VERNACULAR REGENERATION

**LOW-INCOME HOUSING, PRIVATE POLICING AND
URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN INNER-CITY
JOHANNESBURG**

Aidan Mosselson

Vernacular Regeneration

Urban regeneration is currently taking place in inner-city Johannesburg. This book presents an alternative, multi-layered account for reading the process of urban change and renewal.

The provision of social and affordable housing and the spread of private security are explored through the lenses of neoliberal urbanism, gentrification, the privatisation of public space and revanchist policing. This book interrogates these concepts and challenges their assumptions based on new qualitative and ethnographic evidence emerging out of Johannesburg. Dated concepts in Critical Urban Studies are re-evaluated and the book calls for an alternative, adaptable approach, focusing on how we develop a vocabulary and creative understanding of urban regeneration.

This book is an outstanding contribution to theoretical and comparative approaches to understanding cities and processes of urban change. It offers practical insights and experiences which will be of considerable use to practitioners, policy-makers and urban planning students.

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Acronyms

AFHCO	Affordable Housing Company
BBP	Better Buildings Programme
BID	Business Improvement District
BNG	Breaking New Ground
CBD	Central Business District
CDS	City Development Strategy
CID	City Improvement District
CJP	Central Johannesburg Partnership
CPF	Community Policing Forum
DA	Democratic Alliance
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
GPF	Gauteng Partnership Fund
ICHUT	Inner City Housing Upgrading Trust
ICRC	Inner City Regeneration Charter
ICRM	Inner City Road Map
JDA	Johannesburg Development Agency
JHC	Johannesburg Housing Company
JOSHCO	Johannesburg Social Housing Company
JSDF	Johannesburg Spatial Development Framework
NASHO	National Association of Social Housing Organisations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHFC	National Housing Finance Corporation
RCID	Residential City Improvement District
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
TUHF	Trust for Urban Housing Finance

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1 Thinking with and through Johannesburg

Introduction

This is a book about urban change. Cities are dynamic, ever-changing places. As such, they require agile, flexible theoretical lenses and analytic repertoires (Robinson, 2016). But the change which occurs in each specific city is not open-ended or indeterminate. Cities change within the bounds established by their histories, the contemporary socio-political juncture at which research is taking place, and within enduring topographies and physical spaces. This book, then, is about understanding the ways in which processes of urban change unfold in a specific place, with a specific set of histories and dynamics. It pays close attention to the urban regeneration project currently underway in Johannesburg's inner-city, and seeks to understand the range of factors and actors which have come together to shape the process and the effects that it is having on the lived realities unfolding in the area, 24 years since the end of apartheid. The research and discussion cover several areas and topics, focusing on policy formation and the relationship between state intervention, ideologies of redistribution and market-based approaches to urban redevelopment; a sociological study of various housing developers and investors; an examination of everyday policing and security provision in a fraught, stressed urban environment; and a reflection on the lives and experiences of lower-income residents who make the area home. The book attempts to tie these different strands together to develop a fuller picture of experiences of urban change, and to understand what they mean in the context of the post-apartheid city.

Although the book is focused on a specific case, the world of cities is not fragmented, and there is increasing recognition that cities everywhere are linked through relational networks, connections and flows of people, capital and ideas. In examining one particular process of change, the book also asks what can be learnt from Johannesburg that can help us understand dynamics in other places too. It therefore explores the relationship between specificity and generality, and the extent to which it is possible to develop theory which can travel from one individual (although certainly not bounded or isolated) case to speak to and aid in making sense of other settings and localities. It is thus an attempt to apply, as well as explore the limits of, a comparative imagination.

2 *Thinking with and through Johannesburg*

Speaking to elsewhere from Johannesburg is certainly not an obvious or straightforward undertaking. Although iconic, Johannesburg is, on the surface, far from the norm. It is a city which is most frequently noted for its archetypal extremes – its alarming inequalities, distorted and fragmented urban form, severe levels of violence and stark, enduring racial divide. These are all certainly specific problems which affect life in the city and continue to harm many of its approximately five million residents. However, these are also problems which are not unique to Johannesburg. Fear of violence and insecurity, racial discrimination, rising inequalities and housing shortages are shared experiences for urban dwellers across the globe. Thus, insights gained in Johannesburg do not only speak to the immediate context, but can be helpful for thinking through or analysing other places too. At the same time, Johannesburg is an ordinary city like any other, where people, both despite of but also because of the above-mentioned disparities and forms of violence, go about their everyday lives, seeking ways to feel safe, to raise their families, to find work and shelter, to build homes, to connect with others and to get on with not only surviving, but also making the most of life. Some people also engage in the extremely difficult work of making the post-apartheid city better, of attempting to develop housing, enact planning procedures which mitigate fragmentation and exclusion, create employment, govern the city for all its residents, care for friends and family, and even heal racial divides. It can be instructive, then, to look more closely at how people undertake these endeavours in an ‘extreme’ context, to both reveal some of the difficulties which characterise life in other places too, but also to learn about the creativity, urgency and innovation which go into urban governance, and that make up and sustain everyday lives.

