID informed and inspired what the City and the JDA attempted to do in Norwood. Yet, interestingly, while some informal practices are officially prohibited in Ekhaya, but tolerated nonetheless in Norwood, some informal practices officially sanctioned in GAPP documents were rejected by stakeholders on Grant Avenue in reality.

The JDA succeeded, to some extent, in shifting the stance of stakeholders in Norwood on informal actors operating on the high street. Yet, interviews with NORA and NBF members, coupled with participant observation in NORA meetings and on walkabouts with City officials, showed that the determination to exclude informal actors and homeless people from Norwood's busiest street had not been entirely eliminated. In an interview with the chairman of the NBF, his loathing and intolerance of car guards and the homeless was evident. This individual, who runs a restaurant on Grant Avenue, regards all car guards as drug sellers, and homeless people as thieves and drug addicts. He boasted that he knew 'every vagrant by name', and referred to car guards and the homeless as 'creatures', 'creeps', 'extortionists harassing my customers' and 'criminals' (R10 interview 2017). He gave a detailed account of how he had removed one of the car guards from the area outside his business and restricted him to a less productive street adjacent to Grant Avenue, apparently on the basis that that the car guard 'sells drugs to the kids' (R10 interview 2017). He then negotiated with



a neighbouring formal business owner for a monthly contribution to employ a replacement car guard of his own choice. He justified his actions as follows:

*I've got a car guard who I pay a salary to. I put him in a uniform. He collects tips and he gets a salary from me; and his main job is to chase these other creatures away because they harass customers, they're drunk, they're disorderly, they're abusive, they break into cars. It's a very real problem, so the idea of actually being inclusive and including these things, for me, is just, uh, impossible. I'm not going to be inclusive of criminals. (R10 interview 2017)*

After having chased the car guard from the vicinity of his restaurant, he negotiated with a neighbouring formal business owner for a monthly contribution that would go towards paying the replacement car guard. It is worth mentioning that the exclusionary practices of the formal businesses on Grant Avenue also manifest in other ways. According to the restaurant owner quoted above, the entrance to the SPAR supermarket used to be on the high street, but, with the help of the City, the building owners constructed a fence around their property and turned the entrance 'away from Grant Avenue due to vagrants' (R10 interview 2017). The interviewee found this 'really exclusionary', but very 'relatable'.<sup>5</sup> He was sympathetic towards the SPAR building owners because the vagrants on Grant Avenue are 'absolute scum' (R10 interview 2017).

Despite the revulsion and hostility expressed by some influential people in the Norwood community towards particular car guards, the actuality is that car guards are an important part of street governance in the area. Interviews and participant observation showed that several car guards have been working in the streets of Norwood for more than a decade, taking care of motorists' cars, preventing cars from being stolen and contributing to the safety of pedestrians. Some car guards are affable and have a mutually beneficial relationship with businesses and residents, and while there are antagonisms, there are also strong levels of trust and reciprocity. Interviews revealed the

danger that guards are sometimes in when protecting other people's property, but the violence they are exposed to and the trauma they might suffer goes unacknowledged (R18 interview 2016). In light of these circumstances, the hostility and resentment that some members of the community display towards the guards is shameful.

Processes of formal inclusion but practical exclusion also extend to the informal traders operating in the area. The City installed stands for informal traders next to Norwood Park and charges a monthly rental for them. But this location is in a less active street, away from the productive high street, and next to a park that is associated with drug dealers and addicts, and is generally avoided as a result. So although informal traders are 'allowed' to operate in Norwood, they may only do so in fixed and somewhat hidden designated places. The implication is that they are tolerated only to a certain extent, and they can co-exist with formal businesses only if they 'behave'. This 'visible invisibility' – exclusion from the productive sections of the suburb and tolerance in the not-so-productive sections – speaks to the politics of space and scale. A significant disjuncture is unfortunately evident between official positions and documented strategies on the one hand, and on-the-ground practices and dispositions on the other.

