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URBAN AGE

EDITORIAL

Some link Johannesburg's present condition to the very particular circumstances of its past, that is to say they present it as the result of an extraordinarily ruthless experiment in urban Apartheid. Others see it as a precursor of a more general urban future that reflects the coming pattern of life in many cities. Johannesburg could well be the physical product of something that capitalism spared most societies, and that has now lost its distinctiveness. As the city struggles to deal with its poisoned legacy, is it just becoming one more manifestation of the global phenomena reshaping cities everywhere?

Its past makes Johannesburg unique: it is a city built to exclude black South Africans. Not simply because it had its rich suburbs and shantytowns. Or that most aspects of its infrastructure – from its motorway network to its suburban railways – were shaped by the brutal determination to hide the poor from the rich. Or even that its political boundaries served the same purpose. What built Johannesburg the way it is now was the systemic determination to construct an order that black people had no stake in. The majority of the people who made it possible were accommodated in labour camps that specifically excluded families and small business. Soweto was cut off by motorways and greenbelts serving the same purpose moats once did; it was built to never become a real city. Post-Apartheid governments have struggled to deal not just with the huge inequalities of wealth that affect many other countries. But they have also had to find unique ways of recreating their cities physically, structurally and politically. Regarding Johannesburg, they face, it might be said, the ambiguous predicament of making an unequal city work better.

Johannesburg has a lot of things going for it: a willingness to experiment with political systems, an economy that works, and the whole of Africa as a market. At the same time it takes to extremes many of the tendencies that are reshaping life in affluent cities throughout the West. No other city has done more to perfect the concept of the gated community, or is more organised about 'armed response' private policing. Just as Israel has exported airport screening techniques around the world, so South Africa is beginning to sell its skills at building gated communities. No city has gone further down the course of atomisation, losing even its stock exchange to suburbia. With South Africa's porous borders, illegal migrants take over inner suburbs. Levels of violent crime escalate, with armed militia from the north taking part in bank robberies and shoot-outs. The division between affluence and poverty is as extreme in Johannesburg as it is in any city.

In summary, the real answer to the question about the city's relationship to its past and its future is unlikely to be settled until it has gone beyond this question.

Deyan Sudjic, Director, Design Museum, London

Urban Age is a worldwide series of conferences investigating the future of cities

Organised by the Cities Programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science and the Alfred Herrhausen Society, the International Forum of Deutsche Bank

Alfred Herrhausen Society
The International Forum of Deutsche Bank

AFROPOLIS

ACHILLE MBEMBE AND SARAH NUTTALL

Over the last quarter of the twentieth century, the 'global city' paradigm has dominated the study of the urban form. It has also been one of the cornerstones of studies of globalisation. Its starting point is the shared assumption that contemporary life-forms and social structures are profoundly shaped by the global circuits of capital, and the city-form is the spatial expression of the shifts in the geography and structure of the international economy.

Such a universalising category obviously overlooks experiences of urban life in Africa. To be sure, Africa comprises one or two cities that could easily rank in the mid-range of the global hierarchy. Secondary networks of global economic flows can clearly be identified in Johannesburg – a city where cultural, racial and ethnic heterogeneity is the norm. Transnational flows of labour and capital can be mapped. Even more importantly, African cities are becoming increasingly connected with one another. Their links with the imperial metropolis that characterized colonial culture are being transformed. A series of lateral connections in what clearly is a trans-African urban system are emerging. Cities such as Douala, Lagos, Abidjan, Dakar or Nairobi are major regional operational nodes for the exchange of commodities, the circulation of labour and the provisioning of all sorts of services in what is fast becoming a highly pluralised Afropolitan urban space of connectivity.

Ways of writing African urban life into urban theory used to be dominated by considerations on labour migration, changing forms of marriage, the meaning of 'tribalism', legal change, informal social networks, and changing forms of rural-urban connections. They were underpinned by a meta-narrative of modernisation in which Africans were seen as fundamentally and even essentially rural creatures. The task of scholarship was to measure the process of assimilation to the urban environment and to assess the ways in which the relationship between the individual and the tribal community was corrupted, reinvented or maintained.