The not-so-extreme city

Whilst undertaking the research which informs this book, I found my way into a range of different places. Buildings, parks, recreation facilities, churches (some of which used to be synagogues), streets crowded with people, the back of a police van (also crowded with people), shopping malls, a gym, corporate offices and homes. Some of these places certainly exemplified the ‘extremes’ which Johannesburg is noted for. For example, Pullinger Kop Park, located on the eastern edge of Hillbrow, is a desolate patch of land and widely known ‘hotspot’ where drugs are easily available. Built on a plot that was once the stately home of a man who made his fortune in the brutally exploitative mining industry, and still bearing his name, it underscores how the country’s system of racialised capitalism generated luxury and vast sums of wealth for some people, whilst simultaneously impoverishing the black¹ majority and leaving ruination in its wake (cf. Stoler, 2008). As the 20th century unfolded, the wealthy elite moved away from the central city and began to settle in the city’s northern expanses. The land on which Pullinger’s house rested was donated to the City and turned into a public park. The movement of wealthy white people away from the central city prefigured the area’s decline and the destruction of most public infrastructure

in the vicinity. The fate which befell the park thus also clearly shows how capitalism uses people and places, and then discards them once value can no longer be extracted from them (Chari, 2017).

Today, the park is in a severely dilapidated state. When I visited, it was a cold Saturday night in the middle of the bitter Highveld winter. Despite the cold, the park was crowded with people, the majority of them homeless, buying and using the available drugs, and then retreating to the cardboard boxes and assorted blankets which served as their makeshift homes. The scene in the park underscored the severe, seemingly intractable problems which continue to define many people's lives in Hillbrow. It made vivid the ways in which chronic poverty, unemployment and homelessness are the reality for far too many people, despite the city's general wealth and prosperity. It also clearly demonstrated how people, lacking any other forms of social and physical support, depend on cheap, harmful substances to make it through the cold night, as well as how others, lacking other employment opportunities, prey on their vulnerability to earn income. The events unfolding in the park also brought home the ostensible impossibility of governing and improving the inner-city. The bulk of the drug trade was taking place in a basketball court which had been installed in the park during a previous attempt to improve the neighbourhood; the only remaining traces of the improvement effort were a sign announcing the 'Pullinger Kop Revitalisation Project,' which had long-since been effaced and scribbled over, the rims of the baskets at each end of the court – the supporting structures having been thoroughly stripped of any metal or other useable material – and the paved surface that people were bedding down on for the night. The despondency of the situation was overwhelming, and I found myself at the limits of my theoretical vocabulary and ability to make analytic sense of it all. At that point, my eyes fell upon a piece of writing scrawled in a shaky hand onto the 'renewed' surface of the basketball court. In large black letters, someone had written the word 'FUCK,' which, I had to admit, was the most eloquent way of summing up the situation.

Although Pullinger Kop was a particularly difficult, disturbing setting and vivid reminder of Johannesburg's discarded people and spaces, it was also just one of many different spaces which make up the inner-city. Another park, also located in Hillbrow, captures some of the significant changes which have taken place, but also the mundane, but no less significant, effects they have had. Ekhaya Park, which features prominently in latter chapters, is a place I grew familiar with and often look back on fondly. Jointly funded by the Ekhaya Residential City Improvement District, the Johannesburg Development Agency and FIFA's World Cup legacy programme, it is an AstroTurf football pitch surrounded by a tall wire fence and accompanied by a playground and sets of benches. It was built on a plot of land which, like many other spaces in the neighbourhood, had fallen into disuse. I attended several Ekhaya Kidz Soccer Days at the park, where teams comprised of children from surrounding residential buildings compete in day-long tournaments, cheered on by their carers and neighbours. These days were always heart-warming occasions, and offered powerful juxtapositions to the desolation of the other park. Even on

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days when there weren't organised events taking place, the football pitch was always in use, with children playing, shouting and just enjoying being kids, in what was once one of the most dangerous, violent neighbourhoods in the city (Leggett, 2003).

Whilst not taking away from the exclusion, suffering and hardships which characterise life for far too many of Johannesburg's residents – particularly those who shelter in the city's derelict buildings, its parks (in the inner-city and suburbs) and in the informal settlements which dot the city's periphery, but have also sprung up in some abandoned warehouses and industrial buildings on the edge of the inner-city – it is the ordinary, not-so-extreme spaces, such as Ekhaya Park, that I want to draw attention to. When writers describe Johannesburg as a 'city of extremes' (Murray, 2011), they draw our attention to the continuing racial disparities and inequities which define contemporary South Africa, and the ways these are expressed through the divide between spaces of (predominantly white) privilege, such as pristine, exclusive shopping malls, fortified, luxurious gated communities, insulated office parks and corporate skyscrapers, and homelessness, informal settlements, chronic, lifelong unemployment and relative deprivation, particularly in the former black townships. Whilst disturbing, these stark visions fail to include the in-between, not-so-extreme spaces that also make up the city. Whilst a lot of my research took place in public spaces, including the two parks discussed above, a great deal was also carried out inside residential buildings. These interiors offer important insights into the combination of somewhat drastic measures and approaches to security which define the regeneration process, as well as the ordinary, everyday lives which are unfolding inside them.