Exclusions and revanchist attitudes are not only directed towards informal actors operating on Grant Avenue. Some members of the NBF regard certain shops within the precinct as 'a little bit dodgy' (R10 interview 2017) and not in keeping with the vision of the high street, and by extension the suburb, as a destination of choice. One business owner argued that the betting shop, and Rendezvous, an 'adult shop', were obstacles preventing the high street from rivalling the upmarket Fourth Avenue in Parkhurst (R10 interview 2017). Thus, even if the so-called undesirables – car guards, homeless people and informal traders – were to be 'uprooted' and moved elsewhere, some members of the business community would still regard the area as failing to meet the standards and perceptions of an ideal, appealing neighbourhood.

5. He related this to his own restaurant: 'That's why these windows aren't opened up onto the street with people sitting outside. Because you sit outside and someone comes to sell you a broom and someone else tells you about their sad story and why they want money' (R10 interview 2017).

## Implications

Both Ekhaya and Norwood are characterised by social exclusion and conflict over space, but these play out differently in the two localities. In the Ekhaya RCID, while informal traders and homeless people are officially criminalised by the City and its various agencies, the authorised stakeholders on the ground empathise with and accommodate (some of) these people for a variety of reasons. Participant observation shows that some local officials or functionaries, who should be enforcing the City's codes and supporting its objectives, are bending the rules meant to govern the Ekhaya RCID, or even breaking the law themselves: informal traders have to evade City police officials 'prowling' for bribes, and female street traders have a harsh, precarious existence, suffering abuse from police in the inner city. It is one thing for state actors 'to cope with the fluidity and contradictions of [Hillbrow and] the city' (Kihato 2011, 359), but quite another for corrupt City officials to engage in illicit practices for personal gain. Kihato (2011) is justified in observing that if we are to understand the problems of urban governance in Johannesburg, we need to extend our scope beyond official codes of conduct and written norms of urban management because:

*There are other social norms, values and codes that determine acceptable and reprehensible behaviour, and these compete alongside the codes of the official city [...] By looking from the ground up, yet another reality and perspective of the city emerges, drawing our attention to the complexity of urban relationships. (2011, 359)*

In Norwood, the City was more accommodating to informal traders and the homeless, and advocated for their inclusion in the GAPP. Yet, influential actors on the ground – business owners, NORA office bearers and residents – continued to accuse car guards and the homeless of criminal activity and blame them for making the street and the suburb less manageable. Some of these actors used personalised networks and individual strategies – possibly, in part, because of the City's slowness in realising plans and failing to make them bear fruit – to deal with the homeless on the high street and mediate on a micro scale. The realisation of neighbourhood plans and management strategies may be said to be based on everyday negotiation, the mediation of rules, patronage and clientelism as well as voluntary personalised networks. As can be seen from the two fundamentally different cases described in this paper, stakeholders concerned directly with everyday on-the-ground realities use their lived experiences, networks and agency to 'make do' and 'get by', and in so doing, effect urban change, albeit at a micro scale. While some of their efforts at effecting change and providing management may be exclusionary, and while some run counter to official rules and regulations and the City's by-laws, they are understandably influenced by subjective experience of circumstances in their spaces of operation. It could then be argued that by-the-book enforcement of rules and principles, at all times, is neither possible nor desirable because it may be a hindrance to change and the accomplishment of management goals, and is thus not beneficial for everyday active governance. Urban governance and urban social change in Johannesburg do not necessarily need to follow a set of rigid official norms, but rather a set of pragmatic, flexible, practical norms derived from on-the-ground experience(s).

*Urban governance and urban social change in Johannesburg do not necessarily need to follow a set of rigid official norms.*





## **Key findings and conclusions**

# Key findings and conclusions

Comparison of the two neighbourhood improvement projects yields significant findings in terms of the capacity of the state to plan for and realise inclusive processes of urban change. The inquiry also reveals the local dynamics that assist or hinder these processes. Our research demonstrates the nuances, complexities and specificities of local settings, which have to be engaged with in detailed, careful ways in order for state-led processes of change to yield results. At the same time, however, local specificities need to be understood and grappled with in larger contexts and understandings of city-wide processes. Part of the challenge confronting the local state, then, is to navigate between various scales, and to be thorough and responsive when dealing with particular settings, while not losing sight of wider imperatives and agendas.

