

STEPHAN DE BEER

City-making, Space and Spirituality

A COMMUNITY-BASED URBAN PRAXIS WITH
REFLECTIONS FROM SOUTH AFRICA



ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN



City-making, Space and Spirituality

This book is about the soul of the city, embodied in its spaces and people. It traces dynamics in inner city neighbourhoods of South Africa's post-apartheid capital, Pretoria. Viewing the city through its most vulnerable people and places, it recognises that urban space is never neutral and shaped by competing value frameworks.

The first part of the book invites planners, city-makers and ordinary urban citizens, to consider a new self-understanding, reclaiming their agency in the city-making process. Through the metaphor of "becoming like children", planning practice is deconstructed and re-imagined. A praxis-based methodology is presented, cultivating four distinct moments of entering, reading, imagining and co-constructing the city. After deconstructing urban spaces and discourses, the second part of the book explores a concrete spirituality and ethic of urban space. It argues for a shift from planning as technocracy, to planning as immersed, participatory artistry: opening up to the "genius" of space, responsive to urban cries and joining to construct new, soul-full spaces. Local communities and interconnected movements become embodiments of urban alternatives – through resistance and reconstruction; building on local assets; animating local reclamations; and weaving nets of hope that will span the entire city.

Providing a concrete methodology for city-making that is rooted in a community-based urban praxis, this book will be of interest to urban planning researchers, professional planners and designers and also grass-roots community developers or activists.

Stephan de Beer is an urbanist-theologian, passionate about cities that are radically inclusive, both socially and spatially. Previously, he led a community-based organisation in the inner city of Tshwane, focusing on vulnerable people and places and creating responsive social and housing infrastructure. Currently, he is Professor of Practical Theology and director of the Centre for Faith and Community at the University of Pretoria. With doctoral qualifications in theology and urban planning, he seeks to traverse disciplines and boundaries in undoing the apartheid city. He convenes the Urban Studio and the Unit for Street Homelessness, connecting scholarship, neighbourhoods and the streets. He believes that spirituality made concrete can help transform urban places.

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A Community-Based Urban Praxis with Reflections from South Africa

Stephan de Beer

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Figure 00.1 Mapping author's residence in Sunnyside and Burgers Park
 Source: Nel, K. (2017)

A Preface: Stories, Being Storied, Re-Storying¹

At home

I grew up in Sunnyside. It is adjacent to the Burgers Park neighbourhood of the inner city. For the past 50 years these two neighbourhoods, only divided by Nelson Mandela Drive and the elusive Apies River, were home. When I was young I felt sheltered by the streets and the buildings; the voices of neighbours and noises of city life made me feel strangely protected. I felt embraced and had a sense that I belonged. I do not feel it everywhere. But I felt it there.

Sunnyside is an inner city neighbourhood in Pretoria, South Africa. Similar to the Burgers Park neighbourhoods, these neighbourhoods were all white when I grew up, with the exception of some maintenance or gardening staff looking after the many apartment buildings that lined the streets of this neighbourhood. They used to live in the workers' quarters, usually hidden away at the bottom of the building somewhere.

Only for “us”

It was not until much later that I realised: the warmth and embrace I felt in the inner city was not shared by others. If one was homeless, poor or black, one was not welcomed in my neighbourhood. It was only meant for people “like us”.

In my twenties, as a young student of theology, I became aware of a growing number of young men and boys who started to make the streets and parks of Sunnyside home. They were almost all black at a time when Sunnyside was still a white neighbourhood. This was the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. It was the last pangs of apartheid and these young men represented a threat to the “white only” existence of this neighbourhood, but also of the entire city. Vulnerable, unemployed and mostly poorly educated youth represented a new city which the carefully protected constructs of power would not dare imagine. I worked with friends in setting up the first overnight shelter for boys living and working on the streets, in an old abandoned church, then on Jeppe Street, now aptly named Steve Biko Street. This journey, which I describe in more detail later, would alter my life irrevocably.

Invitations to conversions

My immersion and relationships with these boys, and the pain it brought, as well as interspersed immersions in Hillbrow, an inner city neighbourhood of Johannesburg, and an African-American neighbourhood on the south side of Chicago, became locales for conversion: confronting me with issues of race and class, gender and power; the ways in which prejudice based on such categories shaped urban neighbourhoods, investments and disinvestments; and the distance of the church, theology and theological education from issues of urban change, social justice and radical socio-spatial inclusion.

These were invitations to re-assess myself, my own faith assumptions and vocational commitments, and my own identity as a white, heterosexual male, seeking to be serious about the claims of Jesus, in a fast-changing city. These were invitations into a life-long quest for a just city, in which every person will belong and share meaningfully and fairly in both the resources and the making of the city.

Vulnerable people and places

Since 1993 I have been part of a community known as the Tshwane Leadership Foundation. It grew from the collaboration of different inner city churches, and since inception it was committed to integrate some of the city's most vulnerable people into communities of care, empowerment and justice, whilst at the same time journeying in solidarity with vulnerable places, seeking to support its rejuvenation without anyone being displaced.

Seeing the city from places of vulnerability, and through the eyes of those who are vulnerable, are to see with different eyes. We quickly learnt, of course, that people were not only born vulnerable, but also made or left vulnerable because of systemic exclusions or oppression, prejudice and injustice. We also learnt about agency rising in vulnerable places and among vulnerable people, against the odds, carving out new beginnings from below.

Communities from below

Over a 30-year period, one saw small, fragile communities coming into being from below, creating social and housing infrastructure where there was nothing, and access to social, health and other services that helped break cycles of poverty and homelessness. In these communities we quickly learnt that services alone, without attending rigorously to systemic exclusions that made services necessary, were just treating symptoms. Just alternatives had to be found, policies needed change, budgets and investments had to be provided, and planning of local urban neighbourhoods had to be deliberate about making space for vulnerable people; about restoring vulnerable places to dignity and wholeness in close partnership with the people living there. These were in some ways communities outside the city's gates. And yet, they refused to remain outside,

daring to invest in vulnerable places where others of more power chose to disinvest.

Engaging planning

As we journeyed with vulnerable people and places to create accessible social and housing infrastructure, enabling institutional and planning environments were required. Pro-poor planning often seemed to be a myth and institutional bureaucracies hell-bent on retaining the status quo. This led me to a personal journey, hoping to contribute more deliberately to shape local neighbourhoods in ways that would be radically inclusive of vulnerable and poor people – combining theological vision and planning methodologies. I embarked on a journey that became a doctoral study, captured in the pages of this book.

I now found myself in a new world of plans, policies and planning practices. Not prepared to be bogged down by the impossibilities of weary adults, I dared to ask: “Why should suburban constructs and fears determine my neighbourhood and its future?” “Why must we suffer the consequences of bureaucratic plans done by planners who do not stay in our neighbourhoods?” “Why don’t we allow the intuition and the logic of ordinary people, children and the very vulnerable, to enthuse or planning and our plans with gritty visions and daring dreams?” “Why can certain people not be housed?” “Why must planning only be for planners?” Behind these questions was a sincere desire to contribute in a small way to a re-imagined planning praxis: one that will place vulnerable people and places at its centre, and, with humility and awe, work for soul-ful urban places, marked by dignity, sustainability and justice.

Possible contributions

It is my hope that this journey, in some small ways, can contribute to the discipline of planning, the art of city-making, the visions and discourses of making good and inclusive places and an agenda of socio-spatial justice. If it encourages a few individuals or communities to engage the future of their cities or neighbourhoods or parcels of land, deliberately and proactively, as participating city-makers, it would fill me with delight.

Space and spirituality: a city with a soul²

Space is not neutral. Behind spatial constructs and fractures lie deep power lines – social, economic and political – determining the futures of spaces. These are expressions of deeper value frameworks that are prejudiced, hierarchical, exclusive and oppressive; or, inclusive, equalising and life-affirming. This is not a new assertion. What I seek to discover and outline though, almost playfully, is a spirituality that can infuse planning praxis and spatial thinking, in ways that will turn the city on its head: making space/s for vulnerable people that will mediate dignity, justice and well-being. I connect spirituality and space,

insisting that the city has a soul which needs to be tended. I try to develop such a spirituality under the headings of discovering an alternative imagination of urban space, and practising an ethic of urban space.

Between theology and city planning: embracing a transversal rationality

This work has its origins in an embedded local practice, struggling to make sense of changing urban environments and asking how I as an inner city resident and urbanist-theologian can best participate in processes that shape local urban communities. Originating from this immersed position, the study engages in conversation with both diverse planning and critical spatial discourses and with critical theological discourses such as liberation, feminist and eco-feminist approaches, hoping for the emergence of a transversal rationality with which to engage our cities.

Van Huyssteen (2006, 19) contrasts transversal rationality with the idea of one universal, organising truth that has to have validity for everyone and everything. For Van Huyssteen (2006, 21) the concept of transversal rationality is:

fused with consciousness and self-awareness, and this consciousness is then unified by an experience of self-presence, emerging over time from a remembering self-awareness/consciousness in which diverse past experiences are transversally integrated as we reach out to others.

(Van Huyssteen 2006, 21)

Practicing a transdisciplinary approach

If transversality is the broad epistemological paradigm, then transdisciplinarity is the methodological approach emanating from it. Here I hope not only to propose but also to embody a transdisciplinary approach (Klein 2001) to research, planning and urban spatial thinking or urban place-making.

I move between theology, planning and other disciplines in order to imagine urban planning in South Africa today. I do so from a local perspective, considering the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood of the inner city and its immediate surroundings. At another level, I work consciously at creating transdisciplinary spaces for action, reflection, dialogue and research, embodied in a number of the urban engagements described here.

A praxis-approach to planning and city-making

I demonstrate how appropriating the praxis-cycle (Holland & Henriot 1984), first being used as a methodology for doing theology contextually, could be a useful method for *participatory, emancipatory, critical* and *liberationist* urban planning processes. The praxis-cycle is presented here as a specific method within what I call a contextual-narrative approach to planning and city-making. A praxis-approach insists on the importance of reflective practice being shaped

by a number of intentional, interactive and cyclical moments: our multiple immersions; our critical readings of urban spaces, with others, and particularly with those who are denied full access to such spaces; our collective re-imagining of the city from below; and our participation in co-constructing imagined new spaces.

The outline of this book also follows the logic of the cycle, moving from my own narrative and that of the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood; followed by a deconstruction of the urban facades and different critical readings of local urban policy; imaginative reflections on doing planning and city-making differently, rooted in a spirituality and ethic of urban space; and, finally, considering the co-constructing of the city with reference to a small portfolio of specific community-based urban engagements.

Community-based embodiments

Communities can do things for themselves. The ways in which planners, politicians, private sector and planning processes most often engage people and places, particularly in challenging or transitional urban neighbourhoods, are too often to deny local agency, knowledges, experiences and wisdoms, not creating hospitable and authentic spaces for inviting such local resources into. Such resources are alive in communities, every day, holding sometimes fragile weaves together, in spite of limited resources or support. The agency of communities is often staggering and dismissed at our own collective peril.

I concur with Donna Shaper (1989, 120) when she says: “Only communities can restored streets to dwell in and land to grow in and schools to learn in. They can do these things because they understand what’s really important, which is their life together”.

My insistence, and unapologetic bias, is to advance a community-based urban praxis, locating urban planning and place-making processes locally, in communities, with communities deeply shaping the visions and outcomes of such processes, intuitively knowing what is best for them. This study seeks to imagine planning and city-building with the eyes of a child, growing up in an ever-changing urban neighbourhood. It considers stories, including my own; the ways in which neighbourhoods are storied, from above or outside, but, more importantly, from below or within; and it considers re-storying planning or re-storying cities.

With deep gratitude...

This journey would not have been possible, was it not for people embracing and encouraging me on the way. Not only did this journey made me ask and express: “Who am I?”, but also: “Whose am I?”

This work is an adaptation of a doctoral journey in urban planning, accompanied by Mark Oranje, professor and current head of the Department of Town and Regional Planning at the University of Pretoria. His faith in my

journey, and his faith in the redemptive possibilities of planning, and of planning itself being redeemed, was hugely empowering.

A large number of the drawings and graphics that appear in the book was original designs, done with great care by Kathleen Nel, a local architect. I am very appreciative of how her work articulates with beautiful simplicity what many words might fail to do.

The communities of the inner city, in which I always felt embraced, not only enabled this journey, but shaped the content and values contained in here. These include people from my earliest memories of Sunnyside, to current companions; those I lived with joyfully and those reminding me that life is not just smooth.

Without the Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF), Yeast City Housing and other expressions of faith or citizens' action, I would not have grasped the power of community, the beauty of bottom-up actions against the odds, the power of local agency, in faith, to make and change places for the better.

The communities emerging from the faith responses of TLF – and the women, men and children who formed part of these communities – shaped my way of thinking and had me ask a simple but permanent question: “How do we shape a city that is radically inclusive, affirming and empowering of such communities?”

I dedicate these reflections to their memory, and to my daughters, Goitse-modimo and Kinkinwin, who entered this world through the safe arms of inner city communities, and who held me safely, when I needed it. I trust that their lives will speak of a mother bird, forever hovering over the city, to protect and sustain, to enliven and make strong.

Notes

- 1 I use “Story, storied and re-storying” in the way these concepts were used by Landman (2009); Eliastam (2015) and Müller & Trahar (2016).
- 2 With reference to a paper by De Beer (2013).

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“Ah, God, I was but a child when I discovered you
and knew, with a child’s
passionate, loyal conviction
that you were real. You were my playmate – “
(Gateley 2000)

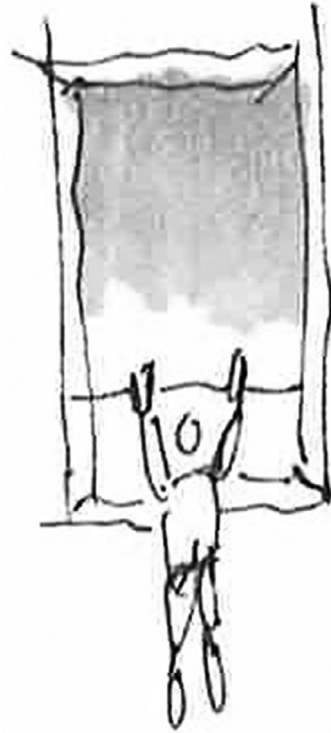


Figure 00.2 Curiosity
Source: Nel, K. (2017)

Introduction

Why embark on this journey?

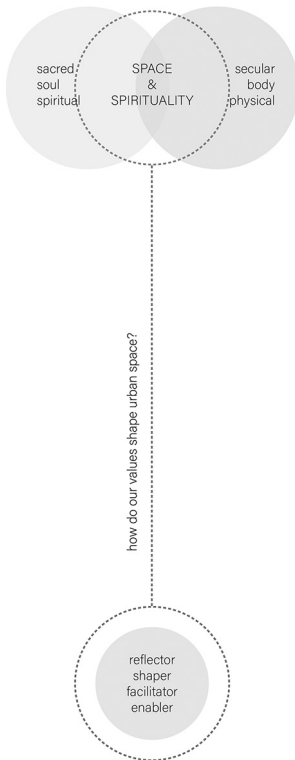


Figure 0.1 Dualisms
Source: Nel 2017

1 Introduction to the journey

This journey is about *the soul of the city, embodied in its spaces and its people*. It reflects on unfolding urban spaces, tracing dynamics in the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood of Tshwane’s inner city¹, between 1993 and 2022.

The narratives emerging from this neighbourhood are brought into conversation with many other narratives and discourses, hoping to discern a vision for *a community-based approach to urban praxis, or city-making*.

This journey departs from *a deliberate option for the city’s most vulnerable people* and hopes to contribute towards a city characterised by radical forms of inclusion, sustainability and justice.

At the root of this journey is the strong belief that Western dualisms separating sacred and secular, soul and body, physical and spiritual, are not sustainable and need to be revisited. I explore *the relationship between space and spirituality*, asserting that there is a connection. Values shape urban space, and the question is whether these values are serving humanity and the earth, or facilitating its decay and

destruction. Spaces and places (external) reflect values (internal), which speak of our morals, ethics, commitments and priorities. Spaces are not only reflectors but also enablers, facilitators and shapers of certain behaviour, values and relationships:

2 City-making, Space and Spirituality

...the way in which society (more specifically, the city) is organized spatially can have an impact on how that society/city works.

(Massey 1994, 162)

What are the values that lie behind spatial expression? How are the people of the city included or excluded from spatial processes? How can communities and local value-driven movements help develop inclusive “soul(full)spaces” that enhance integration, wholeness, equity, justice and peace? It is a question of how these elements – spaces, values, people – interface in creating each other.

The emphasis on community-based urban praxis is rooting urban spatial development in the narratives of local communities and people, but also actively encourages local communities and people to author their own spatial narratives. Herein lies a strong plea for democratised planning and development, decentralised power and decision-making, and a deep affirmation that the daily users of space – a child, an elderly person, the person with a disability, residents, new migrants – should contribute significantly to help determine the neighbourhood s/he wants.

At a deeper almost spiritual level it suggests that all of humanity and creation carry sacred marks of grace, and if this is true our city-making engagements should be transformed accordingly.

2 The context of the journey

The reflections contained here emanate primarily from within the context of the City of Tshwane’s inner city, with a specific focus on the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood. This is one of the oldest parts of the city, but in the ever-sprawling metropole it is a small geographical area.

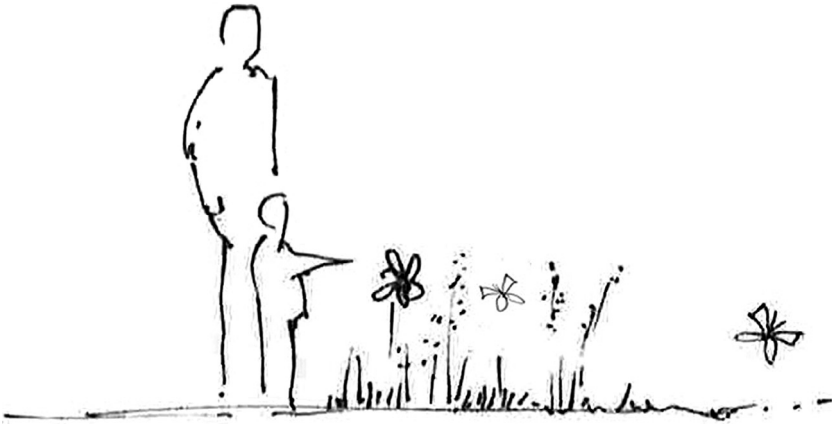


Figure 0.2 Child’s curiosity
Source: Nel 2017

There are different reasons for selecting this specific area.

The *first* reason is personal. The Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood is where I have lived and worked for almost 20 years, where my struggles and hopes are most incarnated. In the initial years, refection was only done “on the run”. Here I reflect in a more intentional and structured way on these experiences, framing my research as *solidarity action research* (cf. Higginbottom 2008, 158–170; Chatterton, Pickerill & Hodkinson 2010, 245–275).

I participated actively in the neighbourhood as a community organiser, leader of a local organisation, a resident of the area, a first-time property owner and a human being seeking to live well in my own neighbourhood together with my family. We were personally affected by dynamics, developments and decisions that affected the area. Writing about Berea-Burgers Park is therefore also a matter of self-interest (cf. Pierce 1997). My own personal participation and experiences, as well as that of the faith- and community-based movement that emerged in this area over the period 1993–2022, shaped the reflections of this book (cf. De Beer & De Beer 2002, 254–263).

The *second* reason relates to the unique character of the post-apartheid South African city (De Beer & De Beer 2002, 254–256). It is a living studio for dialogue and discourse on past, current and emerging urban planning and development theories. It is a daily contest for space (cf. De Beer 2008), as socio-economic and political forces, as well as diverse people and cultures are battling it out to determine who can be included and who not. The challenge to find a new planning and development praxis within the city, against the backdrop of Harvey’s question (2012, 236) about whose city it is (“who has a right to the city?”), is very real. How do we craft cities that will include every person – regardless of who they are and simply because of their humanity – fairly, appropriately and meaningfully?

The *third* reason relates to specific institutional interventions or processes aimed at urban regeneration in the City of Tshwane. Since 1993 various processes, mechanisms, plans and policies were designed, including the Pretoria Inner City Partnership, the Inner City Spatial Development Framework, the Inner City Office, City Improvement Districts and Urban Development Zones, all as attempts to impact positively on the inner city.

I reflect critically on these processes and interventions, assessing their contribution to regeneration, or not. I also consider specific community-based mechanisms and processes, exploring in how far these could perhaps be more rigorously implemented as alternative approaches to dominant urban interventions – mostly from above and from outside – done by public and private sector.

The *fourth* reason relates to the specific praxis that is emerging from within the community- and faith-based sector. The movement to which I have belonged since 1993 (De Beer & De Beer 2002, 257–263) has articulated the objectives it is working towards quite clearly:

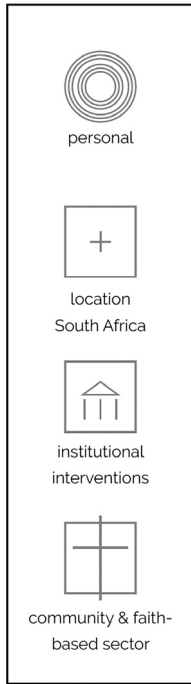


Figure 0.3 Reasons for the study
Source: Nel 2017

- the inclusion of inner city residents in shaping the future of the inner city through participatory processes;
- the full integration of homeless and other vulnerable communities into the city;
- investment that is socially inclusive – purchasing and re-developing property and experimenting with the re-creation of old urban spaces, connected to the real issues and struggles of vulnerable inner city people; and
- the creation of healthy and livable inner city communities, through the provision of decent, affordable housing, new utilisation of urban church spaces, social infrastructure and various urban services.

Throughout the work, I introduce a number of these community-based urban engagements. I trust that some of the reflections emerging from these practices and stories, will encourage fellow travelers in other cities as they seek to express a daily praxis of engagement. I also trust that it might contribute in a small way to inform the meta-narrative of the

South African city, even if it only means *a small voice of concern or disruption against a mighty stream of silent consent*.

3 The central concern, proposition and point of departure

Our own urban journey of 30 years, primarily incarnated in the inner city, was marked by a perpetual battle for its soul: large-scale disinvestment affecting its viability; landlords abandoning property; new landlords exploiting poor tenants and allowing slum formation; vulnerable people struggling to secure tenure and make home; officials and politicians turning on each other while communities wait for services to be delivered. This “battle for soul” also played itself out in organisational politics and the ways in which professionalisation and bureaucratisation replaced intimacy and community.

The *central concern of this journey* is to ask how urban space can be liberating, humane and just, nurturing the soul of the city and its people. It further explores what values, processes, postures and institutions are required to facilitate such soul spaces. I offer exploratory suggestions for an urban spatial framework that draws from an alternative imagination of what the city could be (Chapters 7 and 8).

The *central proposition of the journey* is to propose a community-based urban praxis as an alternative to dominant planning and city-making imaginaries – having local communities participate consciously, critically (resistance) and constructively (reconstruction) in processes of city-making and spatial formation.

Behind this proposition lurk two questions:

- How well are local communities, and vulnerable groups in particular, included in local city-making processes, or integrated into urban spatial arrangements?
- How well does urban regeneration initiatives facilitate deep transformation or reconstruction of urban space – overcoming poverty and socio-economic-spatial exclusion from the city – or are such projects contributing to further marginalisation or dislocation?

I propose rooting such an urban praxis in a spirituality and ethic of urban space constantly opening itself for the life-giving, life-affirming spirit of place, to invite, disturb, prompt and partner with us in recreating/healing/liberating/transforming local urban spaces. It is a proposal for an urban praxis that is radically democratised, communal and rooted in a value-based spirituality of space that is life-affirming and empowering.

My *point of departure* in this spatial journey is a sense of the “genius loci” (Norberg-Schulz 1980), or spirit of place, that needs to be discerned and honoured if we are to make spaces that will tend to the city’s soul. I frame the “genius loci” more broadly and inclusively, considering the Mother bird² as creative spirit, hovering over the city, longing to see fractures mended, dignity restored, life upheld.

4 How do I approach this journey? Methodological considerations

In most of my work, I aspire to do *solidarity action research*, which is going beyond a participatory research approach, being in immersed solidarity with the places I/we engage. By definition this might play itself out as advocacy or activist research, deeply shaped by the insights of equity planning theories³, praxis-based liberation theologies⁴ and emancipatory community development approaches⁵.

My approach is trans-(and post-)disciplinary, shaped by the concept of *transversal rationality*, not only integrating different disciplines, but allowing the diverse knowledges of local communities, community-based practices, urban practitioners and urban social movements to disrupt and inform my own urban understandings. My own trans-disciplinary approach is shaped by post-foundational discourse as found in Van Huyssteen (1997; 1999; 2006), Müller (2003; 2012) and others.

Insights from urban planning, architecture, theology, community development and narrative therapy are informing my own reflections about making cities and urban spaces that are humane, inclusive and just. I draw from these different wells quite deliberately, as I seek to live creatively within the paradoxes of urban life.

Doing solidarity action research in a trans-disciplinary way, still demands a particular methodology, framed here as *contextual-narrative*. I fuse the praxeological approach of Holland and Henriot (1984; cf. also Schreiter 1985), with a narrative therapeutical approach (cf. Morgan 2000; White 2000), allowing narratives from the local context to shape my thinking and praxis about spatial development, deconstructing dominant narratives that exploit and exclude and retrieving so-called strong narratives (tall stories) that represent a preferred reality, or alternative imagination, to that of dominant culture.

Practically speaking it might include critiquing urban narratives (strategies and processes) that give life to some and deal death to others, with a view of building resistance against such; while, on the other hand, retrieving narratives (strategies and processes) that are consistently on the side of life and justice for all, allowing for existing imaginaries, policies, designs and practices to be disrupted and re-shaped.

I adapted the praxis-cycle of Holland and Henriot (1984) as a methodology for city-making or urban planning processes. Growing out of grass-root struggles of slum communities in Latin America, this cyclical approach enabled people who struggled to make sense of their contexts, to read and deconstruct their own contexts; to imagine possible alternatives; and to formulate actions in response to concrete struggles.

Used extensively by contextual and liberation theologies, I use the praxis-cycle in this instance to study urban spatial arrangements and engagements.

The praxis-cycle follows *four distinct moments*, to which a whole chapter is devoted later. Each of the moments represents a different hermeneutical mediation: *entering urban space (insertion or immersion)*; *reading urban space (social analysis)*; *imagining urban space (critical, imaginative reflection)*; and *co-constructing urban space (strategic planning interventions)*.

The four moments do not necessarily follow upon each other in a rigid, linear or mechanistic way, but interact with each other dynamically and continuously, promoting on-going deepening of questions, analysis, reflection and engagement. At the core of the cycle, like a thread throughout the journey, is an imaginative discernment of a different city, prompted by the 'genius loci', or spirit of the city.

5 Own assumptions on the journey

The following assumptions are part of my own paradigm and shaped the reflections contained here:

- The city has a soul and – if honoured and nurtured – space within the city can be life-affirming.
- Inherent to the social spirituality of the faith movement to which I belong (commonly known as Judeo-Christian spirituality), there are certain values and principles that might, if discovered and applied to the urban built environment, have a life-giving impact on the way in which urban space is re-created.

- Urban planning and development have to go beyond urban renewal discourse, which is often superficial and temporary, to a place of real transformation, addressing the root problems in urban society without displacing vulnerable communities elsewhere.
- Planning needs to be done in trans-disciplinary, participative ways, including the range of role players and community representatives in planning, consultation and implementation processes. This should be done not to comply with legislation, but because it will fundamentally alter the way in which planning makes cities.
- Planning and development of urban spaces need to be people-centred: cities are for people and not people for cities.
- I affirm the poor (or “the other”) as a central category for consideration when urban spaces are planned and developed, precisely because they are often excluded from conventional planning processes.
- Planning, design and development practices within the urban environment, are often done without considering the underlying values they represent. These practices – and the dominant stories that re-affirm stereotypes and the exclusion of certain individuals and groups from urban development processes – need to be deconstructed and a process of value-based planning and policy-making needs to be encouraged.
- Integrated development plans, spatial frameworks and related urban policy can be liberating tools to empower urban people in general, and the poor in particular, to experience wholeness and well-being within livable and viable spaces.
- Urban faith-based properties can play a significant and even central role in helping nurture a life-giving spirituality of space; if these buildings become open structures, in dialogue with the world, and at the service of the community.

6 A (concise) clarification of key terms for the journey

6.1 Contextual

A contextual approach does not only refer to context as place, but constitutes an epistemological shift away from a foundationalist, dogmatic, or modernist approach to science, life and development. Knowledge is no longer a set of rigid dogmatic truths, but historically, sociologically and locally determined, as we discover together and negotiate what we know. There is a shift from formation of theory as an elitist enterprise conducted from above, to a more participatory co-construction of knowledge. Local narratives are valid and important, instead of a-critical application of universal meta-theories. The poor, or “the other”, is centered in contextual approaches.

Deist (1990), in speaking of contextual or situational ethics, describes it not as “a fixed set of ethical norms” to be applied, but as “the criteria of neighbourly love” that are applied “appropriately to each particular set of circumstances”. What would be the loving way in a particular socio-historical context?

6.2 *Narrative*

Narrative approaches in science, research and therapy, with their roots in post-modern discourse and theories of social constructionism (cf. Boyd 1996), find epistemological overlap with the contextual approach. It centres stories and story-telling, while deconstructing the stories behind the stories and retrieving the hidden stories (cf. Bons-Storm 1996; De Beer, Tumi & Kotzé 2001; Freedman & Combs 1996; Kotzé & Kotzé 2001; Morgan 2000; Müller 1996; White 2000).

Cities are made up of layers of overlapping, conflicting, official and hidden stories. These stories collectively become the discourses that shape reality as we know and understand it. They help assign or question the meaning of the city. In this work I narrate interweaving stories – cases, policies, plans, proposals and events. The narration includes official and untold stories. As I narrate reflectively, it might become clear how I am storied too (cf. Müller 2012).

6.3 *Spirituality*

I use the term spirituality in a broad, but also in a narrower religious sense.

Firstly, I suggest that every urban community has a *local spirituality* shaping it. This corresponds with the Roman concept of “genius loci” (Norberg-Schulz 1980). It suggests that every being, person and place, has a guardian spirit, a *genius* that gives life.

Robert Linthicum (in McAlpine 1991, 15) refers to the “brooding angel” of the city:

The political system of a city is infused with a spiritual essence, a “soul”, unimagined and unexplored inner depths. The angel of a city is the inner spirituality that broods over the city. And that spirituality has immense power – either for good or for ill.

What is it that you feel in a Calcutta, a Moscow, a Bangkok, a Mexico City, a Washington, a Nairobi? I would suggest that what you sense is the soul of that city.

Part of the work of the city reader or city-maker, is to discern that “inner spirituality”, which are the forces and values that give shape to the city, “either for good or for ill”.

Secondly, I propose the importance of a spirituality of urban space, to be sensitively and contextually nurtured, as the ethos or value base upon which a humane and just city can be built. I consider an eco-feminist spirituality (Jung 1993) of urban space that considers solidarity with all oppressed beings as a priority, rooted in an understanding of our interdependence as living beings in creation.

Thirdly, I refer to spirituality in a narrower sense, considering the constructive contribution that an authentic and liberationist Christian spirituality

(cf. Dorr 1984; McAfee Brown 1988) can make towards the re-construction of urban space. Historically, religious spiritualities too contributed destructively, contributing to the colonised city, being silent in the face of oppressive spaces, or colluding with those that created exclusivist, apartheid cities, dehumanising people and extracting from nature, for own gain.

6.4 Transformation

I speak of transformation not as a finite product, but as on-going processes of socio-economic-political-spatial-environmental change, in the direction of greater access to resources, equity and justice for all the city's people, while sustaining the earth. I consider transformation in the sense of healing-justice for fractured people, neighbourhoods, systems and the environment.

Transformational change does not deal with symptoms only, but addresses urban challenges systemically. In the global South it includes decolonising city planning and city-making through persistent assertion of local knowledges. Processes of urban (spatial) transformation are never neutral or a-political, but requires of the city-maker to be transformed him/herself, in mind, spirit and practice, if they want to contribute authentically to local transformational processes.

6.5 A Trans- (and Post-) Disciplinary Approach

I concur with Jessop and Sum (2001, 89), speaking of a post-disciplinary approach, as rejecting “the discursive and organisational construction (and worse of, fetishisation) of disciplinary boundaries”. The emphasis is on a new kind of knowledge generation that occurs in contexts with an emphasis on transforming knowledge and with learning that is transformative. It is not, as Buscher and Cruickshank (2009, 2) assert, “built on a wholesale dismantling of boundaries”. Writing from the perspective of design and digital technologies, they suggest a post-disciplinary approach as “actively negotiating and forging new boundaries between designers, users and other experts rather than simply abandoning boundaries or working ‘across’ boundaries” (Buscher & Cruickshank 2009, 2).

Jessop and Sum (2001, 89) speak of “the gradual decomposition and/or continuing crisis of orthodox disciplines and... the rise of new transdisciplinary fields of study and a commitment to post-disciplinarity”. Whereas disciplines “separate what needs to be understood as a whole” (Buscher & Cruickshank 2009, 2), they state that “(p)ost-disciplinarity fosters study and intervention as a holistic endeavour”.

I have become increasingly uncomfortable with the narrow, often unhelpful and forced boundaries of disciplinary constructions. I align myself with the definition of Klein and colleagues (2001, 4) who describe trans-disciplinarity as “different academic disciplines working jointly with practitioners to solve a real-world problem”. The emphasis is not on a particular discipline but on a

specific “real-world problem” and the collective search to generate transforming knowledge in order to address and even overcome the problem.

A trans- and post-disciplinary approach to the generation of knowledge is consistent with broader epistemological shifts that are described as post-modernism, post-post-modernism, post-structuralism and post-foundationalism (cf. Van Huyssteen 1997, 1999; Müller 2012). It moves beyond a foundationalism that longs for universal truths that are a-contextual and practises Van Huyssteen’s (2006, 19) transversal rationality.

7 Structure of the journey

In Part I I consider *a new epistemology, identity and methodology* in the direction of a community-based urban praxis. It explores a different way of knowing (epistemology), which requires a new self-understanding for those involved in planning, city-building or space-making. Simultaneously it requires a new self-understanding with ordinary and particularly marginalised citizens: to reclaim their own voice and agency in processes of city-making.

The metaphor of “becoming like a child” is explored, recovering forgotten resources such as wonderment and surprise, play and artfulness, imagination and intuition. It suggests a radical shift from planning as bureaucracy and technocracy to planning as participatory artistry, opening ourselves up to *the Mother Bird hovering over our urban spaces*, responsive to the cries of urban people and places alike and inviting us to be co-constructors with the (S)pirit of new spaces, birthing hope and bursting with life.

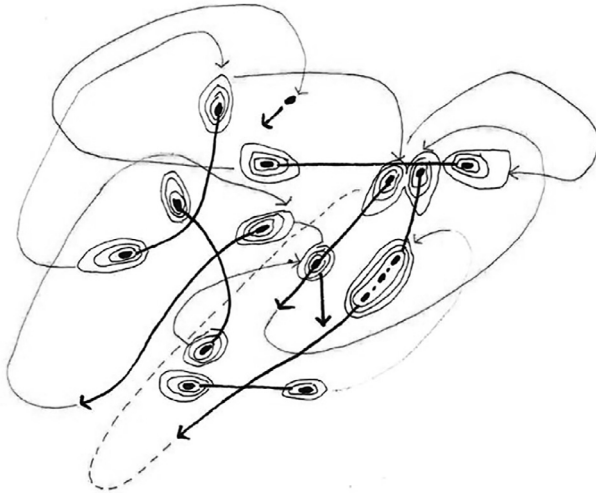


Figure 0.4 Journey
Source: Nel 2017

Part II reflects on “doing the city together” *through the four critical moments of the praxis cycle: entering, reading, imagining and co-constructing the city.*

Focusing on the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood of Tshwane’s inner city, it describes the *socio-cultural, economic and physical changes* that occurred in this neighbourhood; the effects this had on *public and so-called sacred spaces*; and *government’s interface* with a local neighbourhood *through legislative and institutional frameworks*. It *deconstructs behind the facades* of what meets the eye, reflecting on some of the *official texts and dominant narratives* that shaped inner city change in Tshwane.

Based on critical deconstruction of various facades of planning, I then explore *the development and embodiment of an alternative imagination*, through carefully *fostering a spirituality and ethic of urban space, carried by local communities and interconnected, intersectional movements* working for urban justice. In the final chapters I ground the work of city-making in *communities of hope, resistance and reconstruction*, proposing an *integrated community-based urban praxis* as the way in which local communities *participate in the co-construction of urban space, from below and from within.*

8 An invitation on a journey

A journey like this is a very personal one, marking the end, perhaps, of one phase of life and consolidating one’s position at that time. It offered me the opportunity to reflect critically on a personal and collective journey of 30 years in the inner city of Tshwane, in the light of different engagements, narratives, experiences and texts. Hopefully it could also make a small contribution to the theoretical and practical reflections of others who are engaged with changing and/or vulnerable communities, as residents, activists, planners or practitioners.

In the ever-growing, ever-changing cities of South Africa and the global South, my hope is that this could be a small contribution to rethink exclusivist urban (spatial) planning practices and processes: from hierarchical external interventions to a bold acknowledgment, affirmation and invitation of diverse local knowledges creatively at work to shape communities from below and from within.

It would like to raise a foundational question: Do we have a contextual urban praxis, locally appropriate to serve the goals of democratised, decolonised, de-racialised and radically inclusive cities (cf. Oranje 1997, 287–288), or can we be the ones to not only insist for such a praxis but to innovate our own praxes in order to be both appropriate and aligned to bigger transformational goals?

My further hope would be that any reader of this study would consider the values driving their own, and dominant, planning and city-building processes: Whose interests are served? Is the soul of the city fostered, or depleted? If a nagging disconnect/desire can be elicited with urban practitioners to interrogate the ways in which our own values, biases and prejudices shape how we see, read and engage the city, and then to consider re-imagining ourselves and our

urban praxis in the light of being “known”, this would be a worthwhile journey.

At deepest, my hope would be that some would embark on a journey of considering the possible content, practices and disciplines of a spirituality and ethic of urban space. How will our urban engagements, how will we ourselves, have to be transformed if they/we are to mediate people-centered, compassionate, humane, just and sustainable cities? How could our own urban engagements, and the urban communities in which we take responsibility, be humanised and dignified, to honour every individual and all of the earth, as sacred gifts to all of us?

Not only should this be considered at philosophical level but hopefully be concretised into strategic and practical actions flowing from a community-based – and value-driven – urban praxis: precipitated by deep personal and/or institutional transformations.

Notes

- 1 The City of Tshwane is the name of the metropolitan municipality of the administrative capital of South Africa, still known as Pretoria. In this study I will consistently use Tshwane, the abbreviated form, in reference to Pretoria.
- 2 In the Ancient Near East there was a rich tradition to connect God and the mother bird, or, “the Mother-Goddess and the vulture, to which rich notions of protection and regeneration were attributed” (Schroer 1998, 280–281); Palazzo (2002, 81), in reflecting on the feminist theology of Christina Rosetti, speaks of God’s relationship with creation as “tender and nurturing, like a mother bird”; or, as Martin Buber explained it, God’s *ruah* or Spirit was presented as a giant mother bird “whose wings quietly move” (cf. Schottroff 1998, 24–25)
- 3 Cf. the work of equity planning theorists such as Krumholz and Clavel (1994) and Krumholz and Hexter (2019).
- 4 Liberation theologies, opting for poor and oppressed communities, critiqued developmental approaches that create dependency and under-development. Scholar-activists such as Shannahan (2013) and Hankela (2014) have appropriated liberation theologies for the struggles of local urban communities.
- 5 I consider Margaret Ledwith’s (2012; 2017) emancipatory approaches to community development.

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Figure 1.1 Give me a break I am trying to find myself
Source: Taylor, G. (2014)

Part I

Epistemology – Identity –
Methodology



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1 “To know as we are known”

Towards a contextual-narrative planning epistemology

How do we know? How do we gain knowledge? Does the knowledge of planners give them power over communities, or does it equip them to empower communities? Is the local knowledge of communities ever integrated into the body of planning knowledge? How do planners understand the knowledge or perceived knowledge they have?

This chapter raises questions with regard to planning epistemology. It suggests a close relationship between self-knowledge and other-knowledge: it is only as we are known that we can know.

Jane Rendell (2000, 107) writes about this, suggesting that “‘(K)nowing’ the city invites and evokes a need to know the self, the one who seeks knowledge”. She (2000, 106) says “the (hi)stories we tell of cities are (hi)stories of ourselves”.

Afrikaans folk singer, Koos Kombuis (2015, 7–9; 172), writes about getting lost in what could only be the Burgers Park neighbourhood. He is looking for his mother living in an apartment close to the railway station. His description is revealing the fact that he does not know the neighbourhood; he feels himself a stranger; and, based only on a very quick and superficial observation, probably fueled by his own discomfort of the area (“I simply do not feel safe anymore”, p. 8), he makes sweeping value judgments. He speaks of garbage, overpopulation and signs of poverty taking root everywhere; until he gives up on finding his mother and leaves. The story he tells of Burgers Park probably says more about him than providing an insightful perspective on the nature of this neighbourhood.

I found it hard to look at my neighbourhood through his eyes. I do not view my neighbourhood in pathological terms only. I probably felt a sense of disappointment too: here was a white, male Afrikaner, who during apartheid times presented a progressive, alternative vision to the dominant Afrikaner narrative, now speaking of my neighbourhood in a way not dissimilar to the average white or middle-class suburban discourse. Both his response to what he encountered, and my own response of disappointment, tell something of our respective journeys and unfolding (hi)stories. It also speaks of our different biases.

There is a dialectical relation between self-knowledge and other-knowledge. Rendell (2000, 107) locates this within a feminist perspective in which the

personal is an important epistemological vantage point: “Who I am makes a difference to what I know, conversely what I know makes a difference to who I am”.

The epistemological question is explored and a specific approach is proposed:

- to embrace “paradox” and “chaos” as urban facts and “journeying” as a way of being planners: journeying with local communities, affirming local knowledges and constructing local stories with local people.
- to shift from modernist planning approaches, with an emphasis on reason and progress and the pretense of being value-free and a-political, to a postmodern deconstruction of these myths, exploring the close connection between perceived knowledge and power and suggesting that so-called “neutral planning” was simply a façade hiding the very clear political objectives and outcome of the colonial and apartheid city projects.

In addition, I deliberately position myself in relation to that which Edgar Pieterse (2004, 1) and others speak of as emerging “southern urbanisms”, acknowledging the urgency of embracing an epistemological shift that will be true to unique urban forms emerging in the global south. Pieterse (2004, 1) prompts us to ask very specific epistemological questions:

How best can meaningful knowledge about the city be produced? What should we produce knowledge for? And what do these questions mean for the politics of knowledge production in the global South?

This chapter, in response to the challenge of Pieterse and others, leads to the proposal of a contextual-narrative approach to planning and city-making, combining a contextual commitment and immersion, with a critical reading of local narratives and the imagination and co-construction of hopeful future narratives, discerned from below and from within communities.

1 Journeying between the paradoxes

In the novel by Phaswane Mpe (2001, 60), *Welcome to our Hillbrow*, he describes the paradoxical struggles of urban life in which pre-modernity, modernity and post-modernity meet; where Hillbrow and Tiragalong both compete for his soul; where he gets torn between the seduction of death and dreams of life; where the constructs of modern progress and pre-modern bewitching both interpret him.

Urban communities today are defined by diversity rather than similarity; ambiguity rather than certainty. Struggling or transitional urban communities in particular, offer an invitation into a journey of chaos and adventure, where embracing paradox is essential for meaningful, creative and hopeful encounter.

However, there are many who choose to sidestep paradox: professionally through non-participatory processes and exclusionary policies; spatially through

gated communities or more subtly segregated neighbourhoods; personally, through individual choices of who to work with, whose issues to represent in which community to make their personal home. These choices almost all carry within them deeply political and spiritual significance, although planners would still like to portray an image of non-political, value-free neutrality.

The choices planners make identify on which side of power they work, and to which communities they belong. In almost all cases, planners belong to upper middle-class communities, working on behalf of those who pay their salaries and yet planning "as if" they have the interests at heart of those of whom they know very little.

Modernistic planning, shaped mostly by North American and European planning constructs, with a high regard for so-called experts and professionals, tends to prefer working within rigid certainties rather than carving out meaning from within the chaotic paradox today's cities represent. They work with universal truths and general principles, with little concern for local knowledges or contextual details which might offer new, creative and even redemptive resources for the city-building process.

Even though academic theory has shifted to embrace and incorporate post-modern (cf. Leitch 1996, 133; Oranje 1997, 210–211) and even post-post-modern thought (Boomkens 1998, 33–34), and with that a new appreciation for multiple knowledges, diversity and the relative nature of our perceived knowledge or truths, the praxis of planning, when interfacing with power, resources and local people, often falls back into the rigidities of the past. The same modernistic epistemologies and analytical tools are applied to contemporary contexts that are vastly different and differing.

The character in Etienne Van Heerden's (1993, 184–185) novel, who happens to be the local politician, says it like this (translated from Afrikaans):

There is no connection between our shallow rhetoric and that which happens to us – within and outside our emotions. Committee work such as this, public positions, city politics and civil service, are all rituals that evade, that create constructions in which the participants hide (shit) themselves. The reality is shapeless, is dirty and smelly, and undefinable.

Bureaucratic planning is often more comfortable with constructing safe (hyper/virtual/ sur)-realities for themselves, than being exposed to an ambiguous city in which the reality is not as defined and clear. It would already help if planners could at least acknowledge these paradoxes and work more intentionally, creatively and self-critically with and within them.

Pile and Thrift (2000, 303) state that the project captured in their book, *Cities A-Z*, was not interested to "know" the city, since "cities continually unsettle and disturb any claim to 'know' what is exactly going on". Rather, they sought to explore the "tensions involved in knowing cities – the different knowledges and objects of knowledge that are possible." Pile and Thrift (2000,

303) speak of the city “as a patchwork of intersecting fields, as a discordant symphony of overlapping fragments”.

It is in the paradox of different and seemingly opposing knowledges that we start to engage the city as it is. It is in the city exposing our own knowledge or lack of it, our biases and assumptions, that we start to see the city with new eyes, no longer to control but to serve, no longer to capture, but to journey alongside.

I deliberately use the term “journeying” (De Beer & De Beer 2002, 261–262) as it suggests “not-knowing” as a departure point: open to surprise, with others, sometimes even arriving at places not known before (cf. Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001; De Beer & De Beer 2002, 277). At another level journeying suggests the possibility of never arriving completely, but always being “on a journey” towards the “new city”. Not only do we have to engage paradox in the “new city”, but we also need to embrace “journeying” as a way of being with communities, in the process of discovering alternative stories and co-constructing hopeful futures (cf. De Beer & De Beer 2002; Oranje 1997, 27).

2 Shifting paradigms

The shifts taking place in science over the past few decades were liberating. They took us from our captivity to reason and progress, to a new fascination and appreciation for imagination, fantasy, stories, intuition, faith, magic and other aspects of life that were previously denoted as less than science and, worse even, irrational. However, these deeply human phenomena are what often distinguish good cities from mediocre cities. We would do well to retrieve these into newer planning praxes. There is a certain playfulness that is lost, that needs to be recovered if we are to build cities for people.

2.1 *Modernism*

The era of modernism has its roots in enlightenment, with the emphasis on reason, rational science and technological progress. Experience, intuition and story, were often dismissed in this era as non-scientific and therefore not valid in the process of research or theory development.

Modernism also gave birth to the so-called grand narratives (Boomkens 1998, 32): the universal myths, religious systems, or all-encompassing explanations of the world and humanity. These systems or ideologies determined very rationally and “scientifically” how life should be lived and facilitated the so-called emancipation of human beings.

One example is the grand narrative of “the market” that is still pervasive in popular urban development discourse. This narrative affects local neighbourhoods around the world, often in deeply disconnecting and excluding ways. In reaction is the counter-narrative of the revolution, in which oppressed people everywhere find solidarity with each other and march towards a new society. Economic and development theories have, for a long time, been influenced by these discourses.

In planning circles the modernist era often led to an erasure of whatever came before, on the premise that the rationality of modernism offered universal and eternal solutions. Moses in New York City and Hausmann in Berlin created city plans “so as to achieve a radically new departure point that could be a true present” (Berman 1989, 331). These grand solutions often disregarded local histories, feelings and aspirations.

In development theory, the period after World War II is known as the modernisation-period in which there was a growing concern about the development of the so-called Third World. This concern was another result of modernism, based on Western progress-thinking, reliant on the technological advances of the West and assuming the absorption of Western values and life-style. It equated development with economic growth and suggested that economic growth will automatically trickle-down to the poorest sections of communities (cf. De Beer 1998, 132; Treurnicht 1997, 18–21).

Especially since the 1970s there has been a strong reaction against “developmentalism” with its base in such “growth-orientated modernization and progress-thinking” (De Beer 1998, 132). It overwhelmingly contributed to the rich becoming richer and the poor poorer. The debt crisis of African and other southern countries is one of the symptoms of this era. Very often it was “nothing more than new and underhanded ways of increasing the power of strong economic groups” (Gutierrez 1988, 17).

Growth theories have often proved to fail the poorest sectors of the community and the so-called “trickle-down effect” is now regarded by many as a myth (cf. Wallis 1994, 144–145), yet still uncritically advocated in local urban planning processes and programmes without regard for proof to the contrary.

Since the 1970s, there has been a movement of people advocating alternative development strategies. In Latin America, liberation theologies developed largely in response to the failure of “developmentalism” to break the captivity of the poor and oppressed. These theologies represented a strong critique of modernisation and developmentalism and mobilised local communities of resistance which developed creative local alternatives.

2.2 Postmodernism

Postmodernism constituted a break with grand narratives. Some of the features of the postmodern paradigm include its refusal to totalise narratives; its rejection of reason as foundational or universal; the importance of critical analysis of the usage of language; a sensitivity to racial, gender and class differences; an articulation of the margins; its acknowledgment of the connection between knowledge, interest and power; its criticism of modernism and enlightenment “as discursive constructions and sites of struggle” (Leitch 1996, 133); its openness to a multiplicity of interpretations and discourses; a distrust of so-called experts; and a reduction in boundaries between different academic disciplines (Leitch 1996, 133; Oranje 1997, 210–211).

Postmodernism is in one sense therefore, a reaction against the negative results of science and reason. Sandercock (2003) writes about modernist

planning's affirmation of homogeneity, for example, in a world that is increasingly diverse. In architecture (Turner 1996, 7), postmodern thought has led to a new affirmation of plurality, diversity and multivalency. It seeks to understand phenomena "in their uniqueness, the uniqueness redefining cultural discourse and allowing different realities to exist in urban space" (Harvey 1992).

Postmodernist theorists such as Lyotard (1984) and Foucault (1975) argue for a deconstruction of grand narratives and suggest that we rather move towards embracing a plurality of overlapping smaller or local narratives. Foucault, for example, is pleading for the efficacy of *more widely distributed but specific and local critiques on current practices of social and political use of power* (Boomkens 1998, 33), as a way of deconstructing dominant discourses. He does not suggest this as an alternative to global solidarity and connectedness. He does suggest, though, a global connectedness that should take new forms, celebrating and rising out of local rootedness.

And yet, as the next section also indicates, postmodernism comes with its own weaknesses and shadow side. Oranje (1997, 280) cautions against "the *Beastly* sides of postmodernism, its nihilism and endless relativism". He calls for a faith that can counter the shadow sides of postmodernism, in order to truly embrace all human beings and "non-human life forms who share this Earth with us".

2.3 *Post-postmodernism*

Boomkens (1998, 33) speaks of the failure of the grand narratives and how postmodernism was able to identify these failures. However, he questions whether postmodernism can explain the failures of the past and correct them. He suggests that postmodernism fails to offer much of its own, except for a critique and analysis of modernism. In that sense it is a product of modernism, a parasite of the modernist crisis, instead of presenting something authentically new. It is diagnostic but not necessarily transformational.

Boomkens (1998, 34) cautions against the possibility of postmodern theory becoming a new grand narrative, just falling into the trap of that which it is advocating against. In this regard the work of Tom Turner (1996) is then introduced who speaks of post-postmodern life in architecture, urban design and other disciplines. Whereas modernism worked with "one way, one truth, one city", and postmodernism almost suggests that "anything goes", Turner's post-post-modernism tries to move beyond both these approaches.

Turner (1996, 9) suggests that postmodern planning was "anti-planning": "When the hoped-for urban paradise turned into a hated 'concrete jungle'... planners lost heart. Post-postmodernist planning is a sign of returning self-confidence".

Turner (1996, 9) also introduces the notion of faith as an element that tempers reason and suggests an integration of reason and faith that will help facilitate a more holistic planning praxis:

They are strongest in those who place their hands on their hearts and are willing to assert "I believe"; faith always was the strongest competitor for reason; faith in a God; faith in tradition; faith in an institution; faith in a person; faith in a nation. The built environment professionals are witnessing the gradual dawn of a post-postmodernism that seeks to temper reason with faith.

In many poor urban communities, faith and religion are basic life resources that serve not only to provide personal meaning and sustenance in desperate circumstances, but often also become resources for local community transformation. Postmodernism often questions the basic tenets of faith communities. When these tenets constitute a suffering people's only hope – the magic of resurrection, its hope of new beginnings – destroying such can deprive people and communities of the one resource that could transform their existence. They who are poor cannot afford the luxury of questioning away their only hope. From this perspective, postmodernism could also be viewed as an elitist luxury that cannot be afforded by the poor.

3 Knowing together...

Epistemology is the question of gaining knowledge. What do I know? How do I know that I know? How do I gain my knowledge? Who knows? What is valid knowledge? What is the relationship between knowledge and power? Whose knowledge is valid or valuable in the planning process? (cf. Sandercock 2003, 60).

3.1 *From expert-driven to collective journeys (John Short)*

In a modernist era, scientific knowledge was limited to that which could be rationally argued. The experiential or emotive were seen as a-scientific and therefore not valid sources in attaining knowledge. Knowledge about cities and how they should be planned was the monopoly of experts, often at the expense of people in communities.

Short (1989, 53) argues that "(o)ur cities are too important to be left to the 'experts'". He (1989, 51) suggests that "(t)he development of the expert is a function of the creation of the non-expert". Instead of such an expert/non-expert division, Short (1989, 69) advocates radical participation.

There are many people in the city whose voices are rarely heard. They live in a city of other people's making. In a city like Cape Town there is growing discontent with the reality of urban life, at least for the majority of black Cape-tonians, determined by others – former colonisers or neo-colonisers – perpetually estranging black migrants entering the city. The unheard voices and the pain of the excluded need to be incorporated in the task of urban reflection, deconstruction and re-imagination.

It is in the collective journeying of all the citizens, that we can engage urban challenges creatively and inclusively. Short seems to suggest that knowledge lies

in the collective journey. The language of planning “and the community of users cannot be separated” (Oranje 1997, 22). Knowledge is shaped communally.

However, this is not the kind of knowledge that most experts / professionals are about. Theirs is often a monopolised knowledge keeping the planning and design of cities and neighbourhoods away from people, thereby creating power hierarchies and retaining professional securities. This is the opposite of a liberating planning praxis that will revel in the creative participation of all citizens, bringing to the table their own imaginations, insights and intuitive knowledges (cf. Van Herzele 2004).

3.2 *Knowing as loving (Parker Palmer)*

The Quaker author, Parker Palmer (1983, 2), roots knowledge ethically and challenges the way we have obtained, understood or practiced knowledge. Those of us who are well-educated people too often have been schooled in a way of knowing that treats the world as an object to be dissected and manipulated; a way of knowing that gives us power over the world.

Such ways of knowing often breeds a kind of arrogance that seeks to manipulate the world into our image. We use our knowledge to re-arrange the world and to satisfy our drive for power, distorting and deranging life rather than loving it for the gift that it is.

This is the kind of “knowledge” that Pile and Thrift (2000) challenge in their reading of the city. Instead of treating the city as “object” to be “dissected”, they recognise that we too, in the process of engaging the city, are to be exposed, dissected and known by the very city we investigate.

Palmer (1983, 7) places knowledge within a moral or ethical framework:

But I have come to see that knowledge contains its own morality, that it begins not in neutrality but in a place of passion within the human soul. Depending on the nature of that passion, our knowledge will follow certain course and head toward certain ends.

Palmer (1983, 7) suggests two primary historic sources of knowledge, namely curiosity and control, both being amoral in their “need to know that allows no guidance beyond the need itself” (curiosity) and its tendency to abuse power, to manipulate and to be corrupted (control). Palmer (1983, 8) suggests another kind of knowledge that “originates not in curiosity or control but in compassion, or love – a source celebrated not in our intellectual tradition but in our spiritual heritage”. Palmer (1983, 8) elaborates:

The goal of knowledge arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds. A knowledge born of compassion aims not at exploiting and manipulating creation but at reconciling the world to itself. The mind motivated by compassion reaches out to know as

the heart reaches out to love. Here, the act of knowing is an act of love, the act of entering and embracing the reality of the other, of allowing the other to enter and embrace our own. In such knowing we know and are known as members of one community, and our knowing becomes a way of reweaving that community's bonds.

In *To Know as We are Known*, Palmer (1983, 16) writes:

A knowledge that heals and makes whole will come as we look creation in the eyes and allow it to look back, not only searching nature but also allowing nature to search us as well.

Is there not much the city wants to tell us: of our exploitation of its resources; of the ways in which our prejudice has limited some to live in parts of the city where we would never live ourselves; and many have been excluded from parts of the city because they were disabled or women or black? What will our city tell us about past practices of planning, and how would that implicate the planner and me as practitioner/citizen/researcher? Palmer (1983, 16) suggests that moral or ethical knowledge will find its source in compassionate love, through a community of knowing, that will “make itself vulnerable to be known as well and in such a process of mutuality will emerge a knowledge that can facilitate healing and wholeness”.

Is that not the kind of knowledge that we want to obtain in planning, which will ultimately lead to the healing of broken places and healthy urban communities?

The kind of knowing Palmer has in mind requires compassion, which, in the literal sense of the word, requires of us to “suffer with” the city and particularly with those who experience deep forms of suffering and exclusion. This is to make ourselves vulnerable to the point of being exposed for our own lack of knowledge and prejudicial planning and to, instead, form coalitions of planning and action that can start to share different kinds of knowledges, vulnerably with each other.

3.3 Mutual learning (John Friedmann)

John Friedmann describes the polarity between experts and actors. Experts relied on their science-based professional knowledge, while actors relied on their experience of local places. Friedmann (1992) suggests that both parties are extremely and equally important and proposes what he calls a praxis of “mutual learning”. This could only be facilitated by a transactional style of planning, with greater emphasis on interpersonal relationships and skills, human worth and reciprocity and the importance of dialogue or conversation.

The shift towards trans-disciplinary research (De Beer 2014; Klein et al. 2001) is characterised among other things by the close collaboration between diverse disciplines, as well as so-called “experts” and “actors”. Trans-disciplinarity,

from one perspective, could be regarded as an approach to knowledge that affirms the importance of mutual learning.

3.4 *Reflective practice (Schön 1983, 65)*

Schön (1983, vii) contrasts the “‘hard knowledge of science and scholarship’ with the ‘soft knowledge of artistry’”. To integrate these, he suggests the nurturing of reflective practices. Much of urban engagement is mechanistic, following the whims of the market and public and private sector discourses, with little time and attention being given for the important task of listening carefully to the impact of urban engagements on local communities and people.

Contemporary urban practice requires the formation of reflective practitioners, across the spectrum of disciplines: planners, architects, development practitioners, urban religious workers, urban citizens or urban policy-makers. There is a profound requirement for a new generation of city-makers, who will be able to reflect critically on local urban practices, both their own and those of others. Reflective urban practitioners are people who are able to “reflect in action” and to reflect on action, as “participants in a larger societal conversation” (Schön 1983, 353).

Schön regrets the loss of art and creativity in planning, as if it was ever meant to be a clinical, passion-less science. He suggests that reflective practice is one way of retrieving the resources of art and creativity, utilising these as gifts for critical reflection and re-imagination.

3.5 *Talking and listening (Forester 1987; 1989)*

For Forester, planning is a communicative activity. He shifts the emphasis from technical analysis to “a more qualitative and interpretive mode of inquiry, seeking to understand the unique and the contextual rather than arriving at general rules for practice” (cf. Sandercock 2003, 67).

Forester and his colleagues propose a new way of knowledge, that incorporates critical self-reflection to uncover own hidden biases, creating space for discourse and conversation (talking and listening) and attaining knowledge through experiential learning and practical action in the world (Sandercock 2003, 67). This is not dissimilar to Schön’s emphasis on reflective practice. What Forester emphasises though is an emphasis on communicative activity in the process of planning.

Planning education conventionally does not prepare planning professionals with the softer skills of communication and human engagement. Collaborating with social sciences, humanities, theology and visual arts, hold great potential for unlocking diverse resources, all important in discerning different kinds of knowledge, in listening well and in articulating visions from below. Children’s experiences of and visions for the city, for example, can be heard creatively, through the use of play, story-telling, photography and the arts.

3.6 Epistemology of multiplicity (Sandercock 2003)

Arguing a similar approach, but from another angle, is the work of Leonie Sandercock (2003, 76–79), proposing an “epistemology of multiplicity”, or the need to embrace new and multiple ways and sources of knowing. She suggests that we should be intentional in knowing through dialogue; knowing from experience; learning from local knowledge; learning to read symbolic, non-verbal evidence; knowing through contemplation; and knowing through action learning.

There are important overlaps of insight in comparing the foci of scholars here above. In a way, the convictions of people like Short, Schön, Friedmann and Forester, all come together in Sandercock’s vision for the planning profession.

I will now try to integrate these modes of knowing into my proposed hermeneutic or praxis cycle for planning.

4 Towards a contextual-narrative approach

I suggest the development of a contextual-narrative approach to planning, in the modes of knowing described above into my proposed methodology.

4.1 Contextual

There are a number of specific features to a contextual approach. I found striking complementary features between the critique of knowledge and power by planning and built environment scholars, like Short, Forester, Sandercock and others, and the contextual and liberation theologies that were developed in response to situations of oppression (cf. De Beer 1998, 63–64). These features represent a paradigmatic shift that cuts across disciplinary boundaries. Here I will highlight critical elements of a contextual approach to planning.

Table 1.1 A contextual approach

Planning from below
From theory to praxis
A new epistemology
Commitment to and priority of the poor/the “other”
From institutional captivity to people-centred cities
Participatory politics
Embracing multiple publics
Transformation

4.1.1 *Planning from below*

There is a shift from an expert-driven planning approach, doing planning “from above” or “from outside”, to planning done with the people, by the people, and the planner being facilitator, companion and co-author. This is “planning as incarnation”, immersing ourselves into a particular place as fellow human being in time, finding solidarity with local human and urban struggles, as listener and learner of a local context. Elsewhere I described it as being “grounded in a specific context with specific challenges, needs and opportunities, investing ourselves and working alongside its people in solidarity with them” (De Beer 1998, 64).

Dewar (1977, 89) wrote: “If planning is to have any relevance at all, it must be context-related; that is, it must be informed by the fundamental realities of the situation in which it is practiced...”. This requires a shift from universal and general principles, to discovering what is particular to local communities and retrieving local knowledges. It is a shift from grand narratives to specific, localised and often “tall narratives” (cf. Boomkens 1998, 36–41) that offer alternative possibilities which at the same time could have universal meaning.

4.1.2 *From theory to praxis*

A second shift is from the primacy of theory to the importance of praxis. It represents a shift in focus from “orthodoxy” (the right theory) to “orthopraxy” (the right praxis). A valid planning praxis (the “right” praxis), facilitating appropriate design and intervention, will be contextually determined, in how we respect and affirm local histories, struggles and aspirations.

“Praxis” is a political term that denotes more than practice alone: it speaks of “reflective practice”, or “reflexivity” in our practice, or an “action-reflection” model (Holland & Henriot 1984). This is in line with Schön’s proposal for reflective practitioners who are able to “reflect in action”.

In theology it is spoken of as “doing theology”, which is more than a philosophical exercise but rather an intentionality about on-going critical reflection on the ways in which we act (De Beer 1998, 64). Part II of this book is titled “Doing the city together”, suggesting city-making as an on-going, collective process of acting-reflection-imagining-discerning together.

4.1.3 *A new epistemology*

The approach advanced here requires new or other ways of knowing. A contextual approach embraces a way of knowing that “is a dynamic process of discovery, as people from different groups journey together”, imagining a future story for their specific context (De Beer 1998, 63). In this approach dialogue, experience, participatory action, contemplation, symbols and metaphors and multiple local knowledges are all affirmed as sources for knowing (Forth, Odendaal & Hearn 2007; Eflin 2008). My personal experiences, and the

collective experiences of the people, communities and organisations I have worked with over the past 30 years, are interwoven with the knowledges and experiences of urban dwellers, practitioners, activists, artists and thinkers, in different parts of the world.

4.1.4 *Commitment to and priority of the poor/the “other”*

During the 1990s in South Africa, the planning focus shifted, at least theoretically, to include a focus on social justice, equity, quality of life for all people, as well as ecological and physical sustainability (cf. Oranje 1997, 170). In a contextual approach those who are normally marginalised or voiceless in the planning process, are given special consideration and are intentionally included and affirmed as valuable and important role players. There is a political and moral commitment to plan with and on behalf of those who are often sidelined: children, people with disabilities, people who are homeless, sole parents, minorities, refugees, sex workers and others. At the same time, it is a more honest way of assessing the city: In how far is city-making processes integrating the most vulnerable citizens? Are spatial configurations representing all people? Is the quality of life of the city’s most vulnerable people measurably improving as a result of our planning interventions?

4.1.5 *From institutional captivity to people-centred cities*

A contextual approach in planning would require a shift from its bureaucratic and institutional captivity, to a people- and creation-centred approach, in which the city and its people are centred as the “experts”. The purpose of planning is not the plans or policies in themselves, but can only be assessed in terms of what such plans and policies mediate for people, places and neighbourhoods alike. Jaime Lerner (2000, 18), the former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, says it well: “Planning must be geared to people, not to centralized bureaucratic structures. We have to decentralize, simplify decisions, funds, initiatives”. It should be the urban dwellers telling us whether urban plans and policies are useful or not.