Places which stand out in my mind, several years after the bulk of the research was conducted, include a freshly painted, open-plan room, with a small built-in sink and hotplate that was the soon-to-be home of two adult men, both of whom work as security guards and need a way to stretch their meagre salaries; a largely empty, two-bedroom apartment in Hillbrow whose long-faded parquet floors recalled the previous glamour and desirability of the neighbourhood, where, for want of other furniture, my host and I sat on upturned beer crates as we discussed life in the area; a one-bedroom flat where the living room doubles as a stay-at-home father's office and his young child's bedroom; another one-bedroom flat where a large cabinet, complete with a flat-screen TV and speaker system, serves as a divider between the living room and children's bedroom. These spaces stand out for several reasons: firstly, they demonstrate the flexibility which is required to make homes in the inner-city – sub-dividing apartments, sharing a room with a friend, relative or colleague, sacrificing privacy in order to afford central, well-located accommodation – as well as the work that goes into making a life – filling a room with objects such as televisions, speakers, couches, religious artefacts, but, more importantly, carving out a space of quiet and safety where children can be raised and weary bodies can be rested, away from the constant noise, bustle and movement of the throbbing streets outside.

Secondly, paying attention to the everyday ways in which people construct homes for themselves draws attention back to the agency which people possess in all areas and facets of life, and which often gets neglected in extreme accounts of relentless poverty and suffering (Back, 2015). Accounting for these forms of agency is not intended to detract from broader structural problems, including institutionalised racism and inequality, enduring patterns of colonial violence and dispossession, and the damage wrought by neoliberal governance agendas. It is, however, intended as a salve to the more despairing images of life in the post-apartheid period, where constant emphasis on policy failures, inefficiency and corruption, governmental neglect and profit-driven ideologies frequently obscure the ways in which millions of people's lives have changed for the better. These narratives also discredit the ingenuity and experimentalism which are part and parcel of urban life, and the shifting roles and identities which people adopt as they try to make meaningful improvements to the city. Lastly, attending to the not-so-extreme spaces of the city helps situate the experiences of black urban dwellers in the story of ordinary cities around the world (Robinson, 2006), and demonstrates that the lives which people construct in African urban contexts are not only shaped by the extremes of poverty, deprivation and injustice (although these are central parts of the story), but are also based on mutual support, care and simple efforts to get by. Because they are less extreme than we are often led to believe, the lives people lead and choices they make are also marked by practices and lessons which people concerned with other contexts can draw on, relate to, and learn from.

Situating Johannesburg's inner-city

Socio-political landscape

The interiors I am describing above are important because of their physical and socio-political location. Johannesburg's inner-city has always exemplified and materialised the trends which have shaped the country at its various stages of existence. The modern city, seen from above in Figure 1 below, grew out of the gold rush at the end of the 19th century, and bore the hallmarks of this lucrative, but also highly extractive, violent and exploitative industry. The richest seam of gold ever discovered gave birth to a city at the forefront of modernity, as skyscrapers quickly begun to sprout on a once dry, dusty patch of land (Beavon, 2004; van Onselen, 2001). Street names such as Prospect, Nugget, Claim and Quartz still pay homage to the mining industry and mark the area's geography and people's routes through it (Nuttall, 2004). Less visible, however, are the places of harassment, imprisonment and violence which constituted the black population's experiences of the colonial and apartheid city. Although memorialised in places such as Constitutional Hill and the Drill Hall, the everyday violence and oppression which marked the city and through which its 'European'² character was kept intact are not always readily apparent. However, the scrutiny, policing and exclusion which black people were subjected to did as

Figure 1.1 Aerial image of inner-city. Photograph by Clive Hassel.

much to define the city as its burgeoning wealth and glamour (Mbembe, 2008). In that sense, Johannesburg has always intertwined two elements: modernism, aspiration, commerce and wealth, on the one hand, and brutality, repression, white racism, exploitation and subjugation, on the other.

Riding on the high price of gold, the city flourished through the middle decades of the 20th century. The wealth flowing from the mines became concretised in the city's built form, with older buildings being demolished and the bulk of the high-rise buildings and skyscrapers which make up the city's contemporary skyline dating from this period, through to the 1970s (Chipkin, 1993). However, as the apartheid regime's grip on power became increasingly unstable, the fortunes of the inner-city began to decline too. Downturns in the price of gold, international sanctions, deindustrialisation without concomitant reinvestment, and political insurrection all put pressure on the apartheid government and began to change the fabric of the central city. As investors grew wary about the political situation, they began to move away from the inner-city, with factories, warehouses and shops closing down, corporate headquarters beginning to relocate and wealthier white residents leaving for the leafy suburbs (Beavon, 2004; Goga, 2003; Morris, 1999a). Whilst this process of flight had deleterious consequences for the built environment, with neglect and ruin becoming increasingly prevalent, it also signalled a broader change. Before apartheid officially came to an end, more and more black people began to move into the inner-city.

What was once the bastion of white, European urbanity started to more closely reflect the African context in which the city is situated. Newly arriving residents marked the inner-city with their presence, and a new sense that the city was moving away from, but still very much influenced by, its European, racist origins took hold (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008; Tomlinson et al., 2003).