Today, most studies of African urbanism fall within the urban development paradigm. In this paradigm, the city is first and foremost a problem to be solved. The task is to map a social geography of needs, the crucial indices of which are levels of deprivation. From this perspective, the defining feature of contemporary African urbanism is the *slum*. What is underestimated is the extent to which major African cities have been able to attract, in their own ways, certain forms of colonial and now global capital. That such forms of capital are for the most part predatory is without doubt. But isn't this what, at least partly, globalisation is all about, that is, a set of processes that are refracted, splintered, and cracked – or, as anthropologist Jim Ferguson puts it, 'a matter of highly selective and spatially encapsulated forms of connection combined with widespread disconnection and exclusion'? African cities are globally connected, but in a selective, discontinuous and point-to-point fashion. They are also cities of cash – if not of quartz. Large pockets of privilege coexist with misery. These are cities where the circulation of wealth in the form of cash can be ostentatious and where, in the words of Arjun Appadurai, 'the search for cash in order to make ends meet is endless'. Indeed, such fractured, colliding, and splintered orders of urban life can be seen to characterise, increasingly, many cities around the world today.

Over the last decade, there have been three major attempts at reading African urbanism into contemporary theory. Underlying the first such project has been a series of questions related to the role of calculation and rationality in the everyday tactics of those who inhabit African cities and in the way these cities are made, to a certain extent, to work. AbdouMaliq Simone, for instance, argues that what characterises African urban life are forms of social collaboration that are constantly shifting. Faint signals, flashes of creativity, otherwise desperate manoeuvres, small eruptions in the social fabric all provide texture to city life and are increasingly the norm. A wide range of provisional, highly fluid, yet loosely coordinated actions are generated by city residents and run parallel to, yet at times intersect with, a growing proliferation of decentralised local authorities, small-scale enterprises, community associations and civil society organisations. It is these practices that make African cities more or less 'work'. The framing notions of Simone's analysis are informality, movement and the micro-politics of alignment.

For Rem Koolhaas, African cities represent a crystallised, extreme, paradigmatic set of case studies of cities at the forefront of 'globalising modernity'. He argues that 'many of the much-touted values of contemporary global capital and its prophetic organisational models of dispersal and discontinuity, federalism and flexibility, have been realised and perfected in West Africa.' The city in West Africa is an inversion of every essential characteristic of the so-called modern city. It forces the re-conceptualisation of 'city' itself. The 'informal' is the best way of accessing the specificity of African cities' operations. Of the 'informal', he says 'it is not identifiable as a pattern or morphology, but nonetheless manufactures the material reality of urban form. It is an alliance of transformative ingenuity and the tactical mobilisation of resources, produced from conditions of need and in the almost complete absence of centralisation.'

Our own work on Johannesburg shows that African cities are places of manifold rhythms. Rationally planned or not, the African city is better understood in terms of the manner in which it deals with its lines of flight (*fuites*). A city is not simply a string of infrastructures, technologies and legal entities, however networked these are. It also comprises actual bodies, images, footprints, and memories. The everyday human labour mobilised in building specific city-forms is not only material. It is also aesthetic and artistic. Rather than establishing simplistic oppositions between the formal and the informal, or the visible and the invisible, we need a more complex anthropology of things, forms and signs, in order to account for the life of the city in Africa. Such a complex anthropology must take into consideration the fact that here, things and forms are first and foremost operative signs. They not only do the figuring; they are also what is being figured. They always simultaneously hide and reveal other forms.

On the other hand, Filip de Boeck contends that the African city constantly undergoes the effervescent push and pull of destruction and regeneration. Focusing on Kinshasa, he argues that this is a city in which the spoken form seems to dominate the built form and in which the 'invisible' constantly reconfigures the city's public and private spaces. In Kinshasa, it is not, or not primarily, the material infrastructure or the built form that makes the city a city. The city, in a way, exists beyond architecture. The built form is rather produced randomly as a living space, more and more reduced to its basic function, that of a shelter. The main infrastructural unit or building block is the human body in a space characterised by the first world of the day and the second world of the night.

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A ROLLING STONE GATHERS NO MOSS

CAROLINE KIHATO

Johannesburg is founded on mobility. Since the discovery of gold in the 19th century, the city has attracted labourers, entrepreneurs, and industrialists hoping for a better life. As a place where strangers have always converged, the city is the site of continuous contestations over who belongs in the city and to whom the city belongs. The axes of division are many and have multiplied over time. Early struggles pitted black against white and the English against the Afrikaners. New forms of migration and urbanisation brought together new groups, generating novel complexities and conflicts: no longer just black, English and Afrikaner, but also Jews, Christians, Muslims, Indians, Pakistanis and Coloureds. As the city grows, communities, women, children, and the aged carved space from a city once dominated by young men. Johannesburg is an inclusive city, continually surrendering parts of itself to new arrivals. But it has also always been a city of 'others', with every group collaborating and opposing one or more of the others living in the city to insert itself within the city and to claim part of it as its own.