4.1.6 *Participatory politics*

Such a deep and vested immersion as implied in a contextual approach, will help us to engage in a participatory politics (Friedmann 1992, vii; Sandercock 2003, 34–35).

On the one hand it will be *political*: we will be moved from our a-political planning to a place where we make a commitment, where we affirm certain priorities, where we state upfront our moral convictions and biases, for the sake of wholeness, equity and social justice. On the other hand, it will be *participatory*: if the interests of communities we plan for never become our interests, our participation will always be restricted. Only if we experience some of the issues

experienced by those we plan for and with, will our engagements cease to be about merely doing our jobs, or serving external agendas.

Instead of dictating the agenda, we will become servants of neighbourhoods in which the collective agendas will be discerned together, from within and from below.

4.1.7 Embracing multiple publics

Sandercock (2003) cautions, however, that political choices or commitments are not always that easy. Urban communities and interests are diverse; we have to recognise the multiplicity of experiences, knowledges, aspirations and fears and find ways to work within such contexts of multiplicity.

It starts with a recognition, at least, and then an embrace, of multiple publics and multiplicity as a fact of urban life, instead of trying to wish or plan them away. Once we find a way of embracing them, we have to develop what Elaine Graham speaks of as “bilingualism” (2008, 15) and what Sandercock (2003) speaks of as “multicultural literacy”. How do we engage diversity and multiple publics in ways that are credible and creative without being paralysed? How do we allow for the multiple publics to become rich and vibrant sources of transformation from within?

4.1.8 Transformation

Sandercock (2003, 34–35) suggests a “radical postmodern planning practice” as an example of a transformed praxis. She suggests a radical shift from one-sided emphasis on rationality to embracing practical wisdom (cf. Müller 1996). Her approach is characterised by attributes such as people-centredness; embracing other ways of knowing; community empowerment; affirming multiple publics and nurturing multicultural literacy; advocating democratic, participatory politics; placing the power of the story in a central position; and suggesting a shift from comprehensive, integrated plans (blue-prints) to more contextual, people-centred interventions with a specific focus on local analysis

Already in 1997, Oranje highlighted two major challenges in the South African context, that required not only transformation of the urban, but also pre-required transformation of the planner and planning profession. Oranje (1997, 199) spoke of “massive inequalities, homelessness, poverty and despair, inherited from the past”; as well as “the emergence of postmodern tendencies/tentacles/“isms” in a society still set/embedded in the ways/mindsets of modernity/ism and pre-modernity in which a mass reconstruction and development drive must take place”.

The acuteness of the first challenge became only more visible and urgent; while modernistic stuckness in urban bureaucracies prevails. It literally begs for a planning revolution shifting towards a single-minded devotion to deep socio-spatial transformation. The absence of such a revolution might accelerate more violent revolutions.

4.2 Narrative

Müller (1996, 28–30) suggests that “real change happens within our narrative encounters with the context”. It is in encountering the stories of people and communities that we will change and become facilitators of change. It is the narrative aspect of this approach that will lead to true conversion or transformation of planners, communities and cities.

The problem in the past was that stories were often dismissed as emotive, subjective, furthering self-interest, not-knowing and told by non-experts. Stories were not acknowledged for the intuitive knowledge they carried, or for their value in shaping people-centred and appropriate communities. Some might have acknowledged the validity of stories privately, but publicly (and technically) stories were not valued. The epistemological shifts embraced in this study, acknowledge, validate, invite and require the power of stories.

Central in the narrative approach is the use of metaphor. Turner (1996, 79) suggests that “metaphors have a supremely creative role: in literature, arts, architecture, planning and design”. He continues to say that “metaphor constructs meaning and is an essential part of creativity”. Metaphors provide a system of thought that can supplement or bypass logic. The interest in using metaphor accompanies the “declining faith in the objectivity of science” (Turner 1996, 79). It is a critique of modernism. In a narrative approach story, metaphor, symbol and images are once again appropriated as legitimate tools to analyse, explain or construct reality.

In describing the narrative approach, I use four headings, which coincide with the four moments of the praxis-cycle: listening (entering the city); deconstructing grand narratives (reading the city); imagining future stories (imagining the city); and co-constructing strong narratives (co-constructing the city).

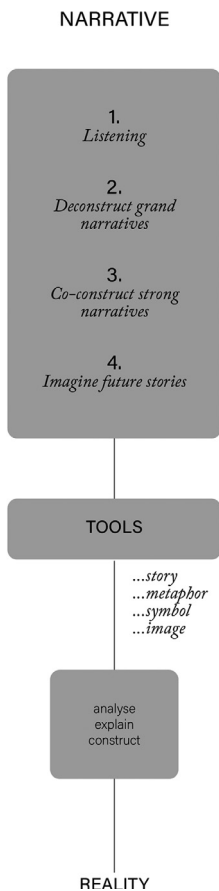


Figure 1.2 The narrative approach
Source: Nel 2017

4.2.1 Listening

In a contextual approach, the elements of listening, dialogue and conversation are central. It requires a “listening approach”, as opposed to a “knowing-approach”. One

of the basic principles of a narrative approach is that it adopts a “not knowing” posture, refusing to pretend all knowledge and opening itself up to learn from the narratives of the neighbourhood and the people and organisations residing in the neighbourhood.

A contextual approach will listen well to multiple stories and layers of stories that present themselves to us in urban communities. Contextual experiences are related in narrative form and these narratives become the basis for doing planning (cf. De Beer 1998, 65; Müller 1996, 3). Creating honest space for storytelling will facilitate the kind of “mutual conversation” that has the potential for “mutual conversion” of both planner and community member, towards shaping space meaningfully (cf. Cowan & Lee 1997).

Without the ability to listen well, stories will not change us and our neighbourhoods. I therefore suggest listening, after creating a presence, as a first step in the planning process. Forester speaks about the “work of listening”, both in planning and in everyday life:

We can hear words, but miss what is meant. We can hear what is intended, but miss what is important. We can hear what is important, but neglect the person speaking. As we listen, though, we can learn and nurture relationships as well. Listening is an act of being attentive, a way of being in a moral world. We can make a difference by listening or failing to do so. And we can be held responsible as a result.

(Forester 1989, 108)

In these words of Forester, the ethical, relational and human-centred aspects of planning, together with the challenges of discernment, transformation and accountability, are addressed by a practice of good, honest and attentive listening. This might be considered a “soft” skill, yet it has the potential to transform the way we do planning and shape communities. At a deeper level, it has the potential to transform us.

Sandercock (2003, 76) says that listening well “means to be able to ask good questions about deeper interests, about what others care about, hope for and fear. Listening is a deeply hermeneutic activity”. It will help us to understand people, communities, the city and ourselves. It is important also to listen to ourselves, to the way in which the language games of planning and development are played (cf. Oranje 1997, 13, 34), how we have been co-opted into such games, and how we ourselves use language to exclude or include. Listening (critically) to ourselves is an important task.

4.2.2 Deconstructing grand narratives

Pile and Thrift (2000, xiii) question whether something as dynamic as the city can ever be captured appropriately in language. They express the difficulty of integrating very diverse elements or characteristics of cities into a coherent reading of the city:

... how to find a rhetoric that balances the seditious, the patient, and the oppressive side of cities with their spontaneous vitality and capacity to induce play? Cities are too often written as either monster machines or improvisatory frontier lands, rarely as both at once.

(Pile & Thrift 2000, xiii; referring to Lefebvre 1996~~5~~)

It is important to analyse the language used to describe cities: Who uses the language? Whose interest is served? Who validates it? Are there other languages to describe the same reality? Would the unofficial version of the same reality be different? How will it differ and why? (cf. also Oranje 1997, 13).

Language is used to construct reality in the image we prefer, and then it gets validated by social consensus (cf. Lyotard 1984). This is also an apt description for so-called grand narratives: those stories that are validated by social consensus as the final and sometimes only truth, even if it is a lie.

The language of inner city decay is an example. When the inner cities of South Africa changed racially, newspapers started to print on their front pages that these communities were becoming slums. Businesses, politicians, estate agents and the general (white) public reached social consensus that this was the case. As a result, businesses disinvested, white people sold property and moved away, banks red-lined areas and – in some cases – decay started to set in. These actions – language that spread myths, policies of non-investment and practices of disinvestment – became self-fulfilled prophecies.

Policies, plans, legislative frameworks, sermons and advertising campaigns all use words to convey messages. A central part of city-making processes is the construction or deconstruction of language (texts). How we use words is important in constructing liberating-transformative city-making processes.

4.2.3 Imagining future stories

Through careful listening, a deconstruction of existing grand narratives (and their myths) and a retrieval of local stories of hope (and their power), planners in partnership with people and communities, develop the resources to imagine preferred realities.

We need to emphasise the importance of “story” in finding and nurturing an alternative imagination. Those who are not part of our technocracies can often better express their struggles, hopes and visions by way of telling stories: how it used to be; what happened last week; how they see their street in future.

Sandercock (2003, 182) suggests that for a long time, “‘story’ was thought of in the social sciences as ‘soft’, inferior, lacking in rigour, or, worst insult of all, as a ‘woman/native/other’ way of knowing”. More analytical tools were sought for academic enquiry and research. However, in recent years, the validity of story has re-surfaced in many disciplines. Instead of being soft and lacking in rigour, stories could be powerful subversions of the status quo; serving to unmask powerful constructs of abuse and exclusion; and visually presenting alternative imaginaries to what we now know.

Sandercock (2003, 182) states: “In order to imagine the ultimately unrepresentable space, life and languages of the city, to make them legible, we translate them into narratives”. Planners need to create spaces for the stories of people and communities to be told and heard, as it will help to form the basis for a new praxis that has as its core the task of re-imagining.

The garden city-concept is an example of an imagined future preferred story, turned into reality. Garden cities were based upon the metaphor of the garden as symbol of “safety, beauty, of production, of harmony between man (sic) and nature” (Turner 1996, 81). A garden city was supposed to resemble these characteristics, so that “walking through the town can be like flickering through a dramatic picture book” (Turner 1996, 85).

Biblical prophets used to deconstruct reality as they observed and analysed it and then provided clear images of the reality that could be. In chapter 65 of the book of Isaiah, the prophet imagines a city where children will not die young, where people will live in the houses they build and share in the fruit of their produce, where the lamb and wolf will dwell together. It is a vision of a “new city” without infant mortality, with new and inclusive economies, accessible housing and reconciled neighbourhoods (cf. Brueggemann 1998, 243–245). These are images that invited the reader into a connected spirituality and a participatory politics, not disconnected from local challenges but rooted in and informed by them.

Turner (1996, 84–85) refers to the work of Gordon Cullen (1971) who envisions that “human imagination can begin to mould the city into a coherent drama”. Cullen suggests that there are “pictures”, “dramas” and “images” that can help to set the city alive. He contrasts, for example, a long straight street that has little impact on the emotions since it is so monotonous, with a street and courtyard in contrast, the various elements “in juxtaposition” to each other, containing dramatic elements that bring the city to life, that make the city visible.

Turner (1996, 85) wonders how we can allow for a creative fusion of myths, history and fiction in planning our streets, buildings and neighbourhoods. And Connah (1998, 16–22) speaks of these as possible narrative spaces that are an extension of our collective and diverse memories, but also our collective and diverse imagination/s.

4.2.4 Co-constructing strong narratives

Although being critical of grand narratives, Boomkens (1998, 39) suggests that we should not discard grand narratives completely nor continuously deconstruct them, but rather find ways to write “strong narratives” (“tall stories”).

Boomkens (1998, 39) suggests strong narratives as an alternative to the circular game of modern construction and postmodern deconstruction. Strong narratives are the construction of “local” histories, in line also with the proposals of Lyotard (1984) and Foucault (1975). In writing such “local” histories, Boomkens suggests the careful selection and organising of facts and paying attention to local details.

Strong narratives, in their attention to detail, often apply exaggeration as a way to accentuate a point. This is used as a rhetorical means to give additional power to an argument. Furthermore, strong narratives not only describe the local in a detailed and informative manner, but often also represent an alternative narrative to the dominant narrative, exposing the myth and relativity of the dominant narrative.

Although local, Boomkens (1998, 40) and others argue that such carefully constructive local narratives provide insight into global ways in which power and other forces work. They propose that strong narratives, locally developed and articulated, often have universal power and meaning. The concrete nature of the narrative is its power (Boomkens 1998, 40). One can argue that McGuirk’s (2014) narratives in *Radical Cities* represent such strong narratives or tall stories, of possible alternative imaginaries/realities.

In her book *Cosmopolis II*, Leonie Sandercock (2003, 182–204) devotes an entire chapter to “the power of story in planning”. The kind of story she had in mind was the tall story, or strong narrative, representing an alternative and giving deep insight into the workings, struggles and visions of a local community. Flowing from such a storied encounter, planning can truly become a vehicle of the people.

4.3 A contextual-narrative approach

This table is a summary of the elements presented in this chapter. In the following chapters the praxis cycle will unfold, representing the characteristics of a contextual approach in terms of commitment, priority, identity and epistemology; while at the same time drawing from narrative methodology, in order to imagine and co-construct alternative, sustainable, inclusive and just future stories.

Table 1.2 A contextual-narrative approach

Contextual (commitment, priority, identity, epistemology)	Narrative (methodology)
Planning from below	Listening and conversation
Praxis-approach	Deconstructing grand narratives
A new way of knowing	Imagining future stories
Commitment to and priority of the poor/the “other”	Co-constructing strong narratives
From institutional capacity to people-centred cities	
Participatory politics	
Embracing multiple publics	
Transformation as goal	

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Figure 2.1 Playing
Source: Siya (2014)

2 “Becoming like children”

Identity and urban praxis

In providing a title for this chapter, I use the metaphor of “becoming like children”. For mutual learning and radical forms of participation, what is fundamentally required from planning professionals is to become humble like children, entering urban communities cautiously, with a “not-knowing” approach, open to be surprised by the discovery of local knowledge and insight and ready to journey with likely and unlikely partners. The dichotomy of “expert” and “non-expert” is challenged.

At the same time, this metaphor suggests a move beyond the relativistic paralysis of postmodernism, reaffirming again notions such as faith and fascination, festivity and fantasy, as appropriate and potential resources for planning praxis. These are the ingredients children are made of. It also suggests moving beyond paralysis, in the insistence that change or transformation is possible and should be facilitated. We need to re-activate child-like imagination and believe that it is actually possible to turn imagination into reality, even against the odds, if we are to survive/flourish in the cities of today.

In this chapter I focus on the professional identity of the planner in relation to urban praxis.

1 Deconstructing modernist planning

Sandercock (2003, 28) suggests the need to deconstruct modernist planning wisdom if we want to work towards an alternative city and to provide it with new content based upon:

reconsidered concepts of democracy, social justice, citizenship, multiculturalism, and multiple publics, and along with these, new qualities of planning imagination.

The modernist city has “always been fraught with ambiguity” (Sandercock 2003, 28). On the one hand it was a city of achievement – sanitation; electricity; engineering, transport networks; and so forth. On the other hand, it was a city of failure – the destruction of the past; the creation of anonymity; pollution; exploitation. It is indeed important to retrieve and build upon the values and

lessons of the past where they served humanity best. At the same time, it is important to deconstruct language, policy and planning history, where it failed humanity.

Planning is always closely related to power. It is vital therefore to deconstruct the power constructs of planning, replacing it with content that will liberate planning itself in order for planning to have a liberative impact on the cities it shapes. Deconstruction could help to imagine new planning approaches and envisage new planning identities (cf. Turner 1996, 129).

1.1 Cultural captivity

Although the landscape of post-modernity and the urban landscape are landscapes of difference, the planning profession too often “unreflectively expresses the norms of the culturally dominant majority, including the norms of how that majority likes to use space” (Sandercock 2003, 21).

Planning is a discipline marked by cultural and middle-class captivity. For that reason, Dalton (1993) and Rodriguez (1993) proposed the recruitment of multi-ethnic women and young planners into planning schools to transform the way planning works (cf. Oranje 1997, 4). In the South African context, it is still only a trickle of people of colour who teach at academic institutions in this field, with the exception being the University of Kwazulu-Natal. More women have found their way into the academic discipline of planning in recent years. Similarly, planning firms need to be creative in how they build diverse, inclusive teams that reflect something of the city’s multiple faces. This might at times mean to include seasoned urban practitioners who might lack professional planning qualifications.

1.2 Male-dominated planning/cities

Planning was always a male-orientated/-dominated discipline (cf. Oranje 1997, 184). Feminists started to deconstruct the traditional way in which gendered constructs have determined cities and space. A deconstructive reading of the urban environment would “examine the hierarchical relationships between land use activities and between the constructive professions” (Turner 1996, 130), showing hierarchies of power, representing mainly male interests. Turner (1996, 131) insists: “Traditional relationships should be deconstructed. Those imagined deep structures, which currently disfigure the built environment, are human constructs”. They are predominantly male constructs too.

Short (1989, 69) speaks of the way in which the city symbolises male power. For too long cities have borne only the imprint of male perceptions and male power. In apartheid planning this was expressed in its great emphasis on control and segregation (Oranje 1997, 174–176). There is a need to feminise the planning discourse and city-making processes if cities are to be liberated from male dominance (cf. Porter 2017).

1.3 *Soul-less planning*

Modernist planning ignored much of what should constitute the soul of the city – “the city of memory, of desire, of spirit; the importance of place and the art of place-making; the local knowledges written into the stones and memories of communities” (Sandercock 2003, 3). The faith of city-builders was in their rational knowledge and technical skill, and they thought they could control the urban environment using these means:

Modernist architects, planners, engineers – Faustian heroes all – saw themselves as experts who could utilize the laws of development to provide societal guidance. The hubris of the city-building professions was their faith in the liberating potential of their technical knowledge and their corresponding belief in their ability to transcend the interest of capital, labour, and the state, and to arrive at an objective assessment of ‘the public interest’.

(Sandercock 2003, 3)

Planning as routine has way too often replaced planning as adventure (Berman 1989, 243), “freezing the creative energies” (Oranje 1997, 49), resulting in a “death sentence for the spirit” (Berman 1989, 242–243; cf. also Oranje 1997, 49).

1.4 *Planning hierarchies: between professions; “experts” and “non-experts”; spatial forms*

Planning hierarchies are human constructs in need of continuous assessment and deconstruction. Hierarchical relationships exist between different professional disciplines – planners, architects, engineers, building contractors and project managers – and if ways are not found to facilitate synergetic relationships between these, it leads to fragmented planning, design and implementation.

To achieve variety in land use patterns, there should also be a variety of relationships between the professions, not an institutionalized decision-making tree. Relationships between the constructive professions should, therefore, be deconstructed.

(Turner 1996, 131)

Turner (1996, 121) elaborates:

In cities, there is a concealed power struggle between the partisans of transport, social justice, gracious housing, religion, commerce, fine building, spacious parks and healthy environment...

...society employs a range of experts to bring them about: engineers, lawyers, architects, priests, teachers, industrialists, environmentalists and

others. Each professional guru dedicates itself to constructing an idealized aspect of the public welfare, which constitutes its private welfare.

This leads to a competition for priority and budget, each believing in its own discipline as being the most important. To obtain priority and resources, it becomes “necessary to gain power and influence” (Turner 1996, 121). Often such power is constructed and attained through the use of specialised discourse only known to the initiated few (the “expert”).

In reading past and present cities, the cities themselves communicate something of the power relations and planning hierarchies that exist(ed) within them.

...reading the built form of ancient cities, one can discover which ... of experts have held power in past periods. The church and the military have inscribed their glorious subtexts on many towns...

...reading maps of modern cities, the cities themselves tell us about the power relationships between experts.

(Turner 1996, 122)

Turner (1996, 121) states: “Power expresses form”. Depending on the status of the discipline or its place in the hierarchy, its priority will determine spatial form.

Closely linked, hierarchically, is the spatial form that is sustained through zoning regulations, with different weight given to different uses, whether commercial, industrial, high-density residential, low-density residential, recreational, green spaces, social amenities and so forth.

Another hierarchy, less subtle and more overt, is that of “expert” and “non-expert”, not adequately recognising the expertise and practical wisdom hidden among members of communities.

Such hierarchies need to be deconstructed in order to give shape to an inclusive, participatory planning praxis that will design with local communities, integrating their knowledges, needs and aspirations. This will lead to different spatial expressions and forms.

1.5 Official planning histories vs. “noir” side/untold histories

Sandercock (2003, 38) suggests that there is “the official story of planning history” and then there are the untold stories, the “noir” side, or the insurgent histories. These alternative histories “challenge our very definition of what constitutes planning”. At the same time, they provide us with a possible alternative planning paradigm and thus with a “future imaginary”. It is therefore important to retrieve and retell the noir face of planning (Sandercock 2003, 37), the phantom stories (cf. Meylahn 2012, 57–63), the unwritten or untold histories, as well as the new movements.

bell hooks (1994) speaks of the potential of subversive spaces and practices to help imagine alternative futures:

Subversive historiography connects oppositional practices from the past and forms of resistance in the present, thus creating spaces of possibility where the future can be imagined differently – imagined in such a way that we can witness ourselves dreaming, moving forward and beyond the limits of confines of fixed locations.

The problem, says Sandercock (2003, 37), is that professions mould their members just as nations mould their citizens, in terms of their understanding of the past, “causing them to forget those events which do not accord with a righteous image, while keeping alive those memories that do”. She then quotes from Kundera who said that “the struggle of people against power is a struggle of memory against forgetting” (Sandercock 2003, 37).

If merely reflecting on planning history in the US, the voices of women, African-Americans and other “invisible” minorities, have been systematically excluded (Sandercock 2003, 40–49). It is not merely the task of adding forgotten or untold stories (almost as an afterthought), but – if these stories are to help shape alternative planning paradigms – there is the more fundamental challenge of “reconceptualizing planning history”, in this case “by using gender and race as categories of analysis” (Sandercock 2003: 47).

The official planning history of South Africa coincides with the history of the unfolding apartheid city. The South African city was carefully constructed to implement apartheid policy, and planners were the facilitators of such implementation. Hidden behind a facade of apolitical planning practice, they participated in one of the most extraordinary exclusivist and demeaning political projects of modern history.

It would also be important to retrieve the alternative histories of activist movements such as Planact (2012); or the story of places like Hillbrow and how it became an alternative urban space long before official policy had changed. These stories could offer resources for an alternative planning paradigm.

2 The challenge of software infrastructure

Charles Landry (2000, 128) suggests that cities have one crucial resource: their people.

...human cleverness, desires, motivations, imagination and creativity are replacing location, natural resources and market access as urban resources. Harnessing these qualities and allowing them to express themselves in initiatives and projects is what urban vitality is about.

The diversity, complexity and challenges of today’s cities require new paradigms of engagement. Landry (2000, 8–9) says that the 21st-century city is in desperate need of appropriate ‘software’ infrastructure, referring to some of the qualities quoted above. We have the technical and technological expertise, but the challenge of today is to understand the city as a whole, a living organism, in which a great

amount of focus should be given to human interaction, social dynamics, relationships, networks and well-being. Such software infrastructure is as essential as roads and sanitation, as is the need to acknowledge this requirement.

Landry (2000, 9) suggests that “governing, organizing and managing better and generating civic vitality can make the difference between success and failure”. Landry (2000, 9) continues to say that “the key applications of creativity will lie in the realm of democracy, organization, governance and management – social and political innovations – as much as in new technology”.

Contemporary urban problems “...require us to think about new organizational forms and a revitalized democracy that harnesses people’s commitment, engagement and potential” (Landry 2000, 9). The shift that Landry is pleading for is from technocratic/bureaucratic planning to participatory, people-centred and interactive planning.

A serious obstacle is the way in which power, politics and planning collude to resist the innovations of communities and people. They tend to retain technocratic/bureaucratic practices that “plan for people” instead of “with people”. Their resistance might have its origin in different factors: a lack of will; a lack of knowledge; feeling threatened; being subverted; dislike of competition; captivity to the “expert”-model; old paradigms; fear; and so forth.

Preparing city-builders for the future requires the development of software capacity among planning professionals, politicians and members of civil society, as well as the capacity to facilitate appropriate software infrastructure. It has implications for the way in which planners are trained, the skills they acquire or develop, and the way in which they walk with communities.

Landry (2000, 9) mentions a number of important imperatives that new planning paradigms should intentionally incorporate:

- accepting one’s own way of approaching issues as limited;
- involving those affected by a problem in implementing the solutions;
- creative and lateral thinking as an important part of the planning process;
- providing an environment for problem-solving that will encourage learning for both decision-makers and those affected by decisions;
- a willingness to consider the inputs from diverse disciplines;
- generating solutions that are culturally, economically, socially and environmentally sustainable;
- appreciating that the potential resources for planning are more extensive than often considered, including citizens’ interests, organised communities, existing research institutes; and so forth;
- being aware of the multiple dimensions of vitality and creativity;
- developing new indicators for vitality, success and failure (deconstructing current indicators might be important as they are often determined culturally, by the dominant group and so on).

Much of what Landry describes as preconditions for new planning paradigms, also resonate with a trans-disciplinary approach to research and action. It is

intentional about collaboration between professionals, communities and researchers in sharing different kinds of knowledge and then fostering collective and integrated visions and actions, informed by such knowledge. It is also insistent on finding solutions in conjunction with communities being researched (cf. De Beer 2014; De Beer & Hugo 2021). In the process of joint research, software infrastructure is being developed.

3 Planning as a political act

John Forester (1989, 25) suggests that all planning activity is political in nature, because relationships of power are always involved and systemic inequalities influence outcomes. Leonie Sandercock (2003, 67) builds on this assertion of Forester, suggesting that planning should "(be) aware of systemic inequalities" and should "(m)ake sure all points of view are heard, and not only those of the most articulate or powerful".

Sandercock (2003, 211–212) identifies a clear need to expand the political horizon of planning, ending the pretense of a-political or value-neutral planning.

If we want to achieve greater social justice, less polluted environments, and broader cross-cultural tolerance, and if planning is to contribute to those social goals, then we need a broader and more politicized definition of planning's domain and practices. These practices will have to include mobilizing constituencies, protests, strikes, acts of civil disobedience, community organization, professional advocacy and research, publicity, as well as the proposing and drafting of laws and new programmes of social intervention.

(Sandercock 2003, 212; with reference to Marris)

If we consider planning as a political act, there are initial political questions to be asked. One such a question should be: "For whom to work, on behalf of which set of forces or struggles?" (Sandercock 2003, 211). This is not always an easy choice, simply because not all community practices are inclusionary (or liberating) practices, just as not all state practices are always repressive or exclusionary. Planners should be engaged in mobilising and working with communities for social, economic, environmental and cultural justice, while at the same time resisting practices of "the state" that will hinder such freedoms flowing from higher degrees of justice (Sandercock 2003, 21).

A second political question in the planning process, once committed to participatory planning, would be: "To whom should we listen?" (cf. Sandercock 2003, 77). The obvious answer would be: to all relevant stakeholders. However, "(i)dentifying relevant stakeholders is itself a deeply political question". Sandercock suggests that it implies "all those affected" but then should be interpreted not only as those affected financially, but also those affected emotionally, or physically or as "to-be-displaced tenants". She emphasises that "(w)e should

make an effort to listen to those who are least powerful” in the context of ever-present power relations (games) in the planning processes.

A third question is: “To what should we listen?” Sandercock (2003, 77) answers her own question by suggesting that part of the planning process should be to retrieve oral tradition and to listen to stories, especially untold/hidden stories: “... the telling of stories is nothing less than a profoundly political act” (Sandercock 2003, 204).

The act of listening itself becomes political as it validates people and empowers them in terms of what they know and what they could offer to the process. Sandercock (2003, 77) writes: “Might not planners’ attention to peoples’ stories be equally empowering, in terms of validating their knowledge and moving forward to a situation of mutual learning through respect for that knowledge”?

The answers to these three questions will imply certain choices based on certain values: “...(s)een thus, planning is a political process because it is about choices; because it is about choices it is about values” (Landry 2000,10).

4 Planning as a spiritual act

The “*genius loci*” (Norberg-Schulz 1980) refers to the spirit of a place. It insinuates a connection between spirituality and space. However, the Western mind has embraced dualisms and dichotomies uncritically. There is a marked separation of sacred and secular, private/personal and public; soul and body; spiritual and physical/spatial. The first categories are usually viewed as the higher good and the second categories as profane. Planners and city-makers are not unaffected by these dualisms.

Sandercock (2003, 214) says: “...architecture and landscape design are relatively permanent and relatively public arts. They affect the land itself, in addition to the owners, users, neighbours, future generations, plants and animals”. The results of the interventions by planners and built environment professionals tell a story of values, commitments and priorities: whose interests are served and who are excluded? Critical moral and ethical considerations are sometimes placed on the backburner in the interest of optimising profit or benefit for the investors.

Soelle (2001, 3) suggests that the relationship between mystical experience and social and political behaviour has not been explored adequately: the relationship between mysticism and politics, spirituality and space, soul and body; the relationship between our internal commitments and our external actions. Whereas Western dualisms dichotomise these categories, Soelle (2001, 3) seeks “to erase the distinction between a mystical internal and a political external”, suggesting that the one is an expression of the other.

Traditional African worldviews are more holistic, embracing all of life as sacred, doing away with false dichotomies. Here I suggest all of life, and therefore also all of created space, as sacred, and therefore planning of these spaces in ways that will affirm its sacredness, and give expression to its beauty,

as essentially a spiritual act. Planning that fails to embrace itself as a spiritual act, runs the risk of being driven not by values aimed at the common good, but by agendas of progress and exclusion at the cost of those who are vulnerable or weak.

Sandercock (2003, 221–227) suggests a planning praxis that will be more in tune with the city of memory, the city of desire, the city of the spirit, building upon the “joys, hopes, fears, the sense of loss, expectation, adventure that are naturally alive in cities”. “Modernist planners became thieves of memory”, Sandercock (2003, 222) says, but at the same time they became thieves of desire, bodiliness, the spirit, ecstasy, expression, community, wherever they succumb to technocratic bureaucracy that has closed itself to the possibility of surprise, awe and wonder.

Various religious persons throughout the centuries resisted dualisms that restricted God and morality to ‘sacred’ spaces; or restricted bodiliness to ‘profane’ spaces. They expressed their critique in unconventional ways, often inverting (sacred) power through clear and public solidarity with the powerless (profane), claiming all spaces as sacred.

Stories about the life of Francis of Assisi point to his insistence on removing boundaries between the sacred and the profane (Soelle 2001, 241). As the clown of God, he modelled a different, if crazy way: “The anarchy of love restores order; it ridicules social division built up on the basis of possessions. It knows no limits” (Soelle 2001, 241). Francis demonstrates this with his own life when he kisses the lepers, not as an act of charity alone, but as a radical act of justice, confronting their exclusion and wanting to eradicate the walls that restricted their spatial access, forging new bonds of solidarity and community thereby (Soelle 2001, 240–241).

Soelle (2001, 97) then insists that “(W)e have neither the right nor even the possibility to limit the number of places of mystical experience”. Planners who are willing to dare beyond narrow self-understandings might discover a vocation that helps them integrate internal values and commitments, with external actions and political and ethical choices. The vocation of the planner then is not simply to facilitate technical processes, but indeed to imagine and midwife the recovery of soul places, in which humanness, community, mystery and awe, can be found, celebrated and transferred for generations to come. In the details of planning for a neighbourhood they might encounter something of the mystical. It is in this sense that planning could be a spiritual act.

5 Re-imagining the art of planning

5.1 *From deconstruction to new imagination*

Sandercock’s (2003, 208) imagination is for a planning discipline that would be able to facilitate a radically different city.

I want a city... where city planning is a war of liberation fought against dumb, featureless public space; against STARchitecture, speculators, and

bench markers; against the multiple sources of oppression, domination and violence; where citizens wrest from space new possibilities, and immerse themselves in their cultures while respecting those of their neighbours, collectively forging new hybrid culture and spaces. I want a city that is run differently from an accounting firm; where planners 'plan' by negotiating desires and fears, mediating memories and hopes, facilitating change and transformation.

This is a vision of a discipline that will make a radical shift from being *a-political administrators of bureaucratic routine to political innovators of people-centred adventure*. It is about innovative planning preceded by a more innovative self- understanding of what planning, place-making or city-making should be.

Oranje (1997, 189–191), with reference to the South African context, describes the shifts in the role of planners since the 1910s and how it changed from communicator (1910s and 1920s) to researcher, logical analyser and synthesiser/designer (1930s). In the 1940s and 1950s the planner became co-ordinator in serving the community's needs. In the 1960s the bureaucratisation of planning intensified and the role of professional planners became that of apolitical technical experts or bureaucratic administrators. Some exceptions were people like Mallows, advocating for the planner as innovator.

In the 1970s and 1980s little changed, although the professional researcher or teacher of planning emerged, and later on the entrepreneur-planner as well as the advocacy planner, primarily at the Universities of Cape Town, Natal and the Witwatersrand. In the 1990s planning professionals reinforced or added the roles of facilitator, mediator, conflict and project manager, communicator and visionary, pro-active, creative and entrepreneurial problem-solvers (cf. Oranje, 1997, 191). Often planners have become stuck in bureaucratic systems and simply administrators of the status quo.

Against this background of an-ever changing planning profession, various scholars since the 1990s proposed new planning paradigms, among them Ramarumo (1994), Ndzombane (1995), Amankwah-Ayeh (1995) and Oranje (1997, 170) himself.

This is a vision of a discipline that will make a radical shift from being *a-political administrators of bureaucratic routine to political innovators of people-centred adventure*. It is about innovative planning preceded by a more innovative self- understanding of what planning, place-making or city-making should be.

In *A Big-Enough God*, Sara Maitland (1995, 9–43) speaks of the challenge religious institutions have to liberate God from narrow god-pictures in order to experience the fullness of her creativity.

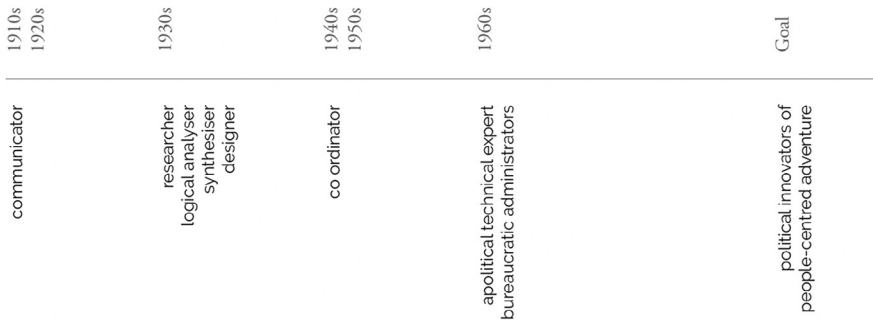


Figure 2.2 The changing role of a planner based on Oranje’s text

Source: Nel 2017

Maitland (1995, 43) writes:

“We have to struggle to replace a functionalist, bureaucrat God with an artist God – that is to say a God who loves both beauty and risk”.

The same could be said of professionals in many disciplines – whether planning, construction, theology, or social work. And yet, there seems to be an almost universal tendency to become technocrats without the creative passion that can still imagine a changed world.

Sandercock (2003, 2) retrieves resources of insurgent citizenship, civil society and social movements as resistant forces to overcome “modernist notions of technical rationality” with “its antidemocratic, race- and gender-blind, and culturally homogenizing practices”. Instead, planning needs to practice radical democracy, being sensitive to racial and gender issues, demonstrating multi-cultural literacy, and expressing these in design that is sensitive culturally, racially and gender-wise. Sandercock (2003, 214–220) proposes a paradigm that will be at the same time *audacious*, *creative* and *visionary*.

5.2 *Audacious, creative, visionary planning*

Audacious planning

“(A)n audacious planning practice” dares to break the rules (Sandercock 2003, 214). Instead of the risk-averse reality of “the bureaucracy” – politicians and the planners who serve them – cities of today require audacious planning: flexible, adventurous, responsive, contextual, risky, truly participatory praxis.

“We have to struggle to replace a functionalist, bureaucrat God with an artist God – that is to say a God who loves both beauty and risk”.

Maitland (1995, 43)

Such praxis will make many politicians and officials nervous; especially if real participation is practiced and the agency of local people and neighbourhoods galvanised to resist soul-destroying urban interventions, instead advancing community-driven urban formation. Instead of embracing local agency as a resource in urban space-making, which is the intention of local government legislation, it is often resisted, sometimes simply because of how politicians and planners feel threatened by it.

Creative planning

Audacious planning should be accompanied by creative planning (Sandercock 2003, 216–220). Charles Landry (2002) applies resources, tools and metaphors that at first glance do not always strike you as relevant to planning or spatial design at all. But he lures the creative out as a transformative resource in city-making processes. Some of the tools he appropriates for city-making processes include brainstorming, mind-mapping, visualisation and imagination.

Creative planning could also apply the rarely utilised tools of the creative arts – dance, theatre, mime, drama, song, visual arts – to much greater effect. In some Dutch neighbourhoods theatre and the arts are used with great effect, replacing tedious meetings with creative spaces in which to engage local residents in consultative and imaginative ways, often rather informally, interwoven with jazz or theatre performances, soliciting real and informed inputs about local neighbourhoods and citizens’ visions, without it being a threatening or bureaucratic process.

Does what the French priest, MD Chenu, observe about theology, not also apply to planning and city-building?: “The greatest tragedy in theology in the past three centuries has been the divorce of the theologian from the poet, the dancer, the musician, the painter, the dramatist, the actress, the movie-maker” (cited in Fox 1983, 180). Artists often penetrate the heart of a problem and provide clarity of vision that could serve the formation of fresh imagination.

Visionary planning

In planning creative cities, Landry (2000) suggests that planning should be more engaged with a *vision of transformation* than with technicalities such as land-use codes, which take up all the time of some planners. Such a broad visionary framework should provide broad guidelines that will help facilitate innovative city-building, help discern the specifics of proposed projects and go much further to serve the public good. It will constitute a shift from bureaucratic routine to political innovation, which implies visionary leadership.

Sometimes planners coming from a bureaucratic tradition, find the challenge of vision or innovation overwhelming. Jaime Lerner (2000, 18), former mayor of Curitiba who exemplified visionary city-making, spoke of the need to start where we are, even if we start in small ways: “At the root of major transformations lies a small transformation; that is a small change may be the beginning of a major one”.

Instead of being bothered with grandiose master plans of which all the details are known upfront, visionary planning should concern itself with a clear future imagination, that could guide our small present efforts, as we take initial steps:

It means for instance having the bus as the embryo of the subway, having the handrail of a stair up the hill as the basis for the infrastructure in a slum. Having a backyard shop as the basis for economic change.

That is why we need an urban policy able to generate change now, without having to wait for 20 years for it to happen. The important thing is to make it happen now and then take time to improve on it

(Lerner 2000, 19)

5.3 *Planners living with paradox*

Planning is to journey with paradox. It is not just about living with and embracing the paradox, diversity and ambiguities of the city; it is also and at an even more fundamental level about embracing the paradoxes of one's own identity/identities and integrating paradoxes within one's personal and professional identity.

It might be the paradox of a presumed expert having, at the same time, to be a listening, “not-knowing” learner; or the paradox of urban-suburban, rural-urban, township-inner city realities; African and Western consciousness, or cultural diversity; or, like the *flâneur*, being outsider and insider at the same time; central figure and marginal clown.

In this regard I want to suggest the work of Donald Messer (1989) who suggested a number of paradoxical images to assist ministers of religion in their own self-understanding and understanding of professional identity. I would like to suggest planning or city-making for a moment as a ministry to humanity and the city, meant to *heal urban fractures* – the vocation which Harvey Cox (1965, 114–125) suggested for the urban church in his classic work, *The Secular City*. This task of planners and city-makers everywhere – to heal urban fractures, to facilitate ways out of fragmentation, to bring about wholeness – is rife with paradox.

In returning to Donald Messer, I would like to adopt (adapt) his five metaphors for those of us involved in planning, city-making or place-making, as a tool for self-understanding, as we negotiate our journeys between paradoxes.

5.5.1 *Planners as servant leaders*

The first metaphor is that of servant leader (Messer 1989, 97–105). The planner should be a *servant* of the people seeking to contribute to the good of a city in which *all* people will be “at home”. The sub-title of the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Department of Public Service and Administration 1997) was “Batho Pele”, which is a Sesotho expression meaning “people first”. In our planning and public work, we should be about the well-being of people and their neighbourhoods. Too often, such a consciousness has been replaced by public servants and planners ruling technocratically through bye-laws and policies.

Servant leadership is not as soft a concept as some would suggest. A posture of humility should not be misunderstood as subservience. Our cities need bold, brave, strategic and innovative leadership more than ever before. What it also required though is a leadership that is shaped by servanthood expressed in solidarity; a leadership shaped by the very communities served by the planner. It is a leadership that allows for itself to be transformed by the pain of people's exclusion, through making itself proximate. Such leadership is accountable to the communities for/with whom it plans.

Servant leaders are people who make sure that urban innovation is not restricted to those with means, but contributing *in particular* to those who face some of the greatest urban challenges. Servant leaders will gear policy towards those who are often forgotten in our cities.

5.5.2 *Planners as political mystics*

Planning cannot afford the pretense of neutrality. It is at the same time a political and a spiritual act, requiring "political mystics" (Messer 1989, 116–134).

Planners should consider very deliberately the ethics and values that (should) drive their planning praxis. Values of community, interdependence, beauty, justice, compassion and equality, need to be considered and integrated into our planning and urban theories. The sacredness of space and the divine dignity of every human being should be at the core of our planning theory.

Once we have re-affirmed a clear value-based vision for our cities, built on universal principles of justice, humanness, equality and dignity, planners need to help resist everything that affects that vision.

The planner, as political mystic, crosses the divide between natural and social sciences, between hardware and software infrastructure, between concrete plans and compassionate solidarity. Not only is an embrace of this paradox potentially helpful to overcome what McAfee Brown speaks of as false dichotomies, but it could also serve as a potential liberating resource for the activist planner at a personal level.

The burden of politically conscientised planning at times could become unbearable. Planners who then lack silent or reflective spaces, or practices that help them to contemplate, meditate or reflect on their actions, might lose the original fervour with which they entered the planning journey. Oranje (1997) speaks of planners becoming bureaucratic functionaries, following the road of least resistance. Being rooted in reflective communities would assist to sustain advocacy planning or a planning praxis committed to imaginative and radical change.

5.5.3 *Planners as reflective practitioners*

To sustain the paradox of political mysticism or value-based planning activism, probably requires another metaphor, namely that of the "reflective practitioner", or "reflective practice", first coined by Schön (1983, 65)¹.

This is a person who can reflect critically and constructively on her own practice, always considering its impact on humanity and creation. At the same

time, it is a person whose practice is informed and strengthened by ongoing and rigorous theoretical engagement, as well as engagement with communities affected by our plans.

Reflective practitioners are lifelong learners, journeying between theory and practice, between reflection and action, being quite deliberate about rooting themselves in clear value frameworks. Reflective practice is ideally done in community, with others as our reflective partners: community members, other planners and those committed to the making of a new city.

5.5.4 Planners as wounded healers

The wounded healer (Messer 1989, 81–96) corresponds with Sandercock’s (2003, 162) proposal of “therapeutic planner”, but also with Cox’s (1965) idea of healing urban fractures. Cities are places of deep fracture and fragmentation, dealing wounds at a personal, communal, neighbourhood and systemic level. It does so through intentional and unintentional exclusion, bureaucratic abuse and systematic denial of access to urban resources for millions of urban dwellers.

Planners as wounded healers go beyond their professional confines, connecting with the city’s woundedness, while at the same time allowing their own personal journeys – own experiences of suffering, woundedness or exclusion– to inform processes of planning and urban engagement (cf. Nouwen 1972). It considers the personal weakness, prejudice and baggage of the planner and how such prejudice, assumptions or personal pain, might contribute to the planning process, consciously or unconsciously, negatively or positively.

The wound of apartheid spatial architecture cannot be healed overnight. But many young students of the built professions do not want to engage in conversation on the ‘apartheid city’, claiming that it was not their making. And yet, this wound remains alive and is still experienced by millions on a daily basis. The planner as wounded healer would tend to the wound of racism and spatial segregation, in as far as we helped deal the wound, are victims of it, or have to find ways to mediate socio-spatial healing in the context of such woundedness.

Where planners and city-makers are able to connect with their own stories of woundedness, fear, exclusion or prejudice, they will become better able at facilitating soul spaces in the city: spaces in which they too can live with their children and families. Planners as wounded healers know the gift of grace and share it generously.

5.5.5 Planners as enslaved liberators

Lastly, Messer (1989, 135–152) uses the paradox of enslaved liberators. The planner as enslaved liberated will recognise her complicity in making an unequal city; while doing all she can to free the city of its inequalities. Being aware of her own array of choices, while choice does not exist for the majority of urban dwellers, she will work tirelessly to expand the city’s tables, for vulnerable urban citizens to have full access to all basic services, options for housing and choices for their children.

Planners are mostly captive to the dominant culture, their own cultural paradigms, or the schools of thought their planning schools exposed them to. We become beneficiaries of capital and instruments of the neo-colonial city, even while we recognise how unsustainable and inequitable it is. We live in gated communities, scared to live and walk in the urban places we ourselves designed.

The planner as enslaved liberator needs to sensitise herself for this paradoxical life and find ways of slowly disentangling self from all that makes our deepest solidarities impossible. In doing so, we learn with others how to live more humanly, more simply and more justly – becoming catalysts of new freedoms, for ourselves and for others. As enslaved liberators our actions will be designed to unshackle ourselves and our city from all that tramples the weak and poor, from all that enslaves us and the places we live in (cf. De Beer 2015b).

5.5 Implications of the contextual-narrative approach for planning education

The implications of the proposed contextual-narrative approach are that it requires new commitments and priorities, new ways of knowing and new skills from planners. If we imagine a generation of planners and city-makers that are able to serve humanity and the earth in ways that are inclusive, affirming of our communal interdependence and working towards the essential objective of greater sustainability, then we need to design planning or city-making curricula that will facilitate the desired outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and values.

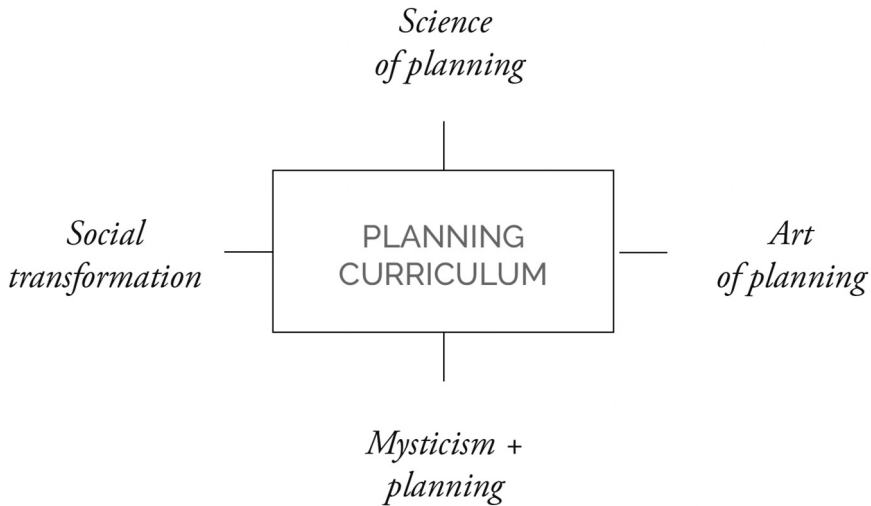


Figure 2.3 Planning curriculum
Source: De Beer 2017

Matthew Fox (1983: 10–11) speaks of marrying science, art, mysticism and social transformation in our educational programmes. As a creation theologian he suggests that theological institutions should lead the way in going beyond dualisms of all kinds to embrace such an integrated educational model. Similarly, one could argue that if we are to build good cities – that are soul cities, people’s cities and cities that deeply honour the soil from which cities sprung – we would do well to develop educational programmes and planning praxes that will combine science (technical knowledge), art (aesthetics, self-expression and beauty), mysticism (spirituality, values, ethics) and social transformation (justice, common good, respect for creation), as the corner stones or pillars on which to build.

Note

- 1 Messer (1989:153–169), in theological terms, spoke of the reflective practitioner as the “practicing theologian”.

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Figure 3.1 Marabastad 01
Source: Nel, K. (2015)

3 A praxis-approach to city-making

Critical moments in the urban journey

This chapter serves to concretise the contextual-narrative approach by suggesting a hermeneutical or praxis-cycle (Holland & Henriot 1984) that incorporates four critical moments in the urban journey. The particular approach describe here is proposed as a methodology for city-making.

This approach is adapted from the discipline of grass-roots faith communities in Latin American, reflecting on their own struggles and imagining actions that could set them free. Over time, the methodology has been developed and re-appropriated by many others. I now reuse the cycle in a planning environment, with four distinct moments.

Moment 1 Entering urban space

The first moment is the moment of insertion or immersion, in which the planner is exposed to communities, entering in a “not-knowing” way and finding his/her way into the labyrinths of knowledge and experience already present in the host community. In this moment many questions, struggles and hopes, will surface, not only from within the community but the planner will also be confronted with his/her own fears, prejudices and possible aspirations.

Moment 2 Reading urban space

In the second moment the questions that surfaced need to be analysed, explored and deconstructed. The stories of people and communities are listened to and heard, and the broader socio-cultural narratives (cf. Bons-Storm 1996) engaged. Metaphors, symbols and rituals that sustain, or oppress, might be retrieved in this moment. The planner now delves deeper, asking the “why”-questions, finding the text behind the text (or the story behind the spatial expression). Quantitative or empirical research could be done alongside qualitative enquiry, to gather as much data as possible.

Moment 3 Imagining urban space

The third moment of the planning process provides the opportunity to reflect on the exposure, narratives and facts that have surfaced, to discern between the

paradoxes and to imagine the city or community that could be. In this moment the planner should be intentional about being reflective.

At the same time, during this moment, the tools of Landry and others will be utilised to engage in creative re-imagination of the neighbourhood and one's own place in it. What is important is that this moment, not unlike the other moments, should be very deliberate in allowing for creative participation in which the diverse people of a local community have an opportunity to share their own knowledges, fears, aspirations and dreams. Careful attention must be given to invite the voices of those mostly unheard. The good stories of liberating practice in local communities also need to find space in cultivating a new imagination.

Moment 4 Co-constructing urban space

The fourth moment is when the collective imagination that started to unfold in the previous moment needs to be translated into design. At this stage, strategic interventions need to be proposed, including the audacious and creative. Innovation, artistry and strategy need to come together at this point in order to co-construct preferred realities in the context of various urban challenges and problems. It is also the difficult moment of negotiating the art of the possible. What are realistic initial steps that can be taken on the way to the ultimate vision?

At its core: the spirit of the planning process

These four moments flow from a prior value-commitment to journey with communities, in order to empower and facilitate wholeness. Said differently, these four moments and the cycle itself should have at its core a spirituality, or value base, that informs the whole cycle. This is what drives the planner, or what holds the praxis-cycle together, gearing it continuously towards empowered, freed and whole urban people, neighbourhoods and systems.

Soelle (2001, 111) understands empowerment as the way in which power, as life-energy, shares itself. Instead of images of patriarchal power that needs to be commanded or grasped, her understanding of power is shaped by "the mystical, nonhierarchical relationship of all living things", infused by life-energy (power) that "causes all creatures to shine in the beauty of their perfection". The cyclical process described here, infused by the (S)pirit of life, has the potential to mediate freedom, the sharing of power and a profound sense of wholeness.

The cycle proposes an on-going process of immersion, reading and critical analysis, collective discernment and imagining, co-construction and community-building, critical assessment and back to the drawing board. It facilitates deepening relationships and interventions, taking us beyond bureaucratic and superficial planning exercises. It is in line with Lerner's suggestion that we should act now, within the boundaries of what we know best, and could then spend the next 20 years to turn that which we piloted into the best it could be (cf. Lerner 2000, 18).

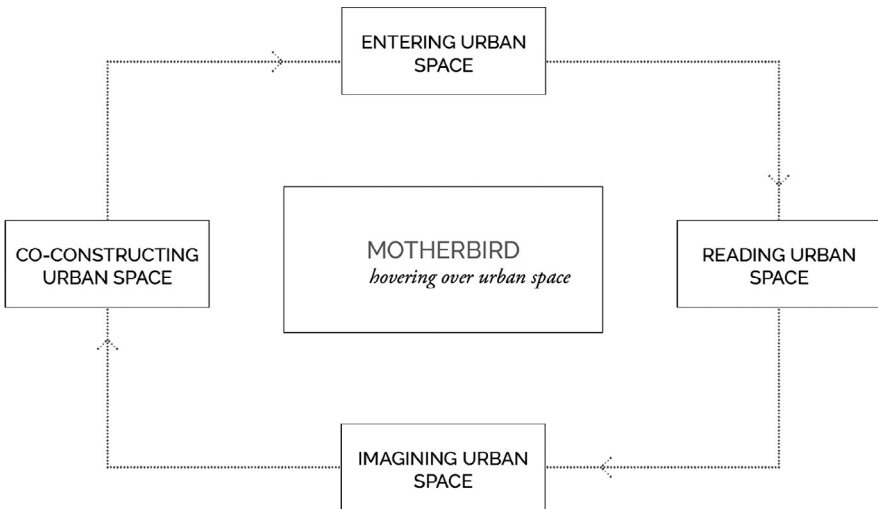


Figure 3.2 Urban Praxis Cycle
Source: De Beer 2017

Moment 1: Entering urban space...

‘Entering urban space’ is very deliberate.

1.1 As “flâneur”...

I suggest Walter Benjamin’s (1982) *flâneur* as a possible metaphor for entering the city. The *flâneur* has its social basis in journalism: to read and observe urban life as well as discover coincidental details within the standardised existence of the masses. The presentation and absorption of news, as done by journalists, happened “al flanerend” (Boomkens 1998, 108).

In journalism there is the curious mix of distance and closeness/intimacy; of feeling at home, yet being part of the anonymity and standardisation of the masses. The journalist, as with the *flâneur*, is at the same time observer/spectator/voyeur and also participant of urban life. That is the art of journalism: to observe and discern within this paradox of distance and closeness, the details that distinguish movements and happenings of the masses (Boomkens 1998, 111).

As we enter urban space we find ourselves within the paradox of urban life; observing and participating, reading and being read. The very identity of the *flâneur* carried within it this same ambiguity: being spectators and observers of urban life; yet at the same time being the powerless prey of anonymous glances and keen observations of the urban masses. Boomkens (1998, 111) speaks of it as “kijken en bekeken worden” (to look and to be looked at). Meaningful engagement requires mutual exchange.

The *flâneur* is not only an ambiguous figure but also a transit figure; not only a newcomer in the city, but also a newcomer in a social and professional sense (Boomkens 1998, 103; 106). S/he moved in the threshold space between market and utopia, reality and imagination, traditional and modern (and post-modern). S/he represents and captures within her/himself a paradox of unlikely and even contradictory socio-cultural roles. S/he is at the same time marginal and central in the socio-cultural narrative of the time (as spectator, outsider and co-author).

In a professional sense the *flâneur* is an in-between figure who searched for identity, somewhere between aristocracy and a new professional connectedness with the masses in their anonymity. Unlike the 20th-century artists or intellectuals who self-consciously developed new methods or styles of practice (Boomkens 1998, 106) the *flâneur* operated at a different level. Instead of professional pretense they became like observers (Boomkens 1998, 107) participating anonymously with the masses in urban life. Rather than fitting everything they saw or thought they knew into tight methods, they were fascinated precisely by that which remained out of reach for most rational methods (Boomkens 1998, 107): the mystery, the coincidence, that which cannot easily be known.

In speaking about Bohemian Paris, Boomkens (1998, 103) quotes Jerrold Siegel, who described it as follows: “They lived in Bohemia because they could not – or not yet – establish a citizenship anywhere else. Ambitious, dedicated, but without means and unrecognised, they had to turn life itself into an art”.

The city does not easily let itself be known. Benjamin’s *flâneur* had a sense of this, measuring the urban condition therefore by elevating life to an art, by allowing oneself to be “enchanted: with a child-like feeling for magic, when you observe the urban masses, just to become horrified again by their intense anonymity” (Boomkens 1998,106).

The *flâneur* indeed moves between the paradoxes of urban life, becoming a paradox in itself: living between the magic of the masses and the lonely anonymity of the individual; between community and isolation; between distance and intimacy.

The deconstruction of society as it was known created the *flâneur*, as a curious in-between figure. In the deconstruction of planning today, we might find the *flâneur* a helpful metaphor for entering the city, not having all the answers but journeying with the paradoxes of urban life, a participant observer, with a childlike sense for magic and the openness to be surprised.

1.2...with the eyes of a child...

Walking in the city like a *flâneur*, is to walk with the eyes of a child. Rilke (1986, 55) speaks of the fact that knowledge is never objective, but rooted in our subjective experience. Therefore, she asks why we do not “continue to look at it all as a child would, as if you were looking to something unfamiliar, out of the depths of your own world”. Is the familiarity with our city not often the problem, presuming that we know it all; misjudging the mysterious and evasive complexities surrounding us? It is of course a question, as asked also by

Dorothee Soelle (2001, 91): “Can amazement, the radical wonderment of the child, be learned again?”.

Her suggestion is that such learning could only happen in the context of something like “meditation”, which is to embrace “a form of stopping and tarrying wherein individuals or communities intentionally set aside for themselves times and places other than the ordinary ones” (Soelle 2001, 91). Entering the city with the eyes of a child would mean entering softly, quietly, almost meditatively, in order to find the capacity to wonder and be amazed again.

Juliao Mutemba was a priest in Bagamoya, Maputo. In a course on reading the city he was asked to walk around the block three times, observing, analyzing, discerning (as retold by his friend, Swedish priest Pelle Söderback). To Juliao this exercise did not make sense, as this has been his community for many years. He knew it inside-out. Until he walked the walk – this time with different eyes, observing every detail, as the *flâneur*: an insider, but at once a stranger and an outsider; *with the eyes of a child*: seeing as if never seen before and open to be surprised. On his return he mentioned that he would never look at his neighbourhood in the same way again (narrated in the Summer School of the Institute for Urban Ministry, Mutemba, 2003). Familiarity sometimes deprives us of magic, surprise, wonder.

We should never seek to capture the city as if we can fully understand its depths. Looking with the eyes of a child will help us to keep a sense of awe, which is a prerequisite for on-going and deepening learning.

Benjamin (1982) hopes to help his readers become better observers, able to see with greater depth into historical processes. He does so through a retrieval of his own appreciation of childhood and the capacity of child-like imagination (Boomkens 1998, 90), which is able to make spontaneous connections between observations and actions, “to call the new into memory” (Boomkens 1998, 90), in ways that have the possibility to transform reality.

Similarly, Matthew Fox (1981, 227) said: “Children’s cognition had revolutionary power because it was tactile, and hence tied to action”. Unless adults were able to make themselves childlike again (Fox 1981, 227), Fox maintains that we will be unable to participate in the playful and creative acts of birthing life-affirming space. But it is not just the magical childhood experiences that are important. The ruins of our childhood might often be the memory that helps us to imagine a different future.

1.3...seeking/choosing community...

The expert-driven planning model has often been a private, individualist enterprise, not creating community, not inviting community wisdom and even at the expense of community. In my proposed approach, the planner or city-maker entering new spaces, needs to seek and submit to the local community.

What was missing in much of the planning literature before, was the recognition of the need for a language and a process of emotional involvement, of embodiment (Sandercock 2003, 163): planning processes that allow the “whole”

person to be involved and that create space for emotions to surface and even to inform the outcome of the process (Sandercock 2003, 163).

Most planners try their best to keep planning processes as clinical and sterile as possible, ruling out the desirability of emotional expression. The challenge in diverse contexts is not to downplay, avoid or transcend difference, but to acknowledge it and to engage with it (Sandercock 2003, 165). Such difference might include different experiences, different ways of expression and the likelihood of conflict.

What is important is “(t)he creation of a safe space in which parties could meet and speak without fear of being dismissed, attacked, or humiliated” (Sandercock 2003, 161). Such spaces will affirm the community and its important contribution and will create mutuality between planner and community.

In line with the previous paragraphs about intuitive knowledge, Polanyi (1962) asserts that people usually know more than they can actually say. Sandercock (2003, 77) speaks of it as “knowledge from experience”. Part of the planner’s task is to affirm and tap into that knowledge:

Particularly when they are working with disempowered communities who have always received messages about their ignorance and/or inferiority, planners need to begin the process of communication by helping people to articulate what they already know. This can be as simple as sitting at someone’s kitchen table and saying “tell me about your street/village/neighborhood’.

(Sandercock 2003, 77–78)

When we create honest spaces for reflection, expression and exchange, affirming every participant and his/her contribution equally, valuing the knowledge and wisdom coming from communities and being transparent about our own lack of understanding, then something of a therapeutic moment could occur (Sandercock 2003, 162–166). Such planning would enhance a sense of community. It would be planning as embodiment or embodied planning; messy, in community. It would lay the foundation for collective ownership in making good cities, from below.

1.4 ...in the labyrinth/s; journeys of adventure

Rendell (2000, 130) says that “(K)nowledge is labyrinthine. In writing the city, I am writing myself...”. And this is an on-going process, as Black Koltuv (1990, 7) writes about it: “Myself, woman, womb, with grilled windows, veiled eyes. Tortuous streets, secret cells, labyrinths and more labyrinths”.

The planner who embraces the labyrinthine nature of the journey opens him/herself to a world of surprise. At first the labyrinth presents us with a deceptive analogy: the environment in which we move seems to be the same wherever you go; but it is precisely this deception that gets you lost.

In describing how people find their way around cities, and what tools people use to read the city, different metaphors are used. Some prefer the metaphor of

rats in a maze, borrowed from experimental psychology (Tonkiss 2000, 1). But Tonkiss (2000, 1) suggests that “(P)art of the art, or science, of making maps is the possibility of losing one’s way”. Tonkiss (2000, 1) continues to say that “cities are more fluid than mazes... It isn’t always necessary to follow the prescribed routes. It isn’t always sensible”. My daughter and I have a little game we play. She wants us to get lost. It takes us on detours, without the aid of maps or apps. It sometimes lands us in strange places. It usually excites and surprises.

Tonkiss actually suggests the possibility and the gift of losing one’s way. Benjamin is not suggesting ways out of the labyrinth. In his Parisian passages (1940[1982]) the masses *become* the modern urban labyrinth. The passages represent the threshold between public and private, the connection between seemingly irreconcilable opposites. Benjamin explores ways in which to find one’s way in the labyrinth. Somehow the planner is challenged with the task not of undoing the chaos and ambiguities of the city, which is an impossible enterprise, but to find one’s way creatively and constructively *in and through* these.

Many planning professionals choose to avoid the labyrinth in which they seldom walk, neither get lost, through avoiding participatory planning; through inserting planning schemes that do not make sense of the labyrinthine nature of communities; through withdrawing into their own gated communities (either physically or in their minds); and through offering blueprints that negate the details – and detours – of local stories.

Instead of walking, searching and losing themselves in urban labyrinths, they escape and explain; instead of integration they reinforce dichotomies of wealth and poverty, public and private; instead of artistry they resort to official bureaucracy.

“Leren leven in het labrynt” (learning to live in the labyrinth) forms the central tenet in the passage-work of Benjamin; learning to live in the chaos of the city, in the paradoxes of urban life. The labyrinthine journey is a process of learning, swinging between desperate attempts to survive on the one hand, and momentary sensations of embrace, being secure, or homecoming on the other (Boomkens 1998, 92).

In Berlin, Benjamin had such an experience, finding his way through the city, getting a grasp of it and experiencing something of being at home and being homeless (“ontheemd”) at the same time. Eventually he leaves Berlin full of despair and chooses to (re-)activate the memory of his childhood dreams, locating himself in Paris. But it was Paris as labyrinth that he recalls, a labyrinth full of lost souls (Boomkens 1998, 98), “een dwaalwereld” (a world of wanderers).

Who does not know his/her way, will never arrive anywhere. But one who knows that s/he is wandering, will know how to live in the labyrinth. Precisely in the paradoxical coherence of wandering and inhabiting, Benjamin develops his idea of modern experience, of modern identity...

(Boomkens 1998, 98 [my translation])

Urban living is a perpetual paradox/cycle of journey and habitation, where you never actually arrive, where you are always a sojourner somewhere between homecoming and homelessness.

In his a/theology, Mark Taylor (1984, 62) speaks of writing as such a journey in which the self walks an “errant path: without clear limits, plots or storylines, embracing this ‘amazing grace’. The loss of limits and boundaries and the discovering of endless connections”. And once we arrive at this place, it is indeed a place of grace; since it opens up new opportunities to be surprised, by the stranger, the detour, the details.

Moment 2: Reading urban space

The first and second moments correspond with the narrative insistence on listening and deconstructing. Reading urban space is the rigorous discipline of reading various texts, listening to diverse voices and deconstructing layers of meaning.

2.1 Reading from the margins...

A contextual-narrative planning paradigm is intentional about reading from the margins. Marinda Schoonraad (2002, 65–70) was asked to deliver a paper on the theme: “Are cities built for women?” She chose to broaden the theme to include “the other”: all those vulnerable or often excluded groups for which cities are not intentionally built. How will our reading of the city differ, if we read the city with those others and through their eyes?

Reading from the margins requires of planners to position themselves specifically and intentionally, not neutrally; which is a political act but also a spiritual/moral/ethical act. It seeks to awaken the consciousness of society for those who are excluded or invisible, placing them on the agenda and affirming their dignity where they are dehumanised or excluded. It assumes a position of deep respect in the way Richard Sennett (2003) speaks of it in reflecting on the housing projects of inner city Chicago.

Law and Da Costa Marques (2000, 119–121) write about invisibility, referring to the way in which people deny the existence of beggars at their windows, or homeless people on the streets. They suggest that such denial is either a result of lack of recognition, or because recognition is too real. We deny the existence of a reality because we do not know or because we know too well. They suggest that there is a rare place in between not knowing and knowing too well, which can be both interesting and disturbing, and in there “vision is possible for a moment” (Law & Da Costa Marques 2000, 121).

The task of planners and those of alternative consciousness should be to create those moments in between – to help people into the gaps between not knowing and knowing too well, where they could be interested, disturbed and considerate of a new and alternative vision. Brave planners will dare to create spaces where those not recognised will meet in circles with those who choose

not to recognise them, sharing stories of fear and hope, humanising both the ignored and those who ignore.