When apartheid formally came to an end in 1994, Johannesburg's inner-city was markedly different, demographically, but also in terms of how the built environment was used and lived in. In a short space of time, wealthy white people were replaced by black residents, who were generally poorer, and many could only afford the rents being charged by sub-letting and sharing rooms with far more people than they were originally built to house (Crankshaw and White, 1995; Morris, 1997). Landlords who remained in the area (and didn't simply abandon their properties in the face of drastic capital flight and residential change, as many did) exploited their tenants and the growing demand for accommodation, charging high rentals and not investing in any maintenance or upkeep (Morris, 1999b). The area's economy also changed, with corporate and financial services giving way to small-scale manufacturing and survivalist trading. These changes infused the area with a different character, but also brought enhanced governance challenges, forms of poverty and deprivation, struggles over space and rights to belong, and crime and violence. At the same time, the changes which were affected also recreated formerly segregated places like Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville as sites of emancipation, mobility, adaptation and experimentation (Gotz and Simone, 2003). As these changes are lived out in the shadows of the former colonial and apartheid urban landscape, Johannesburg has come to embody the hopes, optimism and dynamism, but also the challenges, legacies, inequities and forms of deprivation which define South African urban modernity. Today the city stands as a representative of both South Africa's apartheid past, as well as its uncertain, still-emerging postcolonial present.

Perhaps more than any other setting in Johannesburg, the inner-city demonstrates the changes which have occurred since the end of apartheid. Today, it is a mix of old and new infrastructures and is animated by a diverse population. In a generally dispersed urban landscape, it is densely populated, accounting for roughly 12% of the City of Johannesburg's population (of almost five million) (HSRC, 2014). Although the area has been largely abandoned by corporate South Africa, it still has an immense economy, with vast amounts of commodities and cash circulating through it on a daily basis (Zack, 2016). Whilst South Africa's major banks maintain offices in the area, they have all relocated their corporate headquarters to other, more illustrious parts of the city. Anglo-Gold Ashanti, one of the largest gold producers in the world, have remained in the area, basing themselves in Marshalltown, a banking district which has emerged on the site of the original town centre, and where an open-air museum commemorates the city's inextricable link with gold mining. Outside of this small precinct, small-scale manufacturing, motor mechanics and trading, both formal and informal, are the predominant forms of economic activity.

Map 1.1 Map of inner-city.

The inner-city's social geography is diverse. Various populations have imprinted their presence on distinct areas: Fordsburg, on the western side of the inner-city, is a semi-industrial, low-density suburb traditionally home to South Africans of Indian origin. It boasts a number of restaurants and cafes purveying Indian cuisine, and Bollywood movies and assorted paraphernalia are widely available. More recently, migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia have settled there, drawn to its mosques and Islamic community organisations (Dinath et al., 2014; Jinnah and Rugunanan, 2016). Running eastwards, Braamfontein is a commercial district with a large supply of high-rise office space. It is also increasingly providing accommodation for students, as the University of the Witwatersrand is located within this district and the University of Johannesburg is also nearby. The burgeoning student population has attracted new investments, and several popular bars, entertainment venues, boutique shops and markets have opened in recent years. This area has captured local and international attention, and tourists, aspirant photographers, filmmakers and artists have become ubiquitous. However, whilst the area profits from the presence of the universities and their students, fractious political movements and events originating in the universities have affected the broader vicinity too. In 2016, demonstrations over the costs of higher education at the University of the Witwatersrand spilled out into the streets surrounding the university, and the police fought running battles with students throughout

Braamfontein. The police fired numerous rounds of teargas and rubber bullets, several buses were set ablaze and some shops were looted.³ These events were reminders that frustrations with ongoing inequality, blocked social mobility and persistent institutionalised racism cannot be confined to the universities, and are increasingly part of South Africa's urban fabric. In this case, the city was not just a setting, but a vital staging ground through which these politics could be expressed.

The politics of the moment also play out in the spaces of the Central Business District (CBD). This was originally the centre of the economy during the gold mining era, home to numerous corporate headquarters, financial firms and mining companies. Today it is a mixed-use area, comprising commercial and retail services, both formal and informal, as well as residential buildings and the city legislature. As white South African-owned businesses have vacated the area, different groups of African migrants have come to capitalise on the commercial opportunities available. Jeppe Street, for instance, has attracted a host of Ethiopian businesses and traders. Known colloquially today as 'Little Addis,' entire buildings have become home to shops and warehouses trading in goods from East Africa, including coffee, spices, Ethiopian music, cooking utensils and clothes. In these spaces, the ways the city has been reabsorbed into the African continent become palpable. The effects of migration from the rest of the continent also make themselves felt in and around the Central Methodist Church. Neighbouring the Johannesburg High Court, the church has become a place of refuge for migrants, predominantly from Zimbabwe. In 2008, people fleeing outbreaks of violence targeting African migrants found their way to the church, which opened its doors and became a makeshift refugee centre. Xenophobic hostility towards other Africans has not yet subsided, and the church continues to shelter countless people, much to the chagrin of local government and the neighbouring legal professionals, businesses and property owners (Kuljian, 2014).