A city's history contributes significantly to shaping the nature and character of its future. But as with every history, each period brings with it its own specificities. While some groups continue to see their future as co-terminous with that of the city, many new arrivals see the city as a place of transience – an entrepôt where they wait and accumulate before living out their futures elsewhere. Nowhere is this more evident than among cross-border migrants living in inner city Johannesburg. By focusing on inner city Johannesburg – a site of deep contestation over ownership, belonging, and identity – this article surfaces new struggles and ways of being in what remains a city of strangers.

The account I present challenges much of the literature on urban inclusion which assumes that most residents wish to tie their destiny to the city and have a vision of their futures that includes the city. In this discourse, contestations centre not only on the right to reside in the city, but also on actively shaping its future in accordance with peoples' needs and values. But among many of Johannesburg's cross-border migrants, the battles are for the right to stay and earn, but without the encumbrance of claiming ownership of the city and its future. This is not to say that migrants are not shaping the city's present and future – they are. In contrast to those who feel invested in creating a future of which they are a part, cross-border migrants are constantly in battle among themselves over their past, their relationship to home and their imagined futures elsewhere. For them the present is important only as it paves the way for a future that is outside the inner city, outside South Africa, and often outside the continent. It is these contestations and aspirations that are helping to make inner city Johannesburg.

That migrants are a population caught betwixt and between an often idealised past and an imagined future is clearly illustrated not only by their own perceptions of their dislocation in South African society, but also by their imagining of a future 'back home' or outside of the continent.

This liminal existence is partly explained by a condition of living where many have physically journeyed to Johannesburg, having left behind their families, culture and roots, and entered a political-social space of which they are often not legally, socially or politically recognised as being a part. Whatever external factors exacerbate migrants feeling dislocated from the society in which they live, it is clear that they live as if suspended in it. My research in inner city Johannesburg with migrants consistently reveals narratives of a future outside of the inner city and South Africa. A Nigerian woman who has lived in inner city Johannesburg for four years arrived with the intention of staying in Johannesburg for only three months while she organised a visa to go to the United Kingdom to study. Even migrants with businesses in the city, who presumably would be most likely to feel rooted, do not see Johannesburg as a long-term destination. The words of an Eritrean businessman, 'South Africa is not the place for Eritreans, look at it, none of them live here permanently', highlight the temporality of life in Johannesburg. This transience is captured vividly in a song by Sierra Leonean Refugee All Stars band, 'Refugee rolling'. Although the song speaks specifically of refugees, much of the feeling of rolling, instability and unrootedness is present among many migrants generally.

> Refugee rolling
> rolling like a rolling stone,
> rolling for the better
> rolling for our safety
> rolling for our lives
> we are the clients of the UNHCR…
> a rolling stone never gather no moss
> a rolling stone never stable in one place
> refugee rolling yeah, rolling like a rolling stone…

The character of migrant associational life also provides an illustration of the transient nature of life in Johannesburg. Much of the mobilisation among migrant groups focuses around death: contributing money and organising the logistics for sending a dead body home. It is not a coincidence that the emphasis of solidarity between migrants is facilitating movements out of the city. In doing so people reconfirm their relationship to their country of origin and – both literally and figuratively – to its soil. By making contributions to such involuntary repatriations, migrants demonstrate their loyalties to their compatriots, and reinforce their status at home through messages sent via elaborate and hyperactive rumour mills. However, this constant eye towards home does not preclude the importance of associational life in the everyday. Migrant networks play a critical role in providing a safety net for members without money, work or shelter. But few of these initiatives actively engage or demand inclusion in decision-making processes that shape the future of the city. Nor do they publicly protest when they have been excluded from services to which they have rights. Indeed they can 'gather no moss' in Johannesburg as they are unrooted with visions of a future that is, after all, located elsewhere.

What impact does this unrootedness and liminality have on the future of the city? What does it mean to have an increasing population that does not envision itself as belonging to the city's future? Is the city becoming, in the words of Agamben, a permanent refugee camp? With its constantly changing population of both South African citizens as well as foreign migrants, Johannesburg's inner city continues to be a place of strangers. A survey conducted by the Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2003 showed that almost 70% of the inner city's population had moved their household in the last five years. The 2001 national census shows that at least 11% of South African residents had been in Johannesburg less than five years. This mobility has implications for planning and urban renewal strategies in the city. Heightened levels of mobility could imply that people lack any interest in investing in the city or taking part in making decisions around its future. If surrounded by strangers who perceive their life in the city as transient, there is no incentive to develop a sense of community, belonging or rootedness in the city. Equally, exclusionary planning processes that fail to recognise the presence of immigrants result in inappropriate decisions and the failure of policies: these have consequences for society as a whole and not just immigrants. Unless planning and urban renewal strategies begin to acknowledge and address the transient nature of life in the city – and provide incentives for mobile populations to belong to that city life and perceive it as belonging to them – their sustainability and effectiveness will be undermined. In this context, inclusion strategies would have to move beyond the assumption that all who live in the city have a commitment to its future, and begin to proactively inculcate a sense of ownership of the city among all who live in it.

