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The rhetorical devices for marketing and branding Johannesburg as a city: A critical review

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Abstract: Since the founding of the city of Johannesburg in 1886, the city has taken up the quest to project a modernist image whose meaning has an international reach and a local foundation. In this endeavor, its locational advantages, product (gold), ethnicity (African), race, and class (notwithstanding the interconnections of these factors) has been used as part of the branding narratives of the city. However, the use of these factors has been closely shaped by the political ideologies of the day. While the brand imaginary of the apartheid government was largely Euro-modernist and dependent on the use of locational, product, and racial influences, the post-apartheid vision has been Afro-modern relying on the fusion of global and African images informed by ethnicity and class. Whereas the two governments had political systems that differ widely on ideological grounds, both have had to contend with the indelible influence of the global market in the production of the city's brand narratives. The paper traces the different trajectories of image/branding narratives of the city from its founding to the present. Consequently, it posits the theoretical argument that a global-African imaginary as a form of African modernity is the driving force for the branding of Johannesburg. The goal of the paper is not to assess the effectiveness of the marketing campaigns but to gain insights into the city's self-reflective efforts at re-imagining the city's identity as captured in branding texts through a critical and interpretive approach. The paper presents an Afro-modernity that is relational and inclusively intercultural but perverted by the hegemonic impact of neoliberal policy and its adverse articulations of globalization.

Keywords: City branding, global-African imaginary, global-Africanization, afromodernity, Johannesburg

Introduction

> Cities are no longer just built; they are imaged.
> (Vale and Warner, 2001: 23)

It has been noted by Kearns and Philo (1993) that city images can be key indicators of how a local government wants visitors to experience their city and a means to create a shared vision or brand among constituents. A brand is a sort of evocative story telling aiming at "learning" its recipients "to see the city" in a particular way (Selby, 2004 in Jensen, 2007: 213). This is done by governments for various reasons. They often create city images in the hope of erasing perceptions of industrial decline (Ward, 1998), to downplay racial tension and social polarization (Neill et al., 1995), or to symbolize a city's presence on the national or international stage (Gomez, 1998). In this regard, the City of Johannesburg has attempted to bring together a range of images into a singular, coherent message—or brand—with the goal of generating a symbolic and economic value of its urban spaces and economies since its founding in the 1890s.

While the brand narratives of the apartheid government were largely Euro-modernist and dependent on the use of locational, product, and racial influences, the post-apartheid vision has been Afro-modern relying on the fusion of global and African images informed by location, ethnicity, and class. Whereas the two government systems differ widely on ideological

grounds, both have had to contend with the indelible influence of capitalist market rationality in the projections of the city's brand narratives. This paper traces the various projections of the city's brand image since the founding of the city. With the use of documentary evidence, the paper outlines the various ways in which city branding has been politically-manipulated, culturally-mediated, and historically-constructed. The paper presents a critical analysis of how these various brand images are mediated by political, cultural and commercial needs of the ruling class. It advances the argument that the current "world-class African city" vision represents a global-African imaginary through which the city rhetorically articulates an Afro-modernity that bears a dialectical relationship between hegemony and hybridity.

Colonial modernist imaginary

Johannesburg has one of the most extraordinary origins created by fortune seekers from diverse backgrounds in an area that was initially inhabited by San and Bantu pastoral society (Mallows, 1993). The city started as a shanty town built for 10,000 people in the first year following the discovery of gold in 1886 and in a period of 10 years, it grew to a 100,000 people with no official financial assistance (van Onselen, 1982). It was a settlement without a river or sea, so there was little hope that it would grow into a large city (van der Waal, 1987). The discovery of gold set in motion one of the most rapid urban growth in the last century (Chipkin, 1993). The digger's camp as it was then, started in a plan with named streets and numbered plots pegged out in advance (Mallow, 1993). The Streets were named after prominent Afrikaner leaders of the time such as Louis Botha, Johannes Rissik, Christiaan Johannes Joubert, etc. marking boundaries of historical presence in the town and as signifiers of Afrikaaner authority. The establishment of the streets was also one of the indelible markers of British culture and authority through the development of the town planning grid.

However, the conflict between the British and the Boers over gold and political rights of citizenship in the so-called Boer Republic led to the Anglo-Boer war of 1899 to 1902 where the British triumphed (Rosenthal, 1970). While the two camps displayed social cracks and competing aspirations for the future, they actually cooperated on certain issues along the colour lines. Hancock (1962) points out that political and consequently military decisions emanating from the Afrikaner Prime Minister Jan Smuts started working in conjunction with his South African Party (SAP) cabinet to create a white "South Africanism" intended to merge Boer and South African Briton into one nation (Cartwright, 1965). They signed the treaty of Vereeniging to suppress the vote for non-Whites (Hancock, 1962: 159). Subsequently, a political ideology of white/racial nationalism advocating for national identity for white people asserting white separatism and white supremacism was underway (Brewer, 1982). This ideological position was deleterious to the interests of non-White populations since they were deemed to be obstructive to the modernist image of an orderly city characterized by industrialism, rationality, and progress of the white race.