Demographic, economic and social change are also palpable in the high-rise suburbs of Hillbrow and Berea, which adjoin the CBD on its north-eastern edge. Occupying an area roughly 2 km², these areas have some of the highest residential densities in the entire city and are presently home to approximately 200 000 people. Whilst they were originally established to house the white population employed in and around the CBD, today they are home to a predominantly black African population, comprising South Africans as well as migrants from other African countries, mostly Zimbabwe and Nigeria. Hillbrow is a particularly notorious area and is known throughout South Africa, by black and white people alike, for its high levels of crime, violence, sex work and drugs. North of Hillbrow are the lower-density residential suburbs of Yeoville and Bellevue, which are also home to large migrant populations, predominantly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (Prabhala, 2008). The northern edge of Yeoville is framed by Louis Botha Avenue, one of the main thoroughfares in Johannesburg, which runs all the way from the inner-city to Alexandra township in the north-east of the city. It is one of the busiest roads in the country and has become part of the ambitious Transit Oriented Development strategy currently being implemented in various sites across the city (see Rubin and Appelbaum, 2016).

The eastern side of the inner-city is largely made up of warehouses and factories. Ellis Park Stadium, the site of South Africa's famous victory in the 1995 Rugby World Cup, and the Johannesburg Athletics Stadium are also located in the industrial suburb Doornfontein. Jeppestown is a suburb in the eastern part of the inner-city and is proliferated with disused industrial buildings. The city's disturbing poverty makes itself felt here, as many of these buildings have become people's homes, despite lacking ventilation, water and electricity (Mayson and Charlton, 2015). At the same time, the section of Jeppestown closest to the CBD is home to the Maboneng Precinct, an area in which former industrial buildings have been converted into artists' and fashion designers' studios, high-end retail outlets, restaurants and residential units. It currently occupies 150 000 m² and houses roughly 500 residents, but the developers have ambitious expansion plans (Propertyu, 2013). The area south of the CBD and Jeppestown is known as City Deep. It bears the strongest traces of the city's mining industry and is proliferated by disused mining land and the city's iconic mine dumps which, along with the freeway, also form the southern border of the inner-city. Despite highly toxic soil and water, communities of worshippers have claimed spaces around the abandoned mines, establishing churches and holy sites for themselves, thus reanimating spaces of exploitation, abandonment and ruin and investing them with new hopes, dreams and aspirations (Malcomes and Wilhelm-Solomon, 2016).

Decline and revitalisation

All of the changes which have taken place in the inner-city were made possible by a preceding, drastic process of capital flight and decline. Beginning in the 1980s, white-owned businesses began to relocate away from the inner-city. As international sanctions began to bite and internal political activism made apartheid increasingly untenable, many investors started to feel uncertain about the country's political and economic stability. Simultaneously, increasing numbers of black people began to move into inner-city neighbourhoods which were deemed off-limits to them. They were compelled to move away from the racially designated townships where housing shortages were reaching critical dimensions (Crankshaw and White, 1995). Furthermore, following the 1976 student uprisings in Soweto, the political climate in the townships had become increasingly fractious and these areas became intense sites of conflict between residents and the apartheid security forces. They became increasingly volatile and riven by police brutality and violence between different political factions, prompting many of those who could afford to live elsewhere to leave.

Initially Indian and coloured people began to move into inner-city suburbs such as Hillbrow. The majority who settled in Hillbrow in this period were middle class, and were generally employed in clerical and administrative roles (Crankshaw and White, 1995). Over time, they were followed by greater numbers of Black Africans. Due to apartheid's systematic differentiation according to racial categories, Black Africans were (and continue to be) the most impoverished group in South Africa. Those who moved into Hillbrow at this

stage were therefore less educated and earned lower salaries than the Indians and coloureds who arrived before (ibid.). Faced with increasing changes in the area, white residents began to leave in great numbers. Not only were they motivated by fears couched in racism, they were also enticed by the government's policy of providing financial incentives for aspiring white professionals to move into the decentralised suburbs, particularly in the northern regions of the city (ibid.).

In growing numbers, black people in dire need of accommodation rushed in to fill the openings created by fleeing white residents, despite the threats of removal they faced from Influx Control and Group Areas laws.⁴ Many landlords were quick to seize on the opportunities presented by the new demand for inner-city accommodation, some capitalising on the precarious situation of their newly arrived tenants, exploiting them by overcrowding apartments and refusing to maintain their properties (Morris, 1997). A spiral of neglect and destruction ensued, leading to the development of slum-like conditions in many inner-city buildings. Financial institutions exacerbated the situation as, growing increasingly jittery about the fate of the inner-city, they began red-lining the area, refusing to provide finance for property investments. As a result, owners wishing to maintain their buildings frequently could not raise the capital to do so, and higher-earning people were disincentivised from remaining in or moving into the area. Influx control laws were eventually repealed in 1986, greatly accelerating the movement of black people, particularly Black Africans, into the inner-city and causing the demographic composition and character of the area to change fundamentally (Morris, 1999c).

Whereas in 1986 only roughly 20 000 of Hillbrow's 120 000 residents were black, by 1993 85% of the residential population was black and by 1996 only 5% was white (Tomlinson et al., 2003). This was a pattern repeated in the central regions of cities throughout South Africa, as apartheid began to be dismantled and new urban patterns started to arise (see Maharaj and Mpungose, 1994). Faced with declining infrastructure, the increased presence of populations previously regarded as 'undesirable' and un-urban (Robinson, 1996) and rapidly spreading crime and grime, the flight of businesses and capital from Johannesburg's inner-city accelerated, culminating in 1998 in the relocation of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange to Sandton, a rapidly expanding commercial suburb in the north-eastern part of the city. This was also a period in which property speculation in the northern regions of the city was growing and investors were increasingly being encouraged by local government to look to suburbs like Sandton for new opportunities and profits (Goga, 2003). The decision to move the Stock Exchange confirmed the ascent of the northern districts of the city as the new financial centre and effectively delivered the 'knockout blow' to the old CBD (Beavon, 2004, p. 259), leaving it to fall further into disrepute and decay.