Caroline Kihato, Policy Analyst, Development Bank of Southern Africa

MAKING ALEXANDRA WORK

DR. MIRIAM ALTMAN

Alexandra is a poor urban 'township' located in the heart of Johannesburg, beside one of South Africa's wealthiest financial commercial areas, called Sandton. This makes Alexandra very special in the South African context: from the 1960s through to the early 1980s, the majority of the black population were forcibly relocated from their homes to racially designated areas, far from the core urban areas. Black workers were considered to be 'temporary sojourners' in the cities, there for the sole purpose of working. Alexandra residents successfully resisted this powerful force, and kept a relatively thriving community going to present day. With its excellent location secured, Alexandra is one of the more vibrant townships in South Africa. About 330,000 people live in Alexandra, within a space of 800 hectares (CASE 2005). This is about 10% of metropolitan Johannesburg's population.

In 2001, a national Urban Renewal Programme was launched: Alexandra was one of 8 designated nodes. The integrated upgrading programme involved housing, engineering services, public safety, planning, transport, culture and recreation, education, and health. The local economic development programme started about a year later, with the specific aim of identifying strategies that would weave the Alexandra economy and workforce into the wider urban fabric.

The growing wealth in the area immediately surrounding Alexandra should have offered great opportunity for raising business and labour incomes, generating a virtuous circle. Instead, the Apartheid policy of 'Separate Development', which aimed to separate the races, had left a legacy of marginalisation that has been hard to erase. Some of the implications include:

Low earnings from work: More than two thirds of economically active Alexandrians work in low paid service jobs such as packing, driving, manual labour and cleaning. One quarter are domestic workers – these are mainly women. About one third are found in trades such as plumbing, carpentry, and painting – these are mainly men. Just over half of Alexandrian households do not earn enough to raise them above the poverty line. Almost 60% are unemployed and looking for work (CASE 2005).

Low earnings from business ownership: In South Africa, most informal activity is relatively marginal and subsistence oriented. Formalising is hard work in South Africa: access to markets is made difficult by high levels of concentration; there is hardly any institutional micro-finance for productive activity; and location can make trading difficult. Alexandra-based informal firms earned an average profit of R368 per week (£26) (Kayamandi, 2002): this would not lift a household above the poverty line.

Degraded properties in and around Alexandra: Instead of the wealth permeating Alex, the poverty and degradation in Alexandra spread into historically thriving industrial areas. Commercial and industrial buildings were invaded by squatters, crime rates rose, and properties and urban infrastructure were generally degraded. Some adjacent areas became irretrievable for commercial use. Others simply had high vacancy rates and reduced activity. Sandton lies just across the highway from Alexandra, and there was an anxiety that perhaps it was only a matter of time before the vicious circle of poverty would affect it.

The deep poverty experienced in Alexandra therefore posed a huge opportunity cost for the city and country, since Johannesburg is expected to generate a large proportion of national growth and employment. The development of Alexandra business and labour and surrounding properties therefore had to become central to Johannesburg's forward-looking economic strategy, and not simply a poverty alleviation project.

There are some basic questions that need to be posed for building economic strategies:

What do people do now? What are the current skill-sets and capabilities? This forms a foundation leading to future building of know-how.

Which markets and market niches are growing, locally, regionally and, where relevant, internationally?

Is it possible to match up current know-how with these opportunities? Are there realisable interventions that would enable this matching?

These are fairly straightforward principles, but there are dilemmas and contestations.

Should the focus be on unemployed people or those that are active? There is considerable pressure to reduce unemployment, yet those who are active are also very poor. We [at the Alexandra Urban Renewal Programme] held the view that more long-term unemployed and youth would gain opportunity if we focused on those that were already active. Many Alexandrian business owners lacked formal certification to enable them to access wider markets. Most business people had limited access to a broader set of business ideas that would enable them to upgrade to more profitable activities. Strategic focus was placed on enabling those who already had some momentum to raise profitability and expand their business: they might then employ long-term unemployed and youths. Historically, mining and manufacturing were the main sources of low-skill job creation. There was considerable pressure to focus on generating jobs in light manufacturing. However, the vast majority of new business and employment is located in services, particularly in the urban economy. Aside from the obvious opportunities in construction and auto repair, it took some time to convince the project team of other, sometimes 'invisible' opportunities. Alexandra high school and college graduates were perfectly positioned to take advantage of growing opportunities in business process outsourcing. The strategy identified seven growth sectors, including construction, auto and transport, retail and personal services, tourism, business process outsourcing and 'care'.