Planners have a task to read from the margins and to help others read from the margins. They have a responsibility to introduce the unheard voices from the margins in ways that will awaken those who have become numb. Cornel West (2014) speaks of it as the task of “allow(ing) suffering to speak”.

Law and Da Costa Marques (2000, 229–230) relate an incident in the slums of Rio de Janeiro. Expensive apartments were to be built in Sao Conrado. The target market for purchasing these apartments was rich business people. The marketing brochure showed the apartments close to the beach and in the background a hilly green landscape. Where the green open space was in the picture, was indeed no open space. One of the largest and best-known favelas of the city, Rocinha, with more than a hundred thousand people, was located right there. But, write Law and Da Costa Marques (2000, 230): “they were treated as something that would shortly be removed. No official property tax was being levied on them. So obviously they did not exist”.

Most planners do not live in unrecognised urban neighbourhoods that cannot be traced on maps. However, they have to plan for these “invisible” neighbourhoods, or they plan around them as if they do not exist. Ignoring such neighbourhoods would not necessarily affect them, if they have never felt lost in the labyrinth of forgotten neighbourhoods.

Honest readings from the margins, based on deep immersions, will have one participate in the collective lament of those deprived from urban well-being because of unjust urban systems (cf. Rah 2015), those rendered invisible on city maps, those deemed non-persons and non-citizens.

2.2...deconstructing official narratives...

For many years (1993–2002) the dominant discourse about inner cities in South Africa was that of “decay”, “slums” and so forth. And the dominant vision was “to get feet back into the city”; even though there are more feet than ever. What this really means is that black (and poor) residents were now in the majority, and white business disinvested. Black and poor in this discourse equalled decay and white and business equalled “salvation”.

A magazine article titled “SA Cities seek salvation in regeneration” (Le Roux 2005) refers to the regeneration of the city centre areas in Cape Town and Johannesburg. It does so, without assessing the impact of property prices and redevelopments on low-income residents of the city. It considers “salvation” without social justice. In an endeavour to rid the city of unwanted people, terms such as crime, grim, vagrants and foreigners are frequently and generously contrasted with urban renewal, world-class city and Africa’s leading capital. The salvation of the city, in such a discourse, lies in how it gets sanitised.

Often the reclamation of urban areas is not coming from below and within communities, but are forced upon neighbourhoods by external profiteers. When

low-income residents and people who are homeless are then forced out of the neighbourhood, the average urban citizen of means seldom asks where they have gone to. We live in a society where large percentages of the urban population have become dispensable.

Cape Town is a good case in point, presented as South Africa's inner city success story. One after the other, office blocks were converted into luxury loft apartments and the inner city became a zone of choice for business and upmarket residents alike. In telling the official story, nobody speaks of the displacement of street children and homeless people to neighbouring communities, causing the social fabric of host neighbourhoods already under pressure, to be at even greater risk. It does not quantify or qualify how much of the growth and new wealth actually trickled down to the Cape Flats and neighbouring communities.

Leonie Sandercock (2003, 119) writes that Cape Town is:

...seek(ing) to restructure urban space into a sophisticated consumption environment (with an eye on the tourist market), has a focus on security and law enforcement, with 8,5 million Rand initially allocated for surveillance equipment, rather than focusing on addressing the social problems of the inner city.

Sandercock (2003, 119), frames it as a challenge dictated by white fear. Although the centrality of white capital is often evident in the de/regeneration of the city, policy-makers, mostly black, fail as much to create conditions that prevent displacement of the poor. The collusion of politicians and profiteers deprive a city of its soul.

2.3 ...discovering local wisdom; retrieving local narratives...

Elsewhere, I asked the question: "Whose knowledges shape the city?" (De Beer 2014). I did so in advocating for a community-based urban praxis that makes time and effort to retrieve local knowledge and wisdom. Reading the city without attending carefully to local narratives will inevitably lead to nonsensical planning interventions. The wisdom required for local solutions is often embedded in the community together. The challenge – or art – for planners is to make sure they discern such wisdom.

The Hebrew scriptures contain this telling anecdote:

I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: there was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siegeworks against it. Now there lived in that city a poor man but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. So I said, "wisdom is better than strength". But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

(Ecclesiastes 9: 13–16)

Sandercock (2003, 79) suggests that there is:

the lingering belief... that local knowledge is 'tainted' by self-interest: that is, by the passions, whether greed, love, attachment, anger, faith, power, prestige, beauty. I suggest that many planners, because of their positivist training, are afraid of the presence of these emotions in the community, do not know how to deal with their emotion in the midst of what is meant to be rational deliberation, and therefore choose to hide behind the apparent safety and alleged objectivity of data. We are a profession in a state of arrested emotional development.

Sandercock's view seems to be that planners only 'use' the argument of self-interest, while they are actually fending off the emotions that come with local experiences. In other cases, their professional arrogance might prevent them from heeding wise local words. Certain people or places may even be despised, losing the opportunity to drink from their wisdom.

Residents of the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood of Tshwane's inner city know what is working and what not when it comes to their public open space, the Burgers Park. Decisions about closing certain gates were made without dialogue with residents. The real problems facing the Park are not addressed: cleanliness; a run-down children's play area; lax security guards; and an abandoned greenhouse. Dialogue with local authorities is antagonistic and suggestions from the local community hardly considered. There are sometimes competing – and hidden – agendas at work in decisions about public spaces.

In reading urban spaces, apart from the importance to retrieve local narratives and wisdom, it might provide useful insight to understand why such wisdom is despised, by whom and for what purpose.

2.4 Reading symbolic, nonverbal language

Our urban readings should concern itself also with symbolic, nonverbal language.

The language of graffiti artists captures untold narratives about a city. In Stockholm, Sweden, there is a female community priest, originally from Chile. She is still most fluent in Spanish, after many years in Stockholm, and still speaks Swedish like a Latino. Her friends and companions are the youth of Stockholm's immigrant communities, and she learns much about them from their art on the city's walls. Although she cannot speak Swedish fluently, she understands the vernacular of public art and it helps her to read her community well.

Music, paintings, poetry, dance and theatre all convey messages about the city and its people that we need to read and hear. The city as a text speaks to us through various languages and mediums. It is for the planner to develop the ability to decipher diverse vernaculars that are verbal, nonverbal and symbolic.

The penny dropped for me in a very visual sense, when I was exposed to integrated dance. We were working with a professional dance company that

includes people living with and without physical disability. This exposure had me read our own space, religious buildings and the theatre in which they had to perform, with a completely new lens. I had to view the city through the eyes and experiences of people living with disability, and had they not been part of the planning process, they would almost certainly have been excluded from the very spaces in which they had to perform. The city was not built for them.

If planners are to design sensitively in multi-cultural urban spaces, they need to become multi-lingual and multi-literate. When we start to consider constructing the city, we then have to ask: how do we become more deliberate about making spaces for the vernaculars, nonverbal languages and symbolic gestures often not expressed or welcomed by mainstream society? How do we allow these languages to be freed, as they help the city become free?

Moment 3: Imagining urban space

Moment 3 places emphasis on imagination. This is a reflective moment in which experiences, stories, figures, facts and diverse knowledges, are brought together for consideration. Now that we are deeply immersed and have gone through different analytical iterations, we need to ask: “What kind of a city is possible?”

3.1...imagining...

I return to Benjamin’s fascination with child-like awe. The kind of imagination that Benjamin spoke of was not a childish, impotent dream. Imagination had an important function in the historical and critical task of awakening or conscientising. The imagination of a child is to awaken in him or her the manifold possibilities of life. But the critical task, Benjamin felt, was the assimilation of these imagined/dream elements into an awakening that will help shape a new reality.

Unwin and Parker’s vision of the garden suburb imagined a place where the poor shall teach the rich and the rich shall help the poor to help themselves. It was a vision of communality and mutuality (Hall 1988, 103); of a community that resembled a “day-to-day co-existence which would sooner heal the estrangement of the classes” (Creese 1966, 239; Hall 1988, 104).

The vision of the garden city is an example of a potent dream; of imagination that awakened a new consciousness and facilitated new and hopeful communities. However, the success of the garden city carried within it the seed of its own self-defeat; so successful was it that it soon also became a tool for gentrification and exclusion. This could be compared with Harlem and other success stories where urban communities transformed themselves, but eventually such led to renewed lack of access for the poor and vulnerable (Hall 1988, 104).

Imagining is not just a future exercise. The art of imagining relies on the ability to call into memory. It is when we remember, that we are able to imagine and envision a new future. Ruins often serve as catalysts for visions. The

decaying 19th-century Paris represents the destructive power of modern history, but also plays a powerful role in articulating a collective dream of an imaginary world that could be better (Boomkens 1998, 91). The oppressions of Latin America and South Africa gave birth to collective visions and powerful imaginations of societies that could be.

In their journeys into urban communities, planners would do well not to sidestep places of struggle and ruin, because it is often here that the most creative urban responses are born, precisely because crisis demands innovation.

3.2...nurturing intuition...

It is important that the exercise of imagination disciplines itself with the qualities of the *flâneur* and the child. It should be an imagination rooted in memory, in local stories and people, in the dreams and imaginations already at work locally. Pile and Thrift (2000, 308) suggest that they are not seeking for grand theories about the city or for the “deep inner meanings”, but rather “for the clues to the pattern of interaction, clues that allow us to gain a practical hold on the situation”. The smallest details of the city can be clues as to the patterns of meaning. In our quest for master plans we often miss out on the obvious or not-so-obvious clues that lie in the local detail.

These clues Pile and Thrift speak of are the trademarks of an intuitive knowledge, or a practical wisdom (cf. Müller 2003, 296). Local people often have an intuitive sense of what will work and what not: “Their convoluted knowledge of the city and its inhabitants resist systemisation, but knowledge it is; a kind of practical knowledge powered up” (Pile & Thrift 2000, 308).

The importance of affirming and inviting such intuition or local knowledge into urban planning, design and imaginative processes cannot be underestimated. Intuition should be at the heart of imagination.

Pile and Thrift (2000, 309) speak of the detective, *flâneur* and journalist, as “seekers after clues”. Making good urban places might require a new ability to seek and find the clues, the details and the intuitive knowledges that can help shape a workable new imagination. It requires planners and facilitators that rely on hardware but also on software, on rational knowledge but also on intuitive wisdom, because both (hard- and software, knowledge and intuition, reason and emotion, expert and citizen) will contribute to a better city. It was Einstein who said: “only intuition, resting on sympathetic understanding, can lead to discovery; the daily effort comes from no deliberate intention or programme, but straight from the heart” (Sandercock 2003, 61).

3.3 A hermeneutic of suspicion and a hermeneutic of hunger

Here is where child-like innocence is combined with lived suspicion. To foster new imaginations, we have to be sufficiently suspicious of the dominant imagination.

Exponents of contextual, liberationist or feminist traditions use a hermeneutic of suspicion, which is “a form of ideological critique” (Soelle 2001, 46): “This

hermeneutic begins by suspecting every text, every tradition, in terms of its legitimising role in promoting the domination of the particular tradition”.

Soelle (2001, 47) speaks of the way in which women today can know that all Biblical texts are written from within a patriarchal social structure with related implications. She wonders, however, if this rightful suspicion in itself is enough to lead us out to a new place. She is afraid that a critical consciousness might only lead to despair, hopelessness and paralysis.

She then suggests that it is not suspicion but hunger that leads people in the resource-poor world to seek for alternatives: the hunger for bread and liberation. Similarly, it is not suspicion but a hunger for spirituality that leads people to seek for alternatives. Soelle argues for a hermeneutic of suspicion to be complemented by a hermeneutic of hunger.

A contextual-narrative approach takes an implicitly suspicious look at grand narratives and official discourses. It analyses them for what they fail to say and for whom they exclude from the discourse. A hermeneutic of suspicion should help us develop a critical consciousness and sound critique. But then we need a hermeneutic of hunger – for soul spaces, beauty, community, dignity, equity, justice – to take us beyond suspicion and a critical consciousness, to a place of bold and hopeful imagination.

3.4 Critical imagination of an alternative consciousness

It is in our mutual hunger for the common good, that we might find it possible to imagine an alternative. Sandercock (2003, 2) shares this utopian dream:

I am *dreaming* cosmopolis, my utopia, a construction site of the mind, a city/region in which there is genuine acceptance of, connection with, and respect and space for the cultural Other, and the possibility of working together on matters of common destiny, the possibility of a togetherness in difference. But I also want to practice utopia. A city politics of possibility and hope. I want to outline a planning imagination for the 21st century that is utopian and critical, creative and audacious.

Could we dream of a planning practice that would include dream and work, contemplation and action, reflection and practice, mysticism and politics, ethics and space, soul and body? This would take us beyond so-called neutral planning to an engagement that is rooted in certain ethical values (spirituality) and committed to certain political ideals (social justice; the common good).

Sandercock (2003, 61) offers contemplation as a “new” source of knowledge in planning. Mysticism has always argued that the worthiest knowledge is attained “through contemplation and meditation, and communicable only through poetic image and metaphor”.

Through contemplative reflection on the initial moments in our journey into communities, we might start to see the outline of a new imagination. The deconstruction of official discourses would expose myth and evoke new images



Figure 3.3 Alternative consciousness
Source: Nel 2017

of what could be. The awe and surprise of unexpected knowledges and beauty, present and at work in urban communities, would offer the resources for a new imagination. The new mutuality emerging from dialogue and participation in communities, would present partners that could turn new images into reality. *It is really only in the context of communities that such an alternative imagination/ consciousness can be birthed, developed, grown and sustained.*

Moment 4: Constructing urban space

4.1 Journeys of co-construction

Co-constructing space is to suggest planning processes that will ensure hospitable and participatory spaces for people to engage as co-creators with each other. Soelle (2001, 61) writes: “For Meister Eckhart, all authentic deeds are those that emulate the original act of creation. They are deeds that spring from life and love”.

Listening to Eckhart we can deduct that not all acts of planning are necessarily “authentic deeds” because not all acts of planning necessarily facilitate life, or spring from love. Not all acts of planning emulate the original act/s of creation. There are planning practices that are facilitating exclusionist and even oppressive urban space/s. What is proposed here is planning actions drawing from a spirituality that maintains the sacredness of both creation and humanity.

Co-constructing urban space suggests and assumes the artistry of all people, as something of the divine is present in everyone (Soelle 2001, 172). Working with this

as our point of departure changes the way of the journey and invites every urban dweller as potential co-creators of a new city. However, the bureaucratic captivity to certainties, or the “obsessive preoccupation with security” (Soelle 2001, 234) that marks many urban renewal projects, tend to restrict creativity:

Security becomes an idol when creativity is banished. For, as we have seen, vulnerability is the matrix for creative birthing. Security obsessions become sources of killing the artist. As Jung puts it, “Security and peace do not lead to discoveries”. Boredom and acedia do not lead to breakthroughs.

This could be security relating to issues of crime and violence, but also the personal security of professionals, monopolising planning space and trying to keep ‘lay people’ from interfering with ‘their’ processes.

Co-constructing urban spaces can remain a lofty ideal, such as the idea of participatory local government in South African often proves to be. Local politicians find ways around real participation, thereby hindering lived democracy.

Sandercock (2003, 157) proposes that planning professions should never work alone:

(T)hey are most effective when they act in a transparently political way, in association with residents, politicians, and mobilized communities, negotiating an (always temporary) consensus about the best ways of living together.

Whereas the third moment is a more reflective, almost theoretical moment, the moment of co-construction is the strategic space in which planners and people in community find creative ways together for translating imaginaries into concrete proposals with specific actions.

Planners require the skills, not only of crafting well-designed individual plans and proposals, but also of facilitating collective processes throughout all the stages of analysis, critical reflection, re-imagining, strategic planning, implementation and evaluation. It asks of planners to be able to collaborate synergistically with other disciplines that can add value to the process of co-construction, creatively and strategically.

Once communities have truly participated, the levels of agency, ownership and sustainability of local processes will markedly increase.

4.2 Co-construction needs community

It is only in community that co-constructive processes are truly possible. It is where the diverse urban population, with the planner, can find “consensus about the best ways of living together” (Sandercock 2003, 157). Here, I refer to community not in its geographical or sociological sense only, but I speak of community as the qualitative formation of spaces in which people acknowledge their interdependence and need of each other and then find ways to work collaboratively, in solidarity with each other.

Such expressions of local community stand in contrast with the globalised economic order that requires mindless individualisation, alienating people from other human beings, themselves and the Other (Soelle 2001, 191–192).

The more globally the market economy structures itself, the less interest it demonstrates in the social and ecological webs in which humans live, and the more it requires the individual who is without any relation whatsoever.

Whereas the globalised economic order has disastrous effects on the social and ecological environments in which we live our lives, for those committed to build good cities, the affirmation and strengthening of community, wherever we find it, becomes a vital task. By definition, such communities will seek to resist and outwit the effects of a globalised economic order in local urban places.

Soelle (2001, 194) finds traces of such community, where dedicated individuals, nongovernmental organisations and pockets of people in churches commit themselves to work together in ways that will share hope where there is despair. These groups seek to build community expressed in local and global solidarity, in innovative partnerships and alliances, acting concretely together. Examples are found in south-north, urban-suburban and community-private sector collaborations. Local urban communities should draw courage from multiple examples around the world where communities take back their own power to shape their own futures.

The task of such communities is not only to engage in collective analysis, re-imaginings and collective actions. To sustain these, their task is also to help foster a new and sustaining language “that keeps us awake and shares the memory of liberation and the promise of freedom for all. We need a different hope than that of political strategies and scientific prediction” (Soelle 2001, 197). Without such value-based language grounding our collective action and helping us to reflect critically on our life together, the infiltrations of “god as market” will deplete us.

This is a language that cuts through political rhetoric, administrative hog-wash, scientific scepticism, carrying us into new places. This is not only verbal, theoretical or intellectual language. As Soelle (2001, 197) asserts, the dream of an alternative way – here, of making the city – will not succeed “without songs, rituals, or dancing”.

The *madangguk* is a traditional Korean mask dance that was re-appropriated by the people’s resistance movements in the era of Korean dictatorship. Common people – factory workers, farm workers, students, housewives – danced out their political grievances, their resistance against an unjust regime and their dream of an alternative society. This art form was democratised as was the public spaces in which it was performed. A Korean theologian, Mikyung Chris Lee (2005), writes about *madangguk*, or public theatre, as a medium that fostered a new consciousness, built courage among a people who were suppressed and gave language to their resistance.

Soelle (2001:205) suggests that the courage to resist is found in the recovery of the “strength of the weak”. The *madangguk* seems to have danced into

being, the “strength of the weak”. Such is the work of theatres of the oppressed everywhere. Imagination, resistance and reconstruction, cannot be achieved only through rational engagement. The gift of the artist, the poet, the dancer and the clown, need to be welcomed into the community, to help shape but also sustain the vision of something substantially new. Sometimes, their “poetic imagination is the last way left in which to challenge and conflict the dominant reality” (Fox 1983, 203).

Without grounding their work in such communities, where they can analyse, deconstruct, resist, imagine and co-construct together, planners and city-makers run the risk of bureaucratic self-absorption. It is when we are with each other, that we can open ourselves up to the surprise of the labyrinthine city. It is here, in caring communities that show compassion and solidarity with humankind and creation, that the seeds of a new society will be found. Such communities are seedbeds for new urban imaginaries, fuelling resistance and charting reconstruction, in close companionship with communities and people of like minds everywhere else.

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Figure 4.1 Remnant voices
Source: Taylor, G. (1992)

Part II

Doing the city together



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Figure 4.2 Tshwane – Bera-Burgers Park and Sunnyside
Source: Meiring 1988



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4 Personal and community narratives

Berea-Burgers Park and Tshwane's inner city

1 The story of a neighbourhood: Berea-Burgers Park

1.1 *Berea-Burgers Park: a social construct or a lived neighbourhood*

This chapter tells the story of change and hope in the inner city of Pretoria, Tshwane, with specific focus on the Berea-Burgerspark area of the inner city. Over the past 30 years the inner city has gone through various cycles of change. These changes presented political, socio-cultural, religious, economic and institutional challenges.

What is offered here is a “thick description”¹, based on personal observations and experiences, as one who worked in and with local organisations, community forums and local churches; and lived here as a resident. Others might provide other observations and perspectives looking at the same realities.

The narratives I relate reflect “(d)ifferent social stories, with distinct rhythms” (Massey, Allen & Sarre 1999, 160). And although they are distinctly related to the unfolding story of Berea-Burgers Park they are also universal in terms of mirroring similar stories elsewhere.

...cities are the intersections of multiple narratives: the stories which came together in Chicago, the intermingling of rhythms in Sao Paulo, the long-distance interconnectedness of Madrid and Tenochtitlan... individual cities have distinctive stories to tell; they have their own trajectories. One of the most significant advantages of ‘thinking spatially’ is that it enables us to see these different narratives as genuinely co-existing.

(Massey et al. 1999, 171)

In the next chapters I will deconstruct these narratives and offer a more critical analysis of urban spatial and developmental practices currently affecting the Tshwane inner city reality.

When I refer to neighbourhood, it is with a certain affirmation of what is (emerging), but at the same time with a certain longing (dream) of what could be. To refer to Berea-Burgerspark as a neighbourhood is in itself a social



Figure 4.3 Burgers Park Pavilion
Source: Meiring, H. (1988)

construction, as it seeks to provide clearer meaning and identity to a loosely connected area with differing levels of institutional capacity and places of exchange.

As local role players engage in the story of Berea-Burgerspark and become active in writing its future story collectively, this search for a local household of humanity, captured in the term “neighbourhood”, might become closer to reality than even imagined.

1.2 Forgetting and Remembering Places

I choose to narrate the story of Berea-Burgers Park to ensure that it is/remains/becomes a “remembered place” (cf. Markusen 2004; Lee & Yeoh 2004). Markusen (2004) speaks of forgotten places “as communities and ecologies that are deprived of leadership and stewardship by the actions and attitudes of people both present in and absent from these environments”. Lee and Yeo (2004, 2298)

write: “Forgotten places are often seen as “the victimised, passive, or invisible ‘other’” to global spaces and processes”.

In capitalist society the process of forgetting is often “an explicit, conscious and strategic process” (Lee & Yeoh 2004, 2298), based on “the monopolisation of space and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments”.

Forgetting is a way of erasure by those with more power, manipulating and controlling space in the name of the Market, creating what Lee and Yeoh (2004, 2298) speak of as “non-places” (shopping malls, airports and railway stations), at the expense of the “real places”. In such scenarios a Monte Casino or Melrose Arch in Johannesburg will replace the vibrancy and viability of a Cyrildene or a Yeoville, creating sanitised simulations, distant memories, of real spaces. Forgetting and remembering are becoming “fluid but intentional acts intimately threaded into power struggles among different classes of actors” (Lee & Yeoh 2004, 2300).

Marabastad in the north-west of Tshwane’s inner city constituted such a forgotten place, through the deliberate policies of forced removals and its isolation from the rest of the inner city in terms of planning and investment. Places like Marabastad, Berea-Burgers Park and Salvokop in the inner city of Tshwane need to be remembered, not only by registering their presence, but through a very intentional *re-membering* process (cf. De Beer 2013). Such “re-membering” is to ensure full integration into the socio-spatial-economic fabric of the city, as equal members of the urban household.

1.3 *Valorising neighbourhoods*

Value is assigned (valorisation), inflated (over-valorisation) or taken away (devalorisation) from contemporary urban communities through a combination of external and internal actors, choices and forces (cf. Sassen 2000, 41, 60, 182; 1998, xxxiv; Davey 2001, 31–32). Markusen (2004, 2305) speak of those as:

the deployers of money and physical capital, external allocation of public-sector money and infrastructure, external symbolic analysts who process understandings and create ideologies about places, and local resource-wielders, decision-makers and knowledge workers.

Markusen (2004, 2308) also speaks of those local residents with strong emotional and material ties to place, who “may resist the devaluation of place”. Their histories, homes and friendship ties are deeply embedded in the region and their livelihoods often dependent on the physical environment or on serving others in the population. This might be less the case in inner city neighbourhoods of Tshwane, being so young and very transitional, but there still are the long-timers, often those with less options to relocate elsewhere, who have called this their home for two or three decades already.

In new urbanism there is a strong focus back to traditional neighbourhood design, which was a popular concept among planners between 1940 and 1970

(cf. Oranje 1997, 182). It now also includes an appreciation for transit-oriented design, smart growth policies and the so-called urban village, a “neighbourly concept” with an emphasis on local self-sufficiency (Grant 2006, 57; 60; Kelbaugh 1997, 122). The value of local, self-sufficient neighbourhoods with common elements such as mixed use, mixed housing types, compact form, walkable environment, attractive public realm, clear edges and narrow streets (Grant 2006, 57) is asserted by new urbanism.

Even in the Tshwane Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework of 2012 (City of Tshwane 2012, 61) the lack of *neighbourhood* is lamented, suggesting that both wealthier and poorer areas are “merely housing estates and not neighbourhoods in the true sense of the word”.

I assert the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood as an important place of transition to some and stability to others, mediating new life options, access to new opportunities and resources and providing the possibility of connectedness. I have an imaginary for Berea-Burgerspark, Salvokop, Marabastad, Sunnyside West, Sunnyside East, Arcadia, Meintjieskop, the Central Business District, the West Capital Precinct and the Boom Street Precinct to be valorised as distinct



Figure 4.4 Berea-Burgers Park
Source: Nel 2017

inner city areas with unique qualities that (might) make them into distinct neighbourhoods (instead of non-places). Church Street West, the Zoo Precinct and the Mandela Development Corridor could be added to this.

Local neighbourhoods need to inform their own futures. This could include fostering partnerships between diverse role players and seeking synergies between local visions and potential external investments. Neighbourhood life can be stimulated through relaxed zoning regulations, with local capacity-building processes and decentralised neighbourhood management structures. A neighbourhood incentive scheme could finance innovative grass-roots initiatives that contribute to manage and develop healthy, viable and sustainable neighbourhoods.

2 Personal Reflections: 1973–2022

2.1 *Growing up in the inner city: defying the myths (1973–)*

I grew up in Sunnyside, the highest-density neighbourhood of Tshwane. In 1993, after having lived in Sunnyside for 20 years, since 1973, I moved about five blocks west to live in an apartment building in the adjacent Berea-Burgerspark area of the inner city. With a beautiful view over the award-winning Burgers Park I found my entry into this “new” neighbourhood refreshing and exciting. It was the beginning of a relationship with this part of the city and a growing commitment to sustain this as a viable, livable and inclusive inner city community.

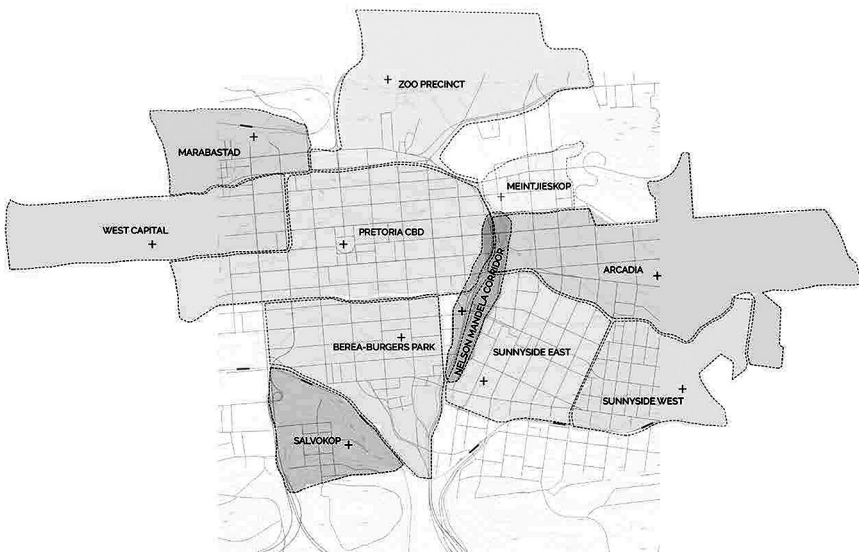


Figure 4.5 Inner city neighbourhood map
Source: Nel, K. (2017)

Twice we had to move, owing to our rental apartments being sold, until we decided to purchase an apartment of our own in 1996. We lived on the eleventh floor and when we moved in there was only one black family on our floor. In 2000 we were the only white family living on the eleventh floor. Our neighbourhood was characterised by rapid racial change, changing social dynamics and diverse responses to these changes.

Perhaps it is important to start by referring to my growing up years in Sunnyside. Growing up, this was really the only space I knew as home (except for the week-end trips to my grandparents' home in the East Rand town of Benoni, about 50 kilometres east of Tshwane, now incorporated into the metropolitan municipality of Ekurhuleni). As only home, I always experienced and affirmed the inner city as positive, safe, humane and life-giving.

As a white South African, I have obviously not experienced the exclusionary character of the inner city that denied the majority of South Africans right of ownership and residence, except in workers' quarters with poor facilities usually built at the back (Pretoria) or on the roof tops (Johannesburg) of apartment buildings.

Growing up in Sunnyside was seen by some (whites) as growing up without privilege. I remember how it was sometimes considered by some with pity, and by others with stereotypes, just like growing up in Danville (Tshwane) or in Vrededorp (Johannesburg) met with certain preconceived ideas of who and what one should be. I always sought for opportunities to defy these myths.

My years in an apartment in Sunnyside and my subsequent years of moving to seven different apartments in close proximity to each other, all marked my "growing up": my own transition from childhood to adulthood, from student to professional, from innocent bystander to conscientised activist, so that I could still speak of my life and presence in the inner city as "growing up" in the inner city.

I can also describe it as a "growing down" into the more vulnerable spaces and experiences of the inner city, or a "growing into", as a relationship of closer solidarity or attachment with my surrounding spaces or environment has developed over time. Perhaps, in some ways the challenge always remains to "grow back" to the place where one once started, seeing as a child, open for wonder and surprise, now tempered by new experiences and discoveries, but not having to be domesticated by such.

2.2 My cruel awakening: the story of the Elim Church and the boys of the streets

I had a dramatic awakening when I became involved with children living on the streets of Sunnyside (cf. De Beer & James 2014, 79–89). While still studying, I was part of a small team of people who – rather naively, at least in my case – set out to open a night shelter for boys living on the streets. In 1990 there was no such facility in the city, and hardly any black people lived in formal housing in Sunnyside. These children, all being black, with one or two exceptions,



Figure 4.6 Sunnyside in the 1960s: southeastern corner of Esselen and Greeff Streets
Source: Swanepoel, R. (2012)

helped me to read Sunnyside, its streets and its spaces, in new or different ways, through their eyes and their experiences.

Reflecting back, they helped me to understand that the space which I embraced as home was not the neutral space I had in mind, but was really a contested space. It excluded the majority of South Africa's people, often using cruel, even violent measures to do so. The "owners", custodians and managers of this space did not want to share it with these children, the poor, black people, or "the other" in general. The forces that wanted to keep this an exclusive neighbourhood were more destructive than I realised.

We obtained an old church property to use as a shelter for boys living on the streets of Sunnyside. The Elim Full Gospel Church just relocated to the suburb of Hillcrest, probably pre-empting the inner city change that was about to occur, and sold their building to enable them to build elsewhere. Anglo Properties bought the property building in Sunnyside from the church, but did not have immediate use for the property. They allowed us to turn it into a boys' shelter as a temporary measure until they were ready to develop the property.

Every night 20–25 boys, aged between eight and 18, slept in this facility. We creatively re-appropriated liturgical spaces, the baptismal font now becoming a communal bath after the afternoon soccer matches, and the worshipping space becoming a recreational area used for different activities. The vacant Sunday School rooms became bed rooms, and the church gallery the common area where boys had supper and breakfast, where group work was held, and vocational skills offered.

On the night of 12 April 1992 this building burnt down, and eight boys were killed. The morning after the fire, police bulldozers moved in to demolish the building, before any formal investigations could start. Conflicting police

statements, the demolition process and preceding events of police harassment at the shelter raised much suspicion and we were convinced of police cover-up backed up by an apartheid legal system. A highly credible independent fire investigator, David Klatzow, found that this had to be arson, based on all the pieces of evidence he could reconstruct. This is described in his autobiography of 2010². A church building of this size and nature could not be destroyed in such a brief period without it being caused by human intervention.

The police had their own fire investigator who construed another picture with different facts. The inquest could never prove arson beyond any doubt and none of the alleged perpetrators or suspects was ever brought to book. Since then different attempts were made to reopen the investigation, and there are still one or two of the surviving boys, now men in their 40s, seeking for justice.

The pain of this experience helped to erase romantic and naive notions of urban space, stating in no uncertain terms the contest for territory, for the very soul of the city, and the depths to which people will sink to ensure they retain their exclusivist enclaves. And yet, on the other hand, this experience also called me deeper into this contest, bidding me to resist the exclusions, to imagine the



Figure 4.7 Elim Church fire
Source: Saturday Star (1992)

inclusions and to give practical and creative expression to a vision of space as life-affirming home for all who are in the city.

2.3 Personal and organisational community engagement

As part of my journey in this community, I was engaged in various local community organisations, such as the Tshwane Leadership Foundation (previously known as Pretoria Community Ministries) (n.d.), which was created by a partnership of local churches; Yeast City Housing (n.d.), a church-owned social housing company; the Boards of Trustees of two apartment complexes in which I lived; the Berea Community Forum; and a civil society initiative called the Berea-Burgers Park Regeneration Initiative.

Although all of these initiatives were permanently under-resourced and below capacity, they offered valuable local responses to change, innovative socio-spatial alternatives to the dominant story of the city and deep insights and knowledges that need to be retrieved and built upon (cf. De Beer 2014). Here, I will mention four important discoveries that have profoundly influenced me and that form, in some ways, the foundations of this work.

I have discovered that *small is indeed beautiful* (cf. Schumacher 1973). I daily discovered the potential and power of small grass-roots initiatives to transform local places. Those initiatives that started small and insignificant a few years back, mostly with almost no resources, continued over the years to impact people, neighbourhoods and policy alike.

Jamie Lerner (2000, 18) spoke of the successes of Curitiba, Brazil, suggesting that their small beginnings had the potential of becoming larger urban transformations. Emerging from the small beginnings is the possibility of caring and liberating local institutions, owned and driven by local people and not external agencies.

Secondly, I have discovered *the importance of local ownership and participation in the well-being of communities*. Without local ownership, external agendas will determine the future of neighbourhoods. Local communities are able to co-determine their own futures, only to the extent that they are able to take ownership of it. And such ownership is only as a result of developing a critical consciousness in the manner described by Freire, Biko and others.

Thirdly, *we discovered together that local communities have an asset- and resource base that is often largely untapped or under-utilised* (cf. Kretzmann & McKnight 1993). Identifying and mobilising this asset base should be a key component of any appropriate strategy for healthy urban communities. These assets include physical, economic, human, intellectual and cultural assets. In so many of the so-called participatory processes initiated and run by the local municipality since 1993, these assets were undervalued, underestimated and undermined, perpetually failing to build on their potential. Mobilising such assets is the first step towards building local movements of change.

Fourthly, after a journey of more than 30 years I am affirming *the potential importance of spirituality in city-making*, mobilising faith resources as part of a

new appreciation for the importance of software infrastructure in building creative and sustainable cities. Faith, when understood not in other-worldly terms, together with other resources that are part of a vocabulary of spirituality, such as vocation, compassion, sacrifice and care, could be vital ingredients in building more humane cities that affirm *all* people.

2.4 *Engaging stereotypes; fostering new identity*

At some level, our journey of the past 30 years was all about engaging stereotypes, fostering new identity, or, rewriting the narrative of the inner city. The inherent good, hidden away in urban areas, might remain undiscovered or neglected, because the forces of prejudice are so hard at work to undermine certain places or people.

Stereotypes reduce certain neighbourhoods or people to be defined in terms of “who they are not” (their weaknesses, deficiencies, problems) instead of appreciating them for “who they really are” (gifts, assets, strengths). Stereotypes are based on assigning singular and reductionist identities to people, or disregarding the identity of people (Sen 2006, 18–28). Our constructions of race, class or gender, are not absent from our planning discourses, proposals and practices. Without an acknowledgement of own stereotypes or prejudices, planning professionals will simply perpetuate the apartheid city that we inherited.

It is often not the lack of technical skills that is our challenge in the city, but a lack of soft skills including how to address and overcome our own stereotypes and prejudice, and those of others, in facilitating urban planning processes, in dealing creatively with diversity, and ultimately, in creating a healthy, inclusive city.

Urban practitioners have to deal with their *own personal stereotypes and prejudices* if they are to facilitate good urban communities. Preconceived ideas about what “the poor” will do to a local neighbourhood, will determine in how far we are prepared to facilitate pro-poor policy and planning processes, in ways that are intentional.

A leading official in our local government, tasked with the housing of the city’s people, goes on record in formal meetings with a concern about bringing too many poor people into the city. However, he fails to recognise the fact that social housing projects in Tshwane maintained a 95 per cent rental income level without any debt to the city for almost 20 consecutive years since 1994. In the same period, sectional title properties and middle-income apartments accommodating mostly middle-class owners and tenants ran up debts of millions with the local municipality.

Dealing with own stereotypes mostly require some form of personal displacement or discomfort. Paulo Freire (1992, 33) reflects on his four and a half years of exiled living in Chile, away from his home country of Brazil. He acknowledges the epistemological consequences of his exile, the way in which it facilitated different and new ways of knowing, away from the comfort of his familiar environment:

It was the first time, with the exception of a brief visit to Bolivia, that I had had the experience of distancing myself geographically, with its epistemological consequences, from Brazil.

(Freire 1992, 33)

Without opting for the kind of displacement that Freire describes, we will fail to experience the epistemological conversions that are required, which includes coming face-to-face with our own stereotypes and prejudices.

Over the past 30 years we also had to contend with those who perpetuate *anti-urban, anti-inner city stereotypes*, creating obstacles for progress or change. In our city there exists an invisible wall between Magnolia Dell (a park between the eastern suburbs and the inner city) and anything west from it. Whatever happens west, is not understood, not known, and therefore feared and stereotyped by middle- and higher-income people. Sometimes the stereotypes might have validity, but many times they are based on ill-informed speculation.

The challenge is how we effectively expose stereotypes, our own and those of others, and nurture a new consciousness. I suggest that this is only possible if and where we create spaces of mutuality: where diverse people engage on equal terms, sharing concerns and visions, entering each other's worlds, breaking bread together.

There are also those who embrace the city through presence and investment, yet harbouring deep *anti-poor sentiments*, expressed either subtly or overtly through actions and policies that intentionally exclude the poor. They would suggest that the city has great potential to work well, but the poor would reduce the viability of the city and therefore need to be located elsewhere. Their discourse turns the poor into perpetrator and not victim; a "deficiency" and never an "asset".

Freire (1992, 11, 37–39) speaks of how the poor or oppressed internalise such dominant discourses about them until they too accept that of themselves. Culhane and Fried (1988, 184–185) show "how the economic, social and cultural contexts of homelessness are ignored and how homeless people are caricatured as 'tramps, bums, alcoholics and psychotics'" (Culhane & Fried 1988, 184).

We need to counter anti-poor discourses that shape our city fabric, by asserting that (i) we belong to the same urban household, as interconnected, interdependent human beings; (ii) we need processes that will help embrace and nurture a new collective identity, overcoming distanced stereotypes, and replacing it with immersed solidarities; (iii) we need spaces in which private investors, government officials, urban residents and the urban poor can carve out visions together, that are inclusive of their respective concerns and aspirations.

Anyone who is concerned with the soul of the city needs to be concerned with the exclusions of some, because that constitutes a direct challenge to our collective humanity as a people and shows up our lack of caring, warmth and hospitality. From a perspective of self-interest, the long-term effects of generations of exclusion need to be considered: how the violence of systemic exclusion



Figure 4.8 Sunnyside today
Source: Boikhutso, B. (2015)

breeds cultures of violence expressed against those seen as the perpetrators of systemic violence (cf. Conn 1987, 153–190; Barndt 1991, 75–100).

A major part of our challenge is to deconstruct the myths about the poor, telling alternative stories, hosting spaces where those who are poor will speak for themselves, constructing inclusive visions together, backed up by workable and proven models of inclusion. Such alternative models need to be documented and broadcasted widely as the hopeful alternative narratives, having the potential to shape policy and space that will be inclusive of all people.

2.5 A changing Berea-Burgers Park: 1993–2022

Socio-spatial configurations in Berea-Burgers Park changed perpetually since the early 1990s and the process of change is still underway. What was an entirely exclusive space for white people only, until the early 1990s, changed to a situation where inner city neighbourhoods in the City of Tshwane were the first to become multi-cultural and today became predominantly black. The changes that occurred were cultural, socio-economic, physical and institutional. The next section of this chapter will attend to some of these changes.

The Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood could not be read without placing it in its broader context as part of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, the Gauteng Province and the realities of South Africa. What happens nationally and provincially also has local effects.

The challenge is to achieve and sustain a critical mass of committed people and institutions that would claim the space of Berea-Burgers Park responsibly and in ways that are truly transformative. Local institutions need to rise up to this challenge, building strong grass-roots movements, that will contribute tangibly to construct a viable, livable, sustainable and just neighbourhood. Tolerance is not sufficient. A combination of broad-based collaboration and measurable strategies – locally birthed, owned and developed – is required to achieve this vision.

3 The Rewriting of a Story: Narratives from Berea-Burgers Park and Tshwane's Inner City

In this section I will give a more specific account of changes in the demographic, socio-cultural, economic, physical and legislative-institutional environments of the inner city.

3.1 Demographic Changes

The Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood currently has 98 residential properties, providing approximately 6,530 units and housing approximately 20,000 people. It has changed from a community that was 100 per cent white in the early 1990s to being 92 per cent black in 2015 (cf. Statistics South Africa 2011). Many buildings have a very diverse population, where cultural negotiation – intentionally or unintentionally – has become a way of life. The area is not only diverse culturally but also accommodates a range of people of all ages. Older people tend to be white and a large youth component is predominantly black. There is a large student population in Berea-Burgers Park, representing various tertiary institutions.

Most white people with alternative options left the area for suburban neighbourhoods, viewing the inner city as a negative place. Many upcoming black professionals have moved into Berea-Burgerspark as a way out of township life and a sign of upward mobility. The income levels of people in the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood is very diverse. It varies from low-income workers and unemployed people living in shelter environments or single room residential facilities, to lower-middle income and middle-income people in sectional title schemes, to a few upmarket penthouses.

Some North Americans described “white flight” from inner cities (starting there in the 1960s), as sophisticated racism (cf. Barndt 1991, 54; 75–100). Another perspective would be that upwardly mobile people, regardless of race, regard the inner city as transitional, until they are ready to retreat into suburban security (and often homogeneity). North Americans spoke of the “second flight” as the black middle-class flight (cf. Lupton 1997). Both “white flight” and the “second flight” occurred in Berea-Burgers Park and other inner city neighbourhoods of South Africa, since the early 1990s.

Since the beginnings of 2000, in the centres of Johannesburg and Cape Town, there is also a new demand for luxury housing options by high-income earners, unthinkable ten years ago. Urban Ocean (Urban Ocean n.d.) has taken the lead in the Johannesburg CBD to convert old art deco buildings into upmarket apartments, drawing high-income earners into inner city living. More recently Propertuity (2017)³ have taken an old industrial precinct of the inner city of Johannesburg by storm to create the vibrant Maboneng Precinct. This trend has not yet hit Tshwane.

3.2 *Socio-Cultural Change*

Socio-culturally, the area has changed significantly. Before 1994 people in Berea-Burgers Park did not have to deal with diversity as homogeneity was enforced by apartheid legislation. *Social exchange* happened between people in apartment buildings, in local churches and in the corner shop. And yet, such exchange was generally rather reserved, orderly, definitely confined to one's own racial and even cultural group.

The racial transition since 1994 saw the area change rapidly. Now more dynamic and spontaneous forms of social exchange have occurred, reflected in busier and noisier streets, passage ways and elevators in apartment buildings; more active weekend social activity in the neighbourhood; and very vocal participation in significant sporting events.

Sundays were silent, almost solemn days before, with a feeling of sombre sacredness. This has changed over the past 30 years so that Sundays have now become days of much activity: many people walking the streets (often with Bible in hand), many families and couples having picnics in Burgers Park, children playing on the pavements, young men washing – and showing off – their cars, and the sombre sacredness has made way for a sense of liveliness and exchange that can be re-read as sacred spontaneity.

Not only is there more dynamic interaction and street life, but there is also greater visibility of diverse people. The voices of diversity are heard and seen in apartment buildings, in the interactions of street vendors, the diverse worship expressions and languages of local churches, the kind of restaurants opening up, the types of concerns raised at the parents' meetings of local schools and the public meetings of local community or residents' organisations.

Celebration and mourning are more visible features of local community life. People come to the streets to celebrate and will party until late into the night. Bus-loads of people will arrive at an apartment building, either to celebrate someone's personal achievement, or to mourn death and loss.

Despite the above changes, often for the better, there is an on-going challenge to overcome *fragmentation*. In the past, inner city communities in South Africa have always been rather fragmented, sustained and kept together only by white privilege. The fragmentation today is often evident in limited financial resources, and the lack of clear political vision for the inner city, embodied in the struggles of those who now call it home.

Since the early 1990s the inner city has increasingly become a catch-basin for people who are *socially excluded* or particularly *vulnerable*. Children living and working on the streets, homeless individuals and families, commercial sex workers (sometimes as young as 11 years of age), refugees, the aged and people with chronic mental illness, all found a refuge in the inner city.

A number of buildings became refuge for people with very low or no income, often characterised by absentee landlords, with poor management, overcrowding and generally poor living conditions being the order of the day. At the same time a number of well-managed buildings were specifically created to offer low-cost social housing options and carried themselves with a sense of innovation and pride.

The inner city is often the first point of entry for both rural and foreign migrants into the city and in the past few decades became a place of concentration for transnational migrants, mostly from other African countries.

Instead of responding hospitably or compassionately to vulnerable urban groups, the city's most dominant responses seemed to have been a toxic combination of increased policing, criminalising vulnerable people, exclusionary policy or the complete absence of policy guiding responses to migration. The city itself is often co-responsible for making the lives of already vulnerable people even more precarious. It is curious how a city with a vision of being a leading African capital city, lacks a pronounced vision of social inclusion, which welcomes, affirms and celebrates Africans from across the continent.

Unfolding socio-cultural changes evoke different views. Assessments of the inner city are often shaped by predictable racial, economic or other biases and even more often come from places of ignorance, from people not having engaged inner city realities first-hand, yet making value judgements nevertheless. This becomes hugely problematic if it then shapes urban policies, plans and practices.

My own discourse on social change in our neighbourhoods, has been largely celebratory, affirming the diversity, new or more varied signs of community and the vibrancy accompanying change. It is not a romantic, uncritical affirmation, however. I am deeply concerned about a culture of entitlement, people asserting individual rights without taking equal responsibility for what they believe they earn. I am concerned with the general apathy of inhabitants of the inner city, not practising active citizenship, not caring about the rights or plight of the most vulnerable among us and not taking ownership for the present or future well-being of inner city neighbourhoods.

3.3 *Economic change*

In the City of Tshwane, most of the 1990s have been marked by large-scale disinvestment from inner city areas by the private sector. In the early 2000s there were signs of new investment into inner city areas, notably in high-end government office parks. That is still the case, but there lacks a coherent drive to regenerate the inner city economically.

3.3.1 *The city as “battered woman”: exploited and discarded*

Letty Russell (1988, 20–21) writes about the city as a battered woman, used for what she had to offer and then discarded, violated and forgotten.

Estate agents (mainly white) made a quick profit in the 1990s from naive first-time home owners (mainly black), selling properties to them without providing proper property owner education, often setting them up for disaster. Many of the agents did not accompany the dynamic processes of urban change responsibly, partly because of their own prejudice, but also because they lacked the skill to work in this new and dynamic environment. Once disaster struck and property owners and sectional title property complexes⁴ went into crises, the very same estate agents withdrew from the areas in which they often irresponsibly generated their profit.

Banks became successful in local neighbourhoods, but closed down local branches when the neighbourhoods started to change, or went to further extremes of redlining certain neighbourhoods, particularly between 1995 and 2005 (Nengome 2005, 35–36; Mahlaka 2015), even when properties were well-managed and displayed good financial statements.

Many businesses and church structures treated the inner city in similar ways, using it to become profitable, powerful or well-established and then disinvesting, often leaving behind a negative legacy (cf. Barndt 1991, 75–100). The media often reinforced negative sentiments with one-sided and prejudiced reporting.

Between 1990 and 2000 many buildings became vacant in the inner city, both as a result of provincial government relocating from Pretoria to Johannesburg, as well as businesses disinvesting from the inner city and relocating to shopping malls in the eastern suburbs of the city. There was a direct parallel between investing in the growth of suburban malls such as Brooklyn and Menlyn in the east of the city and inner city disinvestment.

Church properties were sold without consultation with the larger faith-based community in the inner city. There is at least one example where a large church-owned youth hostel was sold at a drastically reduced price to a landlord with no interest in the well-being of either the city or their tenants and who then allowed the property to become a “near slum” facility.

Scrupulous profiteers picked up so-called “bad” buildings on auction, turning them into accommodation for people desperate to be closer to urban services and employment, but charging rentals that are grossly out of proportion to the quality of accommodation.

3.3.2 *The street corner enterprise*

A more optimistic metaphor than the battered woman is that of the *street corner enterprise*. In the absence of typical street corner cafes, with one or two exceptions, almost every street corner in Berea-Burgers Park now hosts a street corner vegetable seller, the occasional newspaper vendor, *magwenya*⁵ or sweet stands and even upholstery or shoe repair vendors.

Informal trade has grown exponentially in all South African inner cities, owing to transport junctions, high concentrations of people and concentrations of economic activity. The legislative environment has not always been enabling and restrictive policies, limited trading licenses, the lack of earmarked spaces for trading, lack of dedicated storage spaces and police corruption, all contributed to inhibit this vitally important sector of the economy.

Various discourses are alive with regard to informal trade. There is a discourse that equates informality with crime, and law enforcement then becomes the primary way of engagement. Another discourse couches informality in urban management terms, seeking to organise, control and formalise the sector. This could be positive, resulting in proper storage and ablution facilities for traders and less harassment by law enforcement agencies. However, it might also have cost implications to traders which their small margins cannot absorb, or even restrict the number of traders who can benefit.

In the City of Tshwane, a limited number of licenses were awarded for people to trade in the Central Business District (cf. Sebola 2017). In the Berea-Burgers Park area there is no regulated trading areas, although both the Berea Community Forum and the informal traders themselves have argued for it since 2002. A place like Marabastad in the north-western part of the inner city have to accommodate the overflow of traders from other areas, creating huge pressure on an already highly pressurised neighbourhood. City Improvement Districts, although introducing good urban management practices, often regulate informal trade in ways that prevent large numbers of people from economic activity, in favour of the interests of retail stores and big business.

In Berea-Burgers Park, informal trade not only is an economic asset for those earning income from it, but also brings services to people's door steps. Instead of criminalising this sector it should be galvanised as a resource that contributes to a regenerative local economy. Whereas big business often showed disregard for inner city places they abandoned, the informal shop on the corner is intensely personal, both in the immediacy of its benefits for local families, but also in the social relationships formed in local neighbourhoods.

The Warwick Junction in the City of eThekweni (Durban) (Robinson & Dobson 2005) is worth noting in this regard. Located strategically where the railway station, buses and taxis merge, plans were discussed some years ago to rejuvenate the area, and dominant thinking dictated displacement of the informal traders. However, research indicated that the collective monthly turn-over of traders in the area was more than the monthly turnover of the upmarket Pavilion Shopping Mall to the north-west of the city. The city realised that this was an asset much more significant in economic and social value than previously acknowledged.

Instead of displacing such an asset, it thought it much wiser to incorporate the Warwick Junction properly into local regeneration processes. The redevelopment of Warwick Junction, even including cheap overnight accommodation for those traveling from rural Kwazulu-Natal to buy bulk from this market, showed a new understanding of the gift of this space. This integrated and

highly successful development strategy became an award-winning project that deserves the attention of other cities.

There is a shadow side to small, local enterprise, just as dark shadows of big business loom over small neighbourhoods. Trading of illegal substances, or the proliferation of illegal liquor stores (known as ‘shebeens’) in residential areas, need to be arrested. Local communities need to provide pro-active, self-leadership in determining the kinds of economic activity it wants to embrace or tolerate, informed by a clear framework of vision, as well as clarity of how it will address the needs and concerns of its community best.

Informal trade needs to be embraced as valuable urban social capital to be built upon (cf. Lyons & Snoxell 2005). Instead of romanticising or criminalising informal trade, ways need to be found to incorporate it into the reimagined African city, without compromising the magic and benefit that come with informality.

3.3.3 *Economic challenges*

There are a number of economic challenges in Berea-Burgers Park.

A first challenge is the generally *unco-ordinated and incoherent economic activity*, not well woven together through a shared vision for the area. Economic activity is marked by a patchwork of small enterprises, retail stores and informal traders, operating in different parts of the neighbourhood, without proper co-ordination or synergy.

A second challenge relates to *informal trade*. Macro-plans for the city need to incorporate small local enterprises that contribute resiliently to the local economy. Designated areas that allow for unhindered trade, formal structures for storage and ablution, management and organisational support, access to finance and technical advice and the appropriate number of business licences, would all contribute to support and strengthen a crucial economic sector.

A third challenge relates to *formal business*. An anchor industry that helped sustain the Berea-Burgers Park area in more significant ways than being recognised is *the hospitality industry*. A number of well-performing hotels – Burgers Park⁶, Manhattan, Anew (previously Capital Protea) and newer additions like Morning Star and Park Lodge – served visitors to the area, hosting government departments and conferences, and offered local employment options. These hotels have played an important stabilising role in the area and from time to time contribute to local social development objectives. Covid-19 affected this industry substantially, but most of these hotels are now slowly recovering.

Unlike the large shopping malls of Brooklyn and Menlyn to the east of the city, the inner city has a number of *smaller and older shopping centres* that were all affected by the transition of 1994. Some were able to adapt better to the new socio-cultural conditions of the local context, but the economic effects of Covid-19 caused serious challenges for places like Sunnypark, the Sterland Complex and Barclay Square, the city’s first shopping centres, dating back to the 1970s.



Figure 4.9 Inner city shopping centres
Source: Nel 2017

A number of *commercial precincts* exist in the Berea-Burgers Park area, but owing to a lack of co-ordinated vision the neighbourhood is failing to capitalise on these for real economic regeneration. The *Paul Kruger Street Precinct*, a small retail precinct along *Jeff Masemola Street*, and the area around the *Gautrain Station* and the *Tshwane Central Station*, including *Station Square*, all have potential to contribute to local economic well-being.

A fourth challenge is for *local self-reliance*. The current lack of serious commercial interest from outside this area, provides an opportunity for individuals and institutions in Berea-Burgers Park to build locally owned economic engines that will benefit local people optimally. Residents of Berea-Burgers Park are often dependent on the neighbouring Sunnyside for some of their needs, while there is a potential buying power of more than 20,000 people residing in the area, as well as a few thousand people moving through on a daily basis, to and from the Tshwane Central Station.

A fifth challenge has to do with *historical spatial planning* of the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood. Major roads run through the area, seriously affecting the possibility of a close-knit community. Planning prioritised the access of private suburban vehicles into the city centre, over the well-being of local inner city neighbourhoods. A lack of co-ordinated civic agency in the 1980s and 1990s further contributed to the fragmentation of the neighbourhood.

Co-ordination and synergies between formal and informal business, business and local resident needs, and business and socio-economic investment in the area, could go far in building a more self-reliant local economy.

3.4 *Physical Change*

Around the turn of the 19th century, the neighbourhood of (Berea-)Burgers Park was home to the local elite of Pretoria and formed the southern boundary of the city. It was an expression of new wealth generated on the gold fields, which spilled over to Pretoria. Many grand villas were built in this area between the 1870s and 1890s, evident today only in a few remaining buildings such as Melrose House (then owned by George Hays) and the house in Burgers Park which was the official residence of the government botanist.

A century later, and the physical infrastructure of the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood was under severe pressure since the early 1990s. This includes the changes and the quality of residential, office and commercial property, parks and open spaces, pavements and streets (cf. Prinsloo & Cloete 2002).

3.4.1 *Residential properties*

Residential properties in this neighbourhood include sectional title complexes, rental apartment buildings, single room residential facilities, hotels, residential hotels and some transitional or special needs housing facilities. The bulk of residential properties in this neighbourhood are sectional title properties. What happens to these properties will largely affect the quality of the neighbourhood.

Between 1994 and 2001 many buildings in the Berea-Burgers Park area (and elsewhere in the inner city) experienced a culture of non-payment, resulting in deteriorating physical conditions as well as increasing debts with the local authority. Individual owners often paid their mortgage bonds faithfully but failed to pay their communal levies. This resulted in buildings not being maintained and failing to pay their municipal accounts. A number of buildings did not have electricity in the common areas, no working elevators, dark passage ways, dangerous conditions especially for women and children and impossible conditions for the old, disabled, or frail.

Sectional title ownership was a new reality for black buyers who were for the first time able to own property in a place of choice. New property owners were often not well informed by estate agents and banks when they bought their apartments. The trustees of sectional title complexes failed to guide and support their new neighbours into a thorough understanding of the responsibilities and pitfalls of this kind of property arrangement.

The challenges in sectional title properties were directly related to how social and racial transition occurred. In the early 1990s, trustees of these properties were mainly white and often resented the fact of new black owners. The dominant discourse in many buildings, and peddled by property management agencies⁷ in the city – which were also predominantly white-owned – was that racial change in itself caused the break-down of the social fibre and physical well-being. In other words, black people were irresponsible, did not want to pay, or could not run their buildings well. This represented a certain racial (racist) discourse which was accepted through social consensus.

In the Berea Community Forum – a citizens' platform that emerged in the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood – a different approach was taken. It viewed the challenge from the perspective of managing change: proper information and property education, close monitoring of payment and good systems and procedures, all had to be ensured.

Managing agents were often unable to facilitate constructive processes of empowering healthy cultures in buildings, either because of a lack of will, or because they lacked the soft skills necessary to negotiate the socio-cultural diversity that now emerged. Sometimes a lack of new owners' understanding of or interest in the management of their own affairs, made it impossible for the managing agent representing them, to manage the stock well.

The pressure on the residential property sector in the Berea-Burgers Park area reached a point where a small but growing group of people started to resist the downward spirals in their complexes. Individual property owners took greater ownership for whole apartment buildings, studied the sectional title act, called out the exploitative and patronising attitudes and practices of managing agents and facilitated interventions that actually turned negative buildings around.

Towards the end of 2001 there were 18 buildings listed for sequestration because of bad debts with the local municipality. This meant that first time home owners would have lost their properties, even in cases where individual owners were not in arrears, but the body corporate was. As a result of some positive

interventions in buildings, as well as the facilitating work done by the Berea Community Forum, the number of buildings in crisis was reduced to 5 by the beginning of 2005. Stories of gradual, and sometimes radical, recovery served as a source of hope. It also challenged the discourse that blamed race for the decay, since now it was recovery facilitated by largely black property owners.

The factors that contributed to recovery included that owners took full responsibility for their properties; stronger buildings twinned with weaker buildings and coached them out of trouble; community organising resisted inappropriate and exploitative sequestration; banks slowly re-invested in the area (gaining new confidence); and managing agents in some cases developed sorely required softer skills.

A small portion of the residential property sector in Berea-Burgers Park is rather diverse, including rental apartments, single room facilities, residential hotels, social housing units and some transitional/special needs housing. Although the diversity is in principle positive in terms of creating a healthy mix of incomes and housing types, the number of units in these different housing types is too few to create significant access for diverse people with diverse needs. If this portfolio of properties can be expanded significantly, Berea-Burgers Park might become a community modeling the radical inclusivity advocated in this study.

3.4.2 Buildings have stories: abandonment and recycling

Every building has a story. Some buildings were abandoned and allowed to decay. Other buildings were recycled and rehabilitated with great care. The origins of buildings also have stories. Some stories are of bold dreams for what owners or developers saw. Other stories are more exploitative and exclusivist. But buildings are never neutral concrete structures void of narratives.

A trend that emerged since 2000 was the occupation of vacant office buildings which then got used for residential purposes, often without proper conversions. This led to a number of so-called “bad buildings” where tenants pay market-related rents, in exchange for poorly maintained accommodation, municipal services often not being paid, and over-all decaying conditions. In comparison to the city centre of Johannesburg with its more than 80 so-called bad or hijacked buildings, the City of Tshwane has not really gone so far down that road.

There are also examples where proper conversions took place turning office buildings into residential apartments, usually facilitating positive change. A number of buildings owned by City Property and Yeast City Housing have been converted to residential and other new uses.

Unfortunately, there are also such conversions where vulnerable tenants were displaced, raising questions as to how ‘bad’ buildings can be prevented or restored without displacing people (cf. also Trafalgar 2004, 9–10).

Existing buildings and land, even when rather dilapidated, should be seen as vital assets in the process of regenerating the inner city. The challenge is how

some of these properties could be accessed for the purposes of lower-income people or people who are particularly vulnerable and excluded from mainstream processes.

If South African cities in general, and inner cities in particular, will fail to combine economic viability with social inclusivity, inequality will persist and deepen, and the anger of the excluded will not be contained.

3.5 Public spaces: change, identity and ritual

Before 1994 the public spaces (Project for Public Spaces n.d.) of the inner city was supposed to be “neutral” spaces, although they were oppressive in their exclusions. They were pre-determined by certain values of superiority, power and exclusivity. They were never really public spaces in the true sense of the word, but spaces dominated by a small political minority and reflecting only white history.

Public spaces are “theatres of memory” and “theatres of prophecy” (Hayden 1995, 11). They capture the collective memory of a people, remembering and re-living the past, but at the same time capturing visions of a better future, as theatres of prophecy, starting to live, embrace and nurture a new and visionary consciousness of what could be.

After 1994 it was as if some public spaces were re-discovered (Coombes 2004), shifting from exclusive spaces to spaces of public protest and celebration, or becoming symbols of national pride and identity. Some public spaces served to remind citizens of a certain history (Freedom Day Celebrations), of new imaginaries (Women’s Day) and of certain public and ethical challenges (HIV/AIDS).

Two reflections on Church Square, right in the heart of our capital city, will illustrate this somewhat.

In 1996 South Africa won the Africa Cup of Nations soccer tournament. The result was a public display of victory, revealing the changing face of the inner city community. Hundreds of people of all races, but mostly black, flooded the streets, dancing until late in the evening. This would not have been the case a couple of years before.

Church Square became the central gathering point. From different directions in the city people spontaneously moved toward the Square, singing, dancing and celebrating. It became a public ritual performed by all participants. This ritual was not only in celebration of the soccer victory. One had a sense that this was a public reclamation of space by the people of the city. For those of us who are white, we claimed our desire and intention to belong to a new story. The victory dance became a political/spiritual dance of spatial reclamation.

The Taylors lived and worked in the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood. In anecdotal conversations they reflected on the changing nature of Church Square. In the 1970s Gavin was a young youth minister of a Methodist Church in the east of Pretoria. After the death of black consciousness leader, Steve Biko, in custody, this church requested permission from the mayor of Pretoria

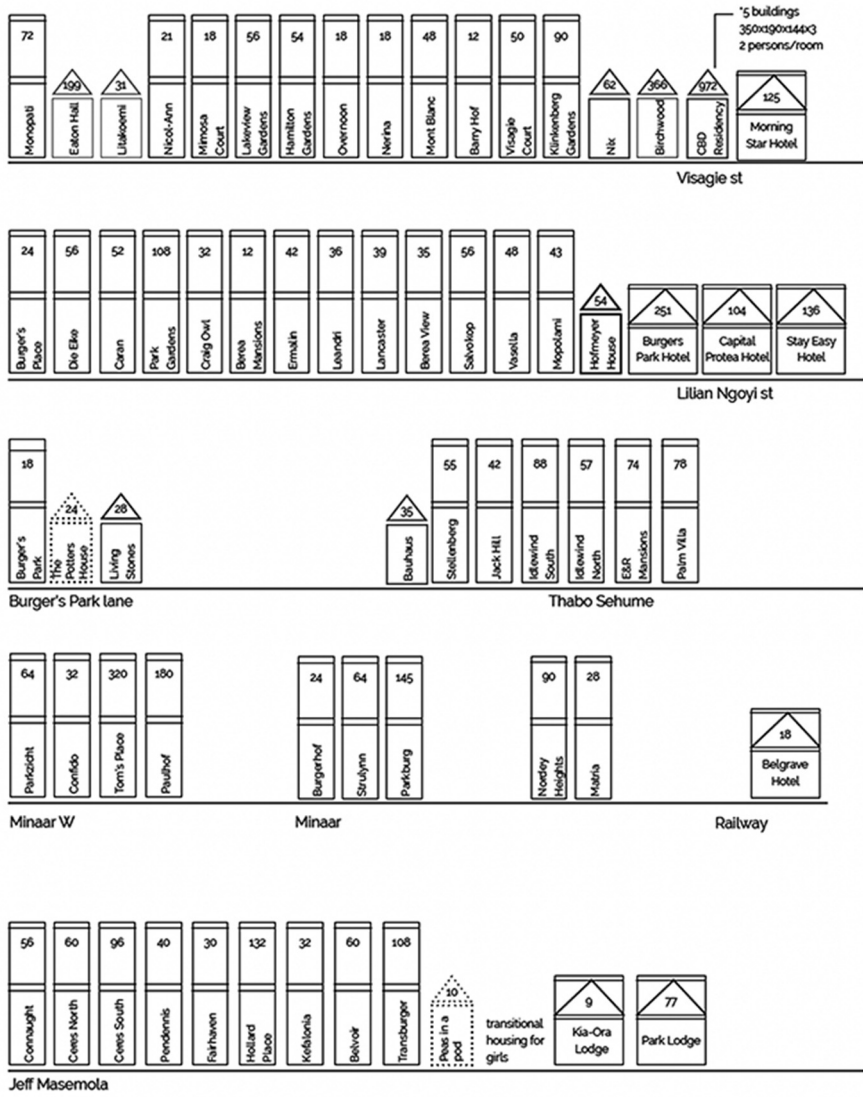


Fig. 100. Nel 2017. Infographic illustrating housing typologies and occupancy in study area.