There have been several efforts to arrest the decline, some more successful than others. Early efforts aimed at turning the inner-city into both a trading hub, imaging it as the 'gateway to Africa,' and a high-tech financial centre (Bremner, 2000). These ambitious plans have given way to more pragmatic, but, as will be argued throughout this book, more durable and substantial renewal plans. The

revitalisation efforts which have had enduring effects on the inner-city, and which this book is concerned with, have focused on the provision of social and affordable housing, largely through refurbishing or converting disused and derelict residential or commercial buildings. The social housing sector is dominated by private, non-profit companies, although there are several state-owned social housing institutions active around the country, including the Johannesburg Social Housing Company (JOSHCO), who are based primarily in and around the inner-city. Social housing caters to households whose salaries are above the maximum requirement to qualify for free state-provided housing, but remain unable to access accommodation through commercial markets. On current figures, those qualifying to be housed by social housing institutions earn between R3500 and R7000 per month. Domestic workers, security guards, waiters, shop assistants, low-skilled manual labourers or self-employed informal traders or craftsmen are frequently tenants in social housing developments.

Affordable housing is a more controversial category. Private companies branding themselves as ‘affordable’ make up the bulk of the formal rental market in the inner-city. Their rentals are targeted at households earning between R3500 and R14000 per month, and generally appeal to people employed in stable but low-paying jobs, such as teachers, police officers, professional assistants, nurses, call-centre workers and bank tellers. However, the ‘affordability’ of these offerings is questionable. Income levels vary within the inner-city: there is a sizeable low-to-moderate income population, as 21% of inner-city households earn monthly salaries between R3500 and R7500; there is also a growing segment that can be thought of as middle class, with 17% earning between R6366 and R12816 per month. However, 49% of inner-city households earn less than R3200 per month and there is a 25% unemployment rate (SERI, 2013). Thus, whilst a significant proportion can afford the rents being charged, private-sector accommodation is beyond the reach of the bulk of population residing in the area. The discrepancy between the rents charged and what people can actually afford to pay has led inner-city residents to find alternative, improvised living arrangements, including under bridges, in derelict buildings lacking water and electricity connections, and in former industrial buildings which have been haphazardly converted into living spaces (Mayson and Charlton, 2015).

At the same time, as I will demonstrate, housing providers too have had to adjust to the inner-city’s realities and find inventive strategies for navigating between commercial demands and the constraints faced by the bulk of the people who call the area home. These acts of navigation, pragmatism and adaptation are at the core of my concerns in writing this book, as I seek to explore how pursuing urban regeneration in the context of Johannesburg’s inner-city (and other locations too), requires flexibility, cognisance of the prevailing socio-spatial circumstances and inventiveness. Focusing on these activities helps make sense of the process underway, and account for, as well as critique, some of the effects that it is having on the area and the people living in it. As will hopefully become clear, the book aims at providing an inductive account of the regeneration process, drawing on the multiple motivating logics and agendas which have

inspired it, the practical activities which go into grounding improvements in a volatile environment, and documenting the ways people live through and with processes of urban change. The overall goal is to emphasise the need for research to engage with and reflect local concerns, agendas and life-worlds, and to avoid over-reliance on pre-given categories or analyses. In turning to Johannesburg, I call attention to the ambiguity and diversity of processes of urban change and emphasise the unpredictability of vernacular experiences and practices everywhere.

Contemporary urban governance: between neoliberalism and developmentalism

By following the regeneration process underway in Johannesburg, this book aims to contribute to the burgeoning debates about urban developments in contemporary South Africa. South African cities have provoked a range of considerations and interventions. Studies have focused on numerous issues, not all unique to South Africa, but often presenting themselves in intense forms: increasing inequality and urban segmentation (particularly through gating and neighbourhood enclosures) (for example Clarno, 2013; de Vries, 2008; Dirsuweit and Wafer, 2006; Harrison et al., 2003; Murray, 2011); governing, or in some cases seeking to eradicate, informality (for example Lemanski, 2009; Mitchell and Heynen, 2009; Steck et al., 2013; Tissington, 2009); housing provision and policy shortcomings (for example Charlton, 2009; Charlton and Kihato, 2006; Huchzermeyer, 2001, 2014; Lemanski, 2006; Oldfield and Greyling, 2015); governance, policy and infrastructural innovations (for example Harrison et al., 2014; Harrison and Harrison, 2014; Rubin and Appelbaum, 2016; Todes, 2014); as well as increasing numbers of studies which engage with changing urban contexts through cultural and literary lenses (for example Charlton, 2017; Hlongwane, 2006; Matsipa, 2017). In terms of the urban policy literature, which this book draws on and aims to contribute to, there are two broad categories or schools of thought. The first focuses on the advent and effects of neoliberal interventions in the post-apartheid period. The second has arisen as a response to the former, and has come to stress the ongoing experimentation and developmental slant of governance in the contemporary period.