South Africa's urban management was historically focused on control. There was therefore great pressure to 'clean up' Alexandra, effectively moving informal traders from sidewalks into a 'neater' square. This was vociferously resisted. Firms located themselves based on access to space, and perceived benefits from pedestrian traffic. In a context of high

unemployment, it seemed crazy to consider destroying existing activity for the purpose of having clear pavements.

Previous policies tended to focus on sweeping generalisations about the informal sector. Yet, where the informal sector is entrepreneurial, each area of activity needs to be recognised as having specific market dynamics, entry points, and profitable niches. In South Africa, identifying points of entry is particularly challenging. Markets are highly concentrated, and many large firms particularly retailers offer credit services, effectively crowding out small operators.

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MPHETHI MOROJELE

The Urban Age conference held in Johannesburg caused me to reflect differently on a number of issues concerning the city. The first is the notion of 'community', and with it, identity formation and the tools of such formation: tools of inclusion and exclusion.

In South Africa the term 'community-based', in relation to development projects, implies that there is an existing community that will feel the direct impact from the planned interventions. The term is generally used in the context of state-sponsored regeneration or developmental projects, mostly within deprived areas. Within the inner city these interventions by and large consist of retro-fitting existing facilities, to formalise irregular activities or forms of inhabitancy.

Community-based projects are required, as a matter of principle, to be preceded by consultative processes. These processes entail identifying (and legitimising) the various stakeholder groups, assessing their needs (which are often in conflict) and designing the institutional framework required for the implementation and sustenance of the project. Given the state's patronage, the institutional frameworks for such projects are required to comply with general principles of democracy, transparency and good governance. Often these interventions bring into relief the inherent tensions between the equalising and symmetrical principles of democracy and the hierarchic asymmetries of existing social networks. Social networks in African societies tended to be based on kinship. When transferred to urban contexts, these network relationships are often construed as forms of favouritism and nepotism, at odds with democratic participatory principles.

On the integrated city

Economic development and growth in Johannesburg post 1994 have seen rapid spatial and social mobility, particularly among the previously oppressed communities, leading to all sorts of social reconfigurations. Social mobility, particularly within African families, has been such that one family now often contains a cross-section of social classes, thus creating new juxtapositions of wealth and deprivation, and new challenges for urban and societal development.

As a legacy of Apartheid the boundaries between wealth and deprivation have been spatially fixed, which is almost unique to South African cities. At the level of settlements the boundaries are geographical. Where co-existence has been necessary, the boundaries are architectural, with separate amenities and circulatory routes designed and incorporated into all spaces of the city, right down to the domestic sphere. Although many other cities in the southern hemisphere have similar disparities in wealth – São Paolo, Bogotá, Mexico City – are examples, none of them display the same fixity and spatial distancing of their disparate groups. It is this exclusion by design, perfected under Apartheid, that has placed the greatest challenge on public space and public culture.

If urbanity is considered to include the recognition of the presence of the 'other', then South African cities were and

continue to be anti-urban. As a response to the insecurities that accompanied the end of Apartheid, ever-increasing mono-functional and privatised environments have been created that artificially attempt to simulate European and American ideas of urbanity. The patterns of sociability that emerge in these privately owned public spaces, under the guises of security and 'lifestyle', promote conformism, consumerism and predictability.

The ever-increasing scale of such private developments is facilitated by the aggressive and speculative behaviour of large property groups, and a lack of state intervention in environmental control, urban design and town planning. These developments also rely on, and are facilitated by large investments in road infrastructure for private transportation instead of other forms of transport.

Given the legacy of low density and geographic spread, public transport constitutes a major element of 'public space'. The time spent on commuting to and from work, and changing modes or operators, constitutes a major experience of urbanity in Johannesburg. Public transport provision therefore cannot be considered purely on functional terms.

Within the context of under-development and unemployment 'inefficiencies' in the public transport system provide opportunities for social and economic exchange. Therefore the mini-bus taxi has become all-pervasive in Johannesburg. The taxis provide their owners not only with income, but also with enhanced status and positions of power within their social networks. For commuters, mini-bus taxis are the most flexible, albeit dangerous, forms of transport in terms of response to commuters' needs and affordability in accessing the divided and disparate city. The most pressing need in the development of better public transport would seem to be changes in urban form rather than rationalised technical transport solutions.