Figure 4.10 Housing typologies in Berea-Burgers Park
Source: Nel, K. (2017)

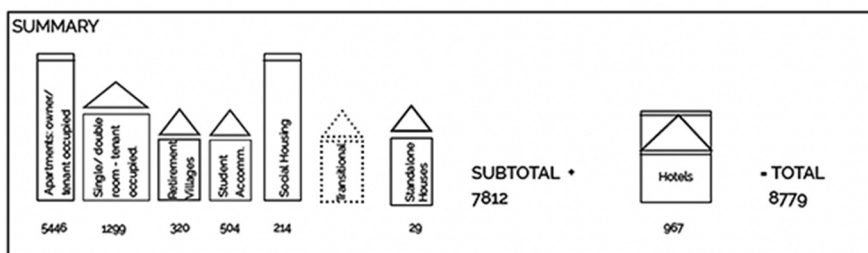
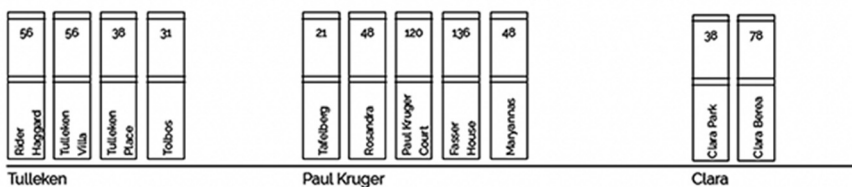
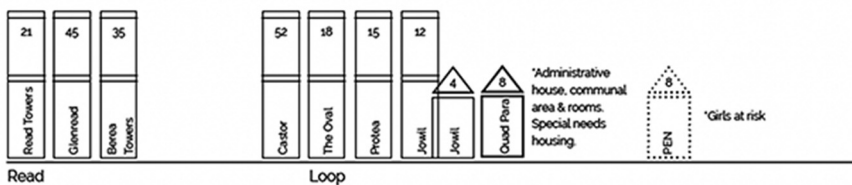
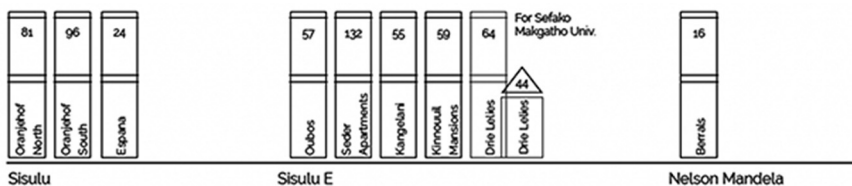




Figure 4.11 Litakoemi, Visagie Street
Source: Yeast City Housing (n.d.)



Figure 4.12 Jubilee Centre, Burgers Park Lane
Source: Yeast City Housing (n.d.)

to have a public protest on Church Square. This request was denied. Church Square was symbolic of Afrikaner power and accessible only to some.

Upon returning to Pretoria in 1994, the Taylors went to Church Square on their first day in the city and walked right into a protest march. Marches of trade unions, the South African Communist Party, and (in 1994) even the far right-wing Afrikaner Resistance Movement, became an expression of a new era, turning the Square from an exclusive place of white domination, into a place where diverse views were allowed to be voiced.

The story of Church Square is still unfolding. The future of Boer President Paul Kruger's statue, at the heart of the Square, and whether it should be retained in an era of decolonisation, as well as the possibility of erecting new symbols that reflect a post-apartheid South Africa more accurately, are debates that flare up from time to time.

The above narratives tell a story of the history, politics and spirit of space. Space is not neutral but determined by certain values, while urban people can help determine the identity and meaning of space. New public spaces can be created, or old public spaces be filled with new content, to become theatres of memory and prophecy.

Burgers Park

The *Burgers Park* is an award-winning park, created in 1847 and declared a National Historical Monument in 1979. Owned by the city, it is a vital local asset that can be used as a base for community regeneration. Located at the heart of the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood, it used to be well maintained until around 2018, after which municipal management and maintenance of the Park sadly deteriorated. It is still well utilised by the general public.

Since 2000 it has become host to an annual community festival, the Feast of the Clowns, drawing more than 10,000–12,000 people in August, as well as a range of other community events. However, its assets are not optimally utilised. The Park hosts a defunct kiosk, a Victorian band stand and a run-down conservatory, all offering opportunities to be further developed but currently under-utilised and run-down. The children's play area is not child-friendly or well-maintained any longer, especially considering the high numbers of children still using it.

In spite of closed gates at some entrance points to the Park, the Park's fence is slowly being carried away by people with substance dependencies. They sell the metal of the fence for their next fix. People now use the openings where the fence used to be as entry points into the Park, completely undeterred, while city officials, almost in clown-like fashion, still religiously lock and unlock the gates.

From Strijdom Square to Lillian Ngoyi Square (cf. Hook 2005; Dlamini & Ntuli 2006; Diphare 1999)

Strijdom Square was a monument in honour of previous apartheid prime minister, Advocate J.G. Strijdom. The history of this Square was later



Figure 4.13 Schubart Park, Pretoria
Source: De Klerk, M. (2015)

overshadowed by the so-called White Wolf, Barend Strydom, who went on a killing spree against black people in 1988, killing eight people.

After the death of President Mandela, the most eventful happening on this Square on most days was the daily presence of a life-sized poster of Madiba

(Nelson Mandela), with whom your picture could be taken by a local photographer. Over the years there were efforts to re-appropriate this space, among other things with the Jacaranda Festival in the mid-1990s, which has since been discontinued.

On 31 May 2001, exactly 40 years to the day after the government declared South Africa a republic, independent of the United Kingdom, the structure supporting Strijdom's edifice crumbled and Strijdom fell into the parking garage under the square. This happened without any prior warning, with no foul play suspected, having some to think of it as an act of fate, or "the hand of God", shattering to pieces a powerful apartheid symbol.

The decision was made not to replace this monument, and Strijdom Square was renamed to the Lillian Ngoyi Square in 2006, following a cabinet decision to name the Square after a resident of the city who helped lead the historical Women's March of 1956 (Dlamini & Ntuli 2006).

Other public spaces

Pavements, like parks and public squares, are indicators of spatial change and re-interpretation. In the Berea-Burgers Park area, pavements are often symbols of male dominance, as men rule the sidewalks with their body language, gestures and gaze.

On Burgers Park Lane, male sex workers used to wait for their clients during the early 1990s, until police harassment forced them out. There is now a sizeable community of homeless people sleeping on the pavement at night, and a number of them are additionally vulnerable, owing to substance dependency.

Public spaces, infused with vision and compassion, can be significant spaces mediating socio-spatial-economic transformation in local neighbourhoods. They offer examples of the unfinished city, yearning to emerge for the well-being of all people, but particularly those forgotten ones.

The way pavements, parks and public spaces are used, tells a story of local histories, power and vulnerability. It captures entrenched stereotypes and dominant behaviour. It provides a platform for experiential living and political statement. It symbolises protest, collective memory and future vision.

3.6 Sanctuary Spaces: Between Church and City; Between Sacred and Profane

In her book *Sanctuary*, Christa Kuljian (2013) provides a rich account of the events that unfolded at Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg. Then Bishop and local minister, Paul Verryn, opened the church to refugees, until more than 2,000 people resided in the building. Being home to them, they had to perform all their ordinary activities in this building. Praying, sleeping, sexual interaction, ablutions, quarrels and schooling all co-habited in this space. The "sacred" space of the church was completely "profaned". From another angle, the church was converted into the sanctuary it was perhaps meant to be, providing safe space to extremely vulnerable people. Elina Hankela's (2014) reading



Figure 4.14 Re-branding homelessness
Source: Feast of the Clowns (2012)



of the situation at Central Methodist Mission is that Verryn sought to reinterpret the meaning of church and church property, in the light of this deeper question: what it meant to be human in a radically changed and changing inner city.

Inner city churches in Tshwane also provide a revealing narrative on how space is interpreted, re-interpreted and transformed. Inner city churches and mosques, new religious expressions and the presence of African initiated churches dotted all across the urban landscape, are all expressions of the changing local demographic.

Some Christian churches, mainly mainline protestant, were sold and changed into mosques (Johannesburg and Tshwane). Two new mosques were built in the inner city of Tshwane since the early 1990s, and additional spaces are taken up informally for the religious practices of the Muslim community.

There has been a shift from mainly traditional, confessional churches housed in cathedrals and historic buildings, and previously home to white believers, to the proliferation of a large number of new, mostly black-led, young and Pentecostal churches, either sharing space with more established churches, or worshipping in shop fronts, office buildings, hotels, or museums. Whereas in 1994 we were able to count only 12–15 active churches in the combined areas of Berea-Burgers Park and the CBD, a more recent mapping process identified 57 churches, just in the Pretoria Central, Salvokop and Marabastad neighbourhoods of the inner city alone (Ribbens & De Beer 2017, 5; 11). This excludes the dense high-rise neighbourhoods of Sunnyside and Arcadia.

The post-apartheid face of the inner city church is illustrated in the Ecumenical Ascension Day Service of 2002. The worship expression combined 17th-century organ music and hymns with contemporary African sounds of drums and electric guitars. Black and white South Africans, Nigerians and French-speaking Africans were among the worshipping community. It was an event redefining the worship experience and the worship space. All of this happened in the old Bosman Street Church, which is a significant historical building closely attached to the old apartheid history, formerly home to important church leaders, who supported apartheid theologically, and hosting the funerals of a number of prominent Afrikaner leaders and apartheid-era prime ministers.

The new face of the inner city church is providing new meaning not only to the church as an institution, but also to the cultural, educational and public institutions that host them. Places such as the Tshwane College, Ezekiel Mphahlele Library, the National Cultural History Museum, Manhattan Hotel and several schools have all been hosting new churches in the past few years.

At the entry points in and out of the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood and other inner city areas of Tshwane, African Initiated Churches (AICs) are meeting under trees, next to the Apies River or in other open spaces. For the AICs, rivers and trees are denoted with cultic significance and sacred meaning. Ordinary spaces become sacred spaces.

The inner city and urban townships also became fertile soil for new religious movements such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG), with

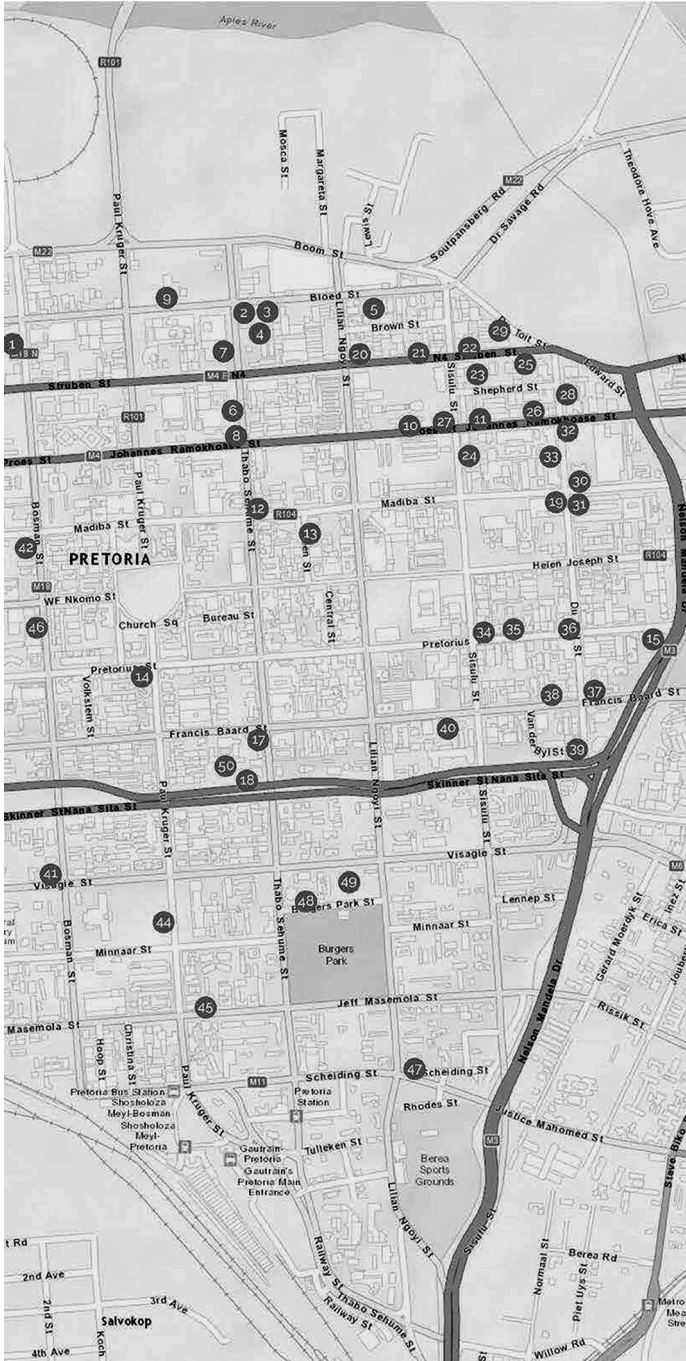


Figure 4.15 Inner city churches
Source: Nel, K. (2017)

franchises at entry points into the city, railway stations, near taxi ranks and in places where (mostly poor) commuters concentrate. With its roots in Brazil, the UCKG operates like a multi-national corporation, generating more than R 130 million into its coffers annually from its more than 1 million followers in South Africa (cf. Van Wyk 2015). In inner city Tshwane there remains a presence of the UCKG but not as pronounced as in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The ways in which the religious sector engages urban change, is ambiguous. Some religious communities seem to be opportunistic, and instead of seeking the well-being of the city, their main emphasis is on their own prosperity. There are examples of gross exploitation of impoverished membership. There are also examples of churches that are completely oblivious to the realities on the streets around them, focused inwardly on the well-being of members.

In Berea-Burgers Park and its surrounding neighbourhoods there are a number of faith-based organisations at work, either started by the church or mosques, or by individual people of faith. Sometimes they work collaboratively but often alongside each other. The inner city used to have two church forums – the City Centre Churches Forum that represented predominantly traditional, denominational churches, and the Tshwane Ministers Fraternal, representing mainly independent black Pentecostal churches. The cultures and objectives of these two forums were quite different, and currently only the Tshwane Ministers Fraternal is still meeting.

There are a few churches that started to recognise their properties as assets that could contribute to urban healing, community development or justice. Such churches reinterpret themselves to become more “holistic centres of life”, being not only spiritual but also social, public and cultural places. Reimagining church property in this way is perhaps a more Africanised understanding, embracing all of life as sacred, and therefore incorporating different elements into the church’s architecture.

The remaking of the Pretoria City Mission (Wesley) in Burgers Park Lane, and its new challenges, is one such an example (WesChurch 2023). Pre-1994, this was a suburban church with its physical location in the inner city. Only a small percentage of members were inner city residents. It accommodated an ageing white community, mostly middle-class, and its activities and use of property reflected a rather introvert church focusing on itself and its own needs.

Since 1993 this community has gone on a journey of re-imagining its identity, which had implications for how it understood the use of its church building in relation to the surrounding community. They changed their name from Wesley Methodist Church to Pretoria City Mission, affirming its outward focus as a “place of mission and service” in the city. It has become a multi-cultural community with different worship expressions, and facilitated a hub for small income-generating enterprises, a pre-school, a second-hand shop and English courses for mostly refugees from elsewhere on the African continent.

In 2003 it completed a 27-unit social housing project in partnership with a faith-based social housing organisation. In 2004–2005 it added the Mahube Healing Centre, offering, counseling, advise, HIV-testing facilities, an

antiretroviral treatment clinic and support groups to people living with HIV/AIDS. The Mahube Care Centre, since discontinued, was a six-bed facility for chronically ill patients. The church was a venue for community meetings of the local Berea Community Forum, and in 2000 it hosted some of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Amnesty Hearings.

These developments were also sparked by the church's own financial need, losing some of its resourceful members and struggling to survive. In their journey to move beyond survival to sustainability, innovative community projects were birthed that generated income and provided employment while serving the local community. This church was rewriting its own story, and the property became a narrative of change. In a context of exclusion and contestation, this became a space of inclusion and hope. Today it has new challenges again, becoming a largely black, middle-class and young congregation, and perhaps not in the same way connected to its surrounding community any longer.

In Cape Town, the old Buitenkant Street Methodist Church has been converted into the District Six Museum, and adjacent to the Museum are two very significant community projects, accommodating at-risk young girls in the Ons Plek programme and hosting a day care centre for neighbourhood children called the Stepping Stones Children's Centre (District Six Museum n.d.; Central Methodist Mission [Cape Town] n.d.). Perhaps, in some ways, these properties are now more sacred in its mediation of life, memory and dignity, than it sometimes was when used only as a worshipping space.

The above narratives tell of faith communities that wrestled with their meaning and identity in changing urban spaces. They refused to withdraw, found meaning in new solidarities with their local neighbourhoods and recycled their properties for life-affirming new uses. They wrestled with the question of contextualising religious spaces for appropriate local uses, shifting from being *withdrawn sanctuaries* to becoming *engaged civic centres*.

Traditional dichotomies of sacred-secular are transcended, at a deeper level representing a reinterpretation of the God they serve. This God is no longer restricted to our sacred church spaces, and therefore *the church as well as the city itself could be sanctuary* (Neddens & Wucher 1987). Sadly, where such intentional, contextual wrestling with identity and meaning cease to be sustained, religious communities sometimes fall back into old platitudes.

Currently there is no inter-religious platform for dialogue that brings together people from different faiths. This is a challenge, not only from a local perspective, but also in terms of current national challenges, including the scourge of corruption, poor service delivery and the co-option or negation of religious voices in public discourse.

The local religious landscape is changing continuously, in relation to the changing urban landscape in which it finds itself. Some religious spaces remained rather introvert, closed their doors or sold to other religious communities, while others opened up to the city around the church, being in creative and life-affirming dialogue with the city, in ways that contribute to the city's soul.

3.7 *Government's Interface with Berea-Burgers Park: Legislative and Institutional Impact on a Local Neighbourhood*

Three decades ago, in January 1993, I started to work for a local community organisation that we created, over the years resulting in the creation of diverse residential communities and social institutions, always seeking for ways to increase access for socially excluded people to housing, urban services, caring communities, social networks and economic opportunity.

In my early years, I did not understand much of the legislative frameworks that kept the apartheid city in place. In later years I grasped how institutions of government as well as legislative frameworks can either enable local community transformation, or hinder it relentlessly.

All three spheres of government in South Africa – local, provincial and national – at times impact upon Berea-Burgers Park and surrounding neighbourhoods. One cannot consider healthy local communities in the inner city of Tshwane without an understanding of the nature and plans of government, in all its permutations.

3.7.1 City of Tshwane

The most direct interface of the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood is with local government. The City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, known as the City of Tshwane, is responsible both politically and administratively for managing the administrative capital of South Africa (formerly known as Pretoria). The inner city⁸ is only a small geographical area within the much larger metropolitan region and therefore competing for limited resources. Within the greater inner city, the Berea-Burgers Park area is one small local neighbourhood.

Naturally a local neighbourhood with about 20,000 people will have to make itself heard and seen if it is to be considered in a city the size of Tshwane, being less than 1 per cent of the over-all population. According to Statistics South Africa (2011), the official population of the City of Tshwane then was 2,921,488 residents and by 2020 had grown to 3,555,741 (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs 2020).

The inner city remains an important economic hub of the city, as well as the centre of political power, therefore justifying close attention and wise management and investment. What makes Pretoria unique is the prominent presence of national government departments headquartered in its Central Business District.

The Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood literally borders on the Central Business District, or downtown area, and many government officials are living in apartments in this neighbourhood. This has always been the case, also pre-1994, but then these jobs were filled by white people.

Although having undergone massive and fast transition between 1994 and 1999, the inner city, at least in the first ten years post-1994, struggled to shake

off the perception that it was a neighbourhood of white privilege. Therefore, some politicians and officials since 1994 did not see serious investment in the inner city as justified and even resisted with suspicion local initiatives meant to benefit people from historically disadvantaged backgrounds.

At a political level the mayoral committee, formed by the Executive Mayor, is the political executive of the city. One of the mayoral committee members used to have the inner city as part of their portfolio, demonstrating the strategic place the inner city used to hold, politically, but this is no longer the case.

After 1994, an inner city office was created to be the central organising point for urban regeneration. Earlier I referred to the creation of the Pretoria Inner City Partnership (cf. Coetzee 2005) resulting from this office, with very positive potential to draw together local government, private sector and local communities for urban regeneration. Unfortunately, this partnership was discredited by the administration that took over in 1999, and the partnership was closed down. Since then, there is no dedicated capacity to envision, plan or execute strategies focused towards inner city regeneration.

Many strategic documents were approved, both for the greater metropolitan area, but also for the inner city. These included the Tshwane Spatial Development Framework (2002); the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework (June 2012); the Tshwane City Strategy (2004); the Tshwane Inner City Development and Regeneration Strategy (2005); and the Tshwane Vision 2055 document (2013). Often these are macro-plans, providing strategic guidelines, but with little direct bearing on a place like Berea-Burgers Park and without the concerns of Berea-Burgers Park properly finding their way into these documents.

For some time, the city envisaged the creation of the Tshwane Development Agency to strategically drive local development plans and ensure alignment between various city strategies. This body never got off the ground, creating a vacuum.

The Local Government Act (1998) requires certain legislative platforms to enable effective local government. The City of Tshwane is organised into seven regions and 76 wards, with a democratically elected Ward Councillor (local politician) responsible for every ward. Every Ward has a Ward Committee, made up of ten members elected by the community, which is supposed to ensure optimal democratic participation in local decision-making.

Over the years the different Ward Committees responsible for Ward 80 – which includes Berea-Burgers Park and parts of Sunnyside – have never been particularly effective. These committees were often hijacked by party-political concerns; plagued by incompetent Ward Councillors; co-opted into supporting actions not actually approved by the Committee; and seldom representing real concerns and recommendations coming from civil society. The principle of Ward Committees is sound and potentially constructive as it could facilitate participatory local governance. It is meaningless if an incompetent Ward Councillor undermines constructive contributions from the community, should they not serve his or her agenda.

3.7.2 *Gauteng Provincial Government*

The UN Habitat 2001 global index listed only Johannesburg of South African cities, as a possible global city-region, based on its “connectivity” or “world city-ness” (Pillay 2004:353). Then premier of the Gauteng Province, Mbhazima Shilowa, actively advocated for Gauteng as a city-region and even considered the structural unification of Gauteng’s metropolitan municipalities and smaller municipalities into one megacity, aimed at city-wide spatial, economic and social integration (Pillay 2004, 351). At least at a conceptual level, considering Gauteng as a city-region that is globally competitive, has become important (cf. Pillay 2004).

The Gauteng City-Region includes the metropolitan areas of Johannesburg, Tshwane (Pretoria), Ekurhuleni (East Rand) and Mogale City (West Rand), as well as seven local municipalities, with a combined population of 16.1 million people (Gauteng City-Region Observatory 2023). It is the economic engine of South Africa, generating “a third of the country’s GDP on 2 per cent of its land area” (Gauteng City-Region Observatory 2023). In terms of finances, commerce, education and diplomatic relationships, it is well-connected globally.

Since 1994 the Gauteng Province launched various initiatives aimed at urban regeneration. *Vusani Amadolobha* was a provincial government programme that included the Gauteng Four-Point Plan on the Regeneration and Integration of Cities, Towns and Township Centres (Department of Development Planning and Local Government 1996). This plan focused on the promotion of clean and safe centres, fostering compact development, encouraging vibrant commercial centres and building regeneration partnerships.

The Pretoria Inner City Partnership (Coetzee 2005, 92–111) worked closely within the framework of the Four-Point Plan, and both the comprehensive redevelopment plan for Marabastad and the spatial development framework for the inner city were supported through this programme. Unfortunately, little of these plans have been translated into projects, more than 20 years later. The design by architect Aziz Tayob for the redevelopment of Marabastad – a historical urban neighbourhood in Tshwane’s inner city – won awards and held great promise. Subsequent city governments since 1999 failed to deliver on this promise. What could have been a remarkable inner city initiative, with support from provincial government, was jeopardised by poor and ineffective leadership at the level of local government.

Similarly, the Gauteng Department of Human Settlements (n.d.) has pioneered an innovative Urban Renewal Programmes since the 1990s, identifying strategic urban localities for investment in infrastructure, local economic development projects and social integration. Community-based stakeholders, often best-positioned to deliver local results, were unfortunately mostly sidelined from participating through these mechanisms.

Gauteng also structured the Gauteng Economic Development Agency (GEDA), to promote Gauteng as a preferable investment destination. This included the multibillion rand Blue IQ, noted as “one of the most advanced

forms of meso-level planning institutions currently in operation in Africa” (Rogerson 2004, 75).

The Blue IQ initiatives have major spatial implications and it already helped transform places like Newtown, Constitutional Hill and parts of Kliptown (cf. Rogerson 2004, 76–80). The Gautrain project was probably its most ambitious so far, aimed at improved public transport, accessibility and connectivity between major nodes of Gauteng (Rogerson 2004, 82–83; cf. also Gautrain 2022). Some of these should really be applauded for the remarkable way in which mostly run-down urban land was transformed into significant socio-political and symbolic spaces, sometimes also leveraging economic development with real local benefits for communities.

Although these initiatives go a long way in attracting investment, facilitating economic growth and contributing to employment creation, it is not clear how sustainably or optimally they contribute to greater social integration of local neighbourhoods, poorer households and vulnerable individuals. In many cases it seems as if they facilitate expensive but site-specific facelifts that fail to optimise benefits for local residents or catalyse continuous local regenerative processes beyond the initial capital lay-out.

In 2012 the GEDA and Blue IQ were merged into the Gauteng Growth and Development Agency (2022). This is an extremely strategic vehicle established by the Gauteng Provincial Government to ensure economic investment and innovation in Gauteng.

3.7.3 National government

After 1994 the Reconstruction and Development Programme was introduced with a focus on pro-poor initiatives and providing broad-base access to opportunity for those who were previously excluded (cf. Wilkinson 2004, 214). This policy was replaced by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) Strategy of 1996 (Marais 1998, 105, 130; Wilkinson 2004, 214), shifting from a pro-poor stance to neo-liberal insistence on growth with a promise of trickle-down. Building on the foundations laid by GEAR, the National Development Plan 2030 of 2012 (Government of South Africa 2022) was adopted.

An important document is the Integrated Urban Development Framework (2023; IUDF), developed in response to Chapter 8 of the National Development Plan, titled “Transforming human settlements and the national space economy” (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs 2014, 9). This document, considered to be a “new deal for South African cities and towns” (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs 2014, 9), provides four overarching goals and eight strategic policy levers to guide integrated urban development. Its emphasis is on integrated spatial planning, integrated and sustainable human settlements and active and empowered local communities.

The IUDF contains lofty ideals of radical socio-spatial transformation. How this will be translated into local communities such as Berea-Burgers Park, and how participants in local city-making processes such as in Berea-Burgers Park acquaint and empower themselves to act within the IUDF, are challenges.

Even before the IUDF was introduced, national government instituted different initiatives geared towards urban regeneration. One of these was the introduction of Urban Development Zones (UDZ), providing tax incentives to lure investments back into depressed urban areas. The Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood happens to fall within such an UDZ, and some social housing initiatives already benefited from this programme.

Some years ago, the National Department of Public Works and the City of Tshwane launched a special programme called *Re Kgabisa Tshwane* (n.d.), to strengthen and solidify the city's capital status in South Africa and Africa. This was a capital reinvestment programme of R 10 billion, launched for refurbishing old government properties and constructing new government office parks in the inner city of Tshwane.

While this was a positive programme for the inner city, creating a positive investment climate and attracting new investments into the inner city, it also raises a number of concerns. *Re Kgabisa Tshwane* often displayed little sensitivity for the needs and aspiration of local communities, developing top-down monumental infrastructure, often at the expense of vulnerable local groups. Being market-led with a focus on economic growth, benefits seldom trickled down to resource poor-residents or neighbours in sustainable ways. Lack of co-ordination between different spheres of government, further hamstrung optimised benefits for local communities.

This became very evident in the recent construction of the headquarters of Statistics South Africa in the Salvokop neighbourhood, adjacent to Berea-Burgers Park. Valued at almost R 2 billion this development took place while the neighbourhood of Salvokop, owned by the Department of Public Work, is in complete decay, with little evidence of any property management by the Department and a lack of political will that prevents strategic actions to regenerate this neighbourhood in partnership with the local community.

Government runs the risk of becoming the primary agent for socially exclusive gentrification, initiating the displacement of low-income people to be replaced by what government deems to be more lucrative investments.

Although a parliamentary decision in the 1990s prevented the relocation of national government departments from the inner city, thereby preventing its complete economic collapse, the benefits of such a decision need to be optimised. New government office parks are often detached from local communities, securitised and completely lacking mixed-use possibilities. There is huge incongruence between, for example, the aspirations of the Integrated Urban Development Framework, on the one hand, and the ways in which a programme like *Re Kgabisa Tshwane* shapes the city on the other. These are often incompatible.

3.8 Organised civil society

There is a wide range of active non-government, community-based and faith-based organisations working in the inner city of Tshwane, some also based in Berea-Burgers Park. These organisations could play an even more strategic and intentional role in local city-making processes.

Civil society organisations actively involved in local inner city neighbourhoods include faith-based organisations such as the Tshwane Leadership Foundation, People Upliftment Project and Pretoria Empowerment and Nurture; organisations focusing on homelessness such as Kitso Lesedi, Homeless Upliftment Project and Youth for Survival; organisations focusing on transnational migrants such as the Xavieri Movement and the Outreach Foundation; as well as the Sediba Hope Health Clinic; Yeast City Housing and the Institute for Urban Ministry. National non-profit organisations such as Lawyers for Human Rights also engage with local concerns around land, housing and property rights, as well as the protection of the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

In addition to registered non-government and non-profit organisations, local communities at times also organised themselves into platforms to facilitate coordinated action and collective advocacy on behalf of local neighbourhood or specific thematic concerns. These included the Berea Community Forum, providing prominent leadership in the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood for a period of about ten years; the Salvokop Development Forum, providing a platform for residents and other stakeholders of Salvokop to develop a collective



Figure 4.16 Marabastad in the 70s
Source: Clark, J.F.C. (2008)

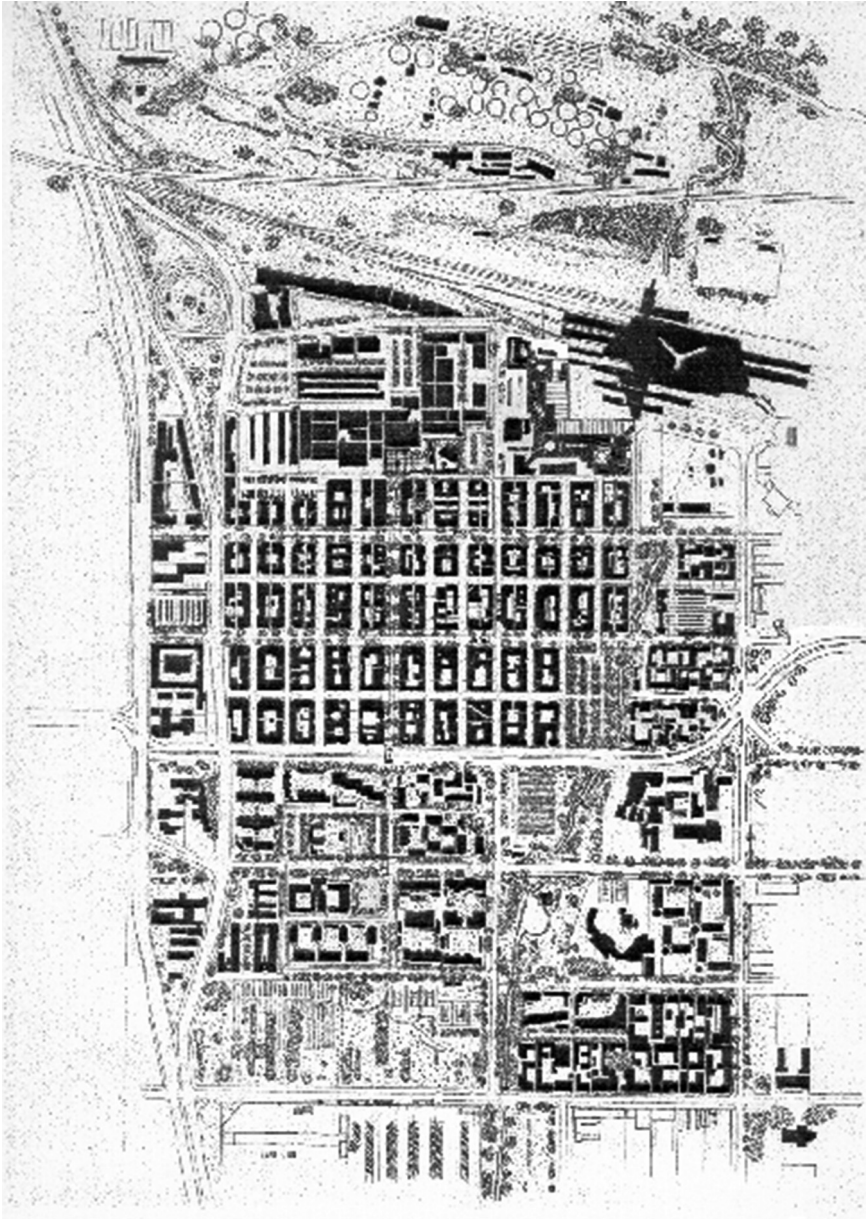


Figure 4.17 Marabastad Urban Design Framework
Source: Aziz Tayob 7amp; Architects (1998)



Figure 4.18 Social infrastructure support and refugee support facilities in Pretoria inner city
Source: De Klerk, M. (2015)



voice on issues that affected them; the now-defunct Marabastad Development Forum that moved along a progressive agenda for urban regeneration between the early 1990s and early 2000s; a caretakers' forum in Sunnyside addressing property, crime and municipal issues; as well as the Sunnyside Community Policing Forum and the Pretoria Central Community Policing Forum, connecting local communities to local police stations, to address matters relating to safety and security in inner city neighbourhoods.

In addition to these geographically based forums, issue-based forums were also established since the 1990s to address thematic concerns. The *Tshwane Homelessness Forum*, today consisting of 30 non-profit organisations as members, became a collective voice on issues related to street homelessness (cf. De Beer & Hugo 2021). The *Tshwane Counter-Trafficking Coalition* brought together organisations and individuals working to fight human trafficking and to organise services supporting victims of trafficking. Since the early 1990s the *Tshwane Alliance for Children Working and Living on the Streets* brought together a wide network of concerned organisations and individuals to address the challenges faced by children living on the streets. And a Refugee Forum at times provided much needed leadership but could not sustain their work.

In spite of strong local civic organisations and platforms, the real challenge remains to animate and sustain broad-based, coherent social movements, committed to local inner city regeneration. Many of the organisations and Forums mentioned above work in isolation from each other, competing for resources, instead of collaborating to achieve more optimal impact.

Notes

- 1 A term used by Don Browning (1991) in his introduction of “descriptive theology”.
- 2 There is a brief description of the event and Klatzow's perspective on it, in his autobiography, *Steeped in Blood: the life and times of a forensic scientist* (2010).
- 3 Propertuity Investments sadly went through liquidation, which had a detrimental effect on the well-being and sustainability of the Maboneng vision.
- 4 Sectional title complexes are group-owned property developments in which people/legal entities acquire separate ownership of a unit/section within the total complex. Usually owners of units will have mortgage bonds with commercial banks which they have to service monthly. Communal areas of a sectional title complex (passages, elevators, parking) are communally owned by the body corporate (the collective of property owners). In addition to servicing the monthly mortgage bond, there is a monthly levy that each owner has to pay into the body corporate's account, for property maintenance, remuneration of salaried staff or municipal levies. Sectional title complexes have a Board of Trustees, annually elected by the Body Corporate, to look after their collective affairs. [See the Sectional Titles Act, 1986 (Act No. 95 of 1986)].
- 5 *Magwenya* or *vetkoek* is a ball of dough deep-fried in oil.
- 6 After almost 50 years of trading, the Burgers Park Hotel sadly closed its doors in May 2022 and is currently for sale and standing empty.

- 7 Property management agencies are set up to provide property management services to property owners, either to an individual owner of commercial or residential property, or to the body corporate of sectional title property complexes.
- 8 In Tshwane, and in this work, 'inner city' refers both to the central business district and the surrounding residential core, which is usually high-density or transitional in nature.

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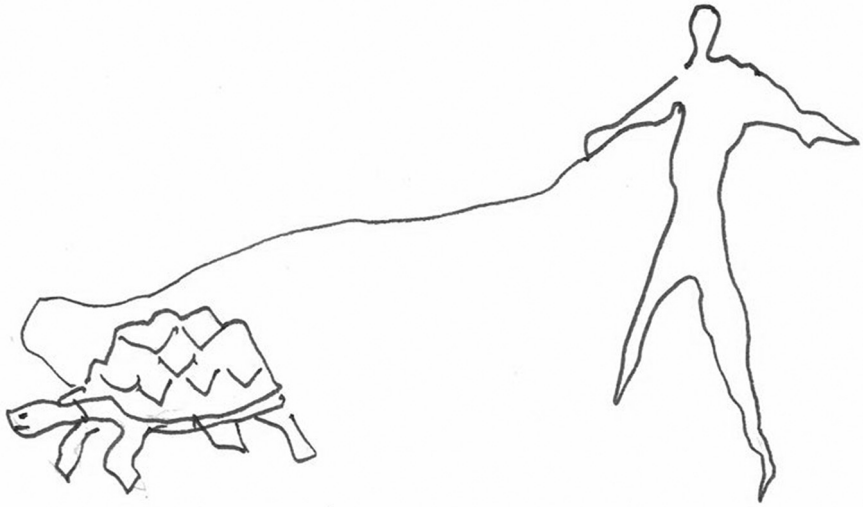


Figure 5.1 Walking my tortoise
Source: Nel, K. (2017)



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SECOND MOMENT

Reading urban space



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Figure 5.2 Tree of life

Source: Ribbens, M. (ed.) (2014), in *(Un)shackled*. Pretoria: Through their eyes



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5 Planners, participation, the poor

The previous chapter presented a “thick description” or insertion into the inner city of Tshwane, with specific reference to the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood. In this chapter I offer a critical reading of this context, exploring “behind” the narratives of the previous chapter, with the view of deconstructing grand (and other) narratives and doing it in a way that will hopefully start to evoke an alternative imagination.

When I first drafted this chapter, I just returned from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where a new Institute for Urban Workers was launched, equipping people working in some of the largest slums of that city. This was a reminder that we cannot read our own city in a vacuum, but need to read it in relation to an African and global backdrop. It further accentuated the harshness of global and local urban exclusion, in which we cannot speak innocently, but in which we have to be suspicious of whose agenda and interests local city-making processes actually serve.

In the course of this chapter I interact with various policy documents introduced in the previous chapter, questioning in how far discourses about participatory planning and development are actually translated into sustained partnerships and participatory action. Being an action researcher, interwoven in the reading will be some of my own engagement in local spatial and political processes, as they inform my reflection throughout.

I approach this chapter in the way Walter Benjamin (1940[1982]) spoke of the *flâneur*, wandering through the streets of the city, always observing, slowly, almost like someone taking his tortoise for a walk in a busy mall. The readings offered in this chapter are like wanderings with one’s tortoise through a mall, allowing the interruptions / questions posed by small, local and marginal narratives, in a way that might disturb the grand narratives so often embraced uncritically, or implemented without pause for thought.

1 Perpetual dependence on outsiders: where are the people of the city?

Local urban communities, particularly in resource-poorer neighbourhoods, are often sidelined in the construction of future urban visions, affecting them most.

By design, communities are highly dependent on outside 'experts', as if they lack the knowledge, experience and agency to determine their own futures.

In the Tshwane Inner City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2005), 12 building blocks are identified for the inner city's development. Building block 12 envisions the inner city as a people's place. My own bias would immediately resonate with such a vision. However, the integrity of such a vision raises serious questions.

The methodology used to develop the Tshwane Inner City Strategy denied the people and organisations of the inner city the opportunity to participate meaningfully in its formulation. The strategy speaks of a people's place, without the people's dreams, concerns, frustrations and struggles being invited or heard, to help inform the vision and strategy. Inputs into the initial plan were invited from government departments and the private sector only. Important stakeholders who live and use inner city communities daily – resident associations; community forums, religious organisations, community-based organisations, non-government organisations, vulnerable groups, informal traders – were effectively excluded by not having access to information, or not being consulted to provide inputs.

Eventually, a newspaper advertisement with a wrong date, invited comments on the plan. This, clearly, was to fulfil the minimum requirements of public participation, after some noise was made by community members. A more inclusive approach could have combined a one-day summit; a workshop series; focus groups; or inviting organised forums, known role players and diverse sectors, into real conversations to engage the contents of the proposed strategy. This would have broadened the base of ownership, contextual insight and potential investment.

A much different approach was followed in the late 1990s, when the Pretoria Inner City Partnership (PICP) was formed. An extensive process of participatory planning resulted in a broad-based partnership, institutionalised in the form of a non-profit company, owned by the City, with Directors representing a range of stakeholders from both civil society, private sector and local government. Much of the work done by the partnership was wrongfully discredited in the period of political transition from an outgoing Executive to a new dispensation under the leadership of a new Executive Mayor, Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, and very little of the vision and plans of the PICP came to fruition.

In the past few years, rumours of new processes to revisit the Inner City Strategy led to little of substance. 20 years since the initial process of the PICP, very little of what was planned got implemented, leaving a trail of tired, suspicious and cynical citizens and citizens' groups, not convinced that participatory processes could amount to anything constructive.

I initially titled this chapter, 'the perpetual dependence on consultants'. Too often external consultants shape our urban futures through frameworks and guidelines that fail to retrieve what is organically simmering in local places. Or they are paid vast sums to produce documents never implemented. An example was an on-going attempt to introduce a policy on homelessness for the City of

Tshwane. Between 1997 and 2015 three different consultants were used and paid, yet no policy was adopted or implemented. Eventually, through a collaborative effort that included a local homelessness stakeholder forum and researchers from two Universities, including me, we drafted a policy and strategy on homelessness adopted in 2019.

Our urban futures – especially in resource-poor neighbourhoods – seem to be perpetually dependent on planners, politicians, profiteers and consultants that are mostly not residents of the communities for whom they speak (cf. also Schoonraad 2003, 65–69). This is felt intimately at the local level of neighbourhoods, but could also be traced, more impersonally, at regional and global levels.

Ordinary citizens in general, including people of faith in local urban places, and those who are most vulnerable, intuitively have a better sense than professional planners, of what their neighbourhoods need. Instead of relying on master plans and depend on external ‘experts’, I’d like to explore models of radical participation in which professional planners and local citizens work collaboratively, to read, interpret, reflect, imagine, plan and implement together. Such an approach could shape the future of urban communities for the good of all people, but especially those most vulnerable, in ways that are fundamentally different.

1.1 Planning through presence versus absentee planners

Can we really plan urban areas with integrity, fully reliant on the outside, absent expert?

I’ve been part of a movement that seeks to facilitate local social infrastructure and community transformation processes for 30 years now. Our focus was always to create a presence in places of vulnerability, affected by social and economic disinvestment. Responses to vulnerabilities in these places have always grown from being deeply present, building relationships, gaining insights into local dynamics and journeying in solidarity over long periods of time. Without such a long-term, immersed presence, we felt it impossible to engage credibly, understand fully or intervene effectively.

Drawing on lessons learnt from local community-based activism and action, I ask whether planners can facilitate social interventions that are credible and optimally transformative for neighbourhoods they know little about, in which they have never lived, with people whom they do not have relationships with?

In the late 1960s and 1970s authoritarian approaches to planning were challenged by new approaches of “social planning, community-based planning, participatory architecture, process architecture, advocacy planning, self-building and sweat equity“ (Ellin 1996, 65). These approaches represented a more participatory, community-based praxis in which presence played an important role. Too often though, planners might secretly admire these approaches without practising them, as they simply require too much of us.

Should this not become part of the job specification of planners – to live in the neighbourhoods that they have to plan for; to experience the dynamics of those neighbourhoods first hand; and to form authentic partnerships that will draw from local knowledge, learn from local interpreters and plan and design with local people?

I would plan differently if my own future and that of my family and children depended on it. This is just common sense.

1.2 The silent asset and agency of citizenry

Ordinary citizens living in local neighbourhoods are a largely underrated asset, both in terms of reading and interpreting local issues accurately, but also in terms of effecting change and facilitating sustainable and sustained regeneration. Citizens represent a tax-base that in itself is powerful in terms of brokerage. The organisations in which ordinary citizens participate have intellectual, physical, financial, cultural and social resources that provide a tremendous asset base on which to build. Providing specific knowledge on urban politics, policies and processes, on top of the silent asset already present among citizenry, could spark local urban revolutions.

However, it might be that it is precisely such an asset-base, once mobilised by an organised citizenry, that sometimes presents a threat to local political processes, because it tends to develop an independent voice and alternative power base that will not necessarily toe party political lines. Emerging citizens' movements are often treated with suspicion, co-opted into silence or manipulated into consent and seldom acknowledged as equal partners with unique gifts.

In one slum community of Addis Ababa, local government was doing little to upgrade the area. But there were some 1,200 local resident volunteers who offer various services, building and upgrading their own houses, building roads and digging ditches for sewerage. When I visited, I witnessed unemployed youth building their own three-storey youth centre where they acquired skills, developed capacity and engaged in recreational activities¹. I saw old women and men making bricks to build houses.

Successfully implemented ventures over the past 30 years in the inner city of Tshwane were often done in spite of inner city plans, by parties other than government, such as private or social property developers, faith-based groups and non-profit organisations. Citizens can do things for themselves and their neighbourhoods that government and even business cannot do. However, this fact is too often negated in urban management and development discourse and in processes of local urban governance.

1.3 Trivialised faith-based resources

Some of the most innovative and transforming slum upgrading projects in Addis Ababa, Manila and inner city development programmes in the United States are facilitated by faith-based organisations. For many in those poor communities, the church, faith or religion is their only anchor, and these

interventions become platforms to generate vision, mobilise resources and construct hopeful change.

Very often though, government- or private-led urban regeneration programmes do not see faith-based institutions as potential partners. They choose to restrict them to roles that are narrow and other-worldly, partly based on ignorance and partly on the historical detachment of many faith-based groups from urban social realities. Sometimes they restrict their roles deliberately as an attempt to exclude them when their advocacy role starts to be at odds with official government discourse.

Elaine Graham (2009) names as one of the greatest challenges for the church in Britain the task of faith literacy, which is to educate government on the actual role played by faith-based organisations in urban Britain in terms of providing social infrastructure, investing in community well-being and contributing to social cohesion and urban peace.

Developing true partnerships with local faith communities can foster a planning praxis that is rooted in communities, under-girded by spirituality and aimed at hope. However, such a partnership contains the dangerous possibility of subverting unhelpful power relationships.

Perhaps that is why faith-based groups, in exploring formal partnerships with local government structures in Tshwane, often experienced their requests as being trivialised. An extreme example is when a previous Executive Mayor's spokesperson suggested left-over food from Mayoral functions as the brightest possible idea for the content of partnership.

His offer of left-over food was made at a time when a faith-based housing company in the inner city was already brokering R 70 million for a social housing development, and when collectively 8 social housing projects were already run by this company. In addition, 3 day care programmes and 4 baby care centres served over 350 children daily, afterschool programmes supported a few hundred children every month, and shelters for homeless women and girls offered hundreds of women an opportunity to start afresh every year. Besides, the church collectively is one of the biggest land owners in the inner city.

Faith-based communities in poor urban communities are often the most strategic civil society agencies. They are often the most consistent, providing social networks and organisation and giving people a sense of belonging and purpose, often in spite of desperate circumstances around them. This should be seen as a largely unutilised asset for urban regeneration (cf. Winkler 2006). *Faithful cities* (The Archbishops' Council 2006, 2–4) coins the term *faithful capital* in describing the current, potential and unacknowledged contribution of faith-based organisations in urban society.

The language of love, hope, forgiveness, restoration, justice and compassion, commonly used in religious communities, humanise the urban discourse. Practices of hospitality, perseverance, participation and partnership are also cited in research done by the William Temple Foundation as characteristics of many urban faith-based organisations. This is a potent resource not to be trivialised in processes of urban regeneration.

2 How participatory is participation? Beyond theory toward radical participation/partnership

2.1 *Participation in crafting local development plans*

The viability of resource-poor urban areas could be strengthened by planning processes that are truly participatory. If people are offered space in which to share their concerns, visions and assets, owning both the planning and the implementation process, the design – and sustainability – of local urban communities will be much more authentic to start with. Although the importance of participation is nowadays emphasised by most urban plans and policies (cf. Friedmann 1992; Rakodi 1993; Pieterse 2004, 3; Gerometta et al. 2005), the disconnect between embracing it theoretically and practising it consistently and thoroughly, leaves us exactly where we were before participatory planning was introduced as a concept.

We might be worse off now since “participation” as an idea has been co-opted in a way that neutralises the power of true participatory planning. In the 1990s the planning profession in South Africa realized that the majority of South Africans only experienced the dark side of planning, had to be familiarised with the potential role of planning and had to participate in their own reconstruction (cf. Oranje 1997, 164, 165, 181).

In the Tshwane City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2004) and the Tshwane Integrated Development Plan (City of Tshwane 2002), much is made of the notion of participation. The City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2004, 9), advocated by the South African Cities Network, stresses the importance of involving the poor as partners in developing city-wide pro-poor strategies. This is very positive, theoretically at least, but mechanisms to ensure such city-wide participation often fail the poor.

The more recent Tshwane Vision 2055 (City of Tshwane 2013), which evolved out of the 2004 Tshwane City Strategy, is even more pronounced in its articulation of a participatory approach, both in the formation of the Vision but also for its implementation. It describes the preparatory process of the vision in detail (pp. 29–31) but also envisions its implementation as a series of multiple strategic partnerships.

In the Executive Mayor’s Message (City of Tshwane 2013, 7), introducing the Tshwane Vision 2055, he states that the Tshwane Vision 2055:

provides us with a platform to establish strategic partnerships with communities and stakeholders to imagine, transform, remake, and build a cohesive and adaptable society.

Likewise, in policies guiding the implementation of so-called Integrated Development Plans (IDP), a strong case is made for the importance of participation as an integral part of successful IDP implementation. At a local community level, however, there are serious constraints that hinder constructive

participation in IDP-processes. In Berea-Burgers Park it would happen, for example, that none of the projects put forward by community groups would be included in the area's Integrated Development Plan and therefore would also not be budgeted for. However, at least four of the six values guiding the IDP-process, as articulated in the 2002 Tshwane IDP (City of Tshwane 2002), stress the importance of real community participation and honest, transparent accountability to local communities and stakeholders. The performance of municipal officials is even measured in relation to how successfully this gets implemented (City of Tshwane 2002, 34).

Interestingly, in the 2011 Tshwane IDP (City of Tshwane 2011) as well as the 2005 Tshwane Inner City Development Strategy (City of Tshwane 2015) less "participatory jargon" is included, simply outlining various activities to be undertaken. At the same time, the language and processes contained in these documents virtually exclude inner city residents, the non-profit sector and community- and faith-based groups from participation.

At a time when the private sector largely withdrew from the inner city between 1990 and 2000, it was often communities and community-based organisations that bravely resisted the ebb and flow of decay. Somehow the asset that local community-based organisations and citizens represent needs to be valued and the resources available in this sector galvanised and integrated into a sustainable inner city strategy.

The whole process of developing the Tshwane Inner City Strategy clearly showed that participation is often only a trendy word, used to satisfy legislative requirements but leaving the larger part of civil society out in the cold.

2.2 Children's participation

Children perhaps most clearly present the challenge of radical participation (cf. Riggio 2002, 45–58; Grant 2006, 25). When the concept of child participation was introduced to a local Ward Councillor in 2006, his sense was that children could not think for themselves and therefore should not be consulted in the planning process for local communities.

In the Tshwane Inner City Strategy, emphasis is placed on healthy places for children, yet the participation of children and of those organisations representing children's concerns has never occurred in a deliberate and systematic manner. Although this strategy speaks of healthy places for children, it fails to address specific concerns of children in the inner city. From the perspective of Berea-Burgers Park, the quality of existing children's play areas, road safety considerations, restricted access to Burgers Park, overcrowding of public schools and quality of education generally, are all matters of concern.

True participation will go beyond theoretically including children into plans and strategies, but will develop a coherent vision for *child-friendly cities*, a term coined by UNICEF (2004). A child-friendly city is a city, or any local system of governance, committed to fulfilling children's rights, ensuring the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions. It is, as a result, a city that is fit for all.



Figure 5.3 Through their eyes.

Source: Tumelo (2014), in *(Un)shackled*. Pretoria: Through their eyes

The Tshwane Vision 2055, unlike the Tshwane Inner City Strategy, actually affirms the concept and vision of a child-friendly city. In 2011 a staggering 677,110 people in the city were below the age of 14 and another 1,185,605 people were between the ages of 15 and 34 years of age. 64 per cent of the population of the city was therefore younger than 34 (cf. City of Tshwane 2013, 55). Acknowledging this reality, the city then envisions “communities where families, children and youth can thrive and actively contribute to the development of their communities” (City of Tshwane 2013, 216). The Tshwane Vision 2055 outlines some criteria for a child and youth friendly city and also identifies a number of strategic actions to be taken in partnership with other stakeholders, in order to advance this agenda (City of Tshwane 2013, 216–217).

Participatory planning involving children and youth would challenge conventional planning and planners. For planners, working with young people means diversifying the types of community consultation processes they employ:

Young people like to be pragmatic, mobile and stimulated by their involvement. Chasing behind a group of young people on bicycles during a neighbourhood tour while trying to write notes and take photographs has probably been the most successful research method we have used. In contrast, community meetings often lead to disinterest and silencing of young people.

(Malone 1999, 23)

If children are valued, they too should be included in participatory processes. Creative means to ensure constructive participation need to be designed and implemented.

It is one thing to articulate a vision for a child and youth friendly city, but an entirely different challenge to translate the vision into concrete, appropriate and effective actions, including equipped planners and practitioners as well as empowered and confident children, participating and contributing collectively to imagine a different future. It is an exciting challenge.

2.3 Pitfalls in participatory approaches

New urbanism is perceived to be focusing on radical participation. Critics of it suggest, however, that participatory methods in new urbanism often “co-opt participants and manipulate consensus-building to suit the interests of a small segment of society” (Fainstein 2000). Through their specialised knowledge and expertise, designers could manipulate processes (Grant 2006, 76).

Luckin and Sharp (2004, 1488) caution against potential conflicts between the self-interest of civic organisations and the broader interests of the locality in which they operate. There could be a subtle blur between advancing own interest and really advancing the interest of the community on whose behalf one purportedly speaks. Not only politicians, officials or planners might advance own agendas at the expense of local communities, but civic organisations and community activists can fall in the same trap, deliberately or unconsciously.

Cento Bull and Jones (2006) suggest that participatory approaches sometimes surface power struggles and conflicts within communities, for example tensions between more dominant and more marginal groups. If such tensions are not creatively managed, participation will not necessarily achieve “local social solidarity, social inclusion, and democratic decision-making” (Cento Bull & Jones 2006, 768).

Within communities there are different role players not always seeing eye to eye. In the previous chapter, I referred to the closure of some of the gates of Burgers Park. This was supported and advocated by a local commercial landlord, while local residents and community organisations did not necessarily agree. It is also true that civil society is not a “homogeneous unit” (cf. Gerometta et al. 2005, 2018; Oranje 1997, 273), but very pluralistic in outlook, vision and interest. Seeing the disparity in resource, knowledge and frames of reference between different sectors of civil society, it begs a question as to who determines the agenda ultimately.

Sometimes there might even be subordination of certain civil society groups in the process (cf. Cento Bull & Jones 2006, 768, 770), specifically referring to the voluntary and faith-based sectors (cf. Peck & Tickell 2002, 390). Private developers, as protagonists serving the interest of neo-liberal policies and profitability, will speak the language of participation and empowerment, but behind the façade of participation will be the subordination and co-option of those with fewer resources.

Gerometta et al. (2005) refer to it as the colonisation of civil society to meet neo-liberal, profit-making interests that might run counter to local interests. Participation is then only used as a smokescreen for goals that in effect might exclude certain sectors of the community, and especially those who are particularly vulnerable.

2.4 Are partnerships for urban regeneration real partnerships?

In recent times, “partnerships have emerged as an important trend in urban regeneration literature” (Hemphill et al. 2006, 60). In the United Kingdom it has become “‘conventional wisdom’ to tackle regeneration through a ‘multisectoral partnership approach’” (Hemphill et al. 2006, 60). Partnerships have become popular also because they were perceived by many to facilitate a more effective and socially acceptable tool for delivery (Hemphill et al. 2006, 60).

In the Tshwane experience, such partnerships were often unequal. Even though community-based organisations are closely connected to local neighbourhoods, fully immersed and not going elsewhere, they are often subtly and not so subtly sidelined from partnership processes. Public-private partnerships often exclude the so-called third sector.

There are examples where broad-based partnerships worked well. In a place like Ireland with relatively weak local government the community-based sector has become a much more integral partner in local development processes (cf. Cameron, Odendaal & Todes 2004, 321). In South Africa, the Landsdowne-Wetton Corridor Project in Cape Town and the Cato Manor and Warwick Junction projects in Durban are good examples of broad-based integrated development initiatives that worked (Cameron, Odendaal & Todes 2004, 323–328).

Perhaps these were examples where power relationships were managed well. Power relationships exist between different spheres of government; between government, private sector and community groups; but also among community groups as they seek to assert themselves (cf. Hemphill et al. 2006, 62). In this regard, Hemphill et al. (2006, 73), suggest the importance of balancing power in the make-up of partnerships, ensuring that one organisation or individual will not over-dominate the partnership. They refer to the example of the Belfast GEMS (Gasworks Employment Matching Service), a successful regeneration partnership, that carried out a stakeholder analysis upfront, to clarify the roles and contributions of the different partners (Hemphill et al. 2006, 67, 73). This helped to steer the partnership in the right direction, as each partner was clear on roles and expectations.

The authenticity of partnerships becomes even more tested when particularly vulnerable groups become partners. The Tshwane Inner City Strategy on the one hand seems to have embraced informal trade as a means to enhance local economic development. On the other hand, the same strategy speaks of actively policing informal traders. Since the adoption of this strategy, different clean-up operations have not embraced nor empowered, but physically displaced and emotionally humiliated informal traders in our inner city.

This contradicts the language of the Tshwane Vision 2055 (City of Tshwane 2015, 83), which:

positions the City as a place where all residents' ability to access, occupy, use urban spaces and produce goods, and trade with others will in turn make it possible to cultivate societal values that promote social cohesion, inclusion and participation in decision making.

If informal traders are seen as partners of local government, mutual implementation and monitoring of strategic action plans will only be advantageous. Instead, different policy and strategy documents in Tshwane, and different statements within one document, use contradictory language.

The Tshwane Vision 2055 is very articulate in its desire for authentic partnerships:

the City will not see its residents as passively recipient of what it means to live in the capital City; rather, the call will be for creating enduring partnerships that will lead to a tangible better life for the people that live in the capital city. This means moving beyond service delivery to a passive citizenry and the regulation of the physical environment to the creation of conditions in which all citizens can develop to their full potential by leading productive and fulfilling lives.

Is this an authentic political commitment to partnership? Or, a well-written document by a visionary consultant? Or, is it simply not worth the paper it is written on?

Whichever it is, the Tshwane 2055 Vision has been adopted with clear language of partnership, and it is now up to citizens themselves to hold local government accountable for what it spells out as its intention. To overcome the exclusion, silencing or co-option of local communities, local people and their institutions should assert their ownership of local conditions and futures, refusing to be objects of others' decisions and dictates. Once they have affirmed their own agency, they can contribute to foster (and force) truly inclusive models of dialogue and co-operation.

2.5 Critical appreciation of different institutional mechanisms

Different institutional vehicles have become commonplace in conversations about urban regeneration and urban community transformation. I introduce some of the prominent ones here in a critical but appreciative manner. Not all these examples are represented in Berea-Burgers Park or the inner city of Tshwane.

One needs to discern appropriate institutional mechanisms that are aligned to the paradigmatic commitment defining local city-making processes. In line with international trends, South African policies regulating local government and urban development, shifted "towards local empowerment and decentralized

decision-making” (Hemphill et al. 2006, 59). The intention was to transfer greater responsibility for their own development to local communities and to encourage multi-partner approaches through which local institutions and organisations work alongside local government to address their own development concerns (cf. Murtagh 2002; Gerometta et al. 2005; Hemphill et al. 2006, 59–60). This meant a shift from “government” (top-down governing of people), to “governance” (bottom-up governance with people), blurring the state-civil society distinction somewhat (cf. Pieterse 2000; 2004, 19; Cento Bull & Jones 2006, 769).

One of the basic assertions I make, is that local communities should take ownership for their own urban futures. The policy shifts reflected above are aligned with my assertion, yet hardly practiced in reality. Elaborate multi-year City Strategies, Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and Spatial Development Frameworks (cf. Wilkinson 2004, 216–218) exist, but often in isolation and without real ownership from the local communities in which these strategies have to be fleshed out. The institutional mechanisms described in what follows, should therefore be assessed in terms of how well they could potentially contribute to participatory urban governance.

2.5.1 Local government: legislative platforms; public companies; and precinct management

An institutional vehicle that has at times been created with mixed success, is *public companies*, either created and owned by local government, or set up outside government for greater flexibility and independence, but relying largely on public funding (Cameron, Odendaal & Todes 2004, 319, 320). These are special purpose vehicles set up for different functions, which can include the facilitation of urban regeneration, the creation of social housing, or the implementation of integrated development plans.

The Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) (n.d) was created to facilitate and manage area-based economic development initiatives throughout the Johannesburg Metropolitan area, but with a significant focus also on the inner city and its regeneration. The JDA co-ordinates and manages capital investment involving public and private sector stakeholders, working closely with the Gauteng provincial government.

The Johannesburg Inner City Partnership (JICP) (n.d.) was set up to “facilitate growth and transformation for all inner city stakeholders through collaboration between City of Johannesburg, other spheres of government and the private sector”. Over the years, this partnership has been successful at brokering broad-based collaboration in addressing critical inner city concerns. Whereas the Johannesburg Development Agency deals with larger infrastructural development and investment, the Johannesburg Inner City Partnership deals with more tangible inner city issues, ranging from cleaning services, walkable pavements and street homelessness, to brokering of social housing opportunities and management of public parks.

Aligned to emerging urbanisms, an emphasis on local ownership of urban processes is growing clearer. One expression is focus-area or *precinct-based urban management* approaches, which is decentralised management of cities, which enables local authorities to create management infrastructure and capacity for smaller, manageable areas, or precincts, as they are often called.

This approach has been followed in Johannesburg's inner city, and in partnership between the JDA (n.d.) and the JICP (n.d.), local, area-based management of well-defined precincts was introduced. Examples of such precincts, managed by precinct managers, are the Newtown Cultural Precinct, the Fashion District and the Sporting Precinct which includes Ellis Park, the Johannesburg Stadium and the campus of the University of Johannesburg.

A similar approach in Tshwane could have remarkable effects, as it could foster working relationships between dedicated local government officials with specific responsibility for a certain precinct and local role players who already take responsibility for aspects of their precinct's well-being. Berea-Burgers Park, Salvokop, the CBD, Sunnyside East and West, the West Capital Precinct and Arcadia could all be distinct precincts managed locally.

Sadly, whereas important institutional mechanisms in Johannesburg were sustained in spite of the unique and overwhelming pressures of that city, similar institutional mechanisms could not be created or sustained with similar impact and integrity in the City of Tshwane.

2.5.2 City Improvement Districts (CIDs)

The concept of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) was popularised in South Africa in the early 1990s and pioneered in Johannesburg by Neil Fraser. Some of the leading Business Improvement Districts in North America include the Times Square BID, the Harlem BID, as well as BIDs in Philadelphia, Washington DC and other large cities.

A Business Improvement District, in South Africa known as City Improvement District (CID), is a "special purpose vehicle", set up to support management and regeneration of a defined local urban area. All property owners in the area pay a monthly tax, over and above normal taxes, into the CID, from which top-up services are implemented for the local area, determined by those who bought into the idea of the CID. The theory is that local authority can only offer services up to a certain point. Beyond that point, local property owners then take ownership of the management of their area, and with the additional resources, top-up services can be provided such as additional cleaners, security personnel, CCTV-cameras, social service projects, tourism ambassadors and so on (cf. Wilkinson 2004, 221–222).

A good example is in Washington DC (Schaller & Modan 2005, 394) where women and men with bright red uniforms are fulfilling three functions simultaneously: serving as tourist ambassadors providing tourist information; serving as the eyes and ears of law enforcement agencies; and looking after the cleanliness of the streets and pavements.

In South Africa, relatively successful CIDs operate in Johannesburg, Tshwane and Cape Town. Positives of CIDs include the additional revenue it unlocks for a local area, the additional management capacity it creates for functions such as cleaning and security and the way in which it creates a new image for an area, thereby attracting new investment. It tends to provide “an excellent mechanism to package, market, sell and thus restructure space as a cultural commodity” (Schaller & Modan 2005, 395). CIDs often function better in predominantly business precincts, as residential neighbourhoods such as Berea-Burgers Park are unable to structure themselves using the same business model. Alternative institutional mechanisms might then have to be explored.

However, the advantages mentioned above – such as good security and improved image – often turn against more vulnerable and less resourced groups inhabiting a CID-precinct. Whereas some CIDs engage in programmes to integrate homeless and other vulnerable groups well into the community, other CIDs go to lengths to criminalise and displace ‘unwanted’ populations. Strengthened security mechanisms and 24/7 surveillance of local neighbourhoods, not only have the possibility of reduced crime rates, but often result in profiling and stigmatising certain groups, if they are deemed not to contribute to the ‘brand’ the CID wants to portray.

Schaller and Modan (2005, 396) speak of how CIDs’ “primarily commercial function”, combined with the legislative authority to impose an additional tax, result in the investment of funds into narrowly identified community endeavours for aims that benefit a narrow constituency. Those who are not property owners in an area do not have the same power to determine priorities and have no say over the way in which CIDs operate, resulting in undemocratic local processes, determined solely by those owning property.