Neoliberal urban governance after apartheid

In the aftermath of its decay, Johannesburg's inner-city became the object of ambitious renewal plans. Broadly, these state-led initiatives sought to rebrand the area as the 'Golden Heartbeat of Africa' and a 'World Class African City' (Bremner, 2000). They thus sought to create an entrepreneurial environment which would attract local and overseas investment and are captured by the aspiration to World City status (Lipietz, 2008; Tomlinson et al., 2003). For many critics, these ambitions and the restructuring of local government

which accompanied them clearly signal the advent of neoliberal forms of governance in the city. As Sihlongonyane (2015, p. 1620) concludes, the initial regeneration strategies developed for Johannesburg clearly signal the dominance of a pro-growth agenda and are 'inimical to the annihilation of economic inequalities.'

For instance, whilst the City Council's short-to-medium term planning and strategy document, *iGoli 2010*, emphasises the need for redistribution, equitable delivery of services and resources, and the enhancement of deprived people's access to economic opportunities, overall, the focus remains augmenting Johannesburg's competitiveness and attractiveness as an investment destination (Johannesburg Development Agency, 2010). Similarly, The Inner City Charter, the document which provides the basis for the renewal strategies undertaken in the 2000s, firmly commits to a pro-growth agenda, and frames the underlying ambitions behind regeneration as increasing business opportunities and property values in the area (City of Johannesburg, 2007). In these ways, the strategies draw on and continue the path set out in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic programme. Adopted in 1996, GEAR emphasises the need for government to maintain fiscal discipline and focus on the cost-effectiveness of its activities (Bond, 2000). It still maintains a commitment to social redress and the redistribution of economic wealth to communities excluded and impoverished under apartheid, but focuses on achieving these aims through 'trickle down economics,' where economic growth and competitiveness are prioritised as the preconditions required to achieve wider social goals (Gumede, 2007).⁵ GEAR is also the framework which established privatisation as an official component of economic policy, focusing on the need to sell-off state assets, establish public-private partnerships and run state activities as profitable parastatals (*ibid.*).⁶

There are direct continuities between the principles of GEAR and those adopted by the City of Johannesburg in the late 1990s and early 2000s. For instance, following the restructuring process recommended by the strategic document *iGoli 2002*, the provision of municipal services has been taken over by utilities which are registered as separate companies, such as Johannesburg City Power, Johannesburg Water and Pikitup (which provides refuse removal, recycling and waste disposal services). These public-private companies operate on cost-recovery principles, and have replaced the idea of citizens entitled to rights and services with 'paying clients' consuming commodities (Barchiesi, 2007; Khan, 2000). This semantic and discursive shift has been accompanied by the introduction of punitive measures such as cutting off water and electricity services when people fail to pay and forcing communities to install pre-paid water and electricity meters (Desai, 2002).

Furthermore, urban governance in Johannesburg has become increasingly business-oriented, with the formation of specialist agencies who work alongside local government to manage the business affairs, developmental needs and rejuvenation of the city. Organisations such as the Central Johannesburg Partnership (CJP), Johannesburg Property Company (JPC) and Johannesburg

Development Agency (JDA) are prominent in setting the direction and priorities of the city and serve to ensure cooperation between local government and the business sector (Lipietz, 2008). For instance, the JDA was established expressly for the purpose of encouraging partnerships between the City of Johannesburg and the private sector and encouraging businesses to invest in the city (Johannesburg Development Agency, 2010). It focuses on 'greenfield' projects designed to boost the image and attractiveness of the city (Viruly et al., 2010). This creates a situation in which regeneration projects prioritise capital and investors above the needs of ordinary citizens and low-income communities (Winkler, 2009).

Another clear, urban-level manifestation of the neoliberal, pro-business agenda has been the rise of City Improvement Districts (CIDs). CIDs are local variations of the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) which have come to prominence in many Anglo-American cities. The adoption of this model in South Africa is symptomatic of the increasing authority of 'policy entrepreneurs,' who circulate globally and influence government agencies in policy formation and implementation (Peyroux, 2012, p. 178). CIDs are self-contained management districts which aim to improve predetermined geographic areas of the city by placing their day-to-day running and maintenance in the hands of independent, private boards. They are established when the majority of property owners and businesses within a circumscribed area agree to set up a non-profit management company. The company then charges every property owner in the defined area a levy, which is used to pay for top-up maintenance, cleaning and security services (Bénit-Gbaffou et al., 2012). Recent challenges to CID legislation in South Africa have made additional levies voluntary, but the model continues to be influential. CIDs have generally been successful urban management interventions and areas where they have been established have come to enjoy enhanced cleanliness and safety (Berg, 2004).

Significantly, however, CIDs are also increasingly criticised for the ways in which they fragment the urban landscape, introduce differential access to resources and services and pursue revanchist forms of urban management (Berg, 2010; Paasche et al., 2014; Peyroux, 2006). They also concentrate a great deal of decision-making and urban governance power in property owners' hands. Whilst the management boards established to run CIDs in theory consist of partnerships between residents, local government and property owners/the business sector, in practice, since voting rights are determined by the amount of property individuals own in the area and the amount contributed through levies, the more wealthy and powerful members come to have control (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2008). In Johannesburg, 'the City of Johannesburg openly acknowledges that it seldom participates in the central CID's management board' (Bénit-Gbaffou et al., 2008, p. 710), creating a situation in which the demands of the business sector are prioritised and they are given increased decision-making powers and control over space.