The conference presented how the City of Bogotá made a clear distinction and actively promoted public good over private interest. This was done through investment in legitimising, dignifying and signalling the equality of all citizens including the urban poor in the city. In contrast to that approach, in South Africa we currently see a preference for public/private partnerships. In urban development such partnerships amount mostly to the sale or lease of public land to private interests with levels of control that are not significant enough to break the prevailing anti-urban paradigms. The emphasis so far has been on deracialising the economy by giving preference to the previously disenfranchised, rather than on more fundamental paradigmatic shifts. Social housing and access for the poor for example remain at the periphery, in the geographically dislocated areas. Apartheid era property and land ownership patterns have more or less remained intact.

The inner city of Johannesburg presents a different case. Due to its density and urban form, public space is used most heavily, despite the relatively high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. Parks, open spaces and streets are used intensely for sport, recreation, religious practices, trade, exchange and all forms of hustling.

This may indicate that perceptions and realities of safety and security are deeply dependent on different subjectivities, and different (race-related) identities. There are therefore vastly different readings of the city in terms of fears and desires, opportunities and constraints and also in terms of what constitutes its centre and periphery.

Interestingly, the over-simplification of race into four categories, inherited from Apartheid, is markedly different to the 28 different categories of race existing in Brazil. This would seem to make it easier to politicise safety and crime in South African cities. However, São Paolo and Johannesburg have similarly high levels of murders, but distinctly different types of crime and criminal institutions. The manner in which criminality is socio-spatially determined is a subject worth exploring and could provide pointers to the relationship between city-form and society.

On the formal/informal

What was interesting to discover during the conference was the way São Paolo views the 'informal', an approach that recognises and differentiates irregularity, illegality and criminality. Under Apartheid all forms of the informal outside of townships were banned and only survived under the harshest levels of harassment. This has resulted in a heightened perception of the informal, but more as an aesthetic construct than reality: many African cities present visual notions of informality but most small businesses are actually formal i.e. are registered and taxed.

Visions for the future of the city are more aesthetically driven than is often acknowledged. Could it be that the integration and management of tensions between generic global images of good city life and local exigencies will provide opportunity for creative re-imaginings of what constitutes a global African city?

Rather than inclusion, the challenge is about integration.

Mphethi Morojele, Director, MMA Architects

QUOTES: URBAN AGE JOHANNESBURG CONFERENCE JULY 2006

THE CHALLENGES OF INCLUSION

In the big complex cities that we are engaging with in the Urban Age project, inclusion fundamentally means the recognition of the presence of others. In this context, the meaning of bonding is not limited to participating to achieve an end but it rather represents the real identification with others in the city. That can only occur as people's identities become more hybrid, partial and multiple, which is to say that if people are enclosed in a coherent identity, they cannot easily identify with those who are unlike themselves. This sociological proposition also gets on the ground when, as planners and as urban designers, we look at the relation between the centres of places in cities and their edges. Traditionally the centre of a community is its most important place. In my view, if you take on this sociological truism, the edges – with their boundaries and their borders – are the most socially important places in the city.
Richard Sennett, Professor of Sociology, London School of Economics and Massachusetts Institute of Technology

LABOUR MARKETS AND WORK PLACES

What makes Johannesburg different? What makes Johannesburg a world city in South Africa as opposed to other cities in the country? I think that Johannesburg does enjoy a certain vibrancy, a certain rate of dynamism, which has eluded some other cities in the country. There are more opportunities in Johannesburg for people to create incomes for themselves and to create lives for themselves. I think Johannesburg is a less segregated city than many of the others – I am thinking of the problems faced in Cape Town in particular – and that creates a fantastic platform for us, but it comes along with a great deal of difficulty and challenge.
Lael Bethlehem, Director, Johannesburg Development Agency

When looking at the transformation of Johannesburg's Central Business District (CBD), we must consider the issue of adaptability. In the early 1990s, the various CBDs in South African cities had pretty much the same vacancy rates. What happened after that is that different CBDs took different directions. Increasingly I am of the view that this had to do with the adaptability of the built environment. Some of the CBDs had more B-grade office space – if I can call it that – a second tier of office space in South Africa. They were able to adapt to changing conditions better than others. Johannesburg had a very high proportion of top – A-grade – office space. I think for many years there was an effort to keep those office spaces at A-grade level and to keep the environment around them reflective of that. That may have cost Johannesburg as we moved along.
François Viruly, Professor in Property Studies, School of Construction Economics and Management, University of the Witwatersrand