Ironically, in the two Tshwane-based cases that I am aware of, the property owners gaining control in local areas through CIDs, mostly do not themselves reside in such areas, but mainly extract profit from the area. In a city like Cape Town, CIDs contribute to perpetuate disparities through dualistic socio-spatial patterns of inclusion and exclusion, based on class and status (Wilkinson 2004, 221–222). Turok (2001) speaks of it as “persistent polarization”, making a clear distinction between insiders and outsiders. CIDs effectively “limit the democratic nature of the public sphere and exclude various views of citizenship and public space” (Schaller & Modan 2005, 394, 396). A secure, clean city becomes more important than the dignity and well-being of every inhabitant of the area.

In the Times Square Improvement District in New York City deliberate measures were taken to integrate vulnerable communities in the precinct as part of the complete overhaul of the area. Instead of displacing people who could no longer afford to stay there, faith-based groups and non-governmental organisations were contracted to render specific social services to the local homeless community, as part of their regeneration initiative. I was unable to establish how consistent they were in preventing displacement.

The critical challenge is how a useful urban management mechanism such as CIDs could be implemented in a way that is not socially exclusive and causing

additional harassment of already marginal people. Ways need to be found for such vehicles to combine the integration of vulnerable communities into the precinct, with the same rigour that is applied to prevent crime and ensure good service delivery.

Good cities will not opt for the one or the other, but will ensure respect for the dignity of every human being, regardless of social, economic or even legal status.

2.5.3 Special Purpose Vehicles/Single-purpose interventions

In the absence of government-led interventions, civil society, faith-based groups or private sector sometimes respond to urban challenges through “special purpose vehicles” or “single-purpose interventions”, designed to address a specific societal challenge.

At the lower end of the market, social housing companies such as Johannesburg Housing Company (2021–23), Yeast City Housing (2022), or the Cape Town Community Housing Company (2013) contributed to urban regeneration through greenfield developments, conversions or rehabilitation of old properties for the purposes of social housing, aimed at lower-income populations. Similarly, local churches in South African cities gave birth to faith-based organisations such as the Tshwane Leadership Foundation, PEN, MES and others, already in the 1990s, to create essential social infrastructure and to stay rooted in urban neighbourhoods many other institutions have detached themselves from.

On the upper end, Urban Ocean (n.d.) has identified a niche market in the banking district of the Johannesburg CBD and defied conventional wisdom in buying up and restoring old art deco buildings into upmarket loft and penthouse apartments. This has become rather contagious and similar developments have brought about substantial change, expressions thereof being found in Braamfontein (Braamfontein Management District 2012–15), the Maboneng Precinct (n.d.) and The Sheds@1Fox (2015).

In Cape Town this has become a trend and places like De Waterkant Village (2014), the City Bowl and Green Point are flooded with trendy upmarket apartments representing a new lifestyle, close to the vibe of the city but coupled with suburban ‘luxury’ and ‘security’.

Museum Park was a non-profit company, established in the 1990s in Tshwane, and sought to promote a cluster of museums and heritage sites in the inner city, mostly situated in and around the Berea-Burgers Park precinct. It was based on examples of similar initiatives in other cities of the world. Unfortunately, it became defunct, owing to a combination of limited resources and lack of political will to support this critical initiative.

Recently two new initiatives emerged in the City of Tshwane, namely the Cool Capital Biennale (2014) and the Capital Collective (n.d.), facilitating small-scale urban interventions such as markets, music events and publicity to rebrand the inner city specifically.

The above examples speak of single-purpose interventions, or special purpose vehicles, established to drive urban regeneration, create inner city housing, or celebrate urban heritage, being variedly successful. Such interventions are not always adequately welcomed or supported by relevant government departments, and even obstructed; they often exist in isolation without being adequately integrated into holistic urban regeneration approaches; and, if their focus is not on an upmarket or commercial audience, limited resources might hinder sustainability. Where government partners with such dedicated vehicles, sustainable and socially inclusive urban regeneration is often witnessed.

2.6 Community development corporations

A mechanism that has been developed with great impact in the USA and the UK, and sometimes elsewhere by another name, are so-called Community Development Corporations (CDCs).

A mechanism like a CID is only one possible institutional vehicle that facilitates local ownership and regeneration. Considering earlier critique of CIDs and the fact that they might not be equally viable in all neighbourhoods, there is a need to explore additional mechanisms to facilitate community-based regeneration that is socially inclusive, serving broader audiences than property owners and particularly integrative of very vulnerable groups.

CDCs are created to drive local community development processes, aimed at regenerating a local neighbourhood physically, socially and economically, through focusing on community assets and community participation, addressing local needs comprehensively and doing so in partnership with professionals, both in the planning and implementation of community goals (Chaskin 2005, 408).

CDCs are what Chaskin (2005, 408) calls “comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs)”, taking different forms in different contexts, “encompassing various combinations of development, organizing and advocacy, and planning, service provision and coordination” (Chaskin 2005, 408), but sharing the principle of local geographical focus. They are very different to CIDs, in their emphasis on local citizen participation, inclusive of all people and not only property owners. Many CDCs are social enterprises in the best sense of the word, combining a primary emphasis on the social good of the community, with a commitment to be financially and environmentally sustainable.

The examples of CDCs that I am most familiar with were those set up by local churches or faith-based non-profits in distressed urban areas of places like Chicago, New York City, or Baltimore, recognising the challenge to go beyond short-term relief and to build institutions that will ensure long-term socio-economic viability and well-being of local urban communities.

Examples of faith-based CDCs that have done remarkable work in inner cities of the United States are the Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC, n.d.) in Harlem, New York City, Bethel New Life (2015) and Lawndale Christian Development Corporation (n.d.), both in Chicago, and the Memphis Leadership Foundation (2023) in Memphis, Tennessee.

The ADC was created in 1989 in the basement of the famous Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem with a small grant \$50,000. Since then they have multiplied this initial gift through brokering investment into the Harlem community to a sum of \$150 million by the year 2007 and \$500 million by the year 2015, focusing on housing, economic revitalisation, human services, education and youth, and civic engagement.

The work of Bethel New Life and Lawndale Christian Development Corporation include the creation of housing projects, multi-purpose health centres, educational and economic interventions and a range of other local innovations, regenerating deprived areas through combining social transformation with economic viability.

CDCs cannot rely on the same funding sources as CIDs, because – at least in South Africa – it is not backed by similar legislation, yet it is worth advocating for. Many CDCs have gone beyond complete dependency on external funding sources, building into their programmes innovative ways of self-support. They creatively combine the values and methods of voluntary associations (social movements) and bureaucratic organisations (institutions) (cf. Chaskin 2005, 410) but often add a strong entrepreneurial focus to generate their own resources for greater self-reliance.

3 Where are the poor?

3.1 *The urban poor and social inclusion*

If people in general are excluded from planning processes, what about the poor or those who are particularly vulnerable?

Perhaps we should start by asking: Who are the poor? I use the term in this study in a rather generic way to include all those who are vulnerable in urban communities in terms of lacking access to sources of livelihood, including shelter, employment, education and social networks. This might include homeless and landless people, women and children at risk, the aged, senior citizens, people with disabilities, refugees, informal traders, the unemployed and under-employed. In South Africa the most vulnerable remains (particularly but not exclusively) black women and children, often living in rural areas, or informal settlements, but also those seeking access to resources by migrating to urban areas (cf. Oranje 1997, 203; Goodlad 1996, 1633).

Often these groups are equated with street furniture without affirming them as essential human capital with much to offer. They are generally excluded from spatial planning processes and even public participation processes.

In line with global trends, the urbanisation of poverty has also become a South African phenomenon. In South Africa, urban poverty was been centralised in black townships before the end of apartheid, with tremendous migration of the poor into ever-sprawling townships but, since 1994, such migration also reached the inner city and other transitional urban neighbourhoods (Mabin 1991, 33–47; Cloete 1991, 91–107).

Shatkin (2004, 2470) suggests that most informal settlements are actually not out of sight. The so-called vertical *favellas* (cf. Berryman 1996, 15) of Sao Paulo

in Brazil, or the vast *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro are often deliberately established by the poor in order to push themselves into sight.

In many places, they spill over into public view and popular consciousness, clustered underneath an overpass, on an undeveloped lot on a residential street or propped on stilts above a canal.

(Shatkin 2004, 2470)

On undeveloped lots all over the east of Tshwane, or along the Moreleta Spruit or Apies River, there are hundreds of homeless people claiming space to live their lives, and yet, their invisibility in government plans and policies is remarkable (Shatkin 2004, 2470). More recently this was being addressed to some extent, through crafting a policy and strategy on street homelessness in the City of Tshwane (cf. De Beer & Vally 2015, 3).

This research has surfaced the reality of the *suburbanisation* of street homelessness, increasingly concentrated in “areas of economic opportunity”, in formerly white suburbs. The official 2011 Census indicated that there are 6,244 street homeless people in Tshwane of which 2,497 were situated in suburban areas (cf. Statistics South Africa 2011). Although this is a growing reality, only R 650,000 has been budgeted to address street homelessness in the city in 2015, from a total budget of R 248 billion. And by 2022, despite a policy on street homelessness, the city had no budget to address it.

In Hebrew Scriptures, the restoration of urban places is always evaluated from the perspective of the poor. To what extent have the poor or poverty been addressed through regeneration projects in Johannesburg, Cape Town or Tshwane? *That* should become the defining question. Using the poor as a yardstick to measure how well the city does, is introducing the theme of social inclusion, but also of socio-spatial justice. The question: “Where are the poor?” raises the question of how inclusive the city is, how accessible its resources and how participatory its city-making processes?

The Tshwane Vision 2055 (City of Tshwane 2013, 83) states that its commitment is:

about making conscious development decisions that meet the basic needs of the present generation, especially the poor, as well as for the future generation to meet their own needs.

It goes even further in framing its intention in “rights to the city” language speaking of a city where participation is not limited to joint decision-making but inclusivity will also entail access to housing, facilities, public goods, environment, political participation, economic development opportunities and so forth (City of Tshwane 2013, 249–251). The clarity of this vision provides an instrument for keeping the city accountable to what it outlines as vision. The depth of our commitment to the real inclusion of the urban poor, will become evident in the depth of our investment in

good social infrastructure, access to the city's resources and participating in city-making processes.

An honest entry into the city through the eyes of the child, led by the experiences of the poor, will not only lead to a radical re-assessment of the status quo and an alternative political imagination but might become the city's only chance for deep and real liberation. According to Freire & Freire (1992, 82), it is only the poor, or those being oppressed, who can liberate the city, and those who are rich or apathetic, from its dehumanising conditions. Without the voice, initiative and consciousness of the poor, we will all remain lesser humans.

3.2 Housing the poor

According to official local government housing statistics, there were some 210,000 households in the metropolitan area of Tshwane on the waiting list for formal housing as at June 2022 (cf. Mahope 2022). This refers to families on the official waiting list, currently living in informal housing, backyards, on the streets, or in overcrowded housing units with family or friends. The current mismatch between the large number of vacant buildings in the city, often state-owned, and the huge housing cry, is politically and morally unacceptable.

Of the approximately 6,530 housing units in the Berea-Burgers Park area, only about 3–4 per cent are for social housing purposes, which is way below what it should or could be, especially seeing the neighbourhood's proximity to public transport modes and a concentration of socio-economic and educational opportunity.

There is no coherent social housing strategy for Tshwane, or for the inner city. Ad hoc decisions are made, often detrimentally affecting the creation of social housing units and access for the poor. Brand et al. (2013, 285) speak of the tension between official inner city regeneration discourse and inclusion of the poor in the City of Tshwane. With reference to the Tshwane Inner City Development and Regeneration Strategy, they state: "In the 39 pages of this document the poor gets a single mention as one of the strategic focus areas".

In deconstructing the old apartheid city, one of the challenges is to reverse the trend of displacing the poor to the urban fringes. Since 1994, the spatial configurations of the apartheid city have not only been maintained but sometimes even perpetuated. In the case of the Kruger Park and Schubart Park residential complexes, 1,132 units of low-cost housing were lost, owing to an unconstitutional eviction by the City and subsequent destruction of infrastructure. This, in spite of the Constitutional Court ruling of October 2021 that tenants should be allowed back in the buildings (cf. Brand, De Beer, De Villiers & Van Marle 2013, 283).

The Integrated Urban Development Framework (2014) is emphasising the urgent necessity for spatial restructuring of the (not yet) post-apartheid city. The inner city could play a key role in ushering in this new city, offering vast tracks of empty land and many vacant buildings, as well the potential for densification and mixed-income, mixed-use developments. Proactive, pro-poor leadership is wanting.

3.3 Considering the Mandela Development Corridor: a local flagship project

In Sunnyside, the impressive campus for the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), a national government department, was developed as a flagship urban regeneration project. This project formed part of the bigger Mandela Development Corridor (MDC), outlined as Building Block 4 of the Tshwane Inner City Strategy (cf. Franz 2001).

The Mandela Development Corridor encompasses 20 hectares of land (Venter 2002), running along the Apies River. It was established to manage the selling and development of portions of land within this precinct, on behalf of the city council, and within a broad spatial development framework for the area. It was meant to be one of the major triggers for the regeneration of that part of the inner city, including the upgrade and development of the Apies River promenade.

The MDC and the Apies River Promenade border on both the Sunnyside-Arcadia neighbourhoods, the CBD as well as Berea-Burgers Park. It seems as if most of the interface between the MDC/Apies River Promenade was with the community of Sunnyside, if at all, but there was little or no discussion about the impact on Berea-Burgers Park, a residential area of about 20,000 people, impacted greatly by these developments.

Almost 500 low-cost residential units (and the only public swimming pool near the CBD) were demolished for the flagship project of the MDC – the DTI campus – without these housing units being replaced by the City.

The MDC lacked a strong social development vision and strategy. There was a scorecard that could monitor black empowerment, but the social impact of the project, both in terms of cost and benefit, was not properly monitored. There was no plan for how vulnerable people in this precinct would be integrated into the Corridor, and it disregarded the effects it would have on families who had to vacate their low-income apartments without alternatives on offer.



Figure 5.4 Marabastad and the skeletons of Schubart Park
Source: Nel, K. (2015)

The land parcels in the Corridor could have facilitated very healthy mixed-use, mixed-income communities, ranging from up-market loft apartments and hi-tech office spaces, to exuberant spaces for cultural expression and social projects (both housing and services), integrating vulnerable people into the good news of the city.

The reality is even worse than what I outline above: 13 years since inception nothing else has happened in the Corridor, apart from the initial project known as the DTI campus, and a small public art project along the Corridor. The Apies River Promenade, instead of undergoing the extensive upgrade that was proposed, in some ways only became a poorly managed eyesore. Today, if one had to ask the average resident who lives in this precinct or walk these streets, they would never have heard of the Mandela Development Corridor.

3.4 Planning, policy and poverty: the invisible ones

Spatial development and urban design frameworks often exclude the poor and their concerns and place little emphasis on social infrastructure.

Although there is now a policy on street homelessness in the City of Tshwane, the imperatives of the policy, such as instituting an interdepartmental

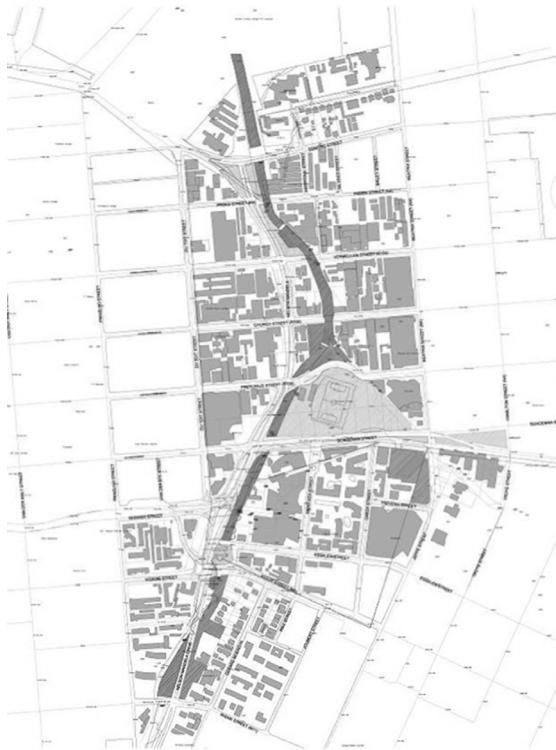


Figure 5.5 Mandela Development Corridor (MDC).
Source: GAPP Architects (2009)

task team on homelessness, have not been implemented. Therefore, homelessness can easily be placed as a concern only of the Department dealing with social development issues, but the health department or the housing department can act as if homelessness has no bearing on them whatsoever, nor do they have any possible responsibility in addressing homelessness.

Similarly issues of refugees, the aged, people with disabilities and the need for social housing, are frequently excluded from local urban policies and plans. Although there is a special office on disability in the Office of the President, and a new national Social Housing Bill, this does not always translate effectively into local policies and plans.

Some statements in some policy documents reveal that there is not complete ignorance or apathy concerning vulnerable sectors of the inner city community. Here I just refer to two statements contained in the inner city strategy. The first statement outlines an action step that should “investigate the need for and develop alternative typologies for non-family housing, such as orphanages, homeless and street children shelters, overnight facilities for vendors, ‘shopping tourists’, etc” (City of Tshwane 2005, 37).

The second statement reads: “The inner city should not be a place where people become destitute, disenfranchised and disenchanting, but rather a place where real urban communities can thrive” (City of Tshwane 2005, 24).

On face value it sounds positive, but what does it actually mean? A more suspicious view could interpret this as saying that the image of an international and African capital city cannot afford disenchanting, disenfranchised and destitute people, and that measures and mechanisms should be taken to prevent such conditions from existing in the city. It is then a case of *image over people*. An even harsher interpretation could be of a sub-text that regards these groups as “unwanted elements” that need to be relocated.

One can only hope that it means something very different, namely a deliberate intention to come alongside disenfranchised people in the inner city, with the kind of support that will facilitate their inclusion into “real (thriving) urban communities”.

Note

- 1 Observed during a visit to Addis Ababa in 2004, for the launch of the Institute for Urban Workers.

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6 What has become of city-making?

Between fallacy, deficiency, commodity and conspiracy

1 How integrated is integrated urban development planning?

Integration is “at the heart of the *Urban Development Framework* that was launched in 1997 as the government’s policy approach to urban development and reconstruction” (Pieterse 2004, 1).

In my mind integration should be assessed in terms of *functional integration* (between physical, economic, social, spatial and institutional aspects of urban development); *integration of different sectors* (the complementary roles of government, community, private sector, non-profit sector and the academy); *integration between vision, policy, plans and funding instruments*, and whether, as a result, there is meaningful and life-sustaining *socio-spatial-economic integration* of diverse populations, including the city’s most vulnerable, in well-located urban places with fair access to sources of livelihood.

The goal and promise of integrated development projects for local areas is that they offer the opportunity for socio-spatial redress, through innovative and sustainable planning that is closely linked to implementation with specific time-frames (cf. Gerometta et al. 2005, 2015). Different institutional forms are used for implementation, ranging from the creation of special-purpose vehicles, to several departments and agencies being involved in complementary ways (Cameron, Odendaal & Todes 2004, 311). In the South African context, spatial transformation should be at the core of such local area plans.

One of the best examples of integrated area planning was the Model Cities programme in the United States, implemented through integrated social, economic and physical development projects:

containing new and imaginative proposals to rebuild or revitalize large slums and blighted areas; to expand housing; job and income opportunities; to reduce dependence on welfare payment; to improve educational facilities and programs; to combat disease and ill health.

(Friedmann 1971, 316)

The programme was criticised for being top-down and narrowly focused but still remains a very ambitious attempt at positive urban intervention (Cameron, Odendaal & Todes 2004, 311; cf. Modarres 2001).

In South Africa, integrated development planning is now institutionalised in terms of Section 34 of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (Cameron, Odendaal & Todes 2004; cf. also Wilkinson 2004, 216–217). In terms of this Act the national government requires an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for all municipalities, as a strategy document to ensure “that words are indeed turned into action” and that development forms part of the municipal budget and activities over a five-year period. This is echoed in the National Development Plan, particularly in chapter 8, dealing with the transformation of human settlements, and specifically worked out in the Integrated Urban Development Framework (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs 2014, 9).

Cameron, Odendaal and Todes (2004, 314) highlights three major forms of criticism against integrated development plans generally, namely that there is an excessive focus on physical development and failure to really address poverty; there is a tendency for such initiatives to be fragmented and uncoordinated; and there is the assumption that an area-based approach on its own will address poverty (cf. UK Social Exclusion Unit 2000; Anderson 2001; Modarres 2001). These three are important considerations in assessing whether so-called integrated approaches are truly integrated.

In the City of Tshwane, local IDPs are supposed to guide integrated development interventions. Reading these plans, simply from the perspective of our own inner city neighbourhoods, reveals a lack of real integration: functionally, sectorally, socially, spatially and even in terms of vision, policy and plans being coherently integrated. One can indeed ask whether integrated development plans are truly integrative. Another question is whether they are local enough, and locally owned, to ensure appropriate, relevant and sustainable implementation.

1.1 Functional integration

Functional integration should not only be measured in terms of how well various elements of integrated urban development are synergised, but the real yardstick for effectiveness should be in terms of how well socio-spatial-economic integration is achieved between people of different racial and economic backgrounds, for excluded and particularly vulnerable populations, and between different and sometimes contesting urban geographies. Such qualitative assessment is crucial in undoing apartheid planning, which was deliberate in its fragmentation of the city, leaving deep urban fractures to this day.

Tshwane Vision 2055 (City of Tshwane 2013, 87) outlines a very bold vision statement for spatial reform that will help achieve socio-spatial integration, in ways that will undo the apartheid city.

The remaking of the capital city is also about intervening decisively in the transformation of human settlements, space economy as well as the creation of

functioning nodes... the remaking of Tshwane will be premised on achieving the principles of spatial justice, spatial sustainability, spatial resilience, spatial quality, and spatial efficiency... It is therefore unimaginable that this spatial urban divide should continue. Therefore, Tshwane Vision 2055 is a call for all of us to ensure that all of us are afforded equal rights and the benefits that our beautiful capital city potentially provides. This calls for spatial reform.

Much more work will need to be done to translate what is a bold imaginary, into concrete reality.

If one of the critiques against integrated development planning is the “excessive focus on physical development”, Tshwane’s IDP documents are unfortunately not very different. The IDP for the inner city is extremely weak on the side of social, health and recreational infrastructure. Challenges such as homelessness, affordable housing or the most essential social services are often not included as part of the city’s IDPs.

The Tshwane Inner City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2005, 32–37) endeavoured to address these in its Action Plan. And yet, issues of poverty, for example, are not addressed in an integrated, coherent manner but rather piece-meal. A reading of the strategy, probably sincere in its intentions, seems to be too generic to be realistic and not emerging from the felt experiences of its residents.

Cameron, Odendaal and Todes (2004, 331) remind us that there are no easy or universal formulas for good social and economic outcomes, but stress the importance of formulating objectives in a way that are “tailored for local conditions”. Two specific issues – health and recreational infrastructure – are examples. In the South African context, integrated planning needs to include a focus on HIV and AIDS, and on health issues in general, including the reality of people living with chronic mental illness on city streets, mental health concerns among children and adolescents and the challenge of substance use in urban neighbourhoods (cf. Isandla Institute n.d.; South African Cities Network 2007). How can we speak of an integrated, regenerated or renewed city, when homeless people die on the city streets because of lack of access to medication or appropriate housing?

Similarly, although the Berea-Burgers Park community accommodates approximately 20,000 residents, and 68 per cent of the residents are under the age of 30, historically significant sport and recreational facilities such as the Berea Park Cricket Grounds and the Caledonian Stadium were not retained as recreational assets for use by the local community, but are being turned into more office parks, serving government bureaucracy.

1.2 Integration of and congruence between vision, policy, plans and funding instruments

There is an equal lack of integration between vision, policy, plans and funding mechanisms. An example is the Tshwane local government’s vision and policy for inner city densification.

One of the Tshwane IDP priorities (City of Tshwane 2002, 18–19) is to build “sustainable and integrated communities”. It mentions the example of housing: “merely building houses does not ensure strong and healthy communities. People also need a sense of community to experience the quality of life than an urban environment can offer” (City of Tshwane 2002, 18).

However, different role players, mostly independent of local authority, create housing interventions and facilitate moderate forms of densification, which aligns to the Tshwane vision. However, because of a lack of integration between such interventions, and the visions, policies and plans of the city, no supportive policy or plans for additional schools, parks or day-care facilities, are developed, and new housing is frowned upon by the same officials advancing the goal of densification, or being custodians of the city’s IDP.

The additional burden on current social infrastructure becomes a legitimate concern because of the lack of alignments between vision and policy on the one hand and plans and practices on the other. Synergising local and provincial government interventions in local urban communities is another challenge, even though the Tshwane IDP (2002, 19) said it was supporting “working in a coordinated way with other government departments and community-based organizations”. Such lack of synergy affected access to funding and proper project coordination.

Once again, the vision behind the progressive, inclusive and participatory language of Tshwane’s strategic documents is impressive and needs to be supported. But, again, the inability to translate vision into concrete actions aligned to it, is glaring.

It seems as if the greatest break-down in local government is between well-articulated policy documents, representing progressive and inclusive visions, and how those are operationalised. It is in this regard that I explore a community-based urban praxis that could greatly assist in ensuring local transformational development, shifting ownership from local government to local communities.

1.3 Sectoral Integration

One of the underlying principles of the Tshwane Inner City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2005) is that “an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach must be followed in addressing the complex issues of the inner city”. In explaining this it refers to the integration of social, economic, physical and institutional elements in the strategy’s implementation, but fails to address the ways in which different sectors, institutions, disciplines and communities could contribute as partners to provide joint leadership for different parts of implementation process.

With regard to the IDP, delivery of projects is in all cases the responsibility of local government, although certain functions might be better fulfilled by the private or non-profit sectors. This is probably one of the greatest weaknesses of the IDPs as local governments lack the capacity to implement all the identified priorities, and often is not the best possible implementing agency.

An important introductory piece to the Tshwane City Development Strategy (City of Tshwane 2004, 11) is a question, asking “What makes cities successful?”. The authors of the strategy mention two common factors traced in all successful cities. Firstly, the notion of strategic thinking that is translated into a coherent strategy; and secondly, the importance of strong leadership. Charles Landry (2000, 3) highlights the importance of strong leadership: “Successful cities seem to have some things in common – visionary individuals, creative organizations and a political culture sharing clarity of purpose”. He does not speak only of political leadership but of widespread leadership, “permeating public, private, and civic organizations”.

In terms of both the IDPs and the Tshwane Inner City Strategy this seems to be a weakness: the inability to mobilise diverse local leadership into ownership for specific tasks or areas of local development. This could build broad-based ownership, broaden the resource base and diversify and broaden the leadership base.

The City Development Strategy (City of Tshwane 2004, 16–17) raises the need to consider the following important issue in its document: “how the private and community sector role in ongoing refinement and implementation of the strategy could be understood within a framework of public leadership”.

This is a *vital question* if we are serious about participatory democracy. To own and implement a strategy of this magnitude would require mobilisation of all resources – governmental, private sector and civil society. Strategies and institutional mechanisms to enable this are rather vague. In the Tshwane Vision 2055 document this is articulated more concretely in terms of the development of strategic partnerships and joint funding models for ensuring implementation of projects.

2 Deficiency-based planning models

Inner cities are often not approached from an asset-based perspective (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993; De Gruchy 2003)), but rather pathologically as if the people and institutions of the city are all inadequate. However, this approach is mostly applied in reference to residential communities and seldom to private sector or government institutions.

2.1 *Engaging Tshwane’s policy and planning documents*

An asset-based model affirms and celebrates the strengths that are present and promotes regeneration from the inside out. A deficiency-based model fails to recognise local assets, defining communities mainly in terms of what they do not have and promoting regeneration from the outside, with consultants, professionals, service providers and external investors being lured into “fixing” local communities.

Policy and planning documents guiding Tshwane’s inner city process, at least at first glance, seem to acknowledge the latent asset that the inner city is. One

of the key strategy areas of the Tshwane City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2004) is to celebrate the city as the Capital focusing on the inner city as the host of government. This is a clear affirmation of the status and identity of the inner city.

The Tshwane Inner City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2005) similarly speaks of the inner city as a capital precinct and seeks “to ensure the centralized presence of government departments and non-governmental organisations (NGO), and retention and upgrading of government facilities”. It seeks to utilise an obvious asset optimally.

It is curious that the central presence of non-government organisations is included in this strategy. To actualise this potential fully, the city could explore potential incentives for NGOs, similar to those offered to the private sector, for investing and remaining in, or relocating into, the inner city.

The Tshwane Inner City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2005) “does not propose to artificially design a new role and character for the inner city, but rather to identify and capitalize on the area’s inherent comparative advantages, characteristics and development potential”. This is an important assertion as it affirms the inner city’s assets, both current and latent.

It stresses the confluent nature of the inner city as a place of meeting, mostly expressed in its contrasts: it is a meeting place of nature and city (towards the south), of poor and rich, of black and white. It connects the city’s east and west, and north and south. “It is in this juxtaposition that harmony and balance exist, creating a unique tapestry of opportunities within the inner city” (City of Tshwane 2005, 7). Again, the language is generally positive and affirming.

The Inner City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2005, 9) also identifies critical gaps or urgent needs, to complement existing assets and potentials. These include the need for a more diversified range of housing opportunities; tourism, recreational and entertainment opportunities to be created for visitors and residents; the need for a pedestrian-friendly inner city; the need for sufficient public spaces; and the necessity for a dedicated (and responsive) management structure for the inner city.

However, much of what is identified as critical assets above, are not built upon in daily governance of local neighbourhoods, or, worse, systematically depleted.

2.2 Selective acknowledgment of assets

The way in which assets are recognised and integrated into frameworks, policies and strategies that guide inner city development – consciously or perhaps unconsciously – seems to perpetuate a tale of two or more cities.

Although the public assets of capital city status, national museums and the National State Theatre are acknowledged, community assets that include local institutions, grass-roots arts initiatives or community festivals are not properly built upon. There seems to selective mobilisation of certain assets and therefore an exclusion of other assets (certain people, neighbourhoods and sectors).

Building Block 2 of the Tshwane Inner City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2005) proposes "(C)reating a cultural circle". Although the strategy takes note of the obvious assets – the bigger museums and theatres – it fails to recognise, consider and include other existing community assets (local visions and initiatives) that could root the cultural circle in the people of the city. Failing to do so might strengthen the more visible and well-resourced assets and weaken or ignore grass-roots assets that are developed and celebrated by the people.

A proposed new park – the Tshwane Urban Park – at the western entry point into the city, is important from a number of perspectives: the planned growth of the western part of the inner city with new densities; the linkages between the inner city and western suburbs and townships; and the lack of an identifiable entry point into the city from the west. Moreover, it affirms the need for green spaces, contributes to livability and adds another possible soul space.

What is of concern is the complete absence from the strategy of the existing green spaces: Burgers Park and other parks in Sunnyside and Arcadia, which are current assets upon which to build, but gradually in a state of disrepair. Strategies need to be employed that will creatively combine the strengthening of existing assets, with the creation of new and complementary assets to form a coherent whole.

Even what is perceived by some as an urban problem, such as informal trading, should be regarded as potential "urban social capital" (Lyons & Snoxell 2005), contributing to the asset base of the city from the bottom up.

2.3 An asset register

An important exercise that has not been done in our city, is the development of a comprehensive inner city asset register, to ascertain assets, resources and services currently available (physical, economic, human, social, spiritual, educational, institutional). It is not always necessary to create new infrastructure, but sometimes significant impact can be facilitated through strengthening and/or expanding existing infrastructure, or through facilitating strategic synergies. Where there are serious shortcomings new infrastructure needs to be created. An example in Tshwane is access to child care for children of refugee families.

The question of local identity is important and the Tshwane Inner City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2005, 9) states as one of its key concerns that the inner city needs one clear, unique identity. Building upon the hidden and transparent assets of existing inner city zones will go a long way in defining such identity. Marabastad is very different from the CBD, which, in turn, is very different from Sunnyside and from the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood. Carefully woven together, the inner city might emerge as a beautiful tapestry of diversity, celebrating existing assets, as it considers the new.

Instead of having the city conform to a "conventional repertoire of manifestations", Barac (2013, 44–45) argues that one should allow the city to "be what it is", instead of beating "its idiosyncracies into the tidy form of theory" or

perceived order. Such a city, he argues, “would... be able to flourish, drawing on the restorative, ethical and seductive power of place”.

This would be to affirm the inherent spirit of a place and through the right processes animate its potential to flourish. *The art of urban animation is not well developed in Tshwane*. Partly it could be because existing assets are not recognised and celebrated well enough.

3 The fallacy of urban renewal: displacement versus *place-making*

3.1 *Urban renewal: revisited “from below”*

Urban renewal is a rather ambiguous term, with different theorists focusing on different aspects of renewal, such as increased economic opportunity and growth, increased neighbourhood stability, upgraded physical infrastructure, slum clearance, diversified housing options and re-investment by banks and private sector.

From one perspective urban renewal could be understood as physical upgrading or socio-economic reinvestment in depressed urban areas. However, from another perspective, urban renewal is accompanied by the displacement of people and even the displacement of a place’s soul. Today there are countless told and untold stories – the stories “from below” (cf. De Beer 1998, 172–173) – weighing the outcomes of urban renewal from the perspective of poor or vulnerable urban people.

In the past 20 years in the inner city of Pretoria, at least 1,500 units of low-cost housing were demolished due to new road developments (e.g. Nana Sita [formerly Skinner] Street and Nelson Mandela Drive), as well as the more recent development of the Department of Trade and Industry Campus. These units were not replaced. Nobody told the story.

The inner city revival of Cape Town is widely reported in the media. But seldom is it asked: Where did the children who lived on the streets move to? Or have they simply been displaced? (cf. Cape Town Partnership n.d.). Kotze and Van der Merwe (2000, 46) discuss urban renewal processes in the Cape Town neighbourhoods of Woodstock, Salt River, Walmer Estate, Waterkant and Bo-Kaap (cf. Garside 1993; Wilkinson & Kragolsen-Kille 2006), asking how this can be called renewal if poor people are displaced in the process.

In Woodstock, trendy redevelopments force low-income people to relocate as they can no longer afford rentals in the neighbourhoods that sometimes were home for four generations (Joseph 2014). Raymond Joseph paints a violent picture of the wealthy’s apathy at the destructive effects their investments have on the lives of poor, long-term residents of Woodstock.

Shatkin (2004, 2472) refers to the Asian cities of Seoul and Bangkok in this regard. In Seoul, during the 1980s some 3 million people were displaced by urban development projects. In a short period between 1984 and 1988, about 100,000 people were displaced in Bangkok by high-rise developments they could not access, within a 15 km radius of the centre of Bangkok. In the long run, not

only the urban poor but the city as a whole will be affected detrimentally, if poorer households are not meaningfully integrated through realistic access to affordable housing options.

3.2 Urban renewal, gentrification & displacement

Urban renewal is often accompanied by gentrification, which, according to The American Heritage Dictionary, is the “restoration of deteriorated urban property especially in working-class neighbourhoods by the middle and upper classes” (Morris 1982).

Gentrification is the process whereby middle-income people move into depressed urban neighbourhoods, upgrading housing stock, causing increased property values and the gradual displacement of poorer families who can no longer afford rent increases, or even consider the possibility of purchasing in these new neighbourhoods.

Whereas initial observers only viewed gentrification as residential rehabilitation, it became increasingly clear that gentrification was the medium used for comprehensive economic, social and spatial restructuring of society.

(Smith & Williams 1986, 3)

The poor now have to compete with professional classes for limited residential and commercial spaces close to the city centre (Shatkin 2004, 2471).

Gentrification dates back as far as the period after World War II in Paris when the city centre displaced the poor for middle- and upper-income people and new public housing was erected on the urban periphery for the poor (cf. Ellin 1996, 45–46). Workers, artists and artisans were replaced by upcoming professionals, upmarket housing and office buildings, and with these shifts a corresponding political conservatism.

Gentrification usually results in the displacement of people and businesses because it increases land values and rents even when occurring in abandoned sections of town.

(Ellin 1996, 83)

Saskia Sassen (2000, 31–33; 72–82; 106–108; 113; 125) speaks of ways in which value is assigned to land or property as over-valorisation and de-valorisation, not always appropriate to the actual value but determined by perception, prejudice, preference, race, class, or other such factors.

The tension between land value and protecting the integrity of a local space and its heritage sometimes becomes rather complex. The Bo-Kaap is an example of a historical space in Cape Town that somehow escaped the reality of forced removals. However, post-apartheid the soul of this space is at stake, as gentrification pushes up property values, causing rising costs to tenants, yet local property owners also seeing opportunities for themselves:

Reza Doutie commands a stunning view of some of Africa's most expensive real estate. His two plots in Cape Town's traditionally Muslim quarter of Bo Kaap offer a panoramic view of Table Bay, the city centre and Table Mountain, on whose steep slopes they perch.

Mr. Doutie wants to profit from South Africa's property boom by subdividing the land – in his family for six generations – to build six houses. But Cape Town's Muslim Judicial Council has thwarted his plan by issuing a fatwa, or Islamic decree, prohibiting development in the area. The dispute has divided one of Cape Town's oldest neighbourhoods and shed light on the friction caused by rocketing property prices.

(Reed 2005)

This anecdote illustrates the pressures on local urban communities and different responses by people from the same community and the same religious persuasion. In this instance a religious decree is employed to preserve spatial integrity as it is perceived by the Muslim Judicial Council. It is a response that wants to fend off the negative impacts of urban renewal and gentrification. But, at the same time, it disallows a local resident of the community to optimise the possibility of their property for increased income.

Smith and Williams (1986, 2–4; 2006) argue that capital and class are threads running through all the studies done on gentrification, reinforcing social and class differentiation. Often the gentrification and accompanying displacement processes have a racial ring to them, as white newcomers into neighbourhoods often replace poorer people from other racial groups.

One of the most disturbing critiques of gentrification is how it turns urban life into “a commodity, removed from the sense of ‘community’ which it once meant to its people” (Williams 1977, 11–20; cf. also Beauregard 1996, 36; De Beer 1998, 179). Displacement is not just a dislocation from one place to the other, but often affects the soul of a place and the soul of a people.

Displacement is affecting whole sets of rituals, life patterns, and social relationships. It is indeed placing whole communities at risk. At the heart of the issues of displacement and community destruction, is the notion of housing as a mere commodity, and the capitalist process of socio-economic polarisation”.

(De Beer 1998, 183)

Friedmann (1971, 40) reflects critically on this saying:

We are interested in territoriality not because of some obscure special metaphysics but because people inhabit these spaces, and it is these flesh and blood people who suffer the booms and busts of the economy. People are not an abstract category of labor that move mechanically at the right time and in just the right proportions to wherever economic opportunities arise. They are social, *connected* beings who live in families, households,

and communities who interact with neighbours, kinfolk, friends and families. Over time, people inhabiting particular places evolve typical patterns of speech, ritual practices, and social practices with which they are comfortable and feel 'at home'.

Displacement is not just physical dislocation, but also a dislocation from self and others. Displacement, in this sense, disturbs the city's soul. We need to foster a spirituality of space that will resist unnecessary displacement and rather concentrate on creative and inclusive place-making.

3.3 The (social) cost of 'urban renewal'

The cost of renewal and the long-term benefits for the city need to be more carefully assessed. The real impact of renewal – the social cost and the cost for vulnerable and resource-poor residents of a community – is often not assessed, either before, during or after the process has been implemented (De Beer 1998, 172).

As Cicin-Sain (1980, 50) writes:

...the process of neighbourhood revitalization could result in a variety of different outcomes or scenarios. On the one hand, neighbourhood revitalization could yield healthy, diverse communities with a mix of race, age and income. It could help cities to achieve many longstanding goals, such as improving the housing stock, increasing the tax base, keeping or attracting middle- and upper-income households to the city, bringing back business, and improving the quality of services delivered. At the same time, revitalization could be accompanied by significant social costs. Revitalization of central city neighbourhoods by upper-social-status newcomers could merely work to shift intractable problems of poverty, unemployment, and inadequate housing, to other parts of a metropolitan area through the wholesale displacement of the old, the poor, and minority residents.

Times Square, New York City, has become one of the most impressive urban regeneration projects in the world. At the same time, long-time residents of single room hotels in Times Square are now saying that they cannot even afford coffee anymore in their own neighbourhood.

Important sporting events sometimes serve as catalysts for urban renewal. When the World Cup Soccer came to South Africa in 2010, cities were gearing themselves, expecting infrastructural development and investment that could be of great benefit even after 2010 (HSRC Review 2006; Pillay & Bass 2008). Places like Sheffield invested £147 million in sporting facilities to host the World Student Games of 1991. Manchester hosted the 2002 Commonwealth Games spending more than £200 million on sporting facilities and an additional £470 million on non-sporting facilities.

But, argue Gratton, Shibli and Coleman (2005), investment in sporting infrastructure, such as big global events, is aimed not primarily at local

communities, but at image-making, the attraction of tourists and economic investment or growth. However, the economic benefits hardly trickle down to the urban poor, with the exception of some jobs on construction sites in the pre-event period.

Potential benefits to cities include new facilities and infrastructure, international reputation, increased tourism, additional employment and city-marketing (cf. Gratton et al. 2005, 987; Kasimati 2003). The possible downside includes high construction and related investment costs, temporary congestion problems and under-utilised sporting facilities of little use to local communities after the event. A growing body of literature indicates that the negatives might actually outweigh the positives (cf. Gratton et al. 2005; Gibson 1998).

In assessing urban renewal outcomes, Hemphill et al. (2004, 725) indicates the importance of adopting key performance indicators by which to measure impact, adding that “these measures should be matched to the needs of the area concerned and focused on a coherent vision of holistic regeneration” (Hemphill et al. 2004, 725). Often renewal interventions happen a-contextually, with little regard to the specific needs, aspirations and hopes of local residents. The process from inception is crucial, as well as the way in which local community members and institutions are participants in verbalising local needs, clarifying a coherent vision and envisaging the kind of regeneration to take place (cf. Hemphill et al. 2004).

Not everyone would agree. Duany (2000), arguing from the perspective of developers or investors, is of the view that neighbourhoods could accommodate a diverse mix of uses but not necessarily of incomes, suggesting that more than 10 per cent of affordable units would be beyond what developers would accept. Duany (2000; cf. also Grant 2006,70) suggests gentrification as a natural part of urban evolution that should not be resisted, as resistance to it would make government or private sector interventions in the (M)arket fail. Gentrification, in this sense, is to drive profitability on the backs of the poor who are displaced, not only physically or spatially, but, in a very real sense, experience a displacement of their humanity.

3.4 Urban renewal: radically re-imagined

The question is whether urban renewal could creatively combine physical upgrading and socio-economic reinvestment, with social inclusion and high levels of social integration, preventing the displacement of vulnerable people.

The point of departure should in my mind always be *to animate regenerative local processes, locally owned, that are radically socially inclusive, in ways that are simultaneously economically and environmentally sustainable*. If urban renewal can be re-imagined and framed in such a definition, it contains ethical criteria for measurement that will prevent displacement, dehumanisation and fragmentation which are often the results of technocratic, profit-driven and un-reflexive urban renewal processes.

Enabling such inclusive regenerative processes would require broader-based collaboratives finding common ground and common vision in pulling seemingly

competing interests together. Local communities need to assert their own agency in becoming co-constructors of their preferred future narratives, in collaboration with local, provincial and national government, as well as possible external capital. Such assertion needs to include resisting external forces that are unable or unwilling to partner with local communities on their terms.

Local agency to participate fully and meaningfully in processes affecting local communities, need to be fostered continuously in robust and deliberate ways, not to be outsmarted by consultants, experts or politicians, purporting to know better. This requires intentional learning and capacity-building spaces, building local expertise in urban management and development processes.

Since there are sufficient case studies of urban renewal projects across the world – both those that displaced the poor and vulnerable, as well as those that built integrated and sustainable neighbourhoods – those who seek for socially inclusive urban regeneration, would do well to study such cases.

Urban renewal understood as locally owned, socially inclusive urban regeneration, needs to marry what is spoken of as the triple bottom line, which is social, economic and environmental regeneration, grounded in shared values and driven by institutional mechanisms able to facilitate broad-based collaboration.

Neither renewal processes that displace or otherwise hurt local people, nor decaying communities, contribute to the well-being of local residents. To resist regeneration when local resources are depleted, service delivery poor or local infrastructure crumbling, also does not make sense. Imaginaries need to be fostered that combine local economic recovery, development and investment, with robust social infrastructure to protect, serve and include the most vulnerable, with measures to green the local economy and reconsider local use and management of natural resources.

It does not have to be either-or, although developers, investors and politicians often frame it as such, mostly in the interest of maximised profits. Private developers are unwilling to consider the inclusion of the most vulnerable in a community as a non-negotiable, and community activists are unable to embrace the benefits of certain economic investments. What is required are processes in which competing interests are negotiated, until ways are found for these interests to be complementary instead of competitive. At its deepest, it is about socially inclusive, humane, just, self-reliant and sustainable local communities.

The challenge is for such inclusionary imaginaries of urban renewal to find its way into strategic documents and practices of local government. Building Block 10 of the Tshwane Inner City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2005) speaks of Development Facilitation, but the strategy itself carries inherently contradictory ‘development paradigms’.

On the one hand it asserts the idea of *developmental* local government, which in my mind builds on the assets of local people, communities and their infrastructure (from below). But in spelling out the activities of this building block, singular emphasis is placed on ‘attracting development’ (from above)). Development from below, as human and social capital enhancement, community empowerment and

integral liberation, are made subservient to development from above, expressed in economic growth and endless expansion.

It remains a deficiency-based approach, negating existing assets and visions of local communities and allowing for urban futures to be determined almost solely through technocratic or private sector interventions.

An important role that local authorities should be playing, through policy and strategic guidelines and spatial frameworks, is to ensure collaboration and synergy between small- and medium-scale local community and economic development initiatives, and larger-scale private sector interventions. This might include the support (or creation) of local community development corporations or other institutional mechanisms, to ensure collaborative approaches to local urban development, renewal or regeneration, with an emphasis on local ownership of the process. Local authorities do not always have the skill or capacity to facilitate broad-based collaborations which, at times, can be rather complex and taxing to navigate.

In re-imagined urban renewal approaches, key questions to be asked should include:

- What are local assets, initiatives and infrastructures, to be strengthened, or replicated?
- What are local needs or deficits to be addressed?
- How should local ownership be fostered and institutionalised?
- What would the ideal institutional vehicle/s be?
- What will the cost of urban renewal be, financially, socially and environmentally?
- How can maximised financial, social and environmental benefits be gained for a local community?
- How many sustainable job opportunities and new services can be created?
- How should policies or bylaws be changed to ensure protection of the local community and its resources, while enabling innovative interventions?

3.4 Urban renewal: branding, identity & place-making

Some urban renewal processes are driven through strong branding campaigns, either building on the existing identity of an area, or creating an identity that is distinguishable.

One should not underestimate the potential benefits of a good brand. The Newtown Cultural Precinct in Johannesburg is a case in point (Johannesburg Development Agency n.d.; Newtown Improvement District 2015). Clearly branded as the cultural capital of Africa, the fruit of this intentionality is evident in new cultural, residential and commercial investments made into this area. However, it needs to be said that Newtown had a long prior history that characterised it as an African cultural hub – a place of destination – unlike any other, even before the dawn of democracy. The conceptualisation of the Newtown Cultural Precinct built on what was already there.

The City of Tshwane has formulated its city vision – and associated branding – around the idea of being an African capital city. This makes sense from the perspective of its prominence in terms of being a political, diplomatic, educational and research hub, regionally but also internationally. However, at the same time, the notion of ‘Capital City’ also evokes images of cold bureaucracy, lacking imagination, and, even, the worst of the post-colony. In many of its strategic documents, the phrase “capital image” is used.

The Tshwane Inner City Strategy, for example, speaks of diverse housing options, appropriate to the needs of inner city residents. But this gets qualified when it states that “(t)hese housing facilities must positively contribute to the Capital Image of the city, and not detract from it”. One wonders what is meant by ‘capital image’ and whether, indeed, the city lives up to its own vision? Does it reflect the dreams, fears and hopes of the diverse people calling the city home? What will housing look like to contribute positively to the “Capital image of the city”, and who gets excluded in the process?

From the perspective of the inner city neighbourhoods that I am embedded in, including Berea-Burgers Park, I would prefer a vision of the city as a “people’s place”, both aligned to the people’s struggle for political liberation and therefore access to the city; but, also, as a correction to the exclusivist imaginaries of our colonial and apartheid past.

Who gets to name the brand of a place? How attuned is the “branding” process to what lives and dreams organically among the people of a place? How are local people, institutions and interests, participating in processes to assign name, meaning and identity to a place?

Too often, urban branding and image-making, as part of strategy documents, are top-down or consultant-driven conceptualisations, detached from local struggles and aspirations, and in that sense, often unrealistic and illusionary. Building on the hopes and actions of what is already in place – ordinary people and their institutions – could capture the imagination in a much more powerful way than illusionary slogans of technocratic administrators.

The current vision statement is perhaps a honest reflection of current practices in the city, which pay lip service to participatory democracy and developmental local government, doing just enough to keep people pacified.

4 Urban space: commodity, gift or threat?

In a capitalist society, urban space becomes a *commodity* (cf. Williams 1977, 11–20; Beauregard 1986, 36). The prophet Isaiah condemned practices that turned land and housing into commodities, inaccessible for some and monopolised by others, when he exclaimed: “Woe to you who add house to house and add field to field, until it is only you in the land”.

Takatso Mofokeng (1991, 67) seems convinced that the market economy is questioning the fundamental values that sustained the poor throughout the ages, namely sanctity of life, the essence of community and solidarity as a basic

way of interaction between human beings. He says that every dimension of our society today has been penetrated by *commodification*.

A spirituality of space that seeks to foster all humanity in community, would affirm and recover urban space, and land more generally, as a *gift* to be managed fairly and distributed equitably (cf. Brueggemann 1977). Once a gift bestowed on all people, it becomes the right of all to share in this gift. Market forces alone should therefore never be allowed to dictate what happens to urban space. We – urban dwellers, citizens, planners and all who believe in a city that should embrace all people equally – need to intervene in order to facilitate socio-economic justice and fair access for all.

If the gift of space is not managed well in the interest of all urban dwellers, it presents a *threat* to those who cannot access space. Insecure tenure, or slums and informal settlements that are located precariously, present a threat not just to people's livelihoods, but also to their safety and health.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil, during the 1990s, the margins have come to the centre (Berryman 1996, 9–101). In addition to sprawling *favellas* on the urban periphery, so-called vertical *favellas* have mushroomed in inner city areas, where urban poor populations started to occupy empty buildings either spontaneously, or through well-organised land and property occupation. In the case of organised occupations, inhabitants had the support of legal and planning professionals, advocating for secure tenure and formalising of informal arrangements. This was very much a political strategy, demanding right to urban space for the urban poor.

Gift, demand and threat come together in the narrative of occupied buildings in Sao Paulo. It is an attempt to escape the threat of exclusionary urban spatial practices and a demand to participate in the gift of urban land.

Urban space, access to housing & the Tshwane Inner City Strategy

If urban space is regarded as a commodity, those with inadequate resources will never be able to access land or housing.

The Tshwane Inner City Strategy (City of Tshwane 2005) affirms that healthy inner city communities will have well-balanced housing stock that provides access to diverse housing options, both in terms of income levels, housing types and housing tenure. It includes consideration for “alternative typologies for nonfamily housing, such as orphanages, homeless and street children shelters, overnight facilities for vendors, ‘shopping tourists’, etc” (City of Tshwane 2005, 37).

It went further to suggest the necessity for a policy that would outline “the location, integration and extent of housing into the urban fabric of the inner city”, complemented by “social support facilities such as schools, day-care, libraries, clinics, etc... to support both the employment sector as well as the growing residential sector in the inner city” (City of Tshwane 2005, 37).

This was hopeful in its affirmation that urban space needed to embrace the diversity of the urban population in creative ways. However, seventeen years

later, none of the recommendations articulated above has been implemented. Although a process to draft the Tshwane Inner City Housing Strategy has been underway for a long time, enabling policies and strategies are still absent. In the meantime, various community-based housing interventions were piloted, some with great success and impact and others less so.

The changed demographic profile of the inner city since the early 1990s, together with new residential developments, had already brought about enormous challenges in terms of available schools, day care centres and facilities for sport and recreation. A policy and strategy on inner city housing today, should build on what has organically developed over the past 30 years, while preempting what might happen over the next 30 years. In addition, such a strategy could not be developed in isolation from those in the city responsible for health, social development, parks and education.

Social, recreational and education facilities need to be proactively developed to correspond with the growing residential fabric and the current demand for densification of inner city spaces. This will contribute to rectify spatial apartheid, bringing people of various income groups closer to the centre of the city, with better access to various social and economic opportunities.

The Tshwane Inner City Strategy has, theoretically at least, moved planning beyond a sterile technocratic exercise. In terms of strategy and implementation it has failed. Instead of urban space being a gift for widely diverse people, it remains an elusive commodity to be accessed by some. And large numbers of people live under constant threat of being displaced.

5 Conspiracies of silence: what planners do not speak about

5.1 Planning without values; a city without a soul

Planners, officials and housing executives are well trained in technical language and in maintaining professional distance (neutrality) from the spaces in which they work. The myth of neutrality turns urban professionals into functionaries of the status quo.

The kind of urban regeneration that will be truly inclusive and hopeful requires a new generation of urban professionals, embarking on new journeys, that combine technical expertise with value-language and value commitments. We need to recover a language and commitment that will include concepts such as sacrifice, vocation, compassion, communal living, justice, the ethics of space, dignity and equity, if we are to build cities that will not continue to perpetuate evil disparities.

A recovery of value language and commitments requires firstly to break the silence: a silence that refuses to name the exclusions of dominant urban practices; that condones unethical urban practices as inevitable; that relegates soul to a minor position as if technique is god; that is unable to imagine something radically new.

What is required is for urban professionals to overcome the dichotomy that often exists between our outer lives as professionals and our inner commitments as human, and spiritual, beings (cf. Palmer 2004). Instead of living with

unsustainable dichotomies (private vs public; spiritual vs physical), we should seek to live constructively in a creative tension between the possibilities and the constraints of our profession (public and physical) and the inner voice of conscience (private and spiritual).

This could probably only happen if planners live closer to the people they plan for, not only physically but also relationally. It could happen if there was a shift from planning for people to planning with people. It becomes possible when we embrace a community-based planning praxis that dissolves the dichotomy and takes up the creative tension in the new life lived together.

I would like to use the example of social housing. Social housing institutions are increasingly struggling to serve the poorest in the city, not being able to make its unit prices affordable for those earning between R1,500 and R3,000 per month (which include low-earning workers, disability pensioners and the elderly). The combined cost of land, construction, finances, professionals and housing administration, work against housing the poor.

Social housing institutions themselves have advocated for a policy that will lift the bracket of people eligible for social housing, both to help social housing institutions become more sustainable, but also as a possible way of cross-subsidising other forms of housing. In reality, however, most social housing institutions moved their criteria for eligibility to higher brackets of income, creating a widening gap for lower-income earners, increasingly being excluded from social housing options. Social housing institutions themselves are largely silent about such exclusions, as their own sustainability, and the more competitive salaries their staff can now draw, make them benefit from the status quo.

It is in such contexts that we need to retrieve value commitments that will help institutionalise and urbanise the values of justice, dignity and equity for all. Bridging the housing gap will not merely happen through growth models or current social housing policies and plans.

Housing providers, professionals, private and public landlords, commercial banks and the housing regulator, need to understand that housing the poor will require sacrifice – personally, institutionally and corporately – as well as innovation. Equity, socio-spatial justice or humanised housing solutions for all will not be achieved through the dominant models of growth-based housing provision. Unless we internalise and institutionalise an ethical commitment to equity, justice and dignity for all, we will participate in perpetuating unequal and exclusivist urban spaces, even in our social housing endeavours.

5.2 Fostering a new consciousness

Steve Biko (1978, 2) spoke of black people's "complicity in the crime of allowing himself (sic) to be misused and therefore let evil reign supreme in the country of his birth". In a similar way, Paulo and Ana Maria Araújo Freire (1992, 211) reflect on what he calls the "connivance" of the oppressed with the oppressors", and their seeming "fear of freedom" expressed in subservience to their employers or "owners".

Biko suggested as the first step in black liberation an inward process of allowing the liberation of the black mind, the developing of a liberated consciousness. Biko said: "The first step thereof is to make the black man (sic) come to himself; to put back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity". He spoke of this as an "inward-looking process" (Biko 1978, 29; also Halisi 1991, 109–110), that would enable them to engage and overcome external forces.

In order to break the silence and name bad power, we need to engage the captivity of our minds, our loss of imagination and our compliance as a measure so sustain self-interest. At the same time, local communities and those who are particularly marginalised from urban spatial processes, should be supported through inward-looking processes, to come to themselves; to embrace pride and dignity; to discover and assert their right to participate; to inform and shape their own living environments.

Two essential elements in such a process are for the victims of socio-spatial exclusions "to locate the oppressor 'outside' themselves" (Freire & Freire 1992, 39), overcoming the internalisation of being oppressed, and secondly, for victims of socio-spatial exclusion to be helped to acknowledge, articulate and share what they already know.

It is about a conversion of the mind; conscientisation; the eyes to see: if we dare dream of a radically different and inclusive city, we need to call forth the voices that can help us discern and name the negative forces at work; we need to evoke and nurture new movements of activism that will resist such forces; and we have to discover a more critical urban praxis, naming that which is against people and helping everyone to imagine something new.

Part of the legacy of Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement was their ability to break the silence and to articulate that which had to be overcome. This was done through creating spaces for dialogue and collective decision-making that was not restricted to a few core leaders, but that nurtured a broad-based generation of future independent thinkers and leaders for the country (Wilson 1991, 74).

Forty years later, there is a revival of Black Consciousness discourse sweeping through universities and grass-roots movements in South Africa, urgently imagining more radical change: the completion of the pseudo-revolution of 1994. We would do well to incorporate Biko, Freire and others as we imagine an alternative urban consciousness, both for the content of their discourse, but also for the epistemological and methodological liberations they embody.

The reflections contained here hope to make a small contribution towards breaking the silence, refusing to comply with urban spatial practices that exclude the poor, perpetuate discriminatory spatial patterns and subdue communities through technocratic, soulless and top-down planning interventions.

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Figure 7.1 Photo walk during the (un)shackled workshop
Source: Ribbens, M. (ed.) (2014), (adapted by K.Nel), in *(Un)shackled*. Pretoria: Through their eyes



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7 Discovering an alternative imagination: towards a spirituality of urban space

In postmodern urbanism there was a return to slowness, sincerity, simplicity and spirituality (Ellin 1996, 2–3). The modernist metaphor of city as machine was changed to text, story and collage, now suggesting not singular technocratic interventions or solutions in city-making, but a multiplicity of diverse yet inclusive elements contributing to urban ecologies.

In this chapter I explore the outline of a spirituality (or ethos) of urban space, embodying an alternative imagination of the city, expressed in different images or metaphors, each representing a vision of a city in which alternative spatial arrangements might facilitate the celebration of diversity; protection of the most vulnerable; high levels of socio-spatial justice, equity and inclusion; and the affirmation of the dignity of all urban life; through processes of social exchange, creative expression, and people's participation.

I use the language of nurture, justice, equity, dignity and solidarity, which are ethical terms and a language of the soul. The visions contained here require inner resources for it to be sustained. I speak of it as a spirituality or ethos of space, connecting our inner and outer lives, our private and public commitments, as humans engaged with city-making processes.

It is by definition a critical spirituality that combines intimacy (personal experiences and expressions) with solidarity (public experiences and expressions) (Beumer 1989, 7), moving beyond the binaries, dichotomies or false dualisms that we often (have to) maintain.

It emerges from a critical reading of urban spaces and the practices that shape it, as well as the narratives from and immersions in Berea-Burgers Park and other urban communities.

On an 'alternative imagination'

At the heart of a spirituality or ethos of space, as outlined here, is the important task of nurturing an alternative *imagination* (Brueggemann 1978; 1986). Brueggemann speaks of the alternative imagination as a hopeful or prophetic imagination or consciousness. He contrasts it with the so-called dominant or royal imagination or consciousness, in which the city and society are shaped by 'empire' or the 'king', in accordance to their interests, and where a politics of

oppression, an economics of affluence, and a religion of dominant triumphalism (cf. Brueggemann 1978, 41; 1993, 77; Linthicum 1991, 47; Birch 1991, 221–227) exist in tandem at the expense of the excluded and the vulnerable. Certain political, economic and socio-religious practices stand in services of Empire and its dictates and are oriented towards sustaining the status quo.

An alternative consciousness would critique urban society from the perspective of those who are excluded, and would offer hopeful alternative scenarios of what (anti-imperial) cities could look like if they were to be nurturing and wholesome places for all its residents.

We have often lost our ability to imagine. In the cauldron of Africa's urban explosion, and sometimes urban implosions, competing forces are at work, either to consume as much they can of finite urban resources, or to contribute to the sustenance and well-being of city people and spaces. Without the power of imagination, and the child-like ability to let go, discoveries of new ways of doing things might remain elusive (cf. Fox 1983, 227).

South African cities are filled with angry young people, despondent because of unemployment; angry tax-payers because of theft and corruption; angry and hurt people from across our borders because of how their South African sisters and brothers turned them into foreigners. We are an angry, hurt, untrusting and betrayed people. We betrayed ourselves.

Fox (1983, 261) writes: "It is imagination that steers the sparks of anger in the direction of transformation and new creation". Without such life-affirming spaces and sources of imagination, the sparks of anger can cause wholesale destruction of entire neighbourhoods and cities.

On spirituality

An alternative imagination requires a rootedness in a spirituality or ethos that will continuously inform and sustain it, preventing it from empty utopianism, and rooting it in concrete actions:

In speaking of spirituality and mysticism we are pointing toward overall visions that provide the basis for powerful convictions that give us the energy and inner enthusiasm to define a meaning for life and find a significance for the whole universe. Only a mystique and a spirituality can sustain hope beyond any crisis and even in the face of a possible collapse of the Earth-system.

(Boff 1997, 136)

I do not use spirituality in a narrow religious sense here, or even in terms of a (religious) faith commitment. I use it in the sense of certain values being held, which inform our ethic, define our praxis, and sustain our hope, in ways that will affirm life and nurture the soul of the city. Dorothee Soelle (1989, 154) holds that:

even those who profess not to believe, do then believe in the discourses that shape our reality: global capital, militarization, consumerism. We replace one God for other gods.

Boff (1997, 136–137) indicates how the relationship between humankind and nature was “based on false ethical premises and a spiritual vacuum” for hundreds of years. Human beings were placed at the centre of all creation at the expense of the rest of creation, disregarding the Earth and its resources, the neighbours on this planet, and the “spiritual depth of the universe” (Boff 1997, 137). The same can be said of the relationship between humankind and the city.

Boff (1997, 136–137) suggests that the outer ecology (structure) of the Earth (and indeed our cities) is at risk because the inner ecology – “forms of solidarity and structures of connectedness” – has been faulty. The political and social structures, including the ways in which we plan, design, build and shape our cities, too often reflect an ethic of desire, domination and consumption, lacking solidarity and communion. To overcome such a soul-destructive ethic and praxis, needs nothing less than a spiritual revolution of values – a desire for what is good. Says Boff (1997, 139): “Without a spiritual revolution, it will be impossible to launch a new paradigm of connectedness”. Solidarity and communion will remain amiss.

Professional city-makers often practice their profession without necessarily having a spiritual connection. We become technocratically detached, unable to be in awe, or to experience a sense of wonderment. We are gods of the machine – technocrats and bureaucrats, pre-programmed for the expected. Yet, the ways in which our cities unfold and the disastrous consequences of global pandemics such as Covid-19, serve us with the unexpected on a daily basis.

On city-making as vocation

The English word ‘vocation’ comes from the Latin word ‘vocare’, which means ‘to be called’; ‘to be named’; ‘to be invoked’. Understanding city-making in the sense of being called, or invoked, to make cities that are good for all who dwell in them – equitable, dignified, just and whole – is more than merely a job. Not only the professional planner or built environment specialist should consider city-making as vocation, but so should the concerned resident of a neighbourhood that becomes vulnerable; the community organiser connecting various interest groups to achieve the common good; the politician who is tasked with managing the city’s resources; or the person in the hospitality industry who welcomes the stranger in her town.

I conclude these introductory reflections on finding a spirituality or ethos of space, with reference to the thought of Matthew Fox. Fox (2000, 264) speaks in beautiful language of “the spiraling journey of creation-centred spirituality”, which “finds its fulfillment in persons responding to their prophetic vocations” (Fox 2000, 264).

There are clear parallels between four moments of Fox’s “spiraling journey” and the four moments of the praxis cycle that I have proposed in this text.

The *first moment* is that of the prophet falling “in love with creation and especially with the little ones... of creation” (Moment 1: Entering the City).

The *second moment* is her experience of “the bottomless depths of pain that wrench at the beauty and dignity of have and have-nots alike” (Moment 2: Reading the City).

The *third moment* is when she recreates, working from the experience of the depths of pain, and “working from the best that both left brain and right brain can offer” (Moment 3: Imagining/the City”).

The *fourth moment* is when she yearns for a New Creation, launching “her creativity in the direction of healing by way of compassion, celebration, and social justice (Moment 4: Designing for Action).

In this manner she – the prophet or city-maker – interferes with pessimism, cynicism, and despair, and channels moral outrage into rebirth (Fox 2000, 264).

A spirituality of space discovers the promise

that the Creator, who is not yet done with her work, desires additional delight still for the cosmos (*and the city [my insertion]*). And *we*, artists all, are to be instruments of that delight, which is the delight both of wisdom and compassion.

(Fox 2000, 228)

1 City as womb: beyond skyscraper and battered woman

1.1 *City as skyscraper*

The *skyscraper* is an urban image representing growth, power and wealth. Some refers to the skyscraper cynically as phallic symbol of male domination and pride, at the exclusion of the poor, women, children and the weak. A more positive perspective views the skyscraper as monument to human possibility and achievement, an outcome of unrestricted imagination, an ode to technological advancement.

An ambiguous symbol, the skyscraper glitters in beauty, while in its shadow the person without shelter is homeless at night. This is true of my city, but also of Bangkok, New York, London and Sao Paulo.

The skyscraper-mentality goes back to Caesar Nero in the first century after Christ. Historian and theologian Dieter Georgi (2005, 159–160) speaks of Nero who “prided himself to be a benefactor, not only of the empire at large but also of its capital Rome; and yet he “had large parts of the city destroyed”:

The lives of his subjects, their properties and their futures meant less to him than his own fame. The city for him was less a place for people to live in than an opportunity for the powerful to make themselves immortal. The stones counted more than humans, especially more than the non-wealthy ones.