## Managing public-private partnerships

One of the most significant results of our research concerns the role of the private sector in interacting with processes of urban change. The comparative findings speak to the possibilities that can be realised from public-private partnerships, as well as to some of the pitfalls of engaging with and relying on the private sector to drive urban change. The experience of the Ekhaya RCID demonstrates that private-sector actors are capable of operating with broader conceptions of the public good in mind, and that interventions such as CIDs are not necessarily only self-interested or to the detriment of local communities. Some of the experiences from Norwood also speak to this point, as demonstrated by the NBF's agreement to the state's proposal of utilising parking management to generate revenue that would secure employment for local car guards and support the improvement process.

In Norwood, and drawing on experience in the Ekhaya RCID, it was demonstrated that seemingly intractable actors can be engaged with and actively persuaded to support ambitious and inclusive arrangements. At the same time, however, the experience in Norwood also demonstrates that not all private actors necessarily abandon hostile or exclusionary positions, and often continue to exhibit discriminatory attitudes. Private-sector actors cannot, therefore, be 'left to their own devices' and relied on to implement urban upgrading and processes of change that benefit wider society. In the context of Johannesburg's geographical fragmentation and deep social divisions, it is vital that state-led processes seek to protect vulnerable communities and pursue goals of inclusion. In their current iterations, both inner-city upgrading processes and the TOD initiative are reliant on private investors for change. While the state's lack of resources and insufficient capacity make this reliance unavoidable, a potential governance vacuum exists. If this is left unfilled, it will have deleterious consequences for vulnerable populations, including homeless people and those in informal occupations. It is important that the state guides processes of urban change, sets down minimum standards and expectations, and includes a wide range of urban actors in planning processes and management arrangements, even when relying on private investors and developers.

## Difficult compromises

The state needs to be proactive in engaging with populations in areas where discriminatory attitudes exist, such as in Hillbrow and Norwood. Prior to the Paterson Park housing development and the GAPP, many local residents in Norwood ignored the state and formulated private solutions to urban management problems, including public safety and the maintenance of public spaces. By implementing large-scale projects

in this suburban setting, the state forced local communities to engage with city-wide processes of change. This revealed the exclusionary, reactionary attitudes that continue to be prevalent in suburban settings, and created intense antagonisms, but it is a vital undertaking, nonetheless, to involve suburban areas in the wider politics and processes of the city. Suburban communities are sometimes well-resourced and able to delay state initiatives through objection processes, as was attempted in Norwood. It is, therefore, important that local government finds ways of getting suburban communities to support its visions of change. Confronting and ameliorating exclusionary tendencies by offering local communities concessions to secure their cooperation is problematic as it might seem to commit more state resources to well-off – and sometimes racist or antagonistic – communities. However, the GAPP experience also shows that suburban communities have valuable resources and expertise to contribute, and the state should leverage these to realise broader ambitions. Although the GAPP initiative has yet to come to fruition, it provides useful examples – particularly in terms of building local coalitions and finding innovative, practical solutions to local problems – that could be replicated in the future.

## Localised urban management strategies

Although problems of inequality, unemployment, lack of safety, crime and an under-capacitated state are shared in cities across South Africa, they manifest in different ways in different localities. A one-size-fits-all schema or programme for urban governance and management is not possible, and a reflexive, nuanced urban management process such as Ekhaya underscores the ways in which adaptive practices need to be found that adjust to local specificities and dynamics. Similar processes were attempted in Norwood, and they would potentially have yielded significant results had the funding for the project not been withdrawn. Informal economic practices and poverty, in particular, cannot simply be ‘planned’ out of neighbourhoods or eliminated through ‘zero tolerance’ management and policing practices. Ekhaya’s coordinators and housing supervisors

demonstrate how innovative, pragmatic solutions can emerge from interaction between formal processes and the skills and knowledge of informal actors. It is, therefore, imperative that visions for urban change and effective planning and management processes commit to working with local specificities, rather than against them.