Developmental imperatives

The neoliberal policy and governance agendas have meant that, not only have the inequalities and injustices of the past endured, but new disparities and forms of

deprivation have arisen in the post-apartheid period. Unemployment levels have increased dramatically as industry has stagnated and employment has become increasingly casualised. The white community continues to enjoy the largest share of wealth and income and also enjoys the highest living standards (Everatt, 2014). Although a small black elite and sizeable middle class have emerged, social mobility for some has been coupled with worsening economic prospects and quality of life for the majority of the country's citizens (Mushongera, 2017; Mushongera et al., 2017), leaving South Africa as one of the most unequal societies on the planet.

However, stress on the failings of the post-apartheid period can obscure many of the substantial gains and improvements which have been made since the end of apartheid. Particularly, it is worth highlighting how millions have been lifted out of poverty through government support and new access to employment and education opportunities (Seekings and Nattrass, 2005). The state has also succeeded in constructing new housing for the poorest members of society, providing homes for upwards of 11 million people (Tissington, 2009). Whilst pockets of deprivation and lack of necessities such as electricity, infrastructure and plumbing endure, these are the exception, rather than the norm. Furthermore, a substantial, progressive body of human rights has been codified in South African law, ensuring that all citizens, in theory at least, enjoy equal access to the law, education, basic needs such as housing, water and electricity, and are free to express their political opinions and sexual preferences. Although these steps have not alleviated the high levels of inequality, poverty and discrimination, they are positive developments in a country emerging from the shadows of racist authoritarian rule.

Constant depictions of post-apartheid policy and urban governance as 'neoliberal' also fail to recognise the array of innovations and practices that are simultaneously driving urban change (Harrison et al., 2014; Miraftab, 2007; Mosselson, 2017). For example, Houghton (2013) shows how the imperatives of global competitiveness and economic growth are entangled with the pursuit of post-apartheid redress and economic redistribution in the city of Durban's urban development strategies and projects. Similarly, Sihlongonyane (2015) demonstrates how Johannesburg's city development and branding strategies, whilst focused on commercial growth, are also deeply invested in attempts to promote new articulations of cosmopolitan but distinctly African urban identities, showcase 'black excellence' and disprove prevalent associations of Africa with despair, disfunction and governance failures. Furthermore, whilst some of the urban renewal policies in Johannesburg are indeed instantiations of neoliberal ideologies and practices, it needs to be acknowledged that these are constantly played out whilst local government tries simultaneously to address legacies and daily realities of social exclusion and widespread poverty (Parnell and Robinson, 2006, 2012). Whilst neoliberalism and rule by market forces are prevalent tropes in the post-apartheid period, struggles for equality and liberation are seldom absent from South African discourse and daily life (van Holdt, 2012a).

Therefore, whilst government policies and programmes take on increasingly neoliberal forms, they retain commitments to redistributive and socially progressive goals. The South African state has also increased its spending on social welfare and support, and is today one of the largest middle-income welfare states in the world. Even with the increased neoliberal approach to governance and socio-economic life,

the provision of services and infrastructure to meet the basic needs of historically disadvantaged populations is a widely accepted priority of the post-apartheid government. Their provision, with that of housing, is a major if not the major fiscal commitment to anti-poverty activity in Johannesburg.

Beall et al. (2000, p. 114)

Reflecting these ambitions, the latest iteration of inner-city revitalisation strategies, the Inner City Transformation Roadmap, whilst maintaining the key pro-growth commitments spelled out in the Inner Charter, emphasises the need for local government to find ways to address ‘the ongoing need for accommodation for very poor residents and newcomers to the city’ and highlights poverty and housing shortages as ‘the most critical issues in the inner city’ (City of Johannesburg, 2013, p. 6).

The policies and political programmes adopted in the post-apartheid period therefore cannot be simply classified or made to fit into one overriding narrative. Attention needs to be paid to the ways in which alternative discourses, new imaginations and possibilities exist alongside powerful structures and inequalities, and how the city itself is a field through which these competitions are played out (Isin, 2008). The different trajectories and policy programmes which have shaped Johannesburg in the contemporary period serve as powerful reminders and evidence that the post-apartheid social order, particularly as it is expressed and lived through cities, remains uncertain, hybridised and in-process.

Awareness of this uncertainty and hybridity sits at the heart of my analysis of dynamics in the inner-city. My contention throughout is that diverse strands and pressures push and pull urban societies in different directions and that single-sided causal explanations and evaluations should be avoided in favour of more rounded, context-sensitive and nuanced critiques. In making my case, I draw on the notion of simultaneity, as articulated by Henri Lefebvre. Simultaneity, as a concept and heuristic device, is central to Lefebvre’s reading of cities. He uses it to emphasise the vibrant, contested and always multiple and shifting nature of the urban and to underscore how cities are spaces of multiplicity and becoming (Schmid, 2008). At the same time, the urban is also engendered and dominated by capitalism and its mode of production (Prigge, 2008). Hence cities are simultaneously spaces of creativity, difference and emergence, whilst also being spaces of domination, oppression and the crystallisation of inequality (Lefebvre, 2003).

Thinking with and through Johannesburg

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