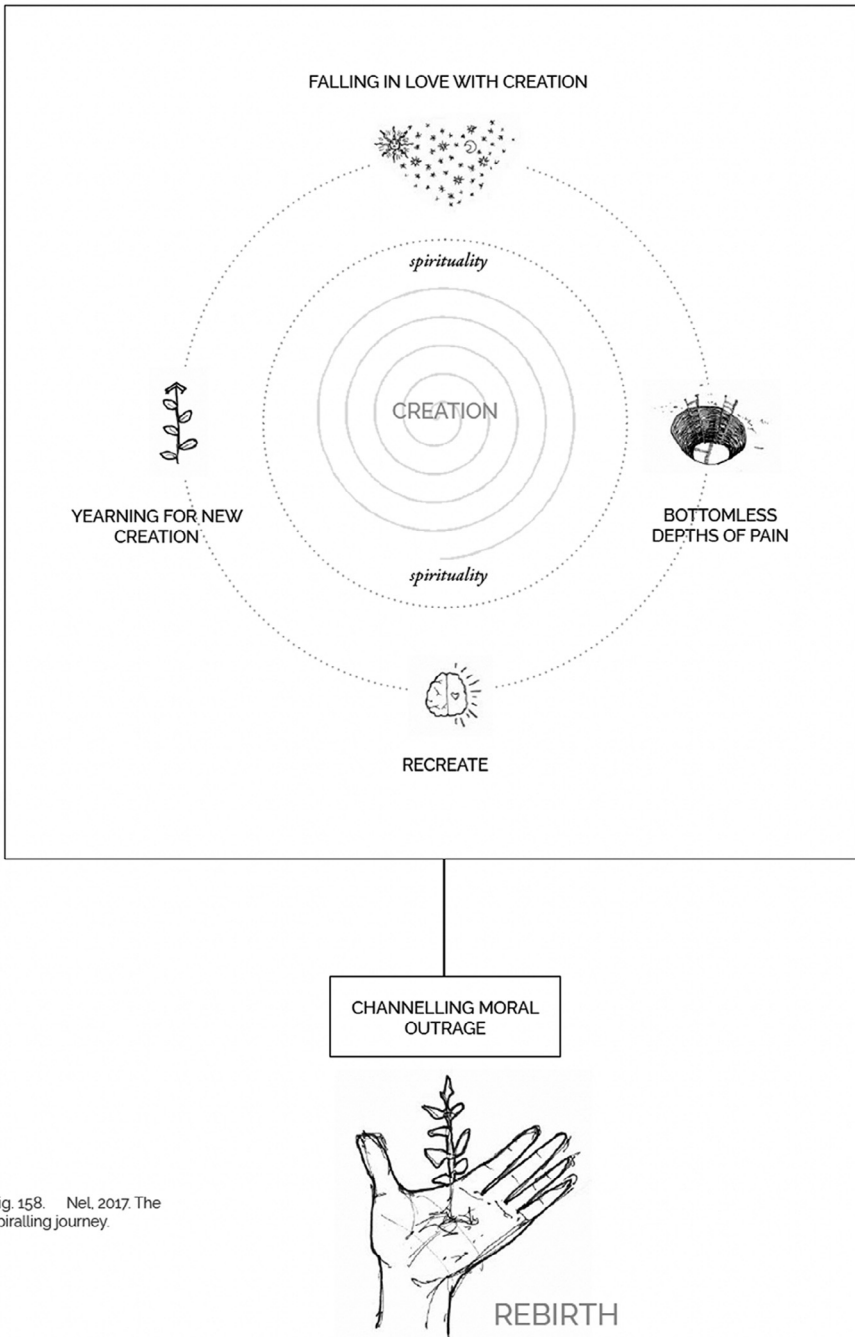


Fig. 158. Nel, 2017. The spiralling journey.

Figure 7.2 The spiralling journey
Source: Nel (2017)

The inner city of Tshwane currently unfolds with a bias towards monumental headquarters of government departments, often at the expense of play spaces, affordable housing, or liveable neighbourhoods. Stones count more than humans, especially those who are not wealthy or influential members of society. In the empire of every new age, the powerful seek for ways to immortalise themselves in edifices to their own glory.

Already in the person of the Caesar, we find traces of the empire that became “motor and protector of the growing world market and the cities and towns representing it” (Georgi 2005, xxiii). Unfortunately, it is of such an empire that the skyscraper becomes symbol.

As a symbol of ultimate achievement in a society where only the strongest survives, there is a sense in which most people aspire to the skyscraper. It is the dominant imaginary that lures us. In spite of the fact that it often resembles oppressive power, there are also the counter-narratives of participants of the skyscraper who use their power and wealth to broker alternatives for those who live in its shadows.

1.2 *City as battered woman*

Understanding the city as battered woman is suggested by feminist theologian and long-time resident of New York City, Letty Russell (1998). Battered woman stands in contract to skyscraper, and sometimes is the effect of it. Skyscraper and battered woman oftentimes co-exist in relationships of unhealthy co-dependency: the one needs the other, in toxic and manipulative ways.

Once beautiful and vibrant neighbourhoods were used by upwardly mobile residents and emerging businesses to carve out positive futures, until the lure of suburban malls and security villages drew people away, shops closed their doors, banks redlined them, the media condemned them, and the beautiful neighbourhoods became victims of abuse: battered, broken and left to fend for themselves. I described this playing itself out in the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood of the city.

After spending a day in downtown Chicago experiencing the visual glamour of the lake and the city, we drove through one of the south side Chicago neighbourhoods, where open spaces were overgrown, with signs of neglect evident everywhere. One wondered for a moment whether this neighbourhood was still under the authority of the City of Chicago, because the battered city stood in such sharp contrast to the city of the skyscraper.

And yet, battering is not always as visible as in this example. Behind the walls of suburban gated communities or luxury mansions, where the custodians of the skyscraper live, the skyscraper continues its reign of terror, conquest and submission, sometimes expressed in gender violence, child abuse, or exploitation of domestic help. The custodian of skyscraper in public can also be the battered woman in private. Public and private expressions of power overlap momentarily. There are also the numerous ‘cheerleaders’ standing behind their ‘instruments of material prosperity’, sustaining the gendered ways in which

urban spaces get shaped. The 'Real housewives of Pretoria' is a reality show that encapsulates the toxicity of all this.

1.3 City as womb

An alternative image could be of the city as womb – a place of nurture, safety and shelter, interdependence between the mother and her children, deep belonging – confirmed by the umbilical cord.

The cosmos can and needs to be imagined as a cosmic womb, a cosmic soup, in which all creatures swim. The cosmos is God's womb, the divine womb. The Jewish word for compassion is derived from the word for womb – compassionate consciousness and womb consciousness go together in all religions' imaging of compassion, both East and West.

(Fox 2000, 284)

Could we imagine the city as womb, where a compassionate consciousness is practiced in urban planning and policy, fostering a great sense of social inclusion, nurturing soul places and facilitating just interconnectedness between people and the city they are in?

Many find in the city not just skyscraper or battering, but also a strange sense of safety and security ("geborgenheid"), like a child in the womb. People would question my living in the inner city, and find my sense of being held safe in the city's arms strange.

One of the leaders of the displaced homeless community of Marabastad wrote about it like this:

Oh shine lovely day shine
Let all the window of the shop shine
Let every person feel free and safe
Oh Marabastad you are my home
If I had wing I will only fly up and
Still land on your lovely home
Marabastad wake-up people wake-up
The sun has risen every bird is sing
All the car hoot louder every hawker
Sell what they can sell

(Lilian Shongwane 1998, published in
Van der Waal 1998, 22)

Amid the squalor and struggle of this inner city neighbourhood, some like Lilian found a home, strange for many to comprehend, but such is the umbilical cord that binds mother to child. In Ndwalane's book, *Shacks, Shelters and Shanty Towns* (2007, 3), another dimension to life on the urban fringes is

depicted, uncovering the hidden assets and beauties, and celebrating displays of resilience against the odds:

Regardless of their circumstances, residents display a hopefulness that this Rainbow Nation will evolve to meet their needs, and those of all her people.

Unfortunately, the womb too is not always safe. Circumstances often pluck people from the mother, and now increasingly from the womb. The womb cannot always provide all the nurture it would need to grow completely. Similarly, there are less and less communities providing safe and nurturing (“geborge”) spaces to vulnerable urban people, spaces of which Lilian and others could say boldly, “you are our home”.

The earth itself has been subjected to human actions and interventions that robbed it of its sustenance, raising questions as to the ability of the mother to hold her children for many generations to come:

A beautiful world is being lost, and the drumbeat is really about ourselves. We are enemies, structured enemies, massively structured enemies of much of the rest of life... human and other-than-human life, invariably together, is at enmity, an enmity at the hands of those who, without wincing, still dare to name themselves creation’s stewards.

(Rasmussen 2001, 5–6)

Holding the image of the city as womb, invites both agent and victim of skyscraper and battered city, to find and create new spaces of creative, constructive and lifegiving co-habitation. It affirms our interdependence, not in the destructive sense of co-dependency, but in the liberating sense of mutuality.

In the context of urban spaces and the entire cosmos being under threat of losing their womb-like qualities, there is a profound need to revisit how we conceive of our cities. Rasmussen (2001, 1–2) suggests that “(T)hreats to planetary life systems in fact compel community spiritual-moral formation of a different sort than is written in the hearts and heads of most of us as ‘moderns’”.

It will require new spatial politics and spatial praxes, highly critical of the city as skyscraper; highly disturbed by the city as battered woman; imagining, hoping, living and acting into being new expressions of wholesome spaces. It will combine “the rage and love” of which Freire and Freire (1992, 5) speaks, “without which there is no hope”.

Human beings in the city are called to participate more consciously in the birthing process of more delightful, more nurturing and more soul-full cities:

The cosmos is still birthing, still expanding, still calling us to birth and expansion. The human race, the most recent and most surprising child of

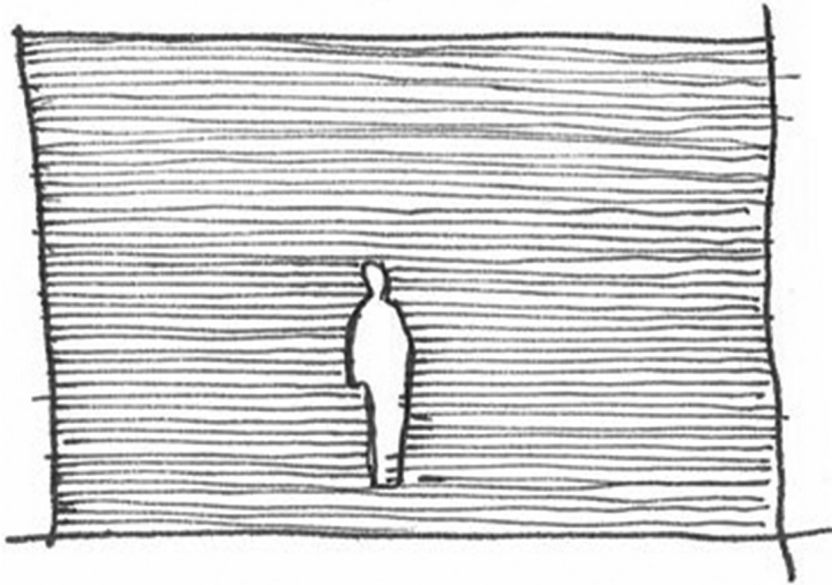


Figure 7.3 Befriending darkness
Source: Nel (2017)

the cosmos, is called to take a conscious role in this birthing process. That is what recovering the motherhood of God and the mother of god role for all people is about.

(Fox 2000, 228)

2 City as cathedral of the soul

2.1 Purpose of the cathedral

Cathedrals are like beacons, not only of spiritual connectedness but also of locating oneself in a new city or town. Cathedrals have a way of connecting people to history, both past and future; but it also creates connections between heaven and earth, and people and God.

Boyd Whyte (2003, 12) says that the cathedral, for Rainer Maria Rilke (1961, 37) “symbolized a God that does not yet exist, but who will be brought into existence by the work of the artist: “those who are solitary creators and make works of arts are building Him”.

Boyd Whyte (2003, 12) carries on saying that the cathedral was for anarchist, Pjotr Kropotkin, “a lasting moment to mutual aid, social harmony and cooperative achievement”.

Both of them spoke of it in terms of human creativity and construction, giving expression to something beautiful, spiritual or sacred.

To imagine the city as cathedral of the soul is to assign to the city the possibility of being a soul space – connecting, locating, orientating; a place not of estrangement but of attachment: to the self, others, the Other and place. It is to foster the hope, rather resiliently and at times apparently foolishly, that the city could indeed be place of belonging, mediating to its inhabitants that they are truly loved (“the beloved”).

2.2 Collapsing the distinction between public and private, sacred and profane

Imagining the city as cathedral is to “collapse the distinction between public and private, sacred and profane” (Harries 1968, 6–7; cf. Harries 1997), drawing an analogy between cathedral (sacred) and city (profane).

The city as cathedral of the soul should not be seen as an abstract, intellectual, esoteric or other-worldly notion, but as a sensual concept of experiencing something of the sacred in the city, where the solitary confinement of Creator and co-creators are replaced by a community of creativity.

At the 2008 inner city festival, Feast of the Clowns, one of the workshops was hosted by artist-activist Jennifer Ferguson on the topic “Taking back our spaces”. The bigger part of her workshop centered on the repetitive singing of two different songs, with participants dancing in a circle, almost chanting these songs repetitively, to themselves and to each other. I struggled for some time to understand how the lyrics of these songs connected to the theme of reclaimed spaces.

The one song simply said:

All I ask of you is forever to remember Me
As loving you

The refrain repeated the Hindi words, “Ishkara mabudli la, ishkara mabudli la”, which speaks of God as lover and God as beloved. But we sang the song in the context of reclaiming our spaces.

It is to find a place deep within where we can know that we are the beloved, deeply and truly embraced without prejudice, affirmed and celebrated by the Lover.

It raised the question of whether we could imagine a relationship with our city in which we could hear this refrain as we walk its streets, even if they are muddy and crowded:

All I ask of you is forever to remember me as loving you.

Or, hearing ourselves repeating this refrain as we reflect on our city, because I discovered that she is not an abstract place of cold concrete, but also a place that invites me warmly to be me, and that holds me safely as the beloved, while I say to her: “All I ask of you is forever to remember me as loving you”.

Being the beloved, here, is not framed in other-worldly terms only, but should be concretely expressed in the way urban spaces mediate life, wholeness, dignity and justice, as signs of being the beloved.

2.3 Discovering beauty against the odds

Jennifer's second song embraced beauty. It is an old Native American song, simply saying:

I walk the beauty way
I walk with beauty before me
I walk with beauty behind me
I walk with beauty all around me
I walk the beauty way

Neels Jackson (2007, 13) wrote about us singing this song in a grey old building in the inner city, and as it was sung we recreated this grey environment into something as beautiful as the singer's voice. The city becomes a soul place when we learn to see with new eyes, and to walk in ways that will recognise or recreate beauty, even in parts of the city that have become grey or cold.

Such is also the ode to Marabastad, captured in the poem of Lilian Shongwane (1998), long-time resident before the community's removal to Mamelodi Extension 6. Amid decay and despair, she discovered *safe arms* ready to embrace, *hospitable backyards* ready to provide home.

Oh, Marabastad you are Alpha and Omega
You are worthy to be praised
You are a shiny city a home for helpless
People you are Gold to those who can
Work by selling what ever they can
Sell from empty bottles to cardboxes
You make us proud by keeping us
Alive and being next to our bread
'Oh' lord see us through raining days
And keep our burning shacks safe

Those of privilege can opt out of the city, often finding it hard to discern place of soul among the broken dreams.

Even the cathedral itself could become skyscraper, or place of cold estrangement, if warmth and home are not deliberately fostered. St George's Cathedral in Cape Town has always been a place of connection, affirmation and liberation. It was a site of struggle, for liberation from apartheid, for HIV/AIDS activists demanding urgency from government. And yet, the Anglican Cathedral in Harare has in the past become the watchdog of oppression, and Rwandese churches became sites of genocide under the watchful eyes of local priests.

The cathedral of the soul could be found in places surprisingly dissimilar to the cathedral in architecture and grandeur, but rather similar in how it connects, locates, nurtures and roots. It is not always in impressive cathedrals, but in obscure shantytown churches, or in backyard *shebeens*¹, that people find connection, home-coming, soul places. Ndwalane (2007, 55) notices this strange ambiguity, referring to the conditions of informal dwellings people reside in: “On the surface, these dwellings certainly have no remarkable architectural value, but beyond that, they are spiritual abodes, places of refuge, conversation, the warmth of kindred spirits”.

The soul plays an important role in African literature and religion, where “all created things have a symbolic quality and everything speaks, as Camara Laye put it, of ‘the mystery and union between heaven and earth’” (Shorter 1978, 12). As Shorter (1978, 12) asserts: “Air, earth water, savannah, forest, mountains, are truly inhabited by genii”. The city too.

And yet, the soul has often “been dulled and deadened by the mechanical aids of technological life”, leading to what Laye would call the “spiritless soul”. What it yearns for instead is for life that is “full and abundant” (Shorter 1978, 12). Most African writers speak of the soul, not in terms of power or force (skyscraper), but in terms of community and a network of relationships (womb), from which energy and power might emanate.



Figure 7.4 Re-branding homelessness II
Source: Feast of the Clowns (2012)

2.4 *Befriending darkness*

Nurturing soul requires a confrontation with death (Shorter 1978, 12), engagement with darkness (Moore 2004), and befriending our darkness (Fox 1983, 132–177). Instead of the conspiracy of silence about death, which, according to Shorter (1978, 13), is upfront in the Western mind, “and everything is done to put it out of sight and mind”, the African worldview traditionally understood death differently. It is always mysterious and violent, and yet always “somehow a new beginning” (Shorter 1978, 13).

One of the inner city churches in our own community faced death. They had to confront their reality and either opt to die with dignity, or to live; but choosing to live for them required a death to old ways of doing things, and a new beginning altogether. Whatever they opted for, required dying. Similarly, urban neighbourhoods at the brink of death could be the locale for the regenerative work done by people in community, birthing signs of hope and life. Instead of disinvesting eagerly from places facing death, befriending darkness might be the very step required to mediate regeneration.

Shorter (1978, 14) refers to the work of African authors such as Senghor, Kayoya and others who argue against “a denial of love”, which is what allows for forces of death, decay and dehumanisation to reign supreme:

Love personalizes, brute force and violence depersonalizes those who employ such methods. Love, according to Camara Laye, means listening, nearness and sympathy... that is why a community or a nation that is built without love... is a dehumanized community.

(Shorter 1978, 14)

Befriending darkness is an act of love, personalising and humanising relationships and places, in ways that activate regenerative possibility. Some might argue against the introduction of love in the context of something (viewed) as scientific as planning. Yet, planning without love might result in the kinds of cities that dehumanise and exclude, peddling practices void of face-to-face relationship with those we plan for; avoiding the practices of “listening, nearness and sympathy”, which is a denial of love, an avoidance of (the fear of) death and decay and, consequently, the beginning of the end.

2.5 *Soul spaces are not sanitised spaces*

Le Corbusier (1967, 91) speaks of the city as a dehumanising place cursed with filth, suffocating gases, perpetual gloom and human despair. He contrasts this city with The Radiant City, the city of his vision, which is a city full of light, air and joy; a redeemed society. In much of his writing and design he made use of glass, light and crystal to give expression to his vision. Le Corbusier and others think of city-making as purification from “filth”, including in this

category both debris and unwanted human beings, and suggest interventions that could have a sanitising or salvific effect.

In and around Burgers Park young men using substances sometimes worked as commercial sex workers, mainly to sustain their addiction. A local hotel owner, together with the South African Police Services, formed an alliance to *sanitise* or purify the area from the “filth” that contaminated it, even though local residents were never heard to complain about any disturbances caused by these individuals.

Evangelical reformers of the 1830s and 1840s sought to rid England from the “great social evil” of prostitution (cf. Watson & Gibson 1995, 60; Walkowitz 1980), being both a social threat and a sign of disorder, reversing the natural (patriarchal) hierarchies of society. Prostitution was responded to through acts of rescue, rehabilitation, reform and legislation. French bureaucrat, Alexandre Parent-Duchtelet, suggested strict regulation of the industry, ensuring that every woman had a dossier with detailed information on her life, on record, to enable better surveillance.

In 19th century urban life in England, *every* woman became a “public woman” (Watson & Gibson 1995, 61). Women who were visibly “unattended” and “unowned” in public spaces such as pavements, streets, cafés and theatres, were equated to prostitutes. Their very presence constituted a threat to male power and fragility, calling for increased measures of urban surveillance and domination.

In 20th century, architectural discourse the image of the new Jerusalem is often prevalent, including the notion of urban reform that will incorporate “moral and ethical improvement” (Boyd Whyte 2003, 179).

Spatial sanitisation even found its way into the fun spaces of Universal Studios Theme Park, where there is a sign posted with 14 different transgressions, warning visitors of the consequences for noise, singing, playing musical instruments, or sitting on the ground for more than five minutes (Ellin 1996, 169). Ellin (1996, 171) suggests this as an example of a sanitized space going insane, deepening and legitimising inequalities between people. She speaks of a “dis-guided and anonymous” use of power, reinforced by mass media, as people become “terrorist and terrorized”.

It is often in the perceived chaos of diversity, excitement, and the tapestry of human expression and behaviour, that humanity and the urban soul are found. Attractive and successful cities are marked by both considerable physical qualities but also by the variety of mix and activity (Tibbalds 1991, 23). It is the presence of people on the streets, whether the shoemaker working informally on the streets of Pretoria or Beijing, or the tourists in Amsterdam or Bangkok, that continue to make cities lively and interesting places (cf. Tibbalds 1991, 28). Yet:

new environments are often characterized by spread out and mediocre buildings, and uncomfortable arrangements for pedestrians, designed more for the benefit of vehicles and devastating effects on the humanity of the city.

(Tibbalds 1992, 39)

We have become good at sanitising the soul from our spaces.

2.6 *Soul-less simulations*

Apart from the sanitised city, or even as an expression of it, is the creation of the simulated city. People frequent Monte Casino, an upmarket centre in the north of Johannesburg, offering a shopping experience, entertainment and a casino, as well as a hotel and conferencing venue, designed to simulate an old Italian walled city (Steinglass 2002).

Inside the city, wanderers enjoy the colourful washing hanging between buildings, and the experience of chaos and vibrancy. And yet, it is only bearable because it is a simulation. In the real city, middle-class people dislike washing on lines between buildings, and where it occurs, quick intervention is required to prevent further decay.

Simulation, as an expression of sanitisation, also tends to go insane. Ellin (1996, 161) writes:

“One entertainment executive explained that his company uses fibreglass rather than granite or rock because you get a very artificial experience with real rock”.

Image-making has become an important focus of many urban design, renewal or city-making processes. The entertainment industry, including cultural and sporting events, have been embraced and propagated as possible catalysts of urban change and regeneration (cf. Ellin 1996, 161). Theme parks, hotels, casinos and sport stadiums have all been successfully employed to facilitate large-scale urban change and economic development. The Victoria & Alfred Waterfront in Cape Town, the Baltimore Harbour, and the stadiums built for World Cup Soccer events or the Olympic Games, are all examples of such interventions.

Some of these developments have facilitated soul-spaces, stimulated local economic development and assisted in the empowerment of local communities and economies to become more self-reliant. Others have perpetuated displacement, inequalities and estrangement from the city. The simulated city can be a bridge between diverse socio-economic groups, but it can also heighten the walls of separation. How can the art of simulation be employed to build real, inclusive, soul cities?

3 Clown city: a place of fantasy and festivity

3.1 *The (lost) art of fantasy and festivity*

Harvey Cox (1969), in *Feast of the Fools*, lament the loss of fantasy and festivity, both in theology and in the city. He speaks of it as the lost capacity for artful imagination and playful celebration.

In my own city monumental projects such as new government headquarters and the Freedom Park Monument are masqueraded as works of imagination and spaces for celebration. Yet, these constructs are often counterfeits, not emerging from the people, but postcolonial edifices of power.

On the other hand, in urban neighbourhoods that are supposed to be poor and powerless, one often gets disarmed by the spontaneous outbursts of celebration, and the imaginative displays of creativity. In the slums of Rio de Janeiro thousands join the frenetic annual activity to prepare and participate in the Great Carnival (cf. Soelle 1993).

Ndwalane (2007, 15) discovers soulfulness in places conventionally regarded as hopeless, where people have nothing left but hope:

The spirit in these humble surrounds is overwhelmingly joyous and welcoming. An exuberant throng of children eagerly awaits their turn on a round-a-bout in the village. Growing up with few material assets, it is more often the children's playful imaginations that will keep them occupied until their parents call them in for the evening meal.

Their tenacity of hope keeps poor neighbourhoods alive, against the odds. And their hope is fed by imagination and celebration.

3.2 Art and play as expressions of a compassionate city

Cities are compassionate in as far as they are able to facilitate the humanity of people, and creating safe communal spaces in which to express these. In the design and constructs of the city there is often little space left for local people, and even less for those who are particularly vulnerable. Art and play made accessible can help foster inclusive communities of belonging, being expressions of a caring, compassionate city:

Compassion is about celebration because it is about what people and other creatures do or ought to do with one another when they find themselves together.

(Fox 2000, 284)

Matthew Fox (2000, 15), in countering a dualistic worldview that juxtaposes body and soul, suggests an approach that will bring together art, spirituality and social justice in the process of (urban) social transformation: "When we play again at this trinity we will have regained the power and passion and imagination that social transformation requires" (Fox 2000, 215).

Fox (2000, 284) emphasises the importance of playfulness as "a way of resolving deep pain and division... a way out of aggression". Eskimo tribes, when war is brewing between them, select the best poets from each tribe to hold a poetry contest. The jury consists of an equal number of members from both tribes. Fox (2000, 24) writes: "The winning poet wins the war for both

sides. Here is an instance of art as healing". Instead, in our culture, Fox (2000, 284) writes, "which does not value playfulness or Eros... we lock ourselves into trillion-dollar military budgets, and imagine we can buy security".

Leonardo Boff (1997, 126), similarly, speaks of the importance of celebration and dance for indigenous people, helping them to sustain themselves and their land. Celebration and dance "create the conditions for experiencing the divinity"; gave "bodily substance to humankind's original vocation" and became "an expression of their deepest selves, which helped them be humanized, integrated and happy" (Boff 1997, 126).

In our technocratic urban praxes, we fail to embrace celebration, dance and the arts, as tools for interpreting the city, spaces for public expression on urban issues, and ways of mobilising people's action in and on behalf of the city.

Public art; the urban jester

For Nietzsche, the artist – as jester – is the one who goes where no one dares, creating that which used to be inaccessible (cf. Boyd Whyte 2003, 10). Public art is aimed at creating spaces – material, virtual or imagined – within which people can engage creatively, giving expression to communal self-reflection, enquiry, struggle or aspiration (cf. Sharp, Pollock & Paddison 2005, 1003–1004).

It is the function of public art to participate in the invention and reinvention of public life, to contribute to public discourse, to resist and reconstruct through its imaginative interventions (Patsy Philips, in Greed & Roberts 1998, 122). Malcolm Miles (2005) speaks of public art as "(i)maginative interventions" expressed in different ways. A good example of artistic intervention is the one-line aphorisms of Jenny Holzer, printed as commercial fliers and distributed in Manhattan in 1976, with phrases such as "Housing is a human right" (Greed and Roberts 1998, 116).

Public art could be placed outdoors, in the form of monuments or figures; it could be the way in which urban design integrates art and craft through landscaping, building design or the use of street furniture; or it could be the way in which artists intervene in public issues. The gift of public art is inhibited though, by the erosion of public space, the privatisation of space, as well as the emergence of multiple publics, sometimes conflicting, instead of one unanimous public or community (cf. Greed & Roberts 1998, 121).

Graffiti, as one form of public art (Spocter 2004; Sharp, Pollock & Paddison 2005, 1015), creates a platform for self-expression and a space to be heard: "Graffiti artists view graffiti as giving them a voice in an anonymous urban space" (Spocter 2004, 292). Embraced by some, co-opted by others, and downright rejected by still others, it is an example of public art that probably elicits the harshest of responses. In Cape Town, bylaws were introduced to outlaw graffiti as a criminal offence (Spocter 2004, 292), "environmentally offensive" and a "public nuisance". It is treated with disdain and ignorance by many viewers (Spocter 2004, 294).



Figure 7.5 March of the Clowns 2009
Source: Feast of the Clowns (2009)

Failing to interpret the voices of these artists is a serious failure to read and affirm local culture and its diverse and contesting voices. Spocter (2004, 292) and Mata (2000), in considering how best to read and interpret urban spaces, advocate for an embrace of graffiti as urban vernacular that can potentially help us in navigating the city culturally.

Jane Golden (2012, xii-xiii) directs a mural arts programme in Philadelphia and describes the power of this medium:

As local leaders began to see the power of murals to represent their values and hopes – to capture memory, to mine the rich social imagery that lies beneath the surface, and to spur social action to reclaim communities – murals became emblematic of a newfound agency.

In her beautiful book, *If these walls could talk*, Maureen O’Connell (2012, 12) reflects on murals as “sites where we discover the practices that sustain life in community and faith in the midst of poverty”. To O’Connell (2012, 11), murals are “theological sites” expressing how communities wrestle with life and death.

Although public art can contribute to critical and constructive urban discourse, social inclusion and social justice, Sharp, Pollock & Paddison (2005) also acknowledges that public art can reinforce cultural domination and exclusion, through what it depicts.

Artful urban regeneration

Art has the potential to contribute to urban regeneration through the symbolic potential it carries, expressing heritage, identity or local culture, reaching pockets of people not being reached by other activities (Evans 2005, 866), and drawing people into spaces that are vibrant and alive (Arts Council 1989; cf. Miles 2005, 896). It has the ability to reclaim spaces for fantasy, festivity and creative expression.

Apart from theatres and other venues in the Newtown Precinct requiring market-related entrance fees, the Mary Fitzgerald Square offers diverse opportunities to access the arts, and many community arts programmes are offered in the Precinct, either in the form of dance, photography, visual arts or commercial theatre (cf. Ferreira 2004; Johannesburg Development Agency n.d.).

An obvious danger is what Miles (2005, 896) speaks of as the “marketization” of the arts, being co-opted into a profit-agenda and running the risk of



Figure 7.6 Bogota Mayor, Antanas Mockus, with his ‘bullet proof’ vest
Source: Unknown (n.d.)

losing its critical or radical edge (Miles 2005, 890–891). Another danger is that only Culture with a capital letter – traditional high arts – is employed and resourced in processes of urban regeneration, at the exclusion of emerging, spontaneous and grass-roots cultural expression (Zukin 1995, 12–13). Landry (2000) warns that such a narrow representation of culture “mirrors the professionalization and bureaucratization of both cultural and other public policy realms and decision-making structures” (Evans 2005, 277).

3.3 *Festivals in the city*

Festivals combine celebration, imagination, art and play.

Bernadette Quinn (2005) describes the meaning of festivals historically. She (2005, 928) refers to Turner (1996, 11) stating that all people in all cultures “recognize the need to set aside certain times and spaces for communal

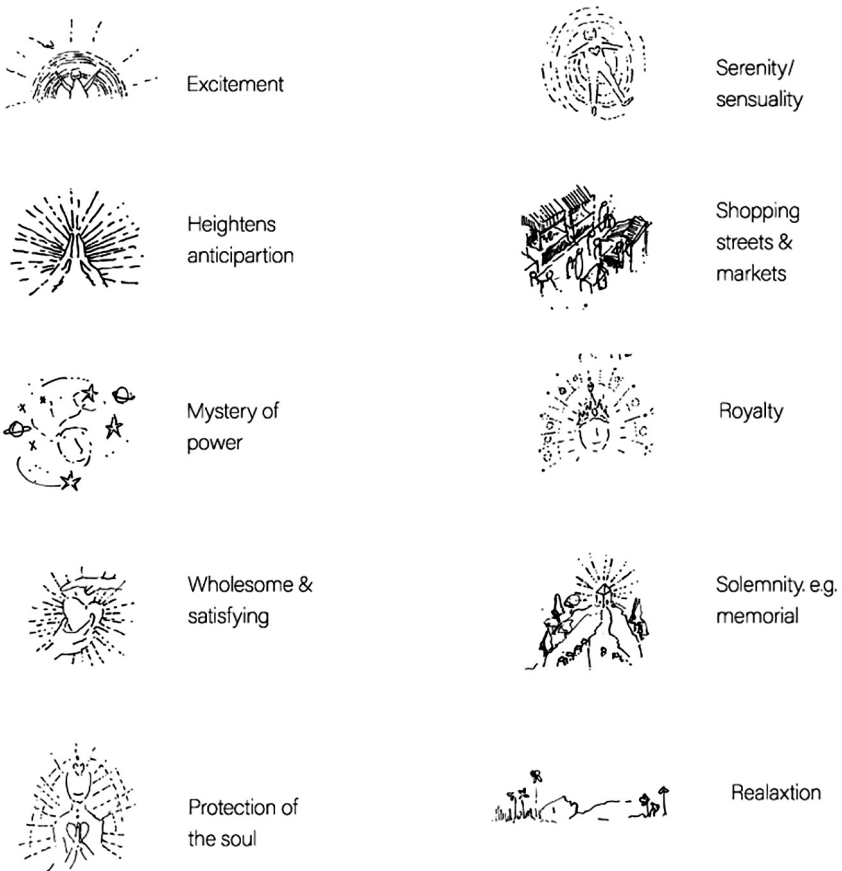


Figure 7.7 Harlequin spaces
Source: Nel (2017)



Figure 7.8 Schouwburgplein
Source: Huffenreuter (2005)

creativity and celebration, and festivals have long constituted a vehicle for expressing the close relationship between identity and place”.

Historically festivals were places of community or:

“mechanisms through which place-based communities express identities, celebrate communally held values and strengthen communal bonds”. These were people’s festivals, growing from the bottom-up. In addition, festivals offer possibilities for “challenging social conventions, social order and authority, and inventing society’s cultural norms”.

(Quinn 2005, 934–935)

These possibilities “of involvement and participation, and the potential to challenge, re-order, subvert and disrupt” (Quinn 2005, 934), are compromised when festivals are commercialised. Economic considerations then outweigh artistic, cultural or justice considerations, and artists’ ability “to question, challenge and criticize” is limited (Quinn 2005, 934).

Many cities invest in festivals “as part of their urban regeneration and city marketing strategies” (Quinn 2005, 931). The emphasis then becomes investment through tourism, diminishing the place of local participation and social critique. Some festivals start small and local, but as they grow and demonstrate regenerative possibilities, they are co-opted by investors, and becoming “increasingly exclusive and inaccessible” (Quinn 2005, 934).

Quinn (2005, 931) argues that cities should regard festivals not only for its economic value, but for its potential contribution to local community, social and cultural empowerment. In the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood, the Feast of

the Clowns has become an annual event in response to disinvestment from the city by white residents and white capital. It sought to write a counter-narrative to the overwhelmingly negative discourses about the inner city in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Reclaiming and democratising space, the festival is a public theatre, bringing professional and grass-roots community artists together, offering activities for children, spaces for considering social justice concerns, and contributing to local community-building.

Miles and Paddison (2005, 52) add another component, emphasising how festivals are able to activate new urban entrepreneurialism, awaking creative capacities from within communities, instead of relying completely on professional cultural workers from outside. They speak of this as culture-led urban regeneration, with a focus on local community assets.

In creating so-called ‘third spaces’, festivals allow for strangers to play, create, dance and imagine together. In doing so, festivals offer a dangerous critique of the exclusivist city that perpetuates barriers. For a couple of years, participants in the Feast of the Clowns were banned from wearing clown faces in their annual March of the Clowns. It was considered a breach of the city’s bylaws. It was explained that, should a riot break out, instigators could not be identified behind their clown faces. The clown unmasks the fear of the sanitised colonial city.

3.4 Clowning in the city

Cities that cannot laugh at themselves tend to cling to false images of what they are not. The city needs the clown to remind her of her frailty; that she is at best a human construction bound to fail at times; and that we should never take ourselves too seriously as leaders, planners or citizens of the city. The vocation of the clown is to put a mirror before us (cf. Nouwen 1979).

Occasionally when one leaves our city in an eastern direction, using Stanza Bopape Street (what used to be Church Street), passers-by are surprisingly distracted by the sight of elephants along the side of the road. That is when the circus comes to town, with elephants, clowns and other performers in tow.

Cities need to attend to their distractions: the sudden influx of refugees; ongoing power failures; growing annoyance with incorrect municipal billing or specific incidents of crime; or disgruntled workers marching through the streets. Instead of burying our heads in the sand, in distractions lie the potential of becoming good and responsive cities, taking all its inhabitants seriously.

In the city of Bogotá in Colombia, Antanas Mockus served as Mayor of the city for two terms (1995–1997; 2000–2003) (cf. McGuirk 2014, 207–230). He understood something about “politics as performance” (McGuirk 2015, 219–222):

As head of the Universidad Nacional he was derided as the “Clown Rector”. As a politician he was the “clown mayor”. This is the man who

dressed up as a caped crusader called Supercitizen... the holy fool, who made a point of always telling the truth and who dared to believe in his fellow citizens' potential for good. By the end of his two terms the homicide rate fell by 70 per cent, traffic fatalities dropped by 30 per cent, water usage was down 40 per cent, tax revenues had tripled and the city's finances were coming into the black.

(McGuirk 2014, 2009)

He sought to embody in himself, and the practices he embraced, what he saw for Bogotá:

Once, his security team forced him to wear a bulletproof vest. In protest, Mockus took some scissors and cut a heart-shaped hole in it right over his heart. With that act, he transformed a piece of armour into a symbol of compassion.

(McGuirk 2014, 222).

The elephant causing a stir among tired commuters, marchers stopping the traffic for hours, or the beggar by the side of the road, all remind us that the city is a place of competing human interests, aspirations and struggles. It is in recognising each other, and being disarmed once in a while, that we will find the resources and the ability to build good cities:

Rome is a good city in which to become aware of the need for clowns. This large, busy, entertaining, and distractive city keeps calling us to join the lion tamers and trapeze artists who get most of the attention. But whenever the clowns appear we are reminded that what really counts is something other than the spectacular and the sensational. Clowns remind us of what happens between the scenes. The clowns show us by their "useless" behavior not simply that many of our preoccupations, worries, tensions, and anxieties need a smile, but that we too have white on our faces and that we too are called to clown a little.

(Nouwen 1979, 108–109)

3.5 Harlequin spaces for harlequin people

Turner (1996, 189–198) suggests that we need "harlequin plans for harlequin spaces, to suit our harlequin lives". Good cities will creatively integrate diverse spaces to give expression to the diversity of human emotions and activities. Turner (1996, 189–198) writes:

By turn, we feel solitary, gregarious, adventurous, amorous, aggressive, bored and excited. These, and all the other moods, some of which can be symbolized by colours, deserve accommodation in the public realm of a town.

Very concretely, Turner (1996, 189–198) speaks of how different emotions can be expressed by different colours, and how these should be captured spatially to allow for healthy human expression.

A good example is the Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam:

Amidst a fascinating light show an Italian tightrope walker balanced above the heads of his audience below him, an illuminated stage on which mystical African stilt-walkers slowly stride forwards to the sound of a Cuban drum band. It is party time in the multicultural metropolis of Rotterdam.

(A1 Rotterdam 1997, 27)

This square was designed by landscape architect, Adriaan Geuze, and officially handed over to the city on 21 June 1997. Says A1 Rotterdam (1997, 27): “Walking over the square... you feel both actor and audience at the same time. Geuze has given the people of Rotterdam a true city stage”. City’s need stages where life can be displayed in all its diverse expressions, agony and beauty. The Schouwburgplein provides such a space.

In Johannesburg the Maboneng Precinct lured people through its harlequin-like tapestry of unique, colourful and sometimes quirky spaces, uniting rastas, hipsters, arty types, salsa dancers and suburbanites. The occasional interruption from surrounding residents of Jeppe, often extremely precarious in their living conditions, remained a reminder though of Maboneng as an illusionary island not yet able to fully integrate socially vulnerable citizens living in its vicinity.

4 City as community of communities

4.1 *Warm, inviting places*

Maybe a clown city – making space for laughter, fantasy, festivity, distraction and the possibility of being disarmed – is better able to facilitate a city of intimate human community. Cities are often perceived as cold concrete constructs, turning people into anonymous and tragic objects, and strangers to themselves, their neighbours and the city itself. Yet for many the city *is* a place of community and belonging; a warm and inviting place they would hardly exchange for anything in the world.

Harvey Conn (1987, 37–64) sought to deconstruct myths about the city, among them the myth of faceless numbers. He suggests that people in the city create new networks of relationships and communion, often not in their immediate neighbourhoods as would be traditionally expected, but in their work places, sport clubs, and other places of meeting and social exchange. In the changing inner city of Pretoria, the corner stalls of informal traders selling vegetables, the 24-hour petrol stations, and the local Taverners’ Village are new expressions of community and social exchange.

The *flâneur* often expresses an ambiguity about the cities in which s/he wanders. Stef Bos (1992) expresses it in the lyrics of his song, *Mijn Stad* (My

city), in which he speaks of his love for his city – a welcome haven for some; but he also expresses his hatred for a city that sometimes cruelly and arrogantly exclude those who are strangers and outsiders.

Refugees and asylum-seekers might find the city a cold and hostile place, and yet, in the midst of their estrangement they sometimes find surprising signs of warmth and embrace. The Scots International Church (2021) in Rotterdam, the Paulus Kerk Rotterdam (n.d.), the Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg (Kuljian 201; Hankela 2014), the Ethiopian restaurant in Sunnyside, Pretoria, or Greenmarket Square in Cape Town, are examples of places where asylum-seekers or foreigners find connection and acceptance, despite their current social status.

The Paulus Kerk² offers hospitality in different ways: to homeless people and substance users; through support groups for LGBTQI people; through journeying with those who sometimes struggle with the dark sides of sexual behaviour therefore being ostracised by society. At the Paulus Kerk they are offered a safe space in which to tell their stories, share their hopes and fears, and find companionship as they seek to journey in and with the paradoxes of life.

4.2 The gift community: a place of mutual exchange

Mike Greenberg (1995, 40–41) speaks of the importance of exchange in building community, but also of community as locus of exchange:

If there is not exchange to establish mutual bonds of relatedness and interdependence, there is not community. But if there is not community to transmit culture richly and differentially to individuals, there is no new value to exchange.

Exchange helps to foster what Greenberg (1995, 40) calls the “gift community”:

The gift community exists to the extent that people recombine what their culture has differently transmitted to them, create new value from these recombinations, and make that new value available to each other through exchange.

Certain neighbourhoods have greater potential to facilitate such gift communities, in Greenberg’s view (1995, 53):

to create a community fostering such exchange and sharing one will build a place with close interaction, many people living and working in close proximity, diversity of thought and custom, encouragement for recombinations of diverse patterns.

In reference to the modern American city and planning discourse, and yet this also speaks of South African urban patterns, he continues to say:

But proximity, diversity, and connectedness are the very qualities that modern planning policies and real estate development practices increasingly, fanatically sought to eliminate from American cities in the decades after World War II. Urban and suburban areas grew up after that war that don't behave like cities, don't look like cities, don't work like cities – aren't cities. The name is the same but the phenomenon is different.

(Greenberg 1995, 54)

In a quest to return to the authenticity of the city as community and place of exchange, Greenberg identifies the pseudo-city, which has exorcised from its soul the essence of what defines it. The city as community will not happen accidentally but needs to be intentionally shaped and planned for: “we have neglected to build or maintain neighbourhood structures that encourage us to participate and engage near our home” (Greenberg 1995, 118).

In a place like Berea-Burgers Park, the priority of vehicles over people has caused planners and engineers to create major thoroughfares into the city and out of the city, ripping through the heart of residential areas, challenging the possibility of neighbourhood and exchange:

...because the neighbourhood is the part of town that is geographically closest, perceptually most familiar, and (in the ideal) psychologically most comfortable to the people who live or work there, the neighbourhood is potentially the most efficient nexus of social, cultural, and economic exchange. But in order to realize this potential, the opportunities for exchange must exist within the neighbourhood and these opportunities must be laid out geographically in relation to each other and to the neighbourhoods residential areas in such a way as to yield economies of form.

(Greenberg 1995, 150)

This requires a different conceptual framework, shifting from major thoroughfares linking residential areas, to “an array of neighbourhoods, each with its own centre” (Greenberg 1995, 151).

4.3 *Virtual community*

In the new world we live in, many people find their community, their closest social exchange and most intimate personal sharing, not in the face-to-face and physical interaction with others, but in the virtual city of chat rooms, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. Licoppe (2004, 135) speaks of the way in which “absent ones make themselves present” and how such “absent presence” has grown rapidly with the advent of the “information society”.

Today there is a new pattern of social relationships, often expressed in a multiplicity of communities marked by *absent connectedness* and being managed through the use of sophisticated communication technologies. This creates new questions, not necessarily only about the city, but about the quality of

human relationships, and the changing nature of human intimacy. Millions seem to search for intimacy through “faceless” or “face-time” conversations with strangers, perhaps because such “absent presence” feels safer than close physical proximity.

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the digital revolution even further, with millions shifting from physical work spaces and face-to-face meetings to virtual work, continuing into the ‘post’-pandemic era. Religious gatherings were replaced during Covid-19 by virtual gatherings, and many worshipping communities felt a sharp decline in physical attendance once the acute phases of Covid-19 subsided. Those with the resources continue with hybrid arrangements.

Although the above is true, increased digital connectivity does not completely replace the need for physical proximity, touch and place. More than two decades ago Ellin (1996, 8) indicated that an increasingly digital culture is often accompanied by a “simultaneous uprising of local cultures and expressions of place”. It seems as if the increased virtual proximity sometimes increases the need for physical presence; while negative experiences of in-person proximity, has people retreat into virtual spaces; in an on-going cycle of events.

While some people still try to come to terms with the virtual revolution, or actively resist it, activist communities are able to organise thematically in a much broader and quicker way than before; dating apps facilitate connections very locally but also internationally; geocaching adventures lead people into cities and towns across the world; and friends and family divided by distance and physical space, can speak to each other as if in the same room.

4.4 The city as multiple, intersectional, overlapping communities

The city today is a community of multiple, intersectional and overlapping communities, finding expression physically and virtually.

Community can be referred to as a group of people living in the same location, or as a social or anthropological category, referring to people sharing similar characteristics. I use community also in a deeper qualitative sense, referring to the sense of exchange, belonging, shared identities, shared rituals, shared values, solidarity, communion, interconnectedness, or family.

I do not suggest community based on narrow definitions of self-identity, but rather in terms of pluralistic or shifting identities in relation to self, and others (cf. Sen 2006, 18–39). I could participate in many different communities at the same time: a group of cyclists that I spend hours on the road with; a home church gathering once a week; my work community, both immediate as well as the extended professional networks I belong to; a study group I participate in as part of a postgraduate degree programme; and my immediate family, extended family and different circles of friends. I might also belong to a variety of WhatsApp groups or other virtual communities exchanging ideas on topics ranging from neighbourhood safety, to photography, to the latest recipes.

4.5 *Between individualism and community*

Georgi (2005, 93) describes how cities in the Greco-Roman world became the locale for “the formation of the human, as individual person and as social being”. Cities became “the training centres” for humanity, however, it was the individualised concept of being human that became more dominant in the Greco-Roman world, at the expense of being human in community.

The original seeds of such an individualised humanity, taking shape already in Greco-Roman cities, remained with us until today. The way in which individual vehicles of the well-to-do have priority over the mobility of thousands of pedestrians, or the possibility of public transport, is one expression of that.

There are cities that experiment with bold alternatives. The City of Vancouver (2022) expresses its vision in the following way: “The City of Vancouver’s mission is to create a great city of communities which cares about our people, our environment and our opportunities to live, work and prosper”.

It is a city made up of 23 distinct communities. On the city’s formal website each community has its own community profile that includes information on history, heritage, planning, zoning, local services and resources (community centres, libraries, schools, fire halls, community organisations), future plans, local community events and more. The City of Vancouver prides itself in envisioning a city marked by “livability, innovation, sustainability and diversity/inclusion”. They have won numerous awards for their ability to weave diverse populations together into coherent neighbourhoods, and have created the



Figure 7.9 Sustainability and peace
Source: Nel (2017)

position of a multicultural social planner within the local authority, to be based in every community.

One of the symptoms of harsh individualism is what Glancey (1999, 173) calls “the politics of selfishness” in which individual choice outweighs communal consideration:

Today, those of us with money and a degree of health and security are offered an ever-increasing choice, not only of things, but of ideas and ways of ordering our lives. The free market enables those who live in cities to satisfy our apparently insatiable and urgent demand for whatever we want – a quarter-pounder with cheese, London buses the colour of a packet of Refreshers, 15 pounds’ worth of unprotected sex, sushi and Thai noodles at four in the morning...

Glancey (1999, 175) suggests that a continuation of a politics of selfishness will leave our cities to disintegrate into ever smaller splinters, unable to nurture the kind of communities and connectedness that could sustain society.

Redeeming the soul of the city would include investing time, creativity and resources in shaping spaces that would foster community and exorcise perceptions or realities of the city as a cold, discriminatory, selfish or exclusive place. One way would be to invest in social planners per neighbourhood: immersed, incarnate and in solidarity.

4.6 What only communities can do...

Donna Shaper (1989, 120) speaks of the power of community:

Only communities can shut poverty off at its tap in greed. Only communities can stop war. Only communities can restore streets to dwell in and land to grow in and schools to learn in. They can do these things because they understand what’s really important, which is their life together.

Communities understand better than big systems or institutions do, because, as the clown reminds us, life is about the common place that happens between the big events or dazzling construction projects. We should not idolise community, Shaper (1989, 120) warns, as it always carries its own shadow of illusion, failure, selfishness, and incompetence, with it. And yet, community as the place where common people come together – the urban dwellers sharing their lives in local neighbourhoods – has the potential to do something new in cities.

The streets will be restored when communities take back the powers they have given away. On that day the big systems won’t have a prayer, and the communities will not need so many.

(Shaper 1989, 120)

5 Sustainable cities, communal economies

Who knows the patterns of our lives before our days are spun?
 Who knows the reason why, and how, before it's all begun?
 The One whose hand weaves all with love and mystery and care;
 The One whose thread and warp and weft are flesh and earth and air!
 (Messenger 2001, 183)

Sustainable cities could never be a realistic vision, if we fail to see the city as deeply interconnected and interdependent communities. It is our fragmentation, denial of the other, and refusal to recognise that our actions have an effect on others, that allow us to develop lifestyles, practices and policies, that threaten the future existence not only of our city, but of our entire planet, because of our exclusivist, exploitative and ego-centred nature.

There is no mainstream development agency today, from the United Nations Development Programme to the World Bank, that does not have sustainable urban development as a very clear objective (Pieterse 2004, 8). Sustainability speaks of the way in which resources are managed and shared within the household of humanity (*oikonomos* = economy), but also of how the structure of the household is managed and maintained in the process of developing and utilising resources (*oikologos* = ecology). Sustainability is not just about the environment but also includes issues relating to economics, land use and institutional well-being (cf. Pieterse 2004, 13).

One of the greatest challenges of cities everywhere, but especially in the global South, is the question of economic, environmental and human sustainability. Theories of compact cities and densification seek to address the effects of continuous urban sprawl and decentralisation (cf. Jencks & Burgess 2002; Oranje 1997, 246–247). With reference to South African cities, Dewar (2002, 217) speaks of the challenges to urban policies and practices:

[The current sprawling, fragmented and separated urban form of South African towns and cities is entirely unsustainable. Greater compaction is essential. There is an increasing national awareness of the need for this and of how it might be achieved technically, but there are a number of entrenched policies and practices which need to be changed if rapid improvement is to happen. The critical variable is political will.

Nan Ellin (1996, 67) refers to Safdie (1970), Carson (1962), Schumacher (1973), and others, who fostered an interest in ecological planning, proposing a “return to self-sufficient small communities”. Such authors paved the way for environmentalism and sustainability planning in the 1980's, promoting communal living, imagining radical alternatives such as the arcologies of Paulo Soleri (1969), and proposing an “own vernacular” that is “an expression of our life and technologies” (Ellin 1996, 73; in reference to Moshe Safdie's critique of large institutions and plea for sustainable local models).

5.1 *Sustaining the earth*

An ethical or spiritual prerequisite to foster (urban) sustainability would be the assertion that human beings belong to each other and to the land, and that the land is part of the community of which we are a part.

Shannon Jung (1993, 36–37) suggests five factors that challenge the sustainability of life and creation. She mentions individualism and powerlessness; economic systems and our lifestyles; a view that human beings are not part of nature; unqualified faith in the ability of science and technology to fix things; and religious devaluation of the earth or creation as a central category for God or for people of faith. In cities in particular, narrow individualism disregards the other or the earth (1993, 3).

Aldo Leopold writes about “the interconnection of all life in community” (Jung 1993, 46). It is in the recognition of this interconnected community in which all created life has to share creatively with each other, that we will start to “restrain competitive human instincts and ultimately promote survival” (1993, 47). Leopold asserts that “(A) thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (1993, 47).

Jung (1993, 30) says: “Both our cultural and theological assumptions have placed humanity at the centre of purpose and meaning in the universe”; with humankind detached from or superior over the environment (1993, 28). Cities do not only dehumanise people, but also elevate the handiworks of people, as if human achievement is superior to the concerns of the environment. The challenge of cities is to be sustainable both socially, for the people who inhabit them, but also environmentally.

In Schumacher’s work (1973), *Small is Beautiful*, he offers a vision of a world where land and human creativity are both respected and affirmed. Instead of centering humanity, the sacredness of the earth has to be re-asserted. Jung (1993, 3) says it beautifully: “Caring for the earth and its future will emerge from out of a sense of nature as a sacrament”.

A spirituality of urban space has to help carve out lifestyles and practices that are communal, life-affirming and creation-centered. We now have to move beyond a human-centered approach to the city, not only building cities as if people matter, but also as if the earth matters, in a way that will enable the city and the earth together to nurture future generations of human life.

5.2 *Sustainability through peace-building*

Rasmussen (2001, 4) suggests that we cannot think about an ethic of sustainable community, without altering how we think about “enemy”:

In all of life there are socially constructed hostilities and historically clashing interests. No soul is immune from harm, no life is without some violation, no community remains at peace indefinitely, no paradise is

unspoiled. Indeed, ‘to be human is to be in conflict, to offend and to be offended’. So the question for viable, sustainable community, finally, is whether there is a gospel and ethic for enemies.

Where we are able to embrace creative, life-affirming and reconciling approaches towards “the enemy” – understanding our mutual need of each other as humans – we also start to overcome the historical and socially constructed animosities that often destroy humanity and the resources of the earth alike. If we are to build a sustainable global community, a radically redefined ethic of unparalleled inclusion and generosity of sharing is required. This is not required in abstractions but in how we deal with the land issue in South Africa or Zimbabwe, Brazil or Israel and Palestine.

5.3 *Sustainability, communal economies and local self-reliance*

The big economic systems have failed small communities. In the context of envisioning sustainable cities, innovative and bold models of communal economies should be explored (Cobb 1992, 72–77; Wallis 1994, 179–185).

One of the great fallacies, repeatedly exposed, is that the benefits of economic growth actually trickle down to the poorest people and neighbourhoods. Cobb, Wallis and countless others challenge the way in which economic growth theories lead to the destruction of traditional communities in the global South, and the exclusion of the majority of the world’s urban dwellers. Wallis (1994, 179–185), with reference to land and property development, demonstrates how human manipulation of the market favours only some. Suburban shopping malls are too often proof of how the Market dictates spatial configurations, distort land values, rob people of land and local self-reliance, and even displace “real” communities (Oranje 1997, 182).

Communal economies or an economics of community do not necessarily discard of private ownership completely. Wallis (1994, 179–185) offers alternative visions of how land and wealth could be redistributed, how co-operative or community ventures could replace individualised property ownership, and how community-owned enterprise development could shift the patterns of distributing profit. The question often has to do with who owns the land, the production process and the profit generated.

An important proposition of communal economies is how fairer distribution of resources better serves the well-being of all citizens, poor *and* rich, in the long run. Cobb (1992, 77) suggests that equitable distribution of resources would “reduce the costs of welfare to the nation”, since people with better access to their own sources of livelihood would not become dependent on the welfare of government or hand-outs of other citizens. Hein Marais (2022) makes the same argument very lucidly, in regard to the acceptance of a universal basic income grant for all South Africans.

The concept of self-reliance is key in building sustainable cities and communal economies (cf. Friedmann 1992, vii). Poorer communities often depend completely on products and political decisions from outside their neighbourhoods

for sustenance. Self-reliant economies require local communities to identify products they need, and to find ways for local production, that will not only employ local people, but also recycle local resources locally, instead of allowing for profit to leave the community at the end of every day.

Trinity Real Estate in New York City is a real estate company created by the Trinity Episcopal Church in Manhattan. The church was bequeathed substantial portions of land as early as the 1700s. Today Trinity Real Estate is owning and managing 18 of the most lucrative properties in and around Hudson Square. The profit generated from this sustains the mission of the local parish, but also supports churches throughout New York City and in the rest of the world, particularly in areas related to hunger, HIV/AIDS, peace-building and democratisation and leadership development.

5.4 Sustainable land use and sustainable building(s)

We cannot contemplate sustainable cities without reflecting critically on the use, distribution and development of land; the innovative use, development and recycling of existing buildings; as well as the sustainable building of new projects. Sustainable land use and building should incorporate concerns for a sustainable ecology and economy:

- Do we exploit the land in ways that will make the city unsustainable for future generations, or do we maintain healthy open spaces, spaces for recreation and social exchange, and spaces fertile for sustainable food production?
- Do we continue to practice uncontrolled decentralisation, or do we foster innovative visions of denser cities, which preserve natural spaces, contain traffic demands in smaller areas, and utilise smaller areas more optimally?
- Does the private sector monopolise land for individual accumulation of wealth, and government build monuments for current political leaders, at the expense of those who lack the power or capital to access land fairly for their own sustenance?
- Do we recycle old buildings in ways that model ecological and economic sustainability through sensitive, responsible, ethical, and inclusive practices and uses, radically subverting dominant paradigms of exploitation and exclusion?

In South Africa, the National Development Plan, the Integrated Urban Development Framework and the Tshwane 2055 Strategy use inclusive language that seeks to address land and spatial segregation, and promote higher density developments that foster mixed-use and mixed-income living, as ways of overcoming some of the historic divides in our cities. This intention remains grossly overshadowed by the proliferation of North American style shopping centres and strip malls, utilising vast amounts of land, designed around private mobility, and often separating work, residence and social life.

A project such as Menlyn Maine (n.d.) in the east of Pretoria is an exception, at one level. It seeks to integrate work, living and social spaces with a strong

green component. It strives to be the first green city in Africa. Its website welcomes one to an integrated city. It reads:

Welcome ...to a City developed on the principle that everything is integrated. Here we can live full, balanced and responsible lives. Menlyn Maine is designed according to New Urbanism Principles. Here, everything you need is on your doorstep. Shops, offices, a gym, restaurants, a hotel, medical facilities and a day-spa are all within walking distance from your apartment.

Everything is integrated, except the poor. It remains economically exclusive and fails to contribute to the spatial restructuring of the city in a way that will constitute spatial justice.

One can only access the “accessible” facilities and services of Menlyn Maine if one has a moderate to high income. The lower-paid workers in Menlyn Maine and the surrounding Menlyn Park shopping centre – security guards, cleaners or maintenance workers – would not be able to access housing, either in this project or in surrounding neighbourhoods. The nearest affordable housing for workers would be at least 20–25 km away.

5.5 Sustainable institutions

Sustainable cities require sustainable institutions. Sustainable institutions (i) are places where there is a high degree of shared vision, democratically owned and shaped by all those involved, and transferred from one generation to the next; (ii) introduce policies and procedures that will support and complement the institution’s vision, and managing limited resource creatively and responsibly; (iii) find innovative ways to generate and complement resources, not only for maintaining what is, but also for investing in preferred future realities; and (iv) contribute toward imaginaries of large-scale ecological and economic sustainability.

Local government departments, citizens’ organisations, non-profit organisations, businesses, churches and mosques all need to work at being sustainable institutions caring for and investing in the city, with their intellectual, social, human and financial capital. Sustainable cities and communities could become a feasible vision if the institutions and communities operating in the city start to foster visions of self-sustainability, which they then can model and share with their neighbours and the city as a whole.

A spirituality of urban space cannot but embrace a vision of a sustainable urban environment, ecology, and institutional life. It is the mother bird that hovers over urban space that seeks to sustain and hold together, even when human practices exploit and tear apart.

6 Ethical cities

I started this chapter with an outline of a spirituality of space. Emanating from such spirituality, I will seek to propose a number of actions/practices in the

next chapter that might assist in exploring a responsible and compassionate ethic of urban space (cf. Boff 1997, 135). As Boff says (1997, 135), “What we need today is not a new morality but a new ethics”.

Against the backdrop of the post-apartheid city, Oranje (1997, 266) argued against a piecemeal approach to address “(T)he huge reconstruction and development needs of the masses of our people, forgotten, downtrodden and disempowered by decades of colonial and Apartheid rule...”. Instead, he argued, “Being a *moral task*, there must be a definite base and unequivocal normative guiding lights/pointers based on what is right and wrong and what should/ought to be (1997, 266). Oranje’s cry is for a new and clear ethic, providing “guiding lights” on “what is right and wrong and what should/ought to be”.

What Boff, Oranje and others suggest, requires a new way of being and living, attentive to change, and prepared to adapt personal and collective lifestyles, practices and policies, while protecting and promoting all of life (cf. Boff 1997, 135), “starting with those that are most threatened”.

In his book, *The poetics of cities*, Mike Greenberg (1995, 8) speaks about ethical cities in this way:

The poetics of cities is also the ethics of cities... how we can treat our neighbours ethically by crafting the physical city in such a way that it can be easily used by all its people – so that not only able-bodied, well-off adults with cars but also children, the elderly, the poor, the blind and the lame can have freedom of movement and convenient access to all the good things that cities offer. We can strive for no less if we imagine ourselves to be a just and ethical society. Political and economic freedom in the abstract means little without practical freedom of movement and action.

6.1 *An ethic of responsibility and compassion*

Boff (1997, 135) suggests that such an ethic should contain the twofold principle of responsibility and compassion. The great spiritual traditions have all emphasised this twofold ethic, including exemplary figures such as Albert Schweitzer, Ghandi, the Buddha, St. Francis of Assisi, chief Seattle, and Jesus Christ. “The guiding principle for compassion”, Boff (1997, 136) writes, is “whatever preserves and promotes all beings in their dynamic equilibrium, especially living things, and among living things, the weakest...”.

Cities of desire are cities consuming more than what they can afford, often giving birth to the skyscraper at the expense of the little ones. Boff (1997, 136) argues that human beings should find the correct balance between compassion and consumption, passion and possession, allowing for desire to be re-channelled. He writes:

Human beings are not simply beings of desires... They are also and fundamentally beings of solidarity and communion. When they become more

so, they enter into harmony with the universal dynamism and carry out their cosmic mission as custodian, troubadour, and guardian angel for everything created, thereby realizing their ethical dimension.

(Boff 1997, 136)

Of St. Francis it was said that he too was a creature of desire (Boff 1997, 209), but it was a desire that “led him to identify himself with the poor” and “with all beings in nature”; a desire that did not accumulate personal possessions, but expressed itself in a deep passion for sacrificial living.

Boff (1997, 209) suggests that the life of St Francis holds great importance for the ecological and economic challenges of our time, and, I would add, for the way we conceive of our cities. St Francis lived his life “with great passion, commitment, awe, wonder, gentleness, forever seeking to connect in communion” (Boff 1997, 209). Why could such figures not become the “patron saints” of planning or city-building professions, since they capture a vision of life and creation that is wholesome, coherent, life-affirming and sustainable, often in stark contrast to that which is practiced today?

An ethics of responsibility and compassion will grow from a spirituality of solidarity and communion. Ethical cities will be places in which people will take responsibility for each other and the earth, as expressions of interconnected solidarity, and places where compassion will be practiced in relationships and policy, as expressions of deep communion.

It is a question of how residents, developers, planners and politicians can work in partnership to give birth to ethical cities, to curb their desires, and to facilitate responsible and compassionate practices and spaces.

6.2 *An ethic of crumbs or an ethic of breaking bread*

In cities of vast disparity, the notion of ethical cities should also be framed in economic terms. It is Ghandi who said, “for the poor the economic is the spiritual and God appears only as bread and butter” (Fox 2000, 269–270). We can fool ourselves with being ethical cities, because we practice political correctness and embrace progressive human rights charters, without any of these necessarily translating into bread and butter for the poor.

An ethical city will confront and resist a wide-spread ethic of crumbs, masqueraded behind noble talk of economic growth, trickle-down effect, corporate social investment, philanthropy and the like. In most of these notions, the vicious cycle of crumbs being carefully invested into places of great despair and dependency without necessarily breaking this cycle, are still present. Non-profit institutions, faith-based organisations, private sector and government all contribute to perpetuate such an ethic, rather uncritically. Instead, I suggest an ethic of breaking bread, taking my cue from an African-American theologian, Theodore Walker (1991).

An ethic of breaking bread is an ethic of abundance, being dissatisfied with an ethic of crumbs. It is adamant about looking out for one another, finding

new ways of sharing resources that place a high premium on equity and justice, and insisting on self-reliance instead of toxic dependencies. A city practising such an ethic – from the streets to the board rooms, the religious gatherings, the places of governance – will be an ethical city, mediating flourishing even to the most vulnerable of its citizens, creating new distribution patterns economically, and ensuring that all will partake of the bread together.

6.3 Exploring an ethic of urban space: a trans-disciplinary task

Imagining the ethical city, would require intensive prior work of analysis and reflection that would help in formulating proposals that present alternatives to current urban practices. The work of considering the ethical city should best be done as trans-disciplinary work where those from the built environment and planning disciplines need to work in close partnership with those from the humanities and social sciences, and those who toil away in communities as residents, mothers, informal traders, street cleaners and activists.