## Governing change at different scales

The inner city and the suburbs have vastly different spatial layouts, demographics, wealth, access to amenities and resources, and states of repair and maintenance. Former township areas and informal settlements are, in many cases, even more impoverished than the inner city. Each area has its own forms of division and inequality and presents its own governance challenges. The tensions between local and broader, city-wide contexts cannot be ignored or underplayed. As argued above, the state needs to be creative and adaptive with respect to each setting and the particular actors and contextual challenges present. At the same time, however, failing to understand these spaces as part of a broader urban context in which people circulate on a daily basis risks exacerbating inequalities and forms of division. Suburbs should be viewed in constant relation to the inner city and the former apartheid-era townships, and a city-wide vision should be articulated and defended. Changing suburbs such as Norwood and Orange Grove should be drawn into a patchwork of unique but interlinked localities by inclusive planning strategies and material interventions. Effective planning and intervention can align and unite divided parts of the city. The ablution facilities planned for Norwood Park, for example, would not only have improved the living conditions of local homeless people, they would also have signalled that their presence in the suburban context was acknowledged and accepted. Working across different geographic contexts, symbolically and materially, and learning from effective practices and interventions, are vital steps in helping Johannesburg build creative infrastructures and knit fragmented landscapes together, thus creating a better, more inclusive city.





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## Interview schedule

Respondent	Role	Organisation Represented	Date Interviewed
R1	Ekhaya South neighbourhood coordinator	Ekhaya RCID	2013
R2	Head of private security company employed by Ekhaya RCID	Bad Boyz Security	2013
R3	Architect	ASM Architects and Urban Designers	2016
R4	Employee of private security company	Bad Boyz Security	2013
R5	Official overseeing GAPP	JDA	2016
R6	Previous Ekhaya coordinator	Ekhaya RCID	2013
R7	Chairperson	NORA	2017
R8	Ekhaya North neighbourhood coordinator	Ekhaya RCID	2016
R9	Building manager	Private company (unspecified)	2013
R10	Chairperson and independent business owner	Norwood Business Forum	2017
R11	Building manager	Connaught Properties	2013
R12	Building manager	Connaught Properties	2013
R13	Tenant	N/A	2013
R14	Building manager	Johannesburg Housing Company	2013
R15	Ward councillor	African National Congress	2013
R16	Building manager	Madulammoho Housing Association	2013
R17	Building manager	Johannesburg Housing Company	2013
R18	Informal car guard	N/A	2017



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Aidan Mosselson's research focuses on public- and private-sector housing, urban redevelopment, security and policing, and processes of social change in inner-city Johannesburg. More broadly, his interests are in post-colonial and decolonial urban theory, comparative urbanism, the politics of the everyday and the relationship between space and social identities. He is currently pursuing a British Academy-funded research project, which explores the relationship between processes of migration, taken-for-granted, unseen labour and the maintenance of public infrastructures in UK cities. His work has been published widely in international urban studies and geography journals, and his monograph, *Vernacular Regeneration: Low-income housing, private policing and urban transformation in inner-city Johannesburg*,

was published by Routledge in 2019. He is currently a Newton International Fellow, supported by the British Academy and based in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, University of Sheffield. He completed his PhD in Social Geography at University College London in 2015. Prior to undertaking his PhD, he was employed as an Associate Lecturer in the Sociology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand. He held a Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship, hosted jointly between the University of Johannesburg and the Gauteng City-Region Observatory, between 2016 and 2017 and was awarded an International Fellowship by the Urban Studies Foundation, which supported a stint as a Visiting Fellow at LSE Cities between November 2017 and April 2018.

## **GAUTENG CITY-REGION OBSERVATORY**

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