In Johannesburg, I notice that there is a peculiarly ambivalent attitude to globalisation, for a variety of reasons. For instance, there is the argument that much of the decline of the local, urban and regional economies seemed to coincide with the period associated with intensive globalisation. So, there are groups of people who see globalisation as the cause of some of the primary economic problems of the present. There are some who of course think that globalisation is the only way into the future for developing a competitive economy. This is one of the sources of ambiguity. The other one is that globalisation coincides with the end of apartheid. I sometimes hear a frightening interpretation that after the Apartheid era ended the economy got worse, poverty increased. I am not sure what people assume one derives from such observations, but it is certainly something that is in the air for some people in Johannesburg, which makes the issue of globalisation even more complicated.
Ed Soja, Professor, LSE and University of California, Los Angeles

MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

What was once actively planned under apartheid is often reproduced and compounded in ongoing, of course unwitting, usually unintended ways. For instance, one of the major commitments of the African National Congress (ANC) government, coming into power in 1994, was to build some 2 million low-cost, subsidised houses within a period of 10 years. We have got quite close to doing that, which is an amazing achievement. But in order to meet the budget and to develop 2 million low-cost houses, these dwellings of course tended to be built where land was cheap, on the far peripheries of the city. Therefore, in many respects, mobility injustice has deepened in South Africa, unintentionally, in the post-apartheid era.
Jeremy Cronin, Deputy Secretary General, South African Communist Party and Member of Parliament

One of the challenges is that we have subsidised train and bus networks, but fewer people are utilising the system. The majority of the people within the city use the minibus taxi system, which is not subsidised. As the subsidies come from the national government, this is a challenge for the city. Passenger surveys show that people complain about the cost of the taxis. Safety is another major concern; a lot of our commuters use minibus taxis but they are still fearful in terms of their safety, crime at the taxi ranks and accidents on the roads.
Nkhensani Kubayi, Chairperson for Section 79 Transportation Portfolio Committee, City of Johannesburg and ANC Councillor

If we want to deal with traffic safety we have to treat it as if it were a public health issue, where you don't depend on people to do the right thing on their own. People will make mistakes, thus we have to make forgiving infrastructures. We have to make infrastructures which are more people-orientated. People will always take the shortest path, even if they know it is risky to do so. It doesn't matter whether you are South African or Indian, no matter which country you come from, it is the same for everyone. So we will have to think very carefully and think again: my main appeal here is that we should take traffic safety as a public health issue.
Geetam Tiwari, Chair and Associate Professor, Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Programme, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi

PUBLIC LIFE AND URBAN SPACE

The investment made in the development and management of urban spaces yields immeasurable social returns. However, we recognise that we are still far from a city where public space works for us in this way. It is fully acknowledged that gated communities and boom neighbourhoods with high walls dominate the South-African landscape. Not only do these over respon to crime prevention challenges, they also undermine social cohesion at the neighbourhood scale. In fact they enforce the converse effect of creating unsafe spaces. Contrast this with hustle and bustle of a township street, where crime is still very high, but the response has not been to create fortresses. The standard of the township houses is almost incomparably lower, but the quality of social interactions far surpasses that of so-called safe neighbourhoods.
Ruby Mathang, Head, Development Planning & Urban Management, City of Johannesburg

One type of public space that has emerged since 1994 is understandably that which commemorates the struggle against apartheid. Symbolic buildings and public spaces have been built as sites for the remembrance of occluded histories and the mobilising of collected bodies. The Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication in Kliptown celebrates the 1955 signing of the ANC's liberation manifesto, the freedom charter. Public life in this space is monumental and commemorative, on an annual or twice-annual basis. Otherwise it is starkly dislocated from the bustle of daily life around it. Perhaps it is always like this when urban space is conceived as grand political gesture, but surely, I would ask, it should now be layered with the multiple registers of public life – of selling, of exchanging, of celebrating, of playing – if it is going to fulfil the revolutionary potential of the charter, the signing of which it commemorates. Or perhaps there is another agenda here, precisely to bury the charter, to entomb it in order for its revolutionary potential to be stilled?
Lindsay Bremner, Honorary Professorial Research Fellow, Wits School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand

HOUSING AND URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS

Our primary challenge in contemporary Johannesburg is how to boost delivery and at the same time achieve better quality living environments, sustainable human settlements, integrated settlements, quality neighbourhoods, better quality houses. We also need to find a way to deliver housing which will be identified, or at least recognised, by the owners as an asset; and not just by the owners but by the industry too, so that a person who owns a house can use that house to participate in the economy of this country. This challenge has been addressed in the context of a high incidence of poverty, high levels of inequality, and rapidly rising building and land costs.
Uhuru Nene, Executive Director, Housing, City of Johannesburg

A house is not just a house; it is far more. A house involves land issues, involves water issues, involves electricity issues, it concerns a whole range of things that have to come together but every single one of these things involves a separate department in the city – we have an electricity department, we have a water department. So, unless you can actually bring all those different actors together as a single team, you will never provide a fully serviced urban environment. What will happen, as has happened to us in the past, is that we build a house with dirt roads, without electricity, without water. Eventually the water department arrives. A couple of years down the line they will have electricity on their budget. Therefore, we really have to look at how we structure the city institutions with regard to how we deliver housing.
Julian Baskin, CEO, Alexandra Renewal Project

Edited by Miguel Kanai, Urban Age Project Researcher, London School of Economics and Political Science

ORGANISED BY

LSE Cities Programme
The Cities Programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science is an interdisciplinary centre that links urban design to urban society through teaching, research and public activities. The Cities Programme is responsible for running the Urban Age project at the LSE and the annual European Mayors conferences, and carries out consultancy projects for public and private sector clients.

Alfred Herrhausen Society, the International Forum of Deutsche Bank
The Alfred Herrhausen Society is a centre of independent thinking that seeks to identify traces of the future in the present, and thereby raise public awareness of the directions in which society is moving. As Deutsche Bank's socio-political thinktank, the Herrhausen Society brings together people who are committed to working for the future of civil society. Founded in 1992, the Society is dedicated to maintaining and building on the legacy of Alfred Herrhausen.

URBAN AGE JOHANNESBURG LOCAL PARTNERS

City of Johannesburg
The City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, led by Executive Mayor Amos Masondo, covers 1,644 km^2 and contains some 3.2 million people. The City, established as a single tier 'unicity' municipality, merges previously independent satellite towns and suburbs such as Soweto, Alexandra, Randburg, Sandton, Roodepoort, Kyalami, Midrand and Ivory Park. *Joburg 2030*, the City's 2002 strategic plan for growth, seeks to reshape Johannesburg's economy and geography by boosting investment in the city, and improving the quality of life for all city residents. This was complemented by a Human Development Strategy in 2005, and a new Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) in 2006. The GDS is based on six core principles: proactive absorption of the poor; balanced and shared growth; facilitated social mobility; settlement restructuring; sustainability and environmental justice; and innovative governance solutions.

Johannesburg Development Agency
The Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) is an agency wholly owned by the City of Johannesburg which stimulates and supports area-based development initiatives throughout the Johannesburg metropolitan area in support of the City's Growth and Development Strategy. As development manager of these initiatives, JDA coordinates and manages capital investment and other programmes involving both public and private sector stakeholders. The objectives of the JDA are: to promote economic growth through the development and promotion of efficient business environments in defined geographic areas; to regenerate decaying areas of the city so as to enhance their ability to contribute to the economic development of the city and the quality of life of its residents; to promote economic empowerment through the structuring and procurement of JDA developments; to promote productive partnerships and cooperation between all relevant stakeholders on area-based initiatives; to develop best practice and organisational expertise in respect of area-based development management.

WISER
The Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) at the University of the Witswatersrand, hosts world-class research on the challenges of social and economic transformation specifically throughout Africa. WISER protects the space for independent, critical inquiry into the complexities of change in South Africa, while drawing upon comparative research from the rest of Africa and elsewhere in the world, and foregrounding the wider historical and theoretical significance accompanying research. Main research thrusts include law, criminality, and the moral logics of everyday life; meanings of money and the culture of economic rationality; rethinking 'race'; cultures of sexuality and power; and the limits of the state.

School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand
The School of Architecture and Planning at the University of the Witwatersrand is engaged with the challenges of design and development in the dynamic African city of Johannesburg and beyond. The School's core activity is the provision of an excellent learning environment towards accredited professional degrees in architecture and in planning, and towards qualifications in related fields such as housing, urban design and wider urban studies. The School supports the quality of its degrees through engagement in research and professional work in these fields. The School's associated research body is the Centre for Urban and Built Environment Studies (CUBES), which is a research and networking entity engaged with a variety of topics and issues on the built environment. CUBES hosts one of the University's key Research Thrusts on 'Cities' and is responsible for bringing together individuals who are interested and can effectively contribute to this topic.

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