Georgi (2005, 356) speaks of *the need for theology, planning and architecture to be companions in imagining cities*. It is such (for some almost unlikely) companionships that will help shape ethical cities, as we help each other read, interpret and imagine the city afresh, through different and sometimes differing eyes. Part of the task of imagining the ethical city would be to critique death-dealing ideologies, to deconstruct destructive constructs, and to demythologise illusionary myths. Ethical cities will constantly read and re-read itself from the perspective of its mediation of either life or death. It will do so uncovering both formal texts as well as hidden texts engraved on the city's walls.

Notes

- 1 *Shebeens* are informal (legal/illegal) liquor stores or bars.
- 2 Pauluskerk Rotterdam (n.d.).

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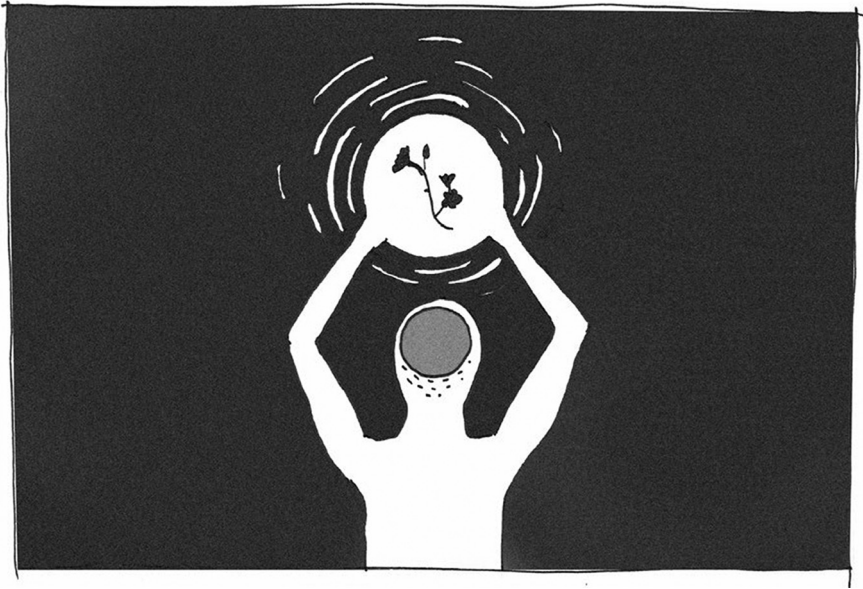


Figure 8.1 Nurturing an alternative imagination
Source: Nel, K. (2017)

8 Embodying an alternative imagination

Practising an ethic of urban space

A spirituality of urban space needs to be embodied through practising an ethic of urban space. Living such an ethic implies certain visions, practices, disciplines, processes and/or moments, being intentionally embodied.

1 An embodied presence

1.1 *Creating an embodied, incarnate presence in small, local places*

1.1.1 *Creating an embodied presence*

Incarnation is the embodied presence of a godhead (in Christianity) or a master or teacher (Buddhism), entering this realm as a human being among fellow human beings (cf. Portier 1994; Michael 1982). The concept of incarnation is also known in Hinduism and Rastafarianism.

When I speak of an embodied, incarnate presence here, it speaks of more than attending planning meetings of the local neighbourhood forum. It is born in a view of life, creation, the city, others and the Other, that implies both humility and awe. Dorothee Soelle (1984, 73) speaks of the “dust factor” in describing an embodied praxis: the idea that human beings were made from the dust of the ground (humility), that the earth does not belong to humans but humans to the earth (humility and awe), and that the earth is God’s and not the possession of humans or of some humans (humility and awe).

An embodied, incarnate presence requires an intentional, *embodied* shift from one place to the other, creating a physical presence, choosing to inhabit a new space, being affected by the environment I choose to inhabit, being with my body in a space, journeying with my fellow neighbours, moving beyond the objectivity of an “expert outsider” to the embodied experiences of the “sojourning insider”.

An incarnate presence should not be seen as a method only, but as a way of life, transforming radically the praxis of planning and the lives of planners. Guider (1995:163) writes: “The way of incarnate presence is not a means to a greater good: it is in itself the beginning, the end, and the greatest good”.

1.1.2 Asserting that small and local is beautiful

An embodied, incarnate presence in local urban places, announces the importance and validity of such places to become the locales from where systematic urban transformation can start.

The big systems have so accentuated the large against the small, the many against the few, the much over the little, that they have practically convinced us that we are useless. And thus, under the cover of mass society, we all disappear into ever-growing powerlessness. As though our smallness could never matter against its bigness.

(Shaper 1989, 152)

Strangely, those who are supposedly better geared to bring about change because of their power or position, are often those with “the most reason to oppose change” (Shaper 1989, 152), because of vested interests:

Nobody on the top of the heap is motivated to jump down. Only those muddling around in what the system leads us to think of as the heap – which is actually our life in community – are likely to produce change in the ethos of the system. Only they who are small and insignificant (from the top view) can be trusted to turn the tables.

(Shaper 1989, 153)

Change from below mostly starts with small steps, which are never to be despised. Small beginnings tend to be the seeds of urban transformation, having the potential to become practices that might inform new policy in time to come. Too often though, urban *degeneration* takes place while we wait for master plans to be implemented, or for external saviours to bring solutions we ourselves have. In the urban praxis of Jaime Lerner, they would set out taking small steps, testing innovative ideas, seeing what works or not, as deposits into a pool of local urban knowledge. And then they would work to perfect the small solutions they piloted. This is a process from practice to policy, and not the other way around.

We can also understand “small” in the sense of city-size. George Clancey (2004, 2337) states that small cities – with fewer than 500,000 people – are dispersed all over the globe, constituting more than half of all urban dwellers. These cities are “both undernoticed and undertheorised” (Clancey 2004, 2337–2338; cf. Markusen 2004), while, in fact, they should provide important locales for reflection and are ideally positioned to develop viable models of innovation for replication (cf. also Rogers & Power 2000).

The challenge is to appreciate the small and the local. This requires repeated, conscious decisions to stay rooted and vested in local places, broadcasting and spreading the hope that is at work here.

Empowerment happens when the small stop taking orders and decide to have value as small, not to have value once big. To blow up the deflated places will require a reevaluation of small. Small will have to come into its own as small.

(Shaper 1989, 154)

1.1.3 Solidarity with the poor, the small, the other

An embodied presence incarnates itself in the embodied marginality of the poor, the small and the other. It fosters a planning praxis of solidarity, embodying radically new inclusions and participations, both in product and process. Pieterse (2004, 4–5) speaks of a new planning paradigm that will borrow from pro-poor planning approaches (Pieterse 2004, 4–5) everywhere, bearing distinctive new features.

There will be a recognition and understanding by planners of the livelihood systems the poor rely on. Planners will gain an understanding of how rigid zoning practices and master planning can undermine the sustenance of poor communities.

Pro-poor planning praxis will promote participatory planning processes that go beyond rhetoric and allow for spaces in which mutual convers(at)ion can be practised with radical implications for actual planning outcomes. Solidarity expressed in truly dialogical planning, requires a form of “professional suicide” in which the “expertise” of the planner will be submitted to the local knowledge of community participants, and both being equally valued (Pieterse 2004, 4–5; Chambers 1997).

The relative power of the marginalised will be strengthened “in urban politics through a deliberate strategy to strengthen the associations and social movements of the poor” (Pieterse 2004, 4). A central objective of those concerned with inclusive cities should be this: to enable the political capacity of poor communities to help transform the reality we all share.

1.2 Redeeming the spirit of place: space and spirituality

I suggest as a second discipline, the practice of redeeming the spirit of place: to recognise, open up to, discern together, who or what is at work where they eyes can't see.

1.2.1 The category of (S)pirit

The category of spirit emerges in all human, cultural traditions (cf. Boff 1997, 158):

Spiritus to Romans, pneuma to Greeks, Ruach to Hebrews, Mana to Melanesians, Axe to Nagos and Yorubas in Africa and their descendants in the Americas, Wakan to Dakota Indians, Ki to the peoples of North-East Asia, Shi to the Chinese.

Writings about space and the city, often honour the *genius loci*, or the spirit of place, affirming the connection between the physical and visible space and a deeper spirituality.

The concept of *genius* in ancient Roman terms suggested that human beings were accompanied throughout their lives by their own spirit (*genius*), in the same way as *genii* existed for families, professional groups, theatres, streets and cities (cf. Norberg-Schulz 1980, 38). Norberg-Schulz (1980, 38) spoke of the *genius loci* in reference to the qualitative character of place, or the “connection between sky and earth”.

Some authors then suggest that every city, town, village or neighbourhood, needs to have its own core, heart, *agora*: a place providing the “physical setting for the expression of collective emotion”. Such a place could be the cathedral, the mosque, the market place, the town square or the crossroads. This would serve to make “visible the spirit of the city, the *genius loci*, in a space for the spirit, a *locus genii*” (Norberg-Schulz 1980, 36).

A city might have multiple *loci genii*: places of the spirit with the capacity to order, enthuse, heal and make whole.

...from the very moment architects began to ponder solutions to the problems of the modern city, the creation of a *locus genii* was considered to be a potentially beneficial urban intervention with the power to order an entire city.

(Norberg-Schulz 1980, 40)

It is the presence of the Spirit in history and the cosmos, or the discovery and retrieval of *genius loci*, that creates the possibility of an emergent, surprising and renewed reality, also in the fragmentation of our cities.

...no matter what the names may be, we are always dealing with life, with the universe as an organism too vast to measure with reality that is emerging, fluctuating, and open to surprise and novelty. The world is filled with the Spirit, which emerges in the spirit found in springs, mountains, trees, winds, persons, houses, cities, heaven, and Earth.

(Boff 1997, 158)

1.2.2 *The mother bird: hovering over our urban spaces*

The Hebrew word for Spirit is the feminine *ruach* (Boff 1997, 160), which is the life-giving, life-permeating cosmic power hovering over the earth to create and recreate, to watch over and nurture, until life breaks forth:

The Hebrew expression of the movement of the spirit over the waters (*merahephet*, “hovered over the waters”) refers to the way the water birds circle over the waters or break the egg – here the cosmic egg -from which all proceeds. In matriarchal cultures the presence of the bird or dove

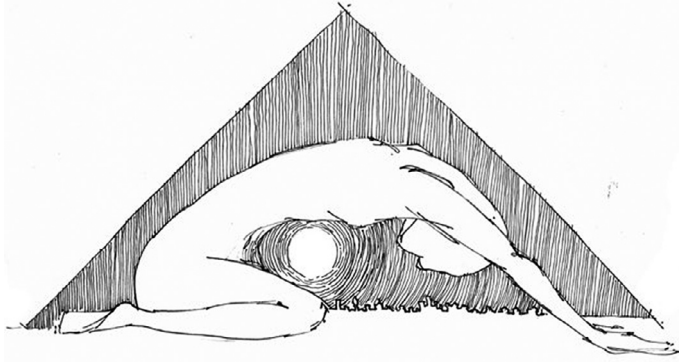


Figure 8.2 Mother bird
Source: Nel (2017)

indicated the activity of the Great other generating life. Interestingly, since *ruach* is feminine in Hebrew, it preserves a hint of a maternal function.

A spirituality of space will seek to connect to the presence of the spirit hovering over urban spaces, waiting like a mother bird to give birth to new life, protecting that which is not yet born, as well as those who are the smallest, most vulnerable, most fragile and most at-risk.

Boff (1997, 162–163) highlights five experiences – ecstasy, enthusiasm, inspiration, communication and responsibility and order – which help to trace the spirit in our midst.

Ecstasy refers to an extraordinary kind of presence, the singularity of life, the possibility of something fundamentally new or different. Many urban spaces evoke such an experience of ecstasy, pulling people back to these spaces repeatedly. *Enthusiasm* is to be possessed by an extraordinary energy or vision to achieve something. In a literal sense, enthusiasm means “having god within” (*en-theos-mos*). Boff (1997, 162) writes: “Nothing great and truly creative is ever achieved without the powerful influence of enthusiasm”.

Experiencing *inspiration* is to be in the presence of something greater than yourself that is influencing your thinking, writing, speaking and design. In a number of religious traditions, such as the Judaeo-Christian tradition, their “sacred” writings have been considered to be inspired by the Spirit (Boff 1997, 163). Can we think of inspired spaces?

Communication is a fourth experience mentioned by Boff (1997, 163), which means “to go out from ourselves to break the closed circle of our own identity, and to surrender to the other”. In our diverse and polarised cities, the kind of communication that creates spaces for fresh and liberating relationships, and unexpected consensus, could be regarded as a sign of a unifying, life-giving spirit in our midst.

Lastly, Boff mentions *reasonability and order*. The possibility to create order and beauty from chaos, to see raw materials being sculpted into splendid

display and to achieve high levels of integration and community in contexts normally marked by wounded relationships and deep divisions, are all signs of the spirit birthing something new.

1.2.3 *Creation-centred spirituality: finding the spirit in all of life*

Matthew Fox (1983, 40), challenges the human-centredness of many religions and suggests a more inclusive spirituality that celebrates the interconnectedness of all living things.

In our planning and city-building practices we have often not even arrived at being human-centred (cf. Short 1989; Oranje 1997, 236). Our practices are often technocratic, bureaucratic, capital-centred, or centred on “just *some* humans”. A shift towards human-centred planning would already be a dramatic shift towards a new paradigm, and yet, Fox steers us beyond that to an approach that would never be at the expense of the rest of life and the planet. Fox (2000, 38–41) suggests sensitivity for the “*dhabar*” – a Hebrew word used for “divine energy” or “Word of God” – that seeks to surprise us as we engage all of life.

This word – *dhabar* – contains not only left-brain substance (verbal, truth-oriented, cognitive, technical) but also right-brain substance (affection, play, love, art, grace). It speaks of developing a new consciousness; a fresh openness; to be surprised in the present; and, in the realm of our urban spaces, to engage in a way that will transform physical space into a sacred space of expectation, of profound meaning and of possible wholeness.

In response to environmental degradation, visions for intergenerational, environmental and inter-species justice have become vital, not only globally but also in South Africa (Oranje 1997, 236, 275). Fox (2000, 104) speaks of it as a new awareness and experience of the “panentheistic divine energy and grace bathing us everywhere”; it is “God among us”.

Or as Boff (1997, 115) puts it:

Beginning a new covenant with the Earth absolutely requires a reclaiming of the dimension of the sacred. Without the sacred, affirming the dignity of earth and the need to set limits to our desire to exploit, its potentialities remain empty rhetoric.

...the sacred always has an essential connection to the cosmos – that is where it is born. The universe becomes a sacrament, a space and time where the energy permeating all things is made manifest, the opportunity for the revelation of the mystery dwelling in the totality of all things.

1.2.4 *Planning: a collective act of discerning and calling forth, together*

Discerning the latent promise and possibility of a place, should be a deliberate collective discipline. It is to call forth the life-giving spirit of place from behind the cobwebs of abuse and technocracy that has often stifled creativity and life for generations. These cobwebs represent the other “spirits” that were not

interested in giving life, but in taking it; nor in building community but in breaking it down.

Such a process of collective discernment will, at the same time, foster a collective new consciousness for “...how absent divine beauty and divine justice seem to be, how the innocent still suffers, how the wicked prosper still” (Boff 1997, 115).

It will seek to call forth the hidden beauty and facilitate bringing together that which was torn apart, giving expression to the voices of the suffering and neutralising the evil power of the wicked that plan and build cities as if only they matter. It is not otherworldly spirituality that is advocated here, but a very material and concrete spirituality that defines innocence and wickedness in the concrete spatial expressions of our cities. It is, as Shannon Jung (1993, 2) asserts, the holy dwelling in the commonplace.

I am graphically reminded of this by an experience I had on the south side of Chicago in 1993. These inner city neighbourhoods were often neglected by local authorities with many abandoned buildings and vacant open spaces, strewn with litter, used condoms and weeds. I was walking the streets daily, deeply struck by the visible disparities between downtown Chicago, which was merely a ten-minute drive away, and the Bronzeville precinct where I lived and worked for six months.

One morning, in April or May, I walked past one of these vacant lots that I had to pass every day, when I was suddenly greeted by a carpet of yellow flowers that appeared overnight. Their resilient appearance amid rather despairing circumstances, gave a sense of the sacred bursting through the scars of urban life.

Planning that is open to the surprise of the yellow flower will not succumb to the myth of neutrality, but be transformed by the (S)pirit, to see new possibilities, facilitate new connections, await the bursting forth of life from spaces that were pronounced dead.



Figure 8.3 Lots of flowers
Source: Ahug (2012)

Influential urbanist Patrick Geddes (1915, 40) agreed with the concept of the *genius loci*, or the spirit of place, but questioned whether we can construct the locus or create the *genius*. He suggested that the best strategy was a rather passive position of doing nearly nothing, “wait(ing) in reverence for the *genius* of the place to work its miracle in its own way”.

A friend of Geddes, Charles Robert Ashbee (1917), said it differently, suggesting the need “to implant groups of artists and craftsmen into the “empty shells” of existing cities”, arguing that, “unless in every city there are men (sic) inventing, dreaming, *finding in the city its soul*, every attempt to reform life in cities would be in vain”.

Ashbee also considers the soul of the city, but says that it needs creative people to help discern, find and give expression to the soul, which is often hidden away.

2 Interconnected community

2.1 Seeking the common good

Planning for good cities will have the common good – the well-being of all citizens – as goal in mind. Stubben’s *Stadtebau* (1890; quoted in Frisby 2001, 67) speaks of city planning as more than the construction of individual dwellings, transport systems and neighbourhood design, but as laying the foundation for the “(p)hysical and mental welfare of the citizenry... it is the fundamental, practical, public hygiene; it is the cradle, the clothing, the adornment of the city”.

City planning should be as much for the poor as the rich, as it facilitates justice, removes social grievances and influences co-operation in social welfare objectives. Gerometta et al. (2005, 2014) argue that the most important role of civil society in such planning processes is to help ensure that the general welfare – the common good – is achieved, rather than individual interests only.

Planning processes could either contribute to erect hierarchical or exclusive walls, or it could help to deconstruct walls and facilitate new arrangements that will democratise the experience of what is good in the hands of many. As said by Soja (2010, 251):

For hierarchy is not an inevitable part of social organization. We live in a society in which the prosperity of the one is often based on the poverty of the other. That need not be so; we have today the resources, the skills, the room, to be able to combine justice with prosperity, mutual respect with efficient organizations. Physical rearrangements, restructuring can help achieve such a society, attacking walls of domination, walls of confinement, will help. But they need to be part of a broader fort to build a better society, physically, economically, socially, politically.

Soja laments the city that is and imagines a city that could be: a city offering conditions for full, free and un-fragmented life, instead of cities of exclusion

and domination; walls that welcome and shelter, instead of walls that push away or oppress.

2.1.1 *Recognising our interconnectedness: what we do affects others*

Everybody in the city is somehow connected. The developments we approve, the apathy we show in the face of certain political, social or economic struggles, the way we envision land use, the by-laws we create and how they impact upon people, all affect the broader urban household.

If we are all interconnected, then we need to be intentional about urban practices and policies that will seek to foster, in very practical ways, the common good. Affirmative measures need to be taken to intentionally include those who are currently excluded from participating in the resources of the city. Seeking the common good is about moving beyond our own self-interest – as politicians, planners, churches, mosques, temples, organisations and citizens – and recognising that the city is made up of highly diverse interests that need to be carefully crafted together into a tapestry of creative co-habitation.

In different religious traditions the notion of interrelatedness of all of life is stressed. The Bhagavad Gita in the Hindu tradition teaches how a spiritually wise person “rejoices in the welfare of all beings” (cf. Pedersen 2001, 36). In the Theravada tradition Buddhist monks chant the Metta Sutta three times a day, starting with a prayer that says:

May all beings be at ease, secure;
 may they be happy in heart
 ...medium-sized or small,
 seen or unseen,
 living far or near,
 born or awaiting birth
 (Pedersen 2001, 35)

2.1.2 *From scarcity to abundance*

Steven Covey (1991, 45, 61–62, 157–162) writes about the difference between a scarcity mentality and an abundance mentality:

The abundance mentality flows out of a deep sense of personal worth and security. It results in sharing recognition, profits and responsibility. It opens up creative new options and alternatives. It turns personal joy and fulfillment outward. It recognizes unlimited possibilities for positive interaction, growth, and development.

Most people are deeply scripted in the scarcity mentality. They see life as a finite pie if someone gets a piece of the pie, it means less for everybody else. It's the zero-sum paradigm of life. People with a scarcity mentality have a hard time sharing recognition, credit, power, or profit.

People and institutions with a scarcity mentality will build cities in ways that will concentrate the “scarce” resources with certain people and in certain neighbourhoods. An abundance mentality will affirm that there is enough for all, if fairly distributed and managed. People and institutions embracing an abundance mentality will build cities in ways that will share the abundance fairly, mediating the good city.

This aligns to my earlier argument in Chapter 6, for an economics of community. Such an economy affirms the abundance of life and resources and therefore finds it possible to share; instead of an economic approach that concentrates on individual wealth-generation alone, whereby individuals frantically ensure that they access a good deal of the scarce resources of the earth, even if it is at the expense of others.

Jim Wallis (1994, 185) asserts:

The key question is one of values. Important questions of scale, forms of technology, and patterns of ownership and decision-making will need creative thought and experimentation. But the critical issue is a change in our ethics and assumptions regarding economic activity. And the key shift is the movement toward community – the idea of the common good – as the criterion by which we evaluate our economic structures and practices. Community is a sign of transformation.

2.2 Feminising the city: practising solidarity with all oppressed

2.2.1 Whose city is it?

Traditionally cities were planned by men for men. City-building tended to be dominated by left brain activity (technique versus artistry, rational versus emotional), with an emphasis on hardware infrastructure (roads and skyscrapers) and a denial of software infrastructure (dialogical spaces, creativity). And yet, the soft city is real and vital for nurturing the soul of the city.

The city as we might imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the city one can locate in maps and statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture.

(Raban 1974, 10)

Feminising the city will ensure liberating spaces not only for women, but for all vulnerable groups, as well as for those who need to be liberated from being perpetrators of exclusions or oppressions. It would mean creating spaces of dialogue and friendship for all who are experiencing oppressive urban space, either as victims or perpetrators.

The feminist critique of the *flâneur* as representing the male gaze, taking visual possession not only of the city but also of women (Watson & Gibson 1995, 65), is valid. The freedom to wander about the city without experiencing threat is often an unequal, or “masculine”, freedom, afforded only to some. Women were denied such freedom of mobility in public spaces in the earlier part of the 19th century, and the effects of violence and sexual harassment still deny women freedom of mobility in many cities or neighbourhoods today.

2.2.2 *From flâneur to flâneuse*

With the creation of the department store in the late 19th century women started to become co-participants in the act of being *flâneur* (Watson & Gibson 1995, 68). Female journalists, writers and sex workers could all be regarded as the *flâneuses* of the 19th century (Watson & Gibson 1995, 71).

Freedom in our urban spaces will be expressed in the way women – and all excluded people – can now experience freedom of mobility, being safely present in public spaces and being allowed as *flâneuse*, both working and wandering, insiders and outsiders, and yet, able to determine for themselves the boundaries by which they want to wander.

bell hooks (1990, 149) proposes that the *flâneur* should be reclaimed as a gender-less allegory, instead of it being narrowly critiqued in terms of the male gaze. In the labyrinth, the *flâneur* loses a sense of himself, becoming passive, feminine, invisible almost, reversing that which was the feat of the *flâneuse* only. The *flâneur/flâneuse* in the urban labyrinth, is at once one with the city, yet also with its margins.

Flâneur/flâneuse carry within them a challenge to patriarchal thought:

Ultimately more truthful than the zeal of the reformer was the disturbed glance of the *flâneur*, recording with stoicism the challenge to patriarchal through and existence made by the presence of women in cities.

(Watson & Gibson 1995, 76)

And yet, Watson and Gibson assert, we should not fall in the trap of romanticising the *flâneuse*, or prematurely misinterpreting her presence in the streets as an expression of freedom, since we need to recognise the distinct difference between the way in which men and women still occupy the streets. For both Benjamin and Baudelaire, the sex worker as *flâneuse* remained “the other”, and spaces still need to be created in which “the other” can speak for herself (cf. Guider 1995, 165–173; Sanchez 2004, 861–883; Watson & Gibson 1995, 72). “The other” could be anyone who experiences herself as “the other”, excluded from, or marginal in the city.

The *flâneur* as wanderer observed, imagined and constructed, often from a position of marginality, being “the other” himself/herself. From such a position the *flâneur* was able to read the society as a whole (Watson & Gibson 1995, 73). *Flâneur/flâneuse* is therefore an ambivalent concept, both working and

wandering, insider and outsider, observer and participant, central and marginal. The allegory of *flâneur/flâneuse* would strike a chord with many who live in the city, love the city, yet feel strangely at odds with the city at times. Benjamin speaks of such ambivalence in the *flâneur's* experience of the city, being seduced by the urban spectacle on the one hand, but at the same time experiencing a "sorrowful engagement with the melancholy of cities" (Watson & Gibson 1995, 73).

Despite their ambivalence, their marginality, the heroism of the *flâneur/flâneuse* lies in:

surviving the disorientating space, both labyrinthine and agoraphobic, of the metropolis. It lies in the ability to discern, making the massed ranks of the anonymity the outline of beauty and individuality appropriate to urban life. The act of creating meaning, seemingly so arbitrary, becomes heroic in itself.

(Watson & Gibson 1995, 75)

2.2.3 *Discovering an eco-feminist spirituality of space*

Both the spirit (in Hebrew) and wisdom (in Hebrew and in the early church) were regarded as female: protector of life, wife and mother (Boff 1997, 169). In exploring a spirituality of space, I suggest that we borrow from the rich contributions of eco-feminism.

There exists a close correlation between eco-spirituality, eco-feminism and deep ecology (cf. Jung 1993, 49; Van Schalkwyk 1999).

Deep ecology can be virtually a religion in its own right. The motivation of that movement includes the sources we have already described: relatedness, transcendence, community, and powerful emotions... Community is especially important. Deep ecology is grounded in the religious vision arising from the experience and appreciation of community with other living things.

(Jung 1993, 49)

In eco-feminism, similar emphasis is placed on the interrelatedness of human community with the broader earth community. Eco-feminism understands the oppression of both women and the earth and shows a "commitment to relational holism" (Jung 1993, 50), but then includes all of creation. The city as skyscraper has equally exploitative, oppressive and exclusive consequences for women and the earth alike, both tending to become victims of its battering.

Karen Warren (1990, 125–145) suggests that both sexism and humanocentrism are based on social domination: women by men, and the environment by humankind. Issues of race and class could be further added, as other expressions of social domination. An eco-feminist ethic would "share a preference for moral choices that are inclusive of the perspectives of oppressed people and the land" (Jung 1993, 51–52).

In both an environmental ethics and feminism, emphasis is placed on “the values of community, of care, of friendship, and on appropriate mutuality” (Jung 1993, 51–52).

This leads Jung (1993, 52) to conclude that “any environmental ethic which permits discrimination against woman to continue, and any feminist ethic which permits discrimination against nature to continue, is quite simply inadequate”.

Building upon the eco-feminist assertion that the oppression of women and the earth are both expressions of social domination, I suggest that an ethics of space should include a conscious decision to practice solidarity with all who are oppressed. This would include not only women, children, the poor, or people from certain excluded groups, based on race, class or ethnicity, but it would include all of creation. As Boff (1997, 211) says: “Kinship is more than human: it is cosmic”.

Translating this into planning discourse would include a strong focus on environmental rights and justice (Oranje 1997, 250), deducing, among other resources, from the South African Constitution, Section 24(a), where it states that every person has the right to “an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being” (Republic of South Africa 1996, 10).

I conclude this section with reference to Boff (1997, 211), who describes the life of St Francis as:

another way of being in the world, one quite different from that of the modernity that we have criticized. The latter stands above things in order to possess and dominate them, whereas that of St Francis is together *with* them, to love them and live with them as brothers and sisters at home.

The life of St Francis showed solidarity with all of creation, and particularly with oppressed sisters and brothers; a kinship that was more than human, including all of life, and all of creation.

2.3 Creating and fostering a multiplicity of warm, inclusive communities

2.3.1 Creating community

Once we have embraced the broader principle of belonging to one urban household we need to give practical expression to this notion, by supporting and creating a multiplicity of warm, inclusive communities in which *just* (fair) hospitality can be practised. What I refer to is the intentional nurture of spaces that facilitate welcome, belonging, sharing, liberating dialogue, life-affirming ritual, celebration of diversity, discovery of vocation and vision and discovery of self in relation to others. I also speak of community in contrast to harsh individualism (self as god), exclusive isolationism (self as an island), or soul-destroying materialism (accumulating goods versus caring relationships).

Community could provide the spaces in which an alternative imagination is nurtured and practised, in the way it invites the excluded, gives voices to the voiceless and secure access to all sources of livelihood.

2.3.2 *Just hospitality*

In the United States the so-called *asylum churches* gave refuge to those who fled Latin American countries who were at war, often under military dictatorships sponsored by the US government itself. When nobody else was willing to embrace vulnerable refugee communities, there were churches that offered just hospitality, welcoming people into their congregations, questioning the legitimacy of governments in countries of origin and critiquing US foreign policy in relation to such governments.

Unprecedented numbers of Americans became involved through their churches and synagogues, which proclaimed themselves “sanctuaries,” as well as in bar association efforts to provide pro bono representation to Salvadorans and Guatemalans.

(Gzesh 2006)

When Bishop Paul Verryn controversially opened the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg to provide sanctuary to Zimbabwean migrant families, building regulations were defied in the process, probably arguing that it is more unethical to deny people safe space than to breach building codes.

At the St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Pretoria, just hospitality has been a theme for many years during the 1980s and 1990s. At a time when black and white South Africans were not allowed to share restaurants in the city, this church opened the Five Loaves Restaurant on their premises, offering simple lunches to all people on a daily basis. Street-based persons, young black lawyers, older white business persons, students from surrounding buildings, all found hospitality here. It was a small but warm alternative to the exclusivist spaces of South Africa’s capital city.

The examples I cited not only provide warm hospitality, but in doing so attend to the city’s fractures and exclusions. They offer, often unintentionally, critique of urban society and the neglects of urban planning. They also demonstrate alternative use of urban space and resource sharing, showing that more inclusive ways of neighbouring and resource distribution were possible.

How can planning or city-making help give expression to just hospitality?

2.3.3 *Mutuality in conversation: The moral community*

The Swahili term, *sokoni*, refers to the traditional African market, which is not only a place for the exchange of goods, but also for lively communication and the exchange of information and ideas (Robra, Manchala & Anderson-Rajamigam 2001, 94).

Sokoni symbolises an open circle, to which all are invited; a moral community in which all can participate clearly, visibly and equally, their voices being heard. Robra et al. (2001, 95) suggests that a religious community, and I add, an urban neighbourhood, will not be a moral community:

if they are not a true community of women and men, if the poor are not at its centre, if we cannot speak about the essentials of life, if children and youth are silenced, if violence occurs even within.

(Robra et al. 2001, 95)

Spaces are required that facilitate mutuality in conversation, ensuring that all partners contribute in equal and accessible ways (Cowan & Lee, 1997). These are not spaces in which “conversion” or “transformation” is mediated by some for others, because there is mutuality in both the giving and receiving.

Boff (1997, 215) writes: “Possession creates obstacles to communication between persons and with nature, for by possession we are saying ‘This is mine’ and ‘That is yours,’ and so we are divided”. The moral community is rooted in an embrace of our common humanity – that we indeed belong together – and that there is a shared abundance among us.

Communities such as the ones I cited above, practising just hospitality, are moral communities, opening up dialogical spaces in which both those invited to enter, as well as the hosts, have an opportunity to undergo a “conversion” experience.

2.3.4 *Planning in community*

A planner who spends one day a week at a homeless shelter in mutual conversation with individuals who experienced homelessness, will rarely envisage the local neighbourhood in which the shelter is hosted – or the reality of homelessness and how we plan neighbourhoods with that in mind – through the same lenses again.

Planning as the practice of *sokoni*, or planning as a moral community, or planning as a community of friends, will include conversations that will radically alter the ways we see and think, connecting us to each other in new solidarities and allow for concepts such as compassion, equity and justice, to infiltrate our planning paradigms. It would keep us accountable as we are now planning with and for our neighbours and friends, whom we face again tomorrow, and not simply for faceless masses.

2.4 *Inclusive, integrated cities*

The quality of city-making or urban democracies should be measured in terms of how well the most vulnerable populations or urban neighbourhoods are integrated, embraced and supported towards flourishing life. This requires an expansion of our moral communities from their rigid, narrow definitions, with

tight boundaries of who belongs and who not, to become all-inclusive (Pedersen 2001, 39, 41). Without such expanded boundaries, inclusive cities – integrating the “weakest” members of society and prioritising ecological and economic sustainability for all who inhabit the planet – will never be possible.

Pedersen (2001, 38) speaks of “moral exclusion” which stands in contrast to a vision of an all-inclusive community. Susan Optokow (1990, 1) says:

Moral exclusion occurs when individuals or groups are perceived as outside the boundary in which moral values, rules and considerations of fairness apply. Those who are morally excluded are perceived as nonentities, expendable, or undeserving; consequently harming them appears acceptable, appropriate, or just.

Georgi (2005, 358) speaks of the way in which some people are classified as dispensable, along the lines of urban garbage:

The problem of trash does not start with garbage removal; even less does it end here. Isolating persons in sanatoriums, reformatories, and prisons can pertain to it as well. This relates to the difficult issue of the distinction between the dispensable and the indispensable, which has many different faces.

And Fernandes (2004, 241), reflecting on the clean-up of the Mumbai coastline, likens muck and people in one breath:

...it’s possible – to now take a relaxing walk along the Mumbai coastline at Girgaum Chowpatty. Finally, the sand feels like sand... the city’s most famed beach is free of muck, debris, urchins, beggars, lepers and hutmens, thanks to state culture Minister Pramod Navalkar.

(Fernandes 2004, 2421)

The case of Mumbai above, where the beach clearance was carefully guarded by permanent police officers and a 120-foot-high watchtower (Fernandes 2004, 2422), illustrates how exclusionary models of community can be practised by the state based on “narrow definitions of liveability that actively exclude marginalised social groups”.

Black Africans in South African towns and cities were excluded from the rights of ownership from the onset (Frescura 1992, 9; in Oranje 1997, 35). Government’s official stand was expressed by the Stallard Commission (1921) “...that urban areas were the white man’s creation and that Africans had a right to be there only in far as they were administering to the white man’s need” (Davenport 1989, 548).

Hubbard (2004, 1687–1702) reflects on measures taken to displace or criminalise prostitution, squatters or aggressive beggars in cities like Paris and London. Although these measures are framed as being in the interest of national

security and moral values, Hubbard (2004, 1607) considers them to be actions of racial othering that seek to keep affluent, white areas pure. Difference or diversity in urban public life are sanitised in ways that communicate to certain marginal groups that “they simply have no right to the city” (Mitchell 2001, 71, in Hubbard 2004, 1697).

Making inclusive cities should also include those living beings that are not human. In their plans for new housing developments, the SOCHO Housing Association in Durban¹ is required to demonstrate a clear strategy for how they will ensure the protection of chameleons. This is a beautiful expression of city-making that affirms the life of the smallest living being.

An important task of communities is to foster such visions of inclusion through policy, practice, ritual and creative expression.

Some examples would be the policy of housing companies that specifically make space for refugees and asylum-seekers; liberated zoning practices that foster diversity and social inclusion (cf. Oranje 1997, 257; Cullingworth 2004, 63–75; Freidheim 1981); religious rituals that are explicit in the use of language that invites and includes (cf. Hessel 1992); the practice of a theatre company in which professional dancers of different physical (dis-)abilities perform together, in a powerful critique of society’s exclusion of those perceived to be disabled (Bouzaglou 2006; Matshikiza 2006); and public art displaying powerful images of social inclusion, questioning the exclusion of some (cf. Sharp et al. 2005).

3 The power of people

3.1 *People can make a difference: fostering radical participation*

The viability of poorer urban areas will be strengthened by planning processes that are radically participatory. Participation invites local assets and insights, nurtures local ownership and investment and facilitates local partnership and social contracts that could form the foundation for viable and sustainable regeneration that is at the same time very inclusive.

Such participatory approaches could help foster strong local democracies, transparency, an appreciation of diversity, local civic ownership and the spiritual progress of participants in terms of mediating respect, dignity and the right to participate in processes shaping their own futures (cf. Oranje 1997, 273).

German philosopher Hegel suggested that collective activity for a common purpose undertaken by civil society “produces new forms of solidarity and egalitarian participation, membership and *Sittlichkeit* [ethical life]” (Gerometta et al. 2005; 2016). It is the collective ethical life in community that will help to produce good, humane and just cities.

Radical participation goes beyond so-called consultative processes in which citizens are expected to rubber stamp plans by officials that have already been conceptualised and are ready to be implemented. Radical participation would include citizens and their organisations in conceptualisation, design, strategic planning, implementation and evaluation. What is required is the development

of "(a) political culture, a sense of community... beyond the traditional institutional framework" (cf. Gerometta et al. 2005; 2013; Klein et al. 2001).

It requires a shift from government to governance and an assertive and sophisticated citizenry able to participate radically, both in terms of process – from conception to implementation and evaluation; but also in terms of product – not being co-opted into pre-determined outcomes but able to effect change that facilitates restructured social, economic and spatial patterns benefiting the most vulnerable members of society, thereby fostering radical expressions of social inclusion.

3.2 *The power of good citizenship*

A city has a soul when the people of the city participate in shaping the city. Georgi (2005, 364) emphasises this: "Citizens need to be assured that the city lives, and it cannot live without the active participation of the citizens". Ebenezer Howard (1902) envisioned a radically different city, marked by radical participation of its citizenry in building a community for the common good. In his vision, the city was "a new civilization based on service to the community and not self-interest".

There is both promise but also challenges with citizens' active participation in city-making. Greenberg (1995, 254–255) writes:

It is possible, with sustained, coordinated, and informed action, for citizen groups to sway city hall, but that possibility is both a promise and a problem. Persistence is most often seen only in reaction to narrow, specific circumstances that are perceived as immediate threats... Only rarely do interest groups... place their narrow, immediate concerns in a larger context.

Although community organising is an important discipline in mobilising citizens for collective action, organising often takes place around isolated or specific events, in a rather ad hoc-manner, instead of building a sustainable agenda to engage and inform long-term design and policy frameworks. Again, Greenberg (1995, 245) says: "... it is hard to assemble a political constituency for urban design policies – as opposed to specific local projects (Greenberg 1995, 245).

There are examples where such consistent organising "from below" results in sustainable citizens' movements contributing to local change. Organised civil society are able to create innovative platforms for collective action, such as "neo-communitarianism" (Gerometta et al. 2005) with its emphasis on the third sector and grass-roots communities, mobilised for local economic development or socially inclusive urban regeneration. In these movements there is an emphasis on a social economy and optimised benefits for the local community, "against the logic of a globalizing capitalism" (Jessop & Sum 2001, 464; cf. Gerometta et al. 2005).

It is often in "less economic competitive spaces" – inner cities, de-industrialised cities or at the lower end of urban hierarchies – that some of the most

remarkable social innovation occurs (cf. Markusen 2004; Gerometta et al. 2005, 2009), in spite of the fact that the odds are often against them in terms of attracting investment, gaining economic access or retaining local leadership. Such examples of innovative and transformative citizenship, should be supported, galvanised and broadcasted.

In the process, once again, children should not be forgotten. A good example of children actively participating in local city-making, is the Crown Street Regeneration Project in Glasgow (cf. Tibbalds 1992, 92–94). Here, primary school children were encouraged to participate in processes to design their own areas, with very positive outcomes.

3.3 *Mobilising faith-based resources*

Dieter Georgi (2005, 364) suggests that faith communities and faith-based institutions should understand itself as part of civil society in engaging the city and urban development. Faith capital is often an untapped resource for urban regeneration that is radically inclusive.

When she did her doctoral work on regeneration in the inner city neighbourhood of Hillbrow, Johannesburg, Tanja Winkler (2006) found that it was faith-based communities that offered the most consistent sense of community to local residents, as well as access to social and other forms of infrastructure, mediating some possibility of human flourishing.

Similarly, with reference to urban areas of the United States, Henry Louis Taylor (1994, 6/6) made a powerful case for the potential role of religious institutions in revitalising neighbourhoods:

Black religious institutions form the social glue that holds together the African American community. Scattered throughout the neighborhood, these institutions form a scaffold and foundation upon which to build a new community. Currently, these institutions provide a range of social services for their own members and neighbourhood residents. Most are also big landowners, and their ministers are an important segment of the black leadership structure. This combined with the strong religious tradition among African Americans make black religious institutions potentially a very powerful force in the neighbourhood revitalization process.

Concurrently, white religious institutions possess resources and expertise that the black community needs.

Churches and religious groups possess physical (buildings and land), human (volunteers and skills), social (networks and local institutions), financial (gifts and loans), intellectual (technical resources and expertise) and spiritual or moral capital (vocation, service and sacrifice).

There are countless examples in cities across the world, of faith-based organisations actively engaged in work that contributes to community-based urban regeneration. Some of these – Bethel New Life (2015) in Chicago; Abyssinian

Baptist Development Corporation (n.d.) in New York City; MES (Mould, Empower, Serve) (2012–23) in Johannesburg; and IHA/UDP (n.d.) in Addis Ababa – were mentioned in previous chapters. They offer examples of what becomes possible when faith-based resources are translated into urban action. In most of these cases, what started out as the provision of social services, have grown into an expanded mission to include comprehensive participation in community economic development, housing provision and urban infrastructure objectives (cf. Taylor 1994, 6/6).

Andrew Davey (2001, 62) goes so far as to say that planning has borrowed its language of regeneration from theology, to start with, and that people of faith (should) now reclaim the language of regeneration, but populate it with new content.

3.4 Building on local assets and agency: the art of socio-economic empowerment

In recent decades, Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993) has started to revolutionise not only community development practice but also the work of social services generally. ABCD defines communities not only in terms of needs or deficiencies, but primarily in terms of assets, resources, capital and gifts. It critiques social service provision that perpetuates dependency, often at the expense of beneficiary communities' own agency or an appreciation of the assets they have.

Jember Teferra in Addis Ababa could have been overwhelmed by the pervasive poverty of slums in her city. But what she saw was the potential of slum dwellers to be agents of their own change and renewal (cf. IHA-UDP n.d.). A few years ago, 20 inner city leaders from different sectors came together to form the Berea-Burgers Park Regeneration Initiative (2005). Early on in the process they identified the needs and assets of the community through a process of community analysis. Much to their surprise, and contrary to dominant public and media opinion, the assets seemed to have outweighed the needs by far.

Justin McGuirk (2014) surfaces examples of city-making from below, through the agency of local communities themselves. Torre David was a derelict skyscraper, standing vacant in downtown Caracas for more than 10 years, until it got occupied by some 3,000 homeless people. Over time they created self-styled apartments, became increasingly self-organised and developed a communal vision embodied in community meetings and consensus-based practices (cf. 2014, 175–206).

McGuirk (2014, 50–66) describes Túpac Amaru in San Salvador, an urban social movement led by a powerful woman, Milagro Sala. Abandoned as a baby, later dropping out of school to work as a street hawker, and then in prison for petty theft, Milagro emerged as a grass-roots leader and activist, organising what was to become a powerful grass-roots movement. A co-operative with thousands of members, all with equal power, Túpac Amaru builds their own communities around giant swimming pools, housing thousands of

people and creating their own schools, hospitals and employment. The best example is a community known as Alto Comedero.

These people own their houses, but did not buy them. Nor was there a developer earning profit out of this enterprise. Instead, government funds are made to work hard, with the benefits distributed to the community – and any profits converted into playgrounds and other social amenities. Effectively, what we have here is a socialist system in microcosm, with workers contributing to a productive system and sharing the rewards equally. Alto Comedero is an increasingly rare zone of exception where social mobility is not dependent on rising property values and speculation.
(McGuirk 2014, 66)

In the UK, Patricia Hewitt argued that "(s)ocial enterprises offer ways of involving excluded groups – including residents in low-income areas and people with disabilities – in designing and delivering their own services" (Luckin & Sharp 2004, 1487), instead of being viewed as liabilities that needed external "rescue".

The key to local self-reliance (cf. De Gruchy 2003) and sustainable cities should be found in local people and organisations appreciating and asserting their own agency and assets. Such assets could be in the form of human resources, finances, land and property, social networks, intellectual capacity, technical competency, or spiritual resilience.

The African vision of *ujamaa* encourages people to take "control of their own lives" (Shorter 1978, 28). It encourages local neighbourhoods where people develop their own local resources and build on inherent assets "in a real family spirit of cooperation, sharing and trust". In such decentralised multiplication of self-reliance, built on own assets, the city will achieve more secure levels of sustainability.

3.5 Re-membering partnerships

Solid, sustainable partnerships could be the greatest asset in a local community, as different strengths are pooled to facilitate change. Partnerships can leverage investment, multiply resources, improve service delivery, facilitate sustainable jobs, enhance local marketing and ensure synergy between various stakeholders (Cowan 1997, 194).

But, partnerships or creative collaborations do not always happen naturally (Cowan 1997, 194):

a large number of urban regeneration projects today are based on partnership, with the public, private and voluntary sector working together. But many of those partnerships, though set up with the best of intentions, are confused as to who controls them, what the roles of the respective partners

are, how they should operate, and how they can measure their success. What they lack is support and guidance in learning the art of collaboration.

Good partnerships or collaboration is a learnt art. For it to produce the optimum results, Cowan (1997, 194) lists several necessary requirements, such as a good flow of information, clarity about the roles and responsibilities of different partners, understanding the role of partnership in relation to the broader context, inspiration from experiences elsewhere and frequent contact between the partners.

Collaboration goes beyond public participation as it assumes shared responsibility in the decision-making and implementation processes, shared investment and shared accountability (cf. Cowan 1997, 194). It represents a bottom-up versus a top-down approach, maximising participation instead of fostering paternalistic approaches to planning and design. Fostering partnerships in city-making processes, is an expression of wanting to promote a people-centred approach to city-making as opposed to city-making that seems people-less (Cowan 1997, 201).

Greenberg (1995, 57) thinks of partnership in making good cities, as an inter-generational enterprise, stretching over centuries!

If a city is a collaborative artwork, as it has been called, it is a very strange kind of collaboration: a partnership between people who may never know each other, who may live centuries apart, who may practice different architectural styles and building technologies, who may begin with very different assumptions about how people go about their daily tasks, who may act on behalf of widely varying kinds of public and private institutions, yet despite the diversity of its creators, in certain places the built environment looks and behaves like a unified assemblage, a collaboration.

City-making processes need to attend sensitively to the foundations laid by our ancestors while considering the well-being of future generations and the finiteness of natural resources. This is to connect past, present and future through acknowledging our deep interdependence.

Father Maximous² el-Antony lives in the Monastery of St Anthony by the Red Sea, the oldest operating Coptic monastery in the world. His life and work stand as a sign of inter-generational city-building. On the one hand Maximous is seeking to rehabilitate the archaeological heritage of this old monastery city, dating back to 356 CE. At the same time, he is committed to help the “city of the monastery” arrive in the virtual city of the 21st century and connect to the plight of urban orphans in cities like Cairo. The work of Maximous spans 1,700 years of life, witness, struggle and hope.

A philosophy and practice of city-building as partnership will not just connect and reconnect us to each other, today; but will also bind ancient, present and future generations, as we seek to re-member and make whole what are often dismembered, fractured cities.

Notes

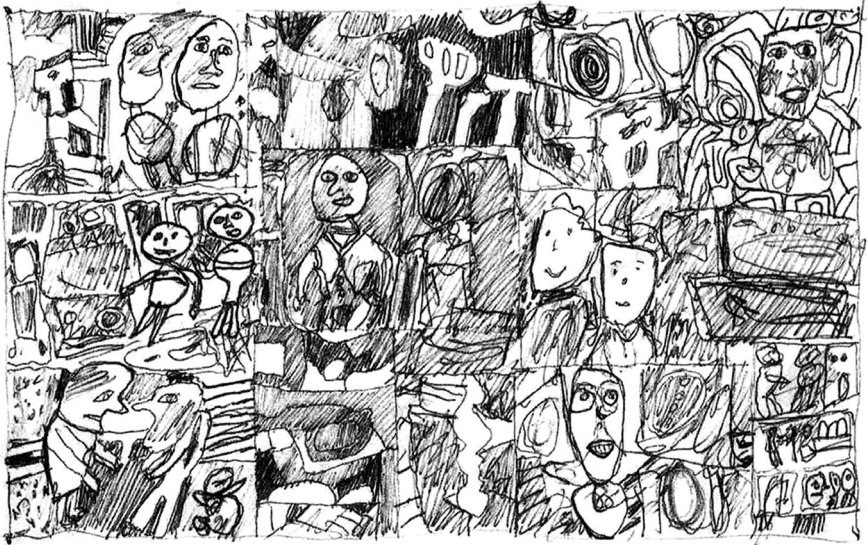
- 1 Told in a conversation with Stuart Talbot, a friend and urban companion who used to work with social housing, both in Durban and in Tshwane.
- 2 From personal conversations with Father Maximous el-Antony in different African cities.

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PUBLIC SPACES NEED TO FUNCTION FOR MANY DIFFERENT USES AND USERS

Figure 9.1 Drawing of 'the ups and downs' by Jean Debuffet
Source: Dee (2001)



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FOURTH MOMENT:
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9 Communities and movements of hope

Between resistance and reconstruction

In this chapter, I consider the vehicles through which an alternative imagination – rooted in a spirituality of urban space and practising an ethic of space – can be embodied. I propose communities and movements – small and local but also interconnected and global – as mediators of hopeful new cities, at the same time resisting death-dealing discourses and practices, while experimenting boldly and bravely with urban reconstructions and transformations that will allow the smallest child, the most vulnerable adult, the most threatened chameleon, to be co-inhabitants of the urban household.

1 Communities of hope

I resonate with Donna Shaper's (1989, 120) insistence that small communities hold the key to radical change. Ending poverty, reclaiming schools, or building housing for so-called "un-houseables" can be done by communities, once they "take back the powers they have given away", because they understand that it is in the interest of their life together to do so. Small narratives of local communities need to be supported, strengthened and broadcasted, in order for the seeds of transformation that become apparent to be spread.

The city is a community of communities. Fragmentation, fear and individualism have often eroded a sense of community, qualitatively, almost altogether. And yet, it is probably most realistic, feasible and tangible to imagine and shape alternative urban spaces through local communities, at the grassroots where people are.

Hopeful communities are ethical communities. Greenberg (1995, 41) says:

Ethics cannot be sustained outside of an ethical community: an actual, not an abstract community in which individuals learn ethical discernment and practical wisdom by direct example, practice, conversation and interaction.

Such communities, in which citizens participate in the life of the city ethically and constructively, become communities of hope, or "a generative, creative force" (Greenberg 1995, 41). Every city seems to have such communities, and often there is remarkable vision and energy alive in these places. City-makers

would do well to find these communities and to relate to them as participants, friends and partners. Of course, these communities themselves are practising the art of city-making in everyday ordinary, and extra-ordinary, ways.

Such communities could be faith communities gathering certain days of the week and wrestling to translate their faith into actions that will influence the city positively. It could be local organisations with management, staff and administrative capacity, which seek to invest their institutional infrastructure in contributing to hopeful places. It could be citizens' movements – small and fragile, or large and robust, informal or formal, organised or poorly organised – that seek to contribute to inclusive, hopeful cities.

Hopeful communities are intentional spaces that practice both resistance and reconstruction. To be intentional about the impact it would hope for, such communities (would have to) foster, slowly over time, certain characteristics for engaging the city effectively. This might include some of the following:

- Coming together with a common purpose and commitment to each other and the city
- Intentionally seeking for the common good, thinking and acting beyond own self-interest
- Placing themselves in solidarity with those who are vulnerable or excluded
- Reflecting on current urban discourses and practices and how they affect the local community
- Participating wisely and critically constructively in public processes, informing policy, plans, projects and budgets
- Making spaces – using interactive methods, the arts and cultural expression – in which to re-imagine the city and one's local community from the perspective of mediating wholeness and justice for all community members
- Learning the art and discipline of creative and robust resistance to those forces or practices that might be detrimental to the well-being of a local community
- Embarking on collective action – advocacy, programmes or interventions – that model clear alternatives
- Acknowledging own and local assets, knowledge and experience as sources of power and liberation
- Recognising the ways in which one's local community belongs to the wider city community, connecting strategically and practising interdependence

Hopeful communities, seeking to act ethically together, do so with the view of contributing to a hopeful city in which all people will have access to sources of sustainable livelihood, and in which no one will be excluded from the urban household.

Such communities are usually limited in their impact, however, because of size, capacity, resources or locality. The challenge then becomes to discern where such communities exist all across the city and for like-minded communities, committed to a hopeful city, to find each other and be connected, until a movement of hope is born.

2 Movements of interconnected communities

At some point small communities have to connect to other small communities; different geographical areas need to organise themselves into city-wide alliances; intersectional urban issues need to find synergy in their similar and collective struggle for urban justice. That is when communities do not cease to exist but, while acting very locally as prophetic embodiments of that which they imagine, they also participate in broader-based urban movements for change.

I echo the appreciation with which David Harvey (2012, xii) reflects on “right to the city movements... active in dozens of cities around the world”. Harvey (2012, xiii) suggests that these movements rise up, not primarily as intellectual responses to urban challenge, but “from the streets, out of the neighbourhoods, as a cry for help and sustenance by oppressed people in desperate times”. Such movements hold the potential to usher in viable and radical urban alternatives. They concentrate not only on access to services but on root causes that prevent or eliminate such access.

Urban social movements, significant as they might be, often remain active only within the narrow base of their singular issues or local geographical areas. Harvey (2012, 25) speaks of the “multitude of diverse urban struggles and urban social movements already in existence”, innovative in addressing issues ranging from environmental sustainability to the integration of migrants and the urban design for public or social housing. That is not wrong in itself, but without participation in broader movements, the breadth and depth of change required would not occur. One would see only piece-meal and ad hoc local transformations without gaining the kind of momentum that can offer adequate resistance to dominant discourses and practices of a neoliberal capitalist city.

The lack of coherence and unity among urban social movements were echoed by James Cone (2001), Shannon Jung (1993) and others. Cone (2001, 24) writes:

Justice fighters for blacks and the defenders of the earth have tended to ignore each other in their public discourse and practice. Their separation from each other is unfortunate because they fight the same enemy – human beings’ domination of each other and nature.

And yet, Cone (2001, 27) demonstrates the intersectionality of justice concerns, referencing a 1989 report of the United Church of Christ, which shows that race was an important indicator of where hazardous waste facilities could be found in the United States: “Forty percent of the nation’s commercial hazardous-waste landfill capacity was in three predominantly African-American and Hispanic communities” (Cone 2001, 27). Jung (1993) stressed that those who advocate the environment without concern for the oppression of women, and those who advocate issues of women’s oppression without concern for the environment, are both practising an inadequate ethic.

In the 1990s Watson and Gibson (1995, 260) spoke of a shift from class politics to identity politics whereby people organised themselves in terms of race, gender, class, sexuality and other such categories. The danger of such organising is that it tends to create new homogeneities, excluding some and disallowing diversity and difference. They then call for a new politics of alliances, partnerships and collaborations that go beyond traditional divides or binary oppositions (Watson & Gibson 1995, 262).

They suggest that “(A) postmodern politics implies a more textured and complex understanding of power and difference” (Watson & Gibson 1995, 262), and, “Instead of assuming single subject positions it is now commonplace to recognise that people represent several groups at once and occupy multiple subject positions and identities which shift and change all the time”.

Based on the violent connection between an economy of wealth accumulation and an economy of dispossession, Harvey (2012, 25) argued that, irrespective of the nature of urban vulnerability of exclusion, the real challenge was with “control over the uses of the surplus”. In this regard he urged for “a coherent opposition movement” with “the singular aim of gaining greater control over the uses of the surplus (let alone over the conditions of its production)”. In his mind, “the ultimate task is to overthrow those practices through a much broader revolutionary movement” Harvey (2012, xviii) states: “The whole capitalist system of perpetual accumulation, along with its structures of exploitative and class power, has to be overthrown and replaced” (Harvey 2012, xviii). It is at the point of dispossession that the dispossessed need not only be reminded of their humanity and therefore right to the city but also need to be supported as they rise up to resist exclusion and “to reinvent the city more after their hearts’ desire” (Harvey 2012, 25).

Although the urgency for city-wide (and at times national and global) coherence of interconnected, intersectional movements is evident, the importance of the local is even more important than before. As global dynamics erased national boundaries, **the local neighbourhood is increasingly becoming the site of political resistance** (cf. Watson & Gibson 1995, 260).

If resistance can be practiced to demonstrate significant change in local neighbourhoods, these could indeed shape city-wide movements in terms of strategy and tactics, alternative imaginaries and hopeful models of what have become possible. The old slogan – think globally, act locally – still applies. Our cities today need local communities of hope acting ethically, while fostering movements of interconnected communities and intersectional themes, standing together for justice.

Local and global movements of interconnected communities will refuse to get stuck in intellectual debates only. They are movements of hope in as far as they engage in the actual sites and places of resistance, generating knowledge while being immersed, and learning from each other’s concerns and aspirations. Their very acts of solidarity and resistance, if authentically about the common good and the city’s wholeness, will already contribute to (re)make cities in ways that resemble participatory democracy (Watson & Gibson 1995, 257).

Spaces in such cities will be:

less privatized so that individuals can interact in the open, expressing both their differences and their commonalities. These are spaces which are not bound by walls of exclusion or inclusion – they are spaces without walls.

(Watson & Gibson 1995, 261)

If movements of interconnected communities cannot model such spaces through their own life together – their own inclusionary practices – they have little to offer.

What seems to be necessary is for a continuum of resistance and reconstruction to be animated: from small communities to movements of communities to city-wide, intersectional urban movements for change.

3 On resistance

3.1 *Rhetoric, respectability or resistance*

In post-apartheid South Africa there was often an allergic reaction towards resistance, quickly labelling those resisting the lack of good governance, neo-liberal capitalism and other forces that came with our freedom, as ‘counter-revolutionaries’.

Being co-opted into the myth of rainbow neutrality, South Africa for a moment faced the weakening of its vibrant civil society, oppositional politics and active faith-based resistance. The rhetoric of liberation-transformation-revolution crept into public policy documents, parliamentary and party-political discourse, and informal conversations on the street, but the complete disconnect between rhetoric and actuality was often nauseating, seeing how the gaps of inequality were widening while the rhetoric flourished.

Swyngedouw (2002, 153) reflects critically on the “respectability” of what used to be radical movements of transformation. In a rather cynical fashion he (2002, 154) suggests that it is “the fate of any revolutionary political or urban-utopian movement and moment to become celebrated when the political and social threat emanating from it seems to have run out of steam”.

In accordance with this view, it is possible for movements of revolution to be co-opted by other powers once they achieved the initial victory, or the initial socio-political threat has been overcome. In the South African landscape, this is now clearer than ever, literally becoming a battle for the soul of a nation and the soul of its cities. How this battle plays itself out at the level of a metropolitan municipality is disturbingly narrated by Olver (2017) in his account of the battle for the soul – and resources and power – of the Nelson Mandela Bay metropolitan municipality, in a book with the apt title, *How to steal a city!*

Swyngedouw (2002, 154) reminds us that real transformation is never merely academic discourse or acts of respectable rhetoric acted out in classrooms or in parliament buildings. “Revolution is acted out in the streets”, Swyngedouw

(2002, 154) argues, and as a result, it is a “decidedly geographical”, spatial and urban affair.

In recent times, we have seen the emergence of robust activist movements – in Parliament, on university campuses, in cities, towns and local communities – disregarding the “respectability” of power, resisting the monopolising of space by some at the expense of the many, reclaiming public and political spaces, becoming a voice that cannot be missed. In the South African context, movements emerged that respond creatively to a myriad of issues ranging from access to health and equal education, to gender and LGBTQI concerns, a right to the city, and a right to water and sanitation.

For as long as some are excluded from economic and social access and not allowed to participate fully in the processes of reconstruction, creative and constructive resistance remains a valid and required response. Transformation and reconstruction will remain buzzwords only, if not continuously preceded or accompanied by ever-deepening processes of socio-economic liberation (cf. Vellem 2007, 131).

Planners and urban practitioners, as well as “innocent” communities of hope, would do well to learn from the engagements and practices of more robust social movements, in terms of organising strategies and tactics for resistance and change-making. Global and local social movements are as much movements of resistance to that which threatens to kill the soul of nations, cities and communities, as they are about seeking constructive alternatives in their respective fields. They should not be disregarded, but attentively considered.

3.2 *Marginality as “site of resistance”*

As local communities, citizens’ organisations, planners and others concerned with the well-being of our cities, immerse themselves in various neighbourhoods, they are often confronted with marginality. On close inspection, one grasps that people and neighbourhoods are usually not marginalised by choice, but as a result of systemic exclusions, external to themselves. Watson and Gibson (1995, 257–261) show how deviation from the cultural norm or dominant narrative, coupled with a lack of economic or political power often leads to marginalisation, both in terms of access to physical location but also to resources for well-being.

Communities of hope often choose marginality, because they choose to be in solidarity with marginal people and places. Such a choice is simultaneously, sometimes unknowingly, a “site of resistance” (hooks 1999, 22) and participation in resistance.

Once individual planners, community practitioners or engaged researchers make such a choice, they might also experience personal or institutional marginality, either subtly or overtly. They might have to decide whether to succumb to the dominant narrative, resign into apathy, or live consciously, and sacrificially even, resisting the dominant narrative, in order to help usher in multiple small transformations in small, local places. Even “innocent”

community developers or city planners, if living with conscience and concerned with justice, when exposed to marginality, are faced with a choice. Those moments of decision determine the integrity with which we embrace and embody our deepest callings and (professional) vocations.

3.3 Beyond isolation: The imperative of intersectionality

Many of the activist movements that have emerged in recent years on the South African landscape have become very sophisticated in their practices and achieved visible results. Yet, as argued earlier, the segregation of different movements from one another significantly hinders advancement of a radical agenda. The conversation around intersectionality becomes very important in such a context.

Scholars such as Crenshaw (1989) assert that race, class and gender are “intersecting oppressions” and that the strategies and tactics to address such oppressions, increasingly need to be interconnected in a deliberately intersectional manner. Boff (1997) speaks of the ways in which the cries of the earth, the poor and women, are, in essence, the same cry, caused by the common denominator of patriarchal and colonialist domination. And Heim Lafrombois (2018, 11), considering Chicago, reflects on what she calls ‘Do-It-Yourself Urbanism’ from an intersectional feminist perspective, exploring the ways in which race, gender, class and sexuality intersect in how communities are shaped and policies made.

The challenge comes when different concerns vie over whose pain is more authentic, delegitimising the pain of the other. In an intersectional approach, different struggles are considered part of a broader struggle to reclaim our common humanity through justice that makes whole. This is very pertinent in urban contexts where most of these topics overlap in rather complex ways. The kind of learning that could occur through an honest desire to be in solidarity with others’ struggles is immeasurable. Planning education would do well to help future planners wrestle with, and reflect on the intersectional nature of oppression, exclusion and marginalisation, and help imagine liberating planning practices that are inclusionary and life-affirming for all inhabitants of an area or region.

3.4 Prophetic anger and lament

Hopeful communities are resistant communities, naming that which ‘deals death’ (social exclusion, physical displacement, socio-spatial inequalities, or lack of access to affordable resources) and imagining and calling forth that which offers life (social inclusion, secure tenure, socio-spatial equality and increased access to affordable resources). Hope is found in the very resistance to that which steals hope.

Those who resist, who ‘name what is wrong’ and who help imagine creative alternatives are often called prophets. Fox (1983, 260) suggests that prophets

carry the creative energy of God “when it has been stymied or stifled by injustice or laziness or too much belief in the immortality of what already is”. The task of the prophet in the face of injustice or a negative status quo is to interfere (Heschel 1962, 205): interfering with injustice, spatial exclusion and dehumanising market forces (Fox 2000, 261). According to Fox (2000, 260), “[t]he prophet knows something about trusting anger, trusting one’s moral outrage, trusting what is intolerable and moulding that anger and outrage into creative possibilities”.

Baum (2016, 506) speaks of “planners’ lack of interest in emotion”, over-emphasising the rationality of planning. Such facilitators of planning or participation processes have not yet learnt the creative power of anger, outrage and lament. By allowing, inviting even, such emotions into planning processes, it offers the possibility of creative and better alternatives, because we hear and address the very concerns soliciting most anger.

In this regard, it is worth considering the work of Forester, who holds a highly contrary view to dominant planning practices. Forester (1999, 203) is of the view that planners (and city-makers) should understand the emotions of others and of themselves – the “emotions of fear and suspicion, anxiety and resentment, compassion and generosity”, as sources of learning and vision. As an example, Forester (1999, 203) notes the necessity of mourning in planning processes. Without this ability to lament or mourn “losses of the past”, it becomes difficult to evoke imaginaries of possible alternative futures.

Katongole (2017, xviii) mentions that lament is “a decisive form of political agency”; it is “a form of resistance (against ‘cheap hope’) and struggle to transform the structures of violence, poverty and marginalisation into an ‘excess of love’”. In this, Katongole (2017) suggests the impossibility to think about hope in contexts of deep violence and social unrest, without evoking and nurturing the capacity and gift of lament.

Baum (2016, 508) speaks of the deep emotions felt by those who experience urban displacement in places as diverse as Boston, Baltimore, Lagos, or London. With reference to the work of Fried (1963), he describes the hopelessness felt by displaced people, losing “attachments to people and places that gave them meaningful identities and secure relationships” (Baum 2016, 508). The levels of trauma and loss many urban dwellers experience on a daily basis need to be considered in planning processes if we are to make more humane cities. Creating hospitable and safe spaces for such anger, pain or trauma to surface, to be lamented and to be held, respectfully, would build the kind of trust that could birth hopeful alternative imaginations.

The majority of planners (and, by implication, the planning processes they manage) tend to dismiss emotions, not only because of their own deeply rationalistic tendencies, but also, perhaps, because of the messiness, unpredictability and complexity once emotions get involved (Baum 2016, 511); the fact that they are mostly not prepared to deal with the emotions of the urban dwellers they plan for; and the fear to face oneself. Planners who are unable to recognise, reflect on or account for their own emotions and desires, will help give birth to

cities and communities that are either shaped in the image of dominant societal groups, or their professions' collective fears and preoccupations and leave in place, replicate and/or deepen the un-healed scars of places and people alike.

3.5 Beyond the myth of a-political urban spatial praxis

Watson and Gibson (1995, 31) ask: "Can we create an effective postmodernism of resistance that involves more than bovine immobility or sitting on fences like Humpty Dumpties playing with words?". In answer to this question, and instead of postmodern relativism, or a-political urban engagement, urban spatial praxis that is deeply and decidedly engaged in the politics of spatial formulation and formation should be considered.

Watson and Gibson (1995, 33) refer to the work of Foucault (1975) and Lefebvre (1991) on space, and the fact that both "problematized revolution spatially around the politics of the urban, the struggles of power over the governing of space and territory that are centered in cities but extend well beyond them into the urbanized countryside and peripheries". Lefebvre (1991) spoke of a "spatial praxis" that engaged the politics of spatial formation. An 'urban spatial praxis' is never neutral, but always deeply political in how it affects people, and that justice does not happen without struggle.

For some South African planners, planning shifted from being a neutral discipline to a critical engagement that includes advocacy and resistance to a status quo that (still) excludes the lives and interests of the most vulnerable. Regrettably so, this has not been the case for most (Oranje, Venter & Ferreira, 2018). Within contexts of spatial segregation and the perpetual reproduction of segregated spaces by the workings of neoliberal capitalist urban formation, the importance of local communities and inter-connected local movements cannot be stressed enough. They become the ones that develop robust urban spatial praxes, able to counter, or at least expose and broadcast the reality of exclusivist and death-dealing urban political and spatial processes.

3.6 Planning: a tool of repression or a tool of inclusion

Planning can either be a progressive tool of inclusion and reconstruction or a tool of control and repression.

Yiftachel (1995, 218) writes, with reference to the situation of Israel-Palestine: "The very same planning tools usually introduced to assist social reform and improvement in people's quality of life can be used as a means of controlling and repressing minority groups". There is a clear comparison between Israel-Palestine nowadays and the socio-spatial oppressions faced by Black South Africans in pre-1994 urban South Africa. Planners in such contested regions face great difficulty, since planning is often used to further oppression and marginalisation, making planners deeply complicit (Allegra, 2016).

Comparative notes should also be made in terms of the ways in which planning policy and procedures impact on a daily basis upon homeless communities,

refugees, those living with disability, and the poor in general. Planners are either complicit in the marginalisation of vulnerable groups, or able to facilitate their inclusion.

The lack of relationships between mainstream planners and particularly vulnerable urban neighbourhoods keeps such planners largely in oblivion to the emotions and aspirations of the majority of South Africa's urban dwellers. Their planning, however ambitious, does not speak of the existential challenges or emotional trauma of vulnerable urban people. Even if not outright an example of repressive planning, what they mediate is hardly inclusive, and tends to, at the very least, repress emotions of anger, frustration, loss, or powerlessness.

In this regard, Yiftachel (2009) speaks of resistance and the "mobilization of the colonized" in situations where spatial production is oppressive. It needs to be discerned daily in how ordinary people struggle to access the city and its resources. Planning, therefore, if not to be a tool of repression and control, must become a tool of resistance and the mobilisation of those who are victims of neo-colonial urban spatialities, assisting communities to assert their own agency for making change on their own terms.

3.7 Resistance starts with us

Resistance starts with and in us, right here and right now where marginality and exclusion are harshly experienced. It starts in communities of struggle and solidarity. Once we become aware of the forces that marginalise some, and how we are complicit through deeply ingrained practices and processes, we can no longer pretend to be ignorant or innocent. We too must be liberated and transformed in terms of our own consciousness, identity, language, practices and postures.

Real prophets are non-elitist in how they speak and act, representing a "street spirituality, one that the nonprofessional person can understand" (Fox 2000, 263). This requires an artistry, calling "forth symbols of justice and injustice that are universally recognizable" (Fox 2000, 263). If planners, educators, theologians, lawyers, business people, scientists or artists can only be understood by professional people from their own disciplines, then Fox (2000, 264) asks: "Whom are you serving?"

If the language they use are inaccessible to those living on the streets and in marginalised and generally forgotten city neighbourhoods, they are neither prophetic, nor wise (Fox 2000, 264). Fox (2000, 264) suggests, therefore, that the prophetic task of professionals should start within their own profession, "to start transforming that particular profession so that it serves the oppressed and ceases to legitimize the oppressor". By doing so, Fox (2000, 264) argues that "[m]any professionals today will find their prophetic calling precisely in de-elitizing their own profession".

Ellin (1996, 71) spoke of the shift in planning praxis of the 1960s and 1970s towards more self-critical and reflective planning and architecture. In some

circles within these disciplines, the professionals became less authoritarian, humbler in recognising themselves as one actor in the planning or city-making arena, and more overtly political, with the goal of empowering people to improve their communities and their environment. Rather than simply designing and realising plans, these architects and planners would also engage in a critical examination of the status quo and in becoming advocates for unrepresented interests.

Resistance starts with how we deliberately seek to disentangle ourselves from being complicit in forces robbing communities of agency.

3.8 Celebrating resistance: a thing of beauty, fantasy, festivity

Dorothee Soelle (1993) speaks of the hope of vulnerable people in Latin America, defying the odds, often through employing rituals or festivals to resist life-denying forces.

Our festivals and diverse expressions of beauty are not just reconstructing the city, but could also offer moments for resistance. Much of artistic expression offers social critique, and if it is aesthetically beautiful, the critique it offers is often even more powerful.

Beauty, fantasy and celebration remain some of the most untapped resources for resistance and reconstruction. Communities and movements would do well to foster such resources among themselves, both as a way of self-sustenance, but also to communicate more effectively and clearly in harsh urban environments. Utilising such resources could assist in overcoming fragmentation, practising hospitality and building cohesion, as they enable us to deal with hard issues in playful, celebratory and beautiful ways.

When the city of Philadelphia instituted legislation against being homeless and also against feeding homeless people on the streets, Shane Claiborne and his friends from *The Simple Way* (n.d.) gathered many who were in solidarity with homeless people to create a huge public street party in one of the parks where most homeless people gathered. They continued to camp out with the homeless people until they were arrested. The judge ruled that the new by-laws were unconstitutional and needed to be revisited. This was a victory for open, democratic and inclusive spaces even for the most vulnerable people of the city (Claiborne 2006, 232–236).

Every time we intervene in the Market, creating accessible or alternative options to what the Market has to offer (or not), we celebrate resistance to one of the most demanding, exclusivist and cruel modern-day urban gods. We demonstrate the possibility of alternatives and of options where others saw none.

4 On reconstruction

City-making from below could not only engage in resistance, as that would have paralyzing effects. Small communities also need to develop the capacity to engage in concrete acts of reconstruction.

Krier proposes a charter for reconstructing the city: “a moral project that mirrors a political constitution” (Krier 1984; in Grant 2006, 26). Krier’s proposal (1984) indicates that reconstruction is never neutral. It implies a certain political and ethical position, consciously or unconsciously.

4.1 Reconstruction as resistance

In the run-up to, and in post-1994 democratic South Africa, the idea of reconstruction became central in planning theory, government policy documents and a number of theological discourses (Oranje, 1997, 180; Villa-Vicencio 1992; Republic of South Africa, 1994). This was accompanied by a new focus on housing, public participation and a new sensitivity for the socio-political context within which planning was done. Oranje (1997, 80; 2014) suggests that this passion faded away in planning as soon as the euphoria of post-Apartheid South Africa passed and was replaced with an empty, repetitive, soulless planning discourse on transformation.

Small local communities have an important role in taking ownership of the processes that could shape hopeful futures for themselves. Communities of hope are never resistant communities only, but – as embodiments of an alternative political imagination – such communities also seek to contribute concretely to the reconstruction of the city. Reconstructive actions in themselves could be actions of resistance, if they help overcome the “pessimism, cynicism, and despair” (Fox 2000, 264) that sometimes take hold of us, our communities, or public discourse and choose to “channel moral outrage into rebirth” (Fox 2000, 264).

One example is Common Ground in New York City, accommodating persons who used to be homeless through rehabilitating abandoned buildings. Their model is not only providing sustainable tenure to formerly homeless people and reconstructing the local urban landscape, but also resisting the notion that homeless people cannot be reintegrated meaningfully, that they will affect surrounding market prices detrimentally, and that it is more expensive to house homeless people decently than to displace them into institutional care models (prisons, hospitals, psychiatric hospitals).

Other examples include innovative and transformative slum-upgrading projects in Manila¹ or Addis Ababa², done from below and from within communities; alternative justice models in Manhattan, New York City³; creative approaches to deal with waste management⁴ in Curitiba, Brazil or Cairo, Egypt, or the reconstruction of inner city sites in Johannesburg or Pretoria for socially inclusive housing, demonstrating the alternative possibilities to socially exclusive urban regeneration.

4.2 Equity planning as solidarity with marginal places and people

Krumholz and Clavel (1994) speak of “equity planning” as simultaneously resisting and reconstructing – resisting in its solidarity with excluded people who lack access, but doing so constructively, through specific interventions

aimed at long-term and hopeful change. Equity-based approaches to planning “hold the promise of better policy and benefits for troubled neighbourhoods and at-risk populations within cities” (Krumholz & Clavel 1994, xiv). ‘Conventional planners’ often allow their ends to be decided by politicians, planning boards and business, allowing political pressure based on the assumption that politicians “represent the people through the democratic process” (Krumholz & Clavel 1994, 3).

Equity planners, in how Krumholz and Clavel (1994, 3) describe this approach, reject such a narrow definition of what planners are supposed to be and do. Equity planners argue that planners who seek a better future for the cities and their people must be concerned with both the ends and the means. They show deep concern for the “truly disadvantaged”, because equity planners assume that the existing democratic institutions are biased against the interests of those at the bottom of the social system. They, therefore, actively seek to mediate downward redistribution (Krumholz & Clavel 1994, 3).

Equity planning could also be regarded as restitutive planning. In contexts where the planning profession contributed to an unequal society, both as institution and in institutionalising socio-spatial inequity, the same profession has the responsibility to do restitution through equity planning.

4.3 Redistributive reconstruction: on abundance and inclusion

The kind of reconstruction that is implicitly resistant will be a ‘redistributive reconstruction’. Such reconstruction works from the premise that there is an abundance of resources in the city instead of perpetuating the myth of scarcity (Covey 1991). Castells (2017) and Fioramonti (2017) thoroughly and convincingly explore the idea of viable alternatives to scarcity economies. The question is not one of scarcity or adequacy, but one of (fair) distribution and (equal) access.

In Krumholz and Clavel’s (1994, 1) view, city policy should be explicit about “providing choices to those who had few”: “Equity planning [makes] a conscious attempt to devise redistributive policies in favour of the least powerful and to enhance the avenues of participation” (Krumholz & Clavel 1994, 1). In their focus on participation of excluded neighbourhoods and groups, equity planners deal intentionally with issues of diversity, race and class, seeking to respond to the political and economic coalitions that estranged the poor from society’s institutions (Krumholz & Clavel 1994, 3–4).

In the United States of America in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a lively interest in the related approaches of advocacy planning, social planning, community planning, or equity planning (Krumholz & Clavel 1994, 15). Currently, in South African cities and towns marked by intense levels of disparity, there is an ongoing need for planners and city-builders who will intentionally position themselves with marginal people and places and with small, local communities to help facilitate equitable-redistributive reconstruction. This, however, does not seem to be where (the majority of) planners want to be, and hard questions need to be asked as to why this is the case.

4.4 *Integrating ethical and aesthetical concerns in city-making*

Stübben (1890) and Sitte (1889), early German planning pioneers, moved planning beyond mere technical or bureaucratic concerns, integrating ethical (Stübben) and aesthetical (Sitte) concerns into their vision for city planning. They are concerned with both utility and beauty and this concern ranges from drainage and lighting to signposting and public toilets, trees and plants and street furniture. Good cities will combine utility, beauty and ethics in the way it is conceptualised, designed and built.

Medellin in Colombia has become exemplary at integrating ethical and aesthetical concerns in urban space-making through their approach of *social urbanism* (cf. McGuirk 2014, 231–257). First coined by Karl Brunner in the 1930s, social urbanism referred to Brunner’s rejection of modernist utopian urban design and city-building from scratch, rather placing emphasis on recognising what is already there (cf. McGuirk 2014, 243–244).

In Medellin an approach was followed that built on existing community assets; made visible informal and “notorious” neighbourhoods through creative investments in parks, schools, libraries and other urban infrastructure; connected fragmented parts of the city through transport infrastructure and the strategic positioning of public infrastructure; and built strong community movements that emphasised participation in the city-building process.

Not only were they successful with integrating the ethical with the aesthetical, but they actually achieved clear socio-political (ethical) goals through aesthetics (methods), sensitive architectural and just infrastructure interventions.

They concentrated the budget of the city in the poorest parts of the city which is where the bulk of design interventions took place. This was an expression of political will that became embodied in the urban design strategy. Santo Domingo was previously one of the city’s most dangerous and notorious neighbourhoods. As a result of social urbanism, it became one of the city’s most prominent and attractive neighbourhoods, hosting the state-of-the-art and highly visible public library and symbolising the best of Medellin’s regeneration programme.

What Medellin got right, McGuirk (2014, 241) suggests, is to overcome disintegration through deliberate integration: “**The only way to make a city whole again is by reconnecting its segregated pieces**”.

Between 1990 and 1993 Medellin was still known as the murder capital of the world, and corrupt governance and growing inequality were the order of the day. By 2008 the homicide rate fell by 90 per cent and urbanists started to flock to Medellin to learn from its achievements (McGuirk 2014, 231).

Creating beauty: an ethical imperative

Creating beauty, especially in vulnerable places, is an ethical act. What was occurring in Medellin is not only the result of clever political or design interventions but an ethical act of *doing the city together, differently*.

Even in the minds of local community organisations and donor agencies there exists a tension between ethics and aesthetics. Beauty is regarded as a luxury preserved for the elite. I argue that the beautification of local communities should be a central part of a conscientisation programme that re-asserts the inherent dignity and value of local places and people. I concur with **Roque Dalton** (2000: “I believe that the world is beautiful, and that poetry, like bread, is for everyone”).

An ethical approach will be deliberate about looking for signs of beauty that already exist, but are sometimes hidden, unsung or forgotten. It goes about its task, stripping layers of prejudice and neglect, until the soul of the city shines through magnificently. Endell (1908), with reference to Berlin, pleads for an awareness of “beauty that is not always immediately apparent” (cf. Frisby 2001, 88): there are “miraculous sights” to be found despite the “loathsome qualities” of that city. Endell (1908, 89) says: “And where ugliness is the norm, proper perception is the first step to a more beautiful, better world”.

Places like Bangkok, Addis Ababa, or Sao Paulo – exploding cities of multiple needs and challenges, traffic congestion and sprawling slums, economic disparities and growing polarisation – are cities of raw beauty, hidden and not so hidden, inducing strong affection, because of the *genius loci* – the energy, inspiration and resilience – that is to be found here.

Seeing afresh is a spiritual or ethical activity, uncovering the beauty behind the scars of generations of being battered, forgotten, exploited. Endell (1908, 92) emphasises this, stating “that every individual could heighten his/her own existence by means of pure seeing and experiencing his/her surroundings anew”.

Beyond the visual; beyond the professional

Beauty needs to be wrestled back from those who gave themselves the right of monopolisation. Local communities need to both reclaim beauty but also expand an appreciation of what it is that constitutes beauty or art.

Massey (1994, 232) argues that an emphasis on the aesthetics in shaping urban spaces, often narrowly emphasises the visual experience as being more privileged than the other senses. When we think of urban regeneration we only think in terms of the visual and not necessarily in terms of “smells, textures, sounds” (Miles 2006, 897). Massey speaks of this as “a way of seeing from the point of view of an authoritative, privileged, and male position”.

Blindekuh (cf. Jetzer 2000, 30–32) is a restaurant in Zürich. Its name refers to the children’s game where children are blindfolded and then have to catch each other. In this restaurant patrons are temporarily blindfolded, losing visual control during their meal while in unfamiliar surroundings. It creates a heightened awareness of all senses. Jetzer (2000, 32) writes: “You discover ‘seeing’ in the dark with your ears, nose, palates and hands, like a culture of slowness”. The waiters being employed are either blind or partially sighted. They become the hosts and hostesses, guiding others into this brave new world. There is an inversion of roles and a deliberate integration into society of people who are

often marginalised. At Blindekuh a reality is constructed that goes beyond the visual and the so-called professional, creating a new experience and reclaiming beauty as wholeness or integration, in a much fuller sense.

In Medellin children participated in monthly imagination workshops, helping to create ideas for making an urban park. The importance was to ensure that the ideas and aspirations generated in these workshops were actually implemented (cf. McGuirk 2014, 245). People's own interventions could include graffiti or mural art, installations, art exhibitions, poetry readings, jazz events, dance competitions, or whatever else it might be that are alive and brewing in the local community, yet not invited to be publicly expressed.

At the 2005 Feast of the Clowns in the inner city of Tshwane, German Recycling artist, *Kwaku* (Eugen Schutz), spent one month in the inner city as artist-in-residence. He created a space in which persons who were homeless and vulnerable young women worked with him, creating art works from waste material.

The work of Brian Bakke and the mural art done at the Bethel New Life Community, both in Chicago, are good examples. In both cases professional artists helped design and accompany processes in which children, teenagers and women from a church-based shelter, co-created the art, becoming powerful installations conveying strong messages coming from within those local communities.

Miles (1996; in Tibbalds 1992, 116) would speak of these expressions as "imaginative interventions" with the potential to beautify, stir dialogue, or even shred unhelpful myths. They have the ability to help re-imagine one's neighbourhood but also oneself.

Aesthetics, civility and the good city

There is a close connection between aesthetics and civility. We cannot consider a city to be a good city if its spaces deny people dignity or worth. New urbanists "believe that an attractive and meaningful built environment can create conditions to enhance civility amongst citizens" (Grant 2006, 22). Common Ground in New York City strongly argues that the quality of living environments contributes to the well-being of people, so that good urban spaces – housing, parks, meeting places – could be healing spaces, both for people and for the environment.

Where we integrate ethics and aesthetics; where we discover and create beauty; and where we resist the monopolisation and commodification of beauty by some, reclaiming it in local communities and places, we unlock the potential of aesthetics to contribute to a city that will indeed be civil – good, honest, respectful, dignified, sharing and interconnected.

4.5 Centring towards wholeness

The healing of South Africa's fragmented apartheid cities should be one of our greatest contextual priorities (cf. Oranje 1997, 247), and yet, most developers and developments still focus in wealthier areas of the city.

When Alexander et al. (1987, 2) refer to a sense of wholeness in cities, they speak of it not only in terms of form or final product, but also in terms of the process that created it. This could also be true of informal settlements, urban townships and inner cities: where people become involved as drivers of their own futures, high levels of self-organisation and local community ownership can be found. People want to participate in their own futures and be able to say “we have done it ourselves”.

One example in which I was personally involved was the creation of The Jubilee Centre in Burgers Park, the main offices of the Tshwane Leadership Foundation. Its architectural design was preceded by a consultative process where all staff of the Foundation – from cleaners to the CEO – were able to make inputs collectively and individually. The women living in The Potter’s House, a transitional housing facility for women which forms part of this Centre, also made inputs into their living environment. All these inputs were considered in drafting an initial project brief for the architects. After their initial design, based on our brief, two more consultative conversations took place, in which the community using the Centre was able to comment, critique, suggest amendments and finally approve of the proposed architectural design.

There was a sense of wholeness, not only in the final product but also in the process. The building is not without flaws. Finishes were not always done well, and in trying to be cost-effective some shortcuts were taken that created problems later. But the space offers a sense of home, inclusion and belonging. And because of the participative process, there is great acceptance and ownership of both the beauty and the flaws.

Alexander et al. (1987, 5) suggest a “centering” process in urban planning and design, aimed at “wholeness in the city, almost spontaneously, by members of the community... provided that every decision, at every instant, was guided by the centering process”. They are convinced that good processes will help facilitate wholeness and that the discipline of centring should play a significant role: “If we create a suitable process there is some hope that the city might become whole once again. If we do not change the process, there is no hope at all” (Alexander et al. 1987, 3).

Design, planning, construction and management of the city should all be aimed at healing and wholeness: to repair what is broken and to create “new wholes” (Alexander et al. 1987, 14). This should be considered for every aspect of city-making: “Every increment of construction must be made in such a way as to heal the city” (Alexander et al. 1987, 22). It is almost as if they envisage a multiplicity of interconnected “wholes”/“centres” clustered together, which will collectively contribute to the city’s healing: “Every whole must be a center itself, and must also produce a cluster of centers around it” (Alexander et al. 1987, 92).

Reconstruction (*as explored here*) can therefore be understood as the essentially spiritual goal of healing the city (its people, institutions and places) through resisting forces of death; erecting hopeful signs of life; facilitating equitable distribution; embodied in centres all-over the city.

It is to redeem, retrieve or recover the soul of the city, as the life-giving womb providing shelter, nurture and sustenance to all who inhabit it at any given time. A city marked by wholeness will be full of feeling, touching us deeply, with “the power to move us, to bring us to tears, to make us happy” (Alexander et al. 1987, 14).

Notes

- 1 Beltran (2012) describes the transformation of Smokey Mountain in Manila.
- 2 Endria (2009) describes quality of life improvement and slum upgrading processes through IHA-UDP in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- 3 See the Center for Court Innovation (n.d.) and the Restorative Justice Initiative (2018).
- 4 Braga (1993) describes solid waste management solutions in Curitiba; De Beer (2014) reflects on the impact of the Zabbaleen community on waste management in Cairo.

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Figure 10.1 Burgers Park Village
Source: Nel (2017)

10 Fostering an integrated community-based urban praxis

1 Co-constructing the city

The fourth moment of the proposed praxis-cycle is the moment of co-construction.

Flowing from deeply immersed and collective readings of the city, in community, and from imagining possible alternatives to the exclusive city, the task then becomes to co-construct different socio-spatial realities than the ones we know.

In preceding chapters, I sought to explore a paradigm for co-constructing urban communities, from below and from within: a way of achieving optimal participation in shaping urban spaces, resisting that which excludes, dehumanises or exploits either humans or creation at large, and constructing together in ways that will be ethical, just, humane, life-affirming, sustainable and beautiful.

In Chapter 9, I propose for communities and movements – small and local, but also interconnected, intersectional, city-wide and global – to be the embodiments of alternative imaginaries. In this chapter I offer concrete postures for co-constructing the city, including *four moments*, *four tasks*, and *roots* that ground or centre it.

Firstly, a praxis-based methodology is deliberate about cultivating the *moments* of the praxis-cycle – entering, reading, imagining and co-constructing the city – sensitively, bravely, generously and boldly, with many others. *Secondly*, the journey expressed in this methodology needs *roots* to hold it. A community-based urban praxis, for it to be sustained, should be rooted in a spirituality and ethic of urban space.

Thirdly, *four tasks* are proposed as the structure within which hundreds of smaller plans, processes and interventions can be conceptualised, designed and actioned: (i) fostering communities of resistance and reconstruction; (ii) building on local assets, finding creative synergies and expanding urban tables; (iii) animating a multiplicity of small, local solidarities, reclamations and transformations; and (iv) weaving a net between these hopeful signs, that will span the entire city.

These tasks are like the corner stones for constructing hospitable, caring and just “urban villages”.

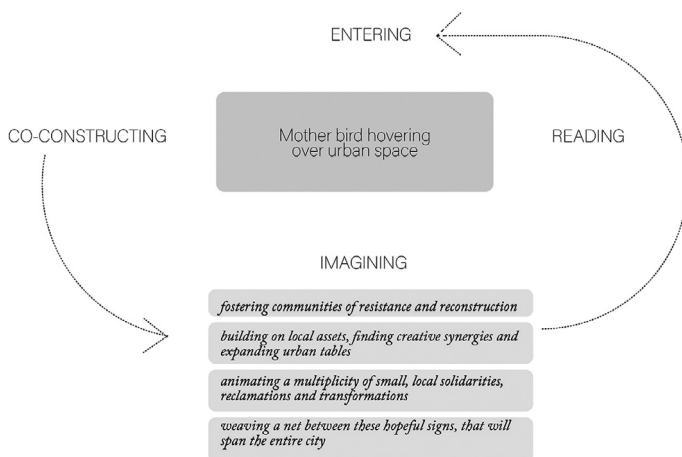


Figure 10.2 Journeys of Co-Construction
Source: Smith (2023)

INTERRUPTION: A small portfolio of community-based urban engagements

I start this chapter with a small interruption. Over the past three decades, a number of community-based urban engagements arose from within our own urban context. Rooted in a praxis-based approach and seeking to respond to the cry of some of the city's most vulnerable populations, these engagements have at times interrupted urban inevitabilities, to demonstrate that another way was possible. I only selected a few examples. Some of these engagements are prototypes worthy of simulation. Others are dormant. Some became tall stories with universal significance.

They are mostly small, local interventions, yet not insignificant. They demonstrate (i) co-construction of urban space from below and from within; (ii) the potential of community-based engagements to contribute to sustainable urban inclusion and infrastructure development; (iii) the resilience of well-organised local partnerships to resist life-denying urban forces; (iv) experiential knowledge not always accessed in formal urban curricula; and (v) a subversion of dominant planning paradigms through organic community-based urban praxes.

Oranje (1997, 9) mourns the fact that "(L)ittle or no room is left for a multiplicity of small narratives, or a multiplicity of alternative paradigms squirming/living side by side". The "engagements" described here are offered as such small narratives, living side by side with formal spatial development frameworks, inner city strategies or regenerative interventions, often not well-integrated or acknowledged by dominant discourses.

Tshwane Leadership Foundation; Feast of the Clowns; Yeast City Housing

When the Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF) (n.d.; Krige 2007) was established in 1993, it was at a time of intense demographic and socio-economic change in the inner city. It established itself at the time when white capital, institutions and churches disinvested from the inner city.

Starting out as Pretoria Community Ministries in 1993, with the support of 6 local churches, no budget, no property and only five volunteer staff ministers, it gradually unfolded into a multi-organisational movement, today known as the Tshwane Leadership Foundation. It was established to be solidarity with the inner city's most vulnerable people, to create communities of care and justice, to support the empowerment of local people and neighbourhoods, to work against slum formation and to participate in re-writing the story of the inner city in a way that will be socially inclusive, undoing remnants of the apartheid city.

TLF is a faith-based, non-profit community organisation, operating in a similar fashion to so-called community development corporations. Over the years it facilitated crucial psycho-social, physical, economic, knowledge and spiritual infrastructure, providing access to services and resources, previously unavailable to the communities it served. It created a number of intentional communities with some of the city's most vulnerable people – women and girl children at risk, people living with chronic mental illness, homeless communities and low-income working people. Thousands of people have benefited from the various communities and institutions it gave birth to.

TLF created the city's first non-racial shelter for women (1993) and first shelter for girl children (1997). In 1998 it launched a multi-faceted programme to accompany homeless people towards reintegration. Since then residential facilities were created for older homeless persons, people living with chronic psycho-social illnesses, and persons who need frail and palliative care. In both Berea-Burgers Park and Salvokop it created multi-purpose community centres, including a pre-school and after-school programme for children, children's rights programmes, and community outreach programmes. In its early years, TLF birthed the Institute for Urban Ministry, gathering and education urban workers in changing South African cities.

The **Feast of the Clowns** (Feast of the Clowns 2014; Tshwane Leadership Foundation 2015) was started in 2000 (after one previous attempt in 1995) to counter negative sentiments expressed about the city. It was meant to celebrate the city and its people, to create access to social, cultural and recreational infrastructure and to create awareness for on-going social justice concerns.

Annually taking place in and around Burgers Park, it has become a community festival that combines live artists on different stages, interactive exhibitions, social justice and community workshops, and children's activities. In 2021 and 2022 it included a Covid-19 vaccination site. The festival kicks off every year with the March of the Clowns, colourfully parading through the city's streets,



Figure 10.3 Feast of the Clowns logo
Source: Tshwane Leadership Foundation (1995)

combining playfulness and protest, as it carries slogans such as “Taking back our streets!”; “It’s up to us!”; “It takes a community to raise a child!”; “We must rise!”; and so forth.

Children wait for weeks ahead of time for the Feast to arrive. Vulnerable people are intentionally included in the workshops and March, and security for the main festival day is predominantly provided by individuals from the homeless community. The festival is a place of social exchange, but also a deliberate spatial intervention, and gets pulled off through mobilising a large network of friends and partners in the city.

Inspired by the book, *Feast of the Fools*, in which Harvey Cox (1969) laments the loss of celebration and imagination, the Feast is aimed at celebrating the city and imagining a city that is radically inclusive. Its ‘bottom-up’ character, being owned and driven by local community members, is what distinguishes and sustains it. Its logo depicts a city held by a clown-figure, raising the question: “Who holds the city?”; “Who takes ownership for the city’s care and well-being?”.

Yeast City Housing (YCH) (2022) was established in 1997 by the Tshwane Leadership Foundation, as the city’s first social housing company (De Beer 1998). It was created in response to socio-spatial changes in the city, loss of affordable housing options, and an acute housing demand. Since then it contributed essential physical and housing infrastructure, and became known for

its innovative responsiveness to local housing needs. It created more than 1,400 units of social housing by 2022, in close partnership and with the support of TLF.

In 2000 it was recognised by the Institute for Housing (Gauteng) as housing developer of the year, for “its path-setting role in providing transitional, communal, institutional and special needs housing, and related social services to poor and at-risk people in the inner city”. It models housing provision that is cost-effective, well-integrated into the local community, aesthetically pleasing, and affordable to the user. Its housing continuum addresses diverse housing needs including special needs of particularly vulnerable groups.

It was able to deliver what it did, through innovative partnerships and funding mechanisms. It often redeveloped urban land and property for residential uses, including the innovative recycling of church land, remodelling five church properties to offer affordable housing, complemented with other social services. YCH is currently challenged by non-paying tenants in its largest complex. How it navigates this challenge, might determine its future.

TLF, the Feast and YCH, have shown clearly how civil society and the faith-based sector can contribute to local urban regeneration, from below and from within, potentially being a constructive and equal partner of government. In parts of the city, they changed the physical landscape very meaningfully.

Berea Community Forum; Salvokop Development Forum; Tshwane Homelessness Forum

In Chapter 4, I referred to civic infrastructure in local inner city neighbourhoods, such as the Berea Community Forum, the Salvokop Development Forum and the Tshwane Homelessness Forum. Before 1994 inner city neighbourhoods in Tshwane were rather self-sufficient and, in a real sense, protected from change. As these neighbourhoods underwent drastic changes in the 1990s, a real need arose for a more organised and active civil society, who could participate in issues affecting local people, spaces and organisations.

The **Berea Community Forum** was created by individuals and organisations, who were living or working in the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood. The Forum focused on property issues, crime prevention, social development and municipal services. It played an important role in educating new property owners on their rights and responsibilities; preventing the irregular sequestration of 18 apartment buildings (almost 900 families); and informing the Gautrain trajectory in a way that prevented demolition of a number of residential apartment buildings and houses. It served as liaison between the local community and local government as well as the South African Police Services, identifying crime hot spots and contributing to crime reduction. Unfortunately, once the neighbourhood went through its initial dramatic transition, and stabilised, the Forum became largely defunct since 2011, and currently no formal platform exists to address issues affecting the Berea-Burgers Park precinct.

The **Salvokop Development Forum** was created to address community concerns, to liaise between the community and the municipality, and to inform the future of this important inner city neighbourhood. It includes the residents of the area, the Salvokop Youth Forum, the local primary school, a community centre, and other role players actively present in Salvokop.

Originally, Salvokop was a neighbourhood offering housing to white railway workers. Since the early 1990s it changed completely, now having a much larger population of tenants, many backyard dwellers and two growing informal settlements. The land in Salvokop is owned by a national government department, with the exception of one portion of land, owned by a local faith-based organisation. Earmarked to become a precinct for national government departments, the few thousand people living in Salvokop find themselves in a precarious situation, lacking secure tenure, and not featuring prominently in government's future plans.

To date, the Forum was able to prevent illegal evictions of large numbers of people living in Salvokop. It participated as part of broad-based Consortiums in preparing proposals for the redevelopment of Salvokop, both in 2002 and in 2011, incorporating the visions and aspirations of the diverse groups sharing the space in Salvokop, and trying to demonstrate economic viability. The then landlord (another government department) never provided feedback and nobody was awarded the tender.

A challenge for the Forum is to strengthen its own capacity as it seeks to strategically engage government and other stakeholders. If it wants to ensure a proper place at the table, it needs to act more collaboratively, intelligently and subversively. It needs to discern a way to balance protecting tenant and housing rights, while insisting that the tenants it represents take greater responsibility for the well-being of Salvokop.

The verdict is still out as to what the future of Salvokop might look like, and whose interests would primarily be served. Whether the Forum could contribute towards an inclusive future for its members, is in its hands.

The **Tshwane Homelessness Forum** has existed since 2000. In the past it was often a small reactive network of concerned individuals, without much concrete impact. In 2010, during the Feast of the Clowns, it re-launched itself with wider representation. In May 2014 it resisted the city's eviction of about 600 homeless people from the city's only municipal-run overnight shelter (cf. Van Zuydam 2014). The city reversed its decision and the Executive Mayor issued a public apology. This prompted a conversation with the Mayor between individuals from the Tshwane Homelessness Forum and the University of Pretoria, during which the Mayor requested for research to help inform a policy on homelessness for the city.

An intensive research project culminated in the Tshwane Homeless Summit, hosted on 25–26 May 2015 (De Beer & Vally 2015). At the Summit, research findings were shared, and through world café style engagement (cf. Löhr et al. 2020), the 400 participants (50 per cent being people with lived experience of homelessness) contributed towards a draft policy on homelessness.

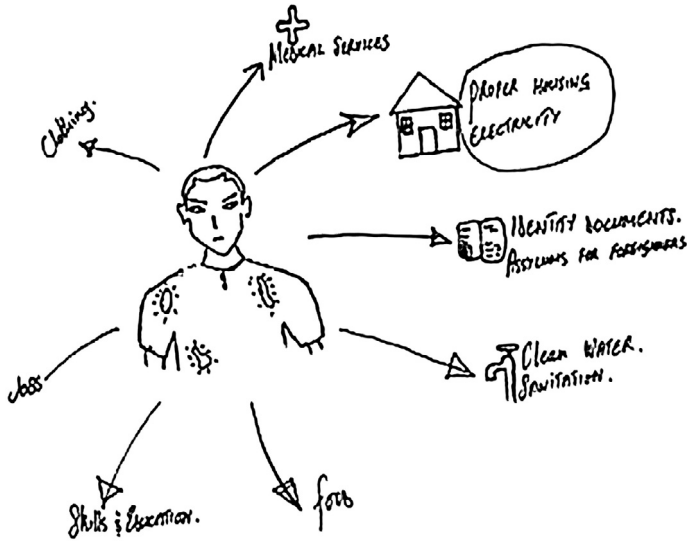


Figure 10.4 Basic needs identified
Source: De Beer & Vally 2015

On 10 October 2015 – World Homelessness Day – the Summit was followed up with the signing of a social contract, entered into between the Tshwane Homelessness Forum, the City of Tshwane, the University of Pretoria, and the University of South Africa. The purpose of the social contract was for the parties to commit themselves to end homelessness for as many people as possible, through a collaborative approach. In 2019 the city formally adopted its policy and strategy on homelessness.

In March 2020 Covid-19 restrictions were announced by the President of South Africa, including an insistence that every municipality should create temporary shelter for people who were homeless. In spite of the City's policy, it was the Tshwane Homelessness Forum that had to pull the City out of its apathy, insisting on a proper, dedicated and collaborative intervention to protect and support homeless individuals during this time. The Tshwane Homelessness Task Team was then set up comprising civil society, city officials, and university-based researchers; a risk reduction strategy was drafted; and implementation followed (cf. De Beer & Hugo 2021). Within only ten days, 27 temporary Covid-19 shelters were created, complemented by psycho-social and health care support, serving some 2,000 people. Post-lockdown there were 600 new bed spaces in Tshwane, as a result of temporary shelters becoming permanent social infrastructure.

At crucial times in the past two decades, the Forum played a critical role in engaging the city and other stakeholders to take collective action. Its collaboration with two local universities has made a big difference. Such a collaborative approach demonstrates how policy, strategy and action can be better

shaped, through fusing the knowledge of people with lived experience and community practitioners, with the academic knowledge of researchers and the institutional competencies of government officials.

Burgers Park Village & Berea-Burgers Park Regeneration Initiative

In 2001, what was then known as the Consortium for Urban Transformation, put together a project called the **Burgers Park Village** (2001). It consolidated a number of loosely connected projects into a coherent demonstration project, to model the recycling of an old inner city block for socially inclusive, multi-purpose use. This was achieved through (re-)developing existing assets optimally.

Pretoria Community Ministries, Yeast City Housing, City Methodist Mission and the Berea Community Forum were the implementing partners. It was able to leverage funds strategically through packaging and designing an integrated urban regeneration project.

The project demonstrated the possibility of upgrading an inner city block through redeveloping existing assets, leveraging additional external resources on local terms, and doing this without excluding vulnerable people. It facilitated the first new-built apartments in the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood in 20 years, creating 45 new social housing units, a 24-bed transitional housing project for women in crisis with their children, and upgrading 31 existing units of a communal housing project. A total of 27 of the new social housing units were communal units built on the roof of the City Methodist Mission, recognising and offering their roof space as an unutilised asset.

In addition, it supported the creation of a HIV/AIDS healing centre and a six-bed care centre for people with chronic illness. The health service complemented the small business hub, conference centre, day-care centre, refugee office, and worship facilities, already offered at the City Methodist Mission. The Burgers Park Village also supported and strengthened the community organising efforts of the Berea Community Forum.

Built on the relative success of the Burgers Park Village, the Consortium for Urban Transformation then packaged the **Berea-Burgers Park Regeneration Initiative**, in 2005–06, as a capacity-building and action planning programme for Berea-Burgers Park, aimed at optimising civic participation in shaping and managing a local inner city neighbourhood.

This initiative was aimed at (i) developing a local action plan for urban generation, that was more context-specific than the city's broad plans; (ii) building urban management capacity of key role players in order to ensure optimal participation in implementing the local action plan; and (iii) ensuring continuity through establishing an appropriate institutional vehicle for implementation. Twenty inner city leaders were chosen for this programme, including civic leaders from different constituencies in Berea-Burgers Park, local politicians and city officials.

The project was run in conjunction with the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, and key

outcomes included broad-based stakeholder participation; a dedicated capacity-building programme for inner city management; and the comprehensive Berea-Burgers Park Regeneration Plan.

A sizeable investment into the neighbourhood, with potential long-term benefits, was largely wasted. A lack of political will in the City of Tshwane, and the inability of city officials to convince politicians of the project's desirability, resulted in non-implementation. Officials and politicians who benefited from traveling to Rotterdam for the capacity-building programme, were never kept accountable for non-implementation. Instead of civic partners then taking ownership for implementation (such as is the case with the Tshwane Homelessness Strategy), they waited patiently on local government.

The plan that emerged still offers good guidelines for local regeneration, even today. Maybe local citizens should revise, re-activate and action the plan.

2 The values, promise and limitations of community-based urban interventions

On-going, critical self-reflection is an essential discipline for city-makers, constantly assessing whether our action contribute towards cities that are *humane and hospitable, inclusive and caring, just and equitable*. Community practitioners can also fall in the trap of doing mechanistically what we know best, without critically reflecting on the impacts of our actions. Such on-going critical reflection helps discern whether there is congruence between what we say and what we do; between expressed internal values and actual embodied practices.

One of the strongest assets of most community-based movements, is a *strong and clear value base*. In some contexts, faith-based community organisations are key among civic stakeholders, retrieving spiritual resources quite deliberately in the interest of building a good city. A number of similar value threads run through the above examples of community-based urban interventions. How such values are faithfully nurtured in urban praxis, might distinguish one organisation or movement from the other, and might determine the sustainability of an intervention or not.

In the case of TLF, for example, there is a set of 18 values that have rooted them over the past 30 years. Words such as “compassion”, “justice”, “servant leadership”, “simple life-style”, “risk”, “brokenness”, and “confession” (Tshwane Leadership Foundation n.d.) form part of their organisational lexicon and are what they seek to embody. Imagine an urban community where local government, business, churches and citizens, are committed to the city, through practising justice, compassion, servant leadership, simple life-style, risk, brokenness and confession.

TLF is continually seeking ways for their values to be translated appropriately into their local contexts. It took risks of investing in neighbourhoods and buildings others disinvested from. It sustains itself through communal disciplines built into their annual calendar.

The various platforms for community participation draw from values that insist on the importance of citizens' participation; respecting the inherent dignity and knowledge of every person; and affirming self-interest as lever for positive local change.

Over time, the impact of such a value-based urban praxis becomes distinguishable in aspects such as higher levels of social inclusion; the responsiveness of local communities to issues affecting them; the depth of community participation and ownership; access to services for vulnerable populations; quality of local community leadership; optimised use and recycling of local assets; and long-term community and institutional self-reliance and sustainability.

Community-based engagements hold *great promise* to engage the city in life-affirming ways.

Communities represent a *different asset-base*. They are able to *unlock and leverage local and external resources and assets* (human, financial, land and property) that would ordinarily not be accessible for government or private sector. They can access the good will of civil society, the land and property of the faith-based sector, donor agencies specifically geared towards supporting local communities or the non-profit sector, or people of good will who will not entrust their resources to government or business. Many community-based interventions are also well-connected nationally, continentally and globally.

They represent *local knowledge, experience and credibility* that cannot be replaced by external or academic knowledge (De Beer 2014). The specialised capacities and frontline work of communities should be appreciated and drawn from. They are often quick to adapt to rapidly changing environments, and innovative in their entrepreneurial and sustainable responses to urban challenges. Many of the cited examples are expressions of chaordic leadership or chaordic organisations, finding it possible to choreograph their way meaningfully through perceived chaos in ways that build healthy community (cf. Hock 1995; Hock 1999; Hjalmarson 2013; De Beer 2016).

Community-based engagements are generally *solution-based* in responding to local challenges, crafting contextually appropriate prototypes that should be scaled to all parts of the city. They are more *participatory and inclusionary* than government-led interventions, because of their proximity to the grass-roots. As a result of the above, this sector has the potential *to deliver appropriately* at a local level. It could, for example, translate the social objectives of the Tshwane Inner City Strategy into reality in feasible and cost-effective ways, as they often contribute to local urban change with little resources.

In Mamelodi East, the Centre that I work for at the University of Pretoria has networked some 100 community-based organisations into a platform for shared learning. The social infrastructure they represent can hardly be simulated from above or outside.

The community-based sector also has certain limitations, In spite of the distinctive contribution that the community-based sector can make to urban regeneration, it is hampered by certain *limitations*.

Local communities sometimes learnt and *internalised powerlessness* (Shaper 1989, 154). Shaper (1989, 154) writes: “What we have learnt is despair and powerlessness at being small. It is society’s way of telling us who’s who and what’s what”. As a result of such internalised powerlessness, community-based groups do not value their unique positionality, asset or knowledge base adequately, which means an inability to contribute optimally what only they can.

Equally limiting is their *external undervaluation* by local government, private sector, the planning community and even the academy. Many of the engagements I cited earlier found difficulty to create vibrant and sustained partnerships with local government. Incompatible organisational cultures, bureaucratic obstacles, technocratic planners, lack of political will or party-political interference, all contribute to disable strong civic-government partnerships.

Other limiting factors are *restricted financial resources* and an *over-reliance on external investment*; a lack of *capacity for on-going research and documentation* of good local practices; *in-fighting between local community leaders* instead of collective brokering on behalf of their constituencies; and a *general display of apathy* by communities that fail to believe they themselves can make change, perpetually waiting for external ‘salvation’.

A critical limitation that should be addressed, is that impactful interventions are *seldom replicated or scaled to a city-wide level*. The successful implementation of a small-scaled, mixed-use development like the Burgers Park Village could have leveraged further funding to add additional project elements, but the lead organisations did not capitalise on their success.

Cities would do well to identify excellent community-based practices, and to incentivise them for replication across the city. Unfortunately, there are very few examples of such encouragement of this sector.

3 Cultivating *every moment*: the journey of a community-based urban praxis

I argue for an urban praxis that is community-based, living in closer community with those we plan for and with – as residents or professionals in the built environment – becoming participants in the planning of our local urban spaces, and evaluating the products of our praxis from below, from the perspective of those who are normally vulnerable or excluded. I explore the possibility to re-imagine the art of place-making or spatial design, not so much as a technocratic intervention of the “expert” but as a creative journey of discovery, with others and the “other”.

I proposed four critical moments in this journey, not necessarily following each other in a rigid linear manner, but as an on-going cycle of deepening engagement, analysis, reflection, and strategic solidarities/actions/interventions, with each moment having to be deliberate and deep. What I propose is an imaginative urban praxis that fosters an on-going cycle of action-reflection, rooted in spirituality and community.

Mallow (1968, 15; in Oranje 1997, 18) describes physical planning as a social process that has “faith in human creativity and change”, yet, is completely dynamic: “movement and change are life, and the only enemy, the only heresy, is finality”.

The proposed cycle recognises that no process or project will be completely final. Movement and change are the only certainties. Yet, it allows for the possibility of new creations, if we resist the despair of our immediate chaos, and dare to see with the eyes of a child. What is important is the intentionality of the journey.

Based on our depth of immersion/s, multiple readings of urban space and the urban imaginations arising from collective discernment, we need to get to a point where we will co-construct urban spaces with many others. Instead of being paralysed by our urban analysis, the fourth moment of the cycle gets us to the place where we engage jointly to *co-construct* the alternatives we have imagined. This is the moment of designing and strategising for collective and decisive action. It requires bold strategies with clear objectives and outcomes, to prevent a reality of stagnating visions and illusionary dreams.

Ideally, it should flow from community and be accompanied by the intention to *foster communities* (civil society, academia, activists, government officials, politicians, or a combination) that will live between resistance and reconstruction, refusing to succumb to the temptation of “the king” and insisting on the rights of the most vulnerable to be seated at the tables of the city. It will be such communities that will insist on keeping the vision alive, and on seeing signs of its translation into practice. They will be sleepless at night and not rest until change occurred.

The fourth moment is when we yearn for a New Creation, or, when the prophet is launching “her creativity in the direction of healing by way of compassion, celebration, and social justice” (Fox 1983, 264). Our work of co-constructing the city is the work that “interferes with pessimism, cynicism, and despair, and channels moral outrage into rebirth” (Fox 1983, 264).

4 Centering around the “mother bird hovering over urban space”

At the core of this cyclical approach should be an openness to the genius, the Spirit, hovering over urban space, desiring to give birth to new possibilities; resilient in resisting life-defying forces; and ready to spread her wings to catch those who fall through urban cracks. It is an openness to each other, to ‘the other’, and to urban assets and ‘miracles’¹ not ceasing to surprise us.

Such openness, if cultivated, will help foster a new consciousness among people historically apart; new collaborations between complementary stakeholders; and bold new visions of urban possibilities never before contemplated. But such openness might also encourage us to resist together, and to act together, in ways we could not see ourselves doing before.

Life-denying forces are subtle in how they penetrate our neighbourhoods and planning languages. Without communities of discernment that are open to be

disrupted by ‘the other’, or by alternative narratives, we will succumb to such forces without even knowing it.

Unless the moments of the praxis cycle – immersion, reading, imagining and action – are bathed in the soul/spirit of the place, but also attentive to our own soul(lessness), and open for the wisdom of ‘the other’, it might be sterile practices without truly liberating/healing substance. It asks of city-makers to be centered in new, ethical and expectant ways. It asks for communities in which we can be deeply accountable to each other.

Our world and our cities, our neighbourhoods and our streets, cry for an urban praxis that will embrace the beauty of creation, in solidarity with the most vulnerable, and in creative and bold response to the promptings of a creative Spirit (spirituality) hovering over us: constantly, repeatedly, groaningly, responding to our own groans, and the groans of our streets and people.

An urban praxis rooted in a clearly articulated spirituality, and translated into a practical ethic, has a chance to arrest the continuous displacement, discrimination and divisions, some urban dwellers experience.

5 Fostering community: between resistance and reconstruction

The task of fostering communities of resistance and reconstruction, should be central to co-constructive city-making processes. Our life in community should be at the heart of our search to discern the cry of the city, and an apt response to it. We should journey through the moments of the praxis cycle, not alone, but with many others who also search for a better city.

A community-based praxis refers to the local *community of people* that engage together in city-making. It is a specific, localised geographical community and implies a solidarity with local people and places, expressed in presence, deep listening and sensitivity for each other.

If the moments or disciplines of the praxis-cycle are carefully and diligently cultivated, it will help birth a community of belonging in which people – who might be quite different in terms of geographical location, expertise, lifestyle, income, power, religion, nationality – learn to respect each other, analyse and discern together, imagine together, resist together and construct together.

Fostering such communities requires a high degree of intentionality, embodying our interdependence creatively in how we shape local urban spaces synergetically. It is not simply about gathering people into a room. Fostering community is a deliberate process of being shaped together, over time, in order for us to make better cities, together.

The communities through which we can engage in city-making processes might be rather different. One might be simultaneously engaged in different but overlapping, or entirely separate communities. They might be informal platforms for co-design, or more formal structures such as the Johannesburg Central Partnership or the Consortium for Urban Transformation. They might be local civic associations or community development corporations. They might be the offices of planning firms who are deliberate about collective journeys of co-

construction with local neighbourhoods; or a municipality hell-bent on making a qualitatively different city.

I find the description of the work of the Urban Design Group in the United Kingdom attractive (Greed & Roberts 1998, 8). They create spaces for dialogue and collaboration between professionals, citizens and a variety of institutions. In order to do what they set out to, they have clearly formulated guiding principles of empowerment, equity, diversity, stewardship and contextual sensitivity. Their planning outcomes might look markedly different from project to project, but are in all cases shaped by broad-based participation and partnership, as described by their guiding principles.

I consider such 'guiding principles' to be conditions for collective discernment, but also for staying faithful to each other and the process.

Between resistance and reconstruction

A community-based urban praxis will live in constant tension between resistance and reconstruction (Chapter 9).

Our first resistance will be internal: resisting external forces wanting to rob us of the power of our life together; resisting being co-opted, either into certain power positions or intellectual discourses, or into emotional responses of numbness, apathy or pessimism.

Swyngedouw (2002, 154) warns against the way in which "historic icons and images of revolutions are today co-opted, sanitized and commercialized". They are "almost completely removed from urban praxis and the everyday life from which they originally flowed". Swyngedouw (2002, 154) says: "It is as if their sting has been removed, as if they have been sapped of the life that once inspired a generation".

Communities of resistance will not easily succumb to a romanticised notion of liberation, or the idea of liberation without a sting. Remembering both the sacrifice of liberation, but also that the liberator too often becomes oppressor, will help resist such romanticised notions. Communities of resistance will retain critical engagement with the city and its (new) powers, supporting them when their actions are on the side of spaces and people who are vulnerable, but resisting them when the poor are crushed by the market's selfish politicking.

Resistance does not necessarily find its expression in "respectability" (Swyngedouw 2002, 155) and sanity. It is precisely in the playful experimentations and creative re-inventions of the 1960s that fresh socio-spatial formations emerged. It is often our playful (yet serious), creative, robust, passionate and politically incorrect resistance of certain spatial expressions that will lead to the constructive birthing of new expressions.

At the same time, a community-based urban praxis does not get trapped in a mode of resistance that is deconstructive only, without offering viable alternatives. Instead, resistant communities in post-apartheid, post-colonial contexts also become communities of reconstruction, applying rigour in finding alternatives to urban poverty and exclusion; in developing innovative solutions to

address some of the city's most pressing challenges; in constructing spaces that display high degrees of compassion, inclusion, responsibility, equity and social justice. It does not oppose the idea of "power" but, instead, celebrates and mobilises a different kind of power, at work in the interest of local citizens and forgotten communities (cf. Shaper 1989).

6 Building on local assets: finding synergies; expanding tables

Instead of maintaining a dependent reliance on external sources, I have asserted the importance of *retrieving local assets* repeatedly, as a core element of a community-based urban praxis. Although most communities might intuitively know their assets, it is essential to practice the discipline of an asset survey, and the development of an asset register, as the foundation of their local regenerative work.

Thandanani is a local community organisation, driven by young activists and residents in the Mamelodi township of our city. Starting off with no external support, they relied on their own passion, youthfulness and clarity of vision to engage some of their community's most pressing challenges. They build local agency without allowing external agents – even government departments with funding that they need – to dictate their agenda. They assert who they are, what they want and where they are going, and invite partners who are willing to work with them on terms decided by the local community.

This principle of local agency and self-assertion could apply to local governments exploring large investments from commercial banks or international funding institutions, but also to local civic organisations seeking support for community-based interventions.

Once we have identified our collective assets – institutional, physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, financial, cultural – the next important aspect would be to *find, foster and manage creative synergies* between them. Far greater access would be possible, if we started to create synergy between assets that are already available to us. In Tshwane, we are now able to connect health care professionals to homeless persons across the city, synergising available infrastructure and resources that were previously existing in isolation from each other.

In unequal cities, many are not at the table. What is required is *expanded tables*, either through the creation of additional seats or new tables. The problem is not necessarily that there are not sufficient resources, but available resources are not accessible in equitable or just ways.

Mobilising synergised asset pools towards those who are not yet at the table, could help eradicate exclusionary urban policies, practices and spaces. Instead of the haphazard ways in which many civil society groups approach this, a coherent, coordinated and collaborative strategy should be developed over time, through which improved access can be measured, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

There are examples of such synergised assets, ranging from an annual Christmas festival in Burgers Park to housing provision or access to

antiretroviral treatment. Seemingly small interventions could provide the foundations for more significant transformations.

At some point a very small percentage of people eligible to receive anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment in Tshwane, was able to access it. A local church had physical space that was underutilised. A health non-governmental organisation with expertise in the management of ARV treatment centres moved into this space. The combination of re-utilising a local property, leveraging technical and intellectual expertise, and brokering funding through the support of a third organisation, enabled many more people to access ARV treatment and now also other health services on a regular basis.

Synergised assets, locally available, can transform the ways in which a city works for its people: whether in housing, health care, education, vocational opportunity, access to sanitation, expression through the arts, or disaster management.

7 A multiplicity of small, local solidarities, reclamations & transformations

The ultimate goal is not recognition of assets and the synergising thereof, although achieving that will already be a great innovation. Synergising local assets should be incorporated into our community-based urban praxis to ensure the expanded tables in solidarity with those urban dwellers that are currently excluded.

The vision I present is one of a praxis that will combine a politics of resistance with constructive solidarities that will transform the everyday (cf. Swyngedouw 2002, 161–162).

But *solidarity alone is not enough*, if we fail to reclaim lost ground, monopolised spaces, gentrified neighbourhoods. Reclamation will be visible in the allocation/securing of land for mixed use and specifically to include those who cannot otherwise access land or property in given areas; in exorcising from local spaces those uses, activities or processes that are hurting some or excluding many; in re-creating local spaces to address the diversity of cultures, generations and social needs.

Reclamation alone is not enough either, if we fail to transform that which was reclaimed into optimal access for the collective. Debord envisioned “a different form of urbanism” (Swyngedouw 2002, 162), residing in the proliferating number of active repossessions and conscious, real and symbolic reconstructions of everyday urban spaces and practices, of the kind we have seen mushrooming lately in many parts of the world. Swyngedouw (2002, 162–163) refers to examples of spatial reclamations ranging from the closure of the busiest street in Oxford turning it into a beach party in response to the commercialisation of public spaces, to the successive occupations of city centre streets in places like Seattle, Davos, Nice and Genoa, by anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation groups.

It could also refer to the ways in which vacant buildings and land are reutilised for social uses, affordable housing or informal trade markets, or how the

Market is not allowed to dictate spatial configurations but is resisted and outwitted through more creative land uses that still prove to be economically viable, but are now not in the interest of a few, but are for the good of the community as a whole.

The wholeness of the city (Alexander et al. 1987, 32) will not necessarily be the result of single interventions or grandiose master plans. It will rather be facilitated through multiple initiatives and synergies between such initiatives, by both small and big projects.

Barcelona is cited as a good example where regeneration was not achieved through a single master plan but through a series of local interventions that fed into a more coherent transformational process (Buchanan 1992). The sites for hosting the Olympic Games were spread throughout the city, located in key areas for the city's revitalisation and at significant points in the city's periphery (Buchanan 1992).

8 Weaving a net; spanning the city

The political environment must be created to encourage, facilitate or reward local initiatives that reclaim and transform, especially where it demonstrates high degrees of social inclusion and socio-spatial justice, achieved in ways that are viable and sustainable. Innovative local solutions should be scaled, to spread its impact across the city.

Ways need to be found to connect "small" local transformations with "big" institutions (Shaper 1989, 120). The bottom-up approach of community-based initiatives, resident forums, local faith-based organisations and community development corporations, needs to be synergised with the top-down approaches of City Strategies, Spatial Development Frameworks and Integrated Development Approaches.

Local governments should refrain from replacing community vehicles that achieve much, with top-down costly mechanisms. It would be much wiser to facilitate synergies between existing assets, services, infrastructures and visions of all the relevant institutions and communities that would like to contribute to local urban regeneration.

At one point in Atlanta, The Atlanta Project (Giles 1993) was conceptualised, ensuring that different vulnerable neighbourhoods were not only well-organised from within but then connected to business and tertiary institutions, to affect the local development objectives of that neighbourhood. It was like spanning a net across the city and making sure that no neighbourhood will be fall through the cracks. Nothing prevents us from conceptualising something similar in a city the size of Tshwane. This also requires of institutions of higher education to shift from un-reflexive community engagement to much more measurable collaborations with local communities, working towards concrete change against specific time-frames.

Prototypes of good practices that facilitate a higher degree of socio-spatial justice, public participation, and soul-ful spaces are out there, and in here, as

examples for us. It boils down to the will of politicians, the artistry of planners, the conscience of profiteers, the faithful actions/activist faith of religious institutions, the relentlessness of civic organisations, and the wise, strategic and stubborn organising of local people, whether such prototypes will remain isolated local stories, or become strong threads that will weave the city together. Ours is to weave the nets, tirelessly.

9 Co-constructing hospitable, caring and just urban villages

In solidarity with those who are excluded, and with those places at risk of death because of the levels of despair, disinvestment and exploitation, reclamations of spaces will be sought, and various processes, projects, programmes and actions will be launched to transform reclaimed spaces into the collective visions imagined and constructed together. Although larger frameworks are positive in directing processes, these will not be used to quench local initiative, but rather to invite as many role players as possible to offer their strengths and visions into the whole.

This journey is one of re-imagining and re-creating/co-constructing *urban villages* that are hospitable (“walking humbly”), caring (“loving tenderly”), and just (“acting justly”)².

In new urbanism much emphasis is placed on the concept of *urban villages*. Its vision lies in the ambiguity of the concept: a search for greater cohesion, community and coherence within complex urban environments, without necessarily being naive about the fact that humanity will never grasp complete utopia – it remains a journey of movement and change.

In the urban village – which I use metaphorically with close resemblance to a *neighbourhood approach* – the emphasis is on mixed-use developments, mixed housing types and compact form, creating access to diverse resources within proximity, and stimulating the creation of new jobs (Grant 2006, 60). When high-density, multi-family properties are mixed with retail and other uses, such efforts frequently yield what is characterised as an urban village.

The urban village concept fosters greater sustainability, owing to compact design, well-integrated open spaces, and less insistence on private transport (Grant 2006, 60). In the United Kingdom the government even committed itself to the urban village concept in the late 1990s through its Millennium Villages project, showcasing “the most sustainable approaches to urban development” (Grant 2006, 60).

In drawing from the concept of urban villages I do not refer to an exclusivist dream, but to communities that will display high levels of social inclusion and cohesion, enhanced by good urban design. Traditionally urban design was the preserve of those with greater wealth and power (cf. Oranje 1997 241). However, in facilitating the healing of fractured communities, and in understanding planning also as a spiritual act and a healing profession, urban design becomes important for deprived communities to unlock the beauty within, and to create the kinds of connections that would mediate healthy urban life. Whether urban

design is accessible or not in vulnerable urban places, becomes a matter of spatial justice.

The urban villages I envisage will practice radical hospitality and warm humanity, humbly acknowledging ourselves as “dust” (cf. Soelle 1984, 73); display creative and inclusive models of caring, and institutionalise fair, equal and unobstructed access to resources as an expression of justice.

A long time ago, an urban peasant coming to Jerusalem to find a sustainable livelihood, saw the injustice of that city, and became a prophetic voice of reason to the city leaders. Micah, using spiritual language, suggested that God wanted only three things from the leaders and citizens of that city: to walk humbly with God, to love tenderly, and to act justly...

Even then, it was already a call for a humble, humane and hospitable city; deeply caring and radically inclusive; demonstrating itself in on-going acts and structures of justice.

Notes

- 1 As used by Hannah Arendt in her lecture, ‘Freedom and Politics’ (1960).
- 2 This is taken from the prophet Micah in Hebrew Scriptures, chapter 6 and verse 8.

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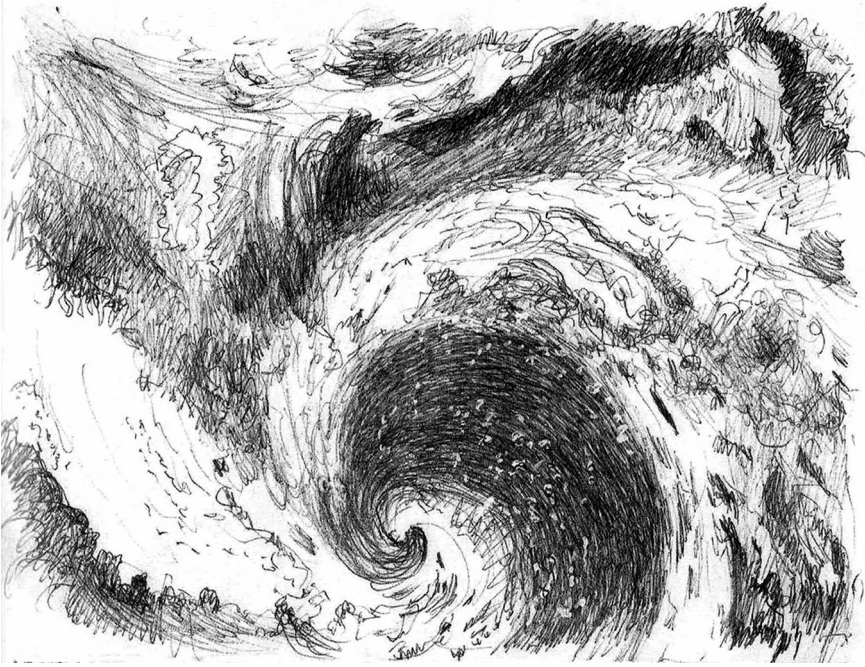


Figure 11.1 Abstract drawing of weather system over Greenland

Source: Dee, C. (2001), In *Form and Fabric in Landscape Architecture: A visual journey*, 7. London: Spon Press

Conclusion

Leading out faith-fully: when deep speaks to deep

The table below summarises my proposal for a community-based urban praxis:

Table 11.1 A Community-based urban praxis

A community-based praxis is a journey from below and within communities:

- combining four distinct moments of:
 - entering/immersing oneself into the city
 - reading the complexities of the city well
 - imagining alternatives to the dominant story; and
 - co-constructing new stories of inclusion, dignity and justice
 - centring around/engaging from within a deep connectedness to the “genius” or S (s)pirit of space (mother bird).
 - being rooted within and discerning together as community/communities of solidarity (local community people, those who are particularly vulnerable, professionals and others), both resisting death and reconstructing life, together:
 - working towards:
 - overcoming local challenges through retrieving and building new local assets
 - expanding the tables of the city (radical inclusion) so that all can be seated, through finding and fostering creative synergies
 - facilitating a multiplicity of small, local solidarities, reclamations and transformations (social, economic and physical); and
 - co-constructing hospitable, caring and just urban villages
-

Much of what is written here will never become reality if we are unable to develop a new kind, and generation, of leadership – whether civic, business, religious or political.

Oranje (1997, 272) stresses the importance of leadership that goes beyond a list of skills or requirements, but that is embracing a certain ethic (values), which, I would like to add, is flowing from a deep connectedness to *the (S)pirit within/hovering over* our urban spaces and accountable in and to community,

not just the community of like-minded professionals or “experts”, but primarily to the community of residents and the most vulnerable ones among us.

Such leadership will act and discern from within its own soul spaces, in order to lead people and places out from captivity to greater soulfulness. It is when “deep calls to deep” that the city will find its soul, and those who help shape the city will not lose theirs.

Planners should again believe in planning (Oranje 1997, 280):

what it can attain and how it could facilitate a better reality than the current one. They should find the religious fervour and passion about planning and the need for planning that drove the pioneers of planning in this country, [without of course the racist undertones of those early days].

(Oranje 1997, 280)

These two calls of Oranje (1997, 280) presuppose a realisation of the essential nature of planning – that it is a *faith*, an *ideology*, a *secular religion*... built on knowledge, hope, wisdom and love for our fellow human beings, as well as the non-human life forms who share this earth with us. If, on the other hand, those engaging urban communities are primarily interested in profit/income as motivation, Oranje (1997, 288) warns of “a dark future inhabited by other outcasts of a variety of sorts” with gloom for us and our children and their children. The goal for now, he proposes (1997, 287–288), can be nothing but a focus on reconstruction and development, the spiritual and material development of our people and “the pursuit of justice – procedural, substantive, inter-generational and ecological”.

I would caution against an over-idealisation of planning in terms of how *it* could mediate wholeness and utopia in our world. But I echo the call for leadership that is rooting their urban praxis and planning engagement in a discovery of the Mother Bird hovering over urban spaces, longing, looking, to respond to urban cries, of humans and earth alike, in order to mend and make whole.

If our engagement with our urban communities fails to flow from within our own inner soul-spaces we would find it hard to facilitate soul-spaces in the cities we engage with. And if we fail to construct ethical frameworks and actions that are both responsible and compassionate, rooted in such inner soul-spaces and in nurturing communities, we will equally fail to foster cities that are wombs of life: caring, feeding, sustaining and sending forth into the world – people of dignity, living with wonder, playing-sharing fairly and co-creating with God.

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