1. According to Mbembe (2008), Johannesburg's beginning as a town was an imitation in that it was imagined to be a colonial town, an English town with little ties to the environment around it. Its development was "imitative of new creations radiating out of the centre" (Herwitz 1998: H3). To maintain this image from the first decade of the 20th century, Johannesburg's new British colonial government forcibly relocated the native population to the city's outskirts (Judd and Surridge, 2002: 196). Furthermore, the Housing Com2missions of 1903, 1913 and the Tuberculosis Commission of 1914 condemned ill-chosen sites, absence of sanitary services and structures unsuitable for human habitation (Swanson, 1995). Reports from these commissions influenced the government to clampdown on slums and shantytowns. Also, in response to increased "slums" in the inner city, the Union government passed Municipal Ordinance No. 23 of 1919 and the Housing Act

No. 35 of 1920 which empowered local authorities to develop housing schemes for lower income groups. This

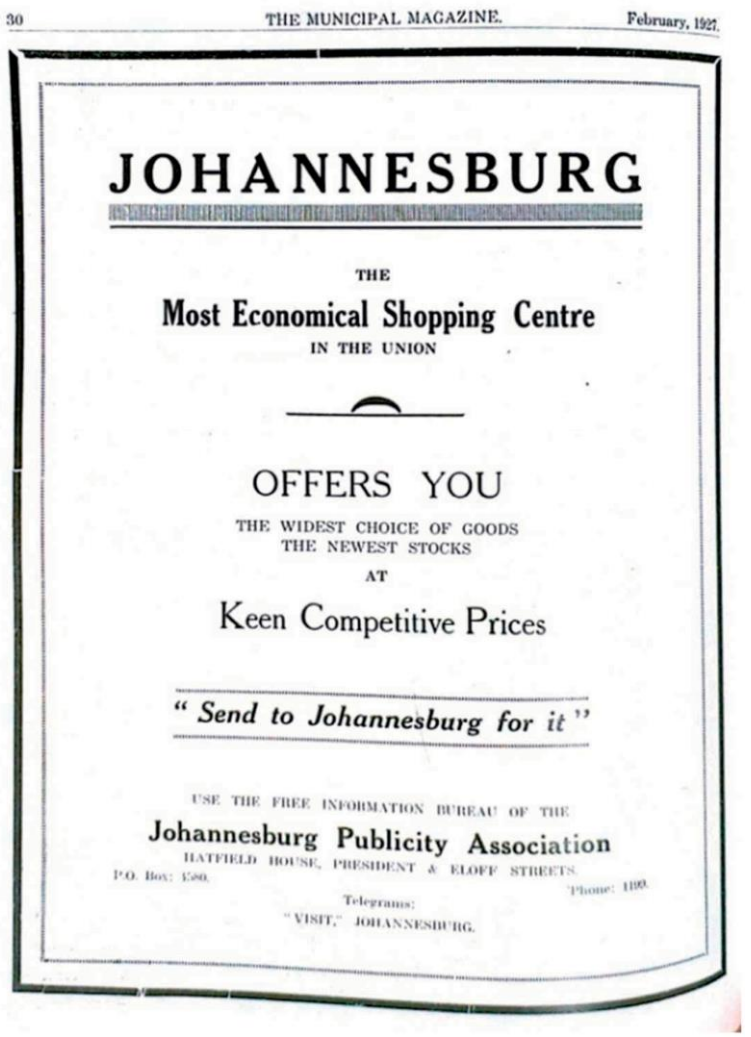


Figure 1. Marketing Johannesburg 1927.

Source: Municipal Magazine (1927: 30).

legislative state intervention created more space for expressing the British modernist imprint of Victorian architecture through the development of many historical landmarks of building. Among them, were the Corner House and the Carlton Hotel, both being the first of many steel-framed structures to be erected in the town (Chipkin, 1993).

Modernist exclusionary growth of the city

Much of these buildings signified colonial modernist distinction and authority. Dirsuweit and Schattauer (2004) say that Johannesburg was anxious for the status of being a world city and did not want to be perceived as an insignificant colonial city. The Municipal Magazine (1927) shows modernist representation of Johannesburg in the 1920s reflecting Johannesburg as "the Most Economic Centre in the Union" (see Figure 1). The Magazine described Johannesburg as "a miracle of the empire…" In its marketing material, it states:

> Its (Johannesburg's) public buildings such as the Town Hall, Law Court, Cathedral, University, Railway building, Stock Exchange, clubs and others, give mute though

> solid testimony to the march of progress of this focus point of South Africa. Johannesburg is (sic) no longer a place to which men go only to make money and depart. It has become a fine city with wide expanses where the cultured work and live. (page 9)

The quote reflects that the city was viewed as a place where the cultured could work and live. There is no doubt that this assertion was firmly embedded and reflecting the embodiment of a western modernist image that was tied to racial exclusivity and its uncompromising hostility towards diversity. In line with this aspiration, the government passed the Native Urban Areas Act No. 21 of 1923 which provided that all towns should establish separate urban locations for the African population (Christopher, 1997). This Act enforced the compulsory residence of black people in locations, controlled their immigration into urban areas and empowered the government to expel those black people that it considered to be idle and disorderly. Subsequently, the shift in policy from segregation to formal Apartheid in 1948 signified the change in government from the United Party led by General Smuts to the National Party led by Dr Malan (Beavon, 2004). It affected the urban landscape as apartheid planning became formalized as national policy. Maylan (1995: 30) notes that "life in segregated urban accommodation, whether it was employer controlled, class differentiated or ethnically zoned, was subject to further regulation". Parnell (1993) argues that the export of British town planning practices to South Africa nurtured the emerging racial and class differences. The town planning practice that arose from apartheid planning led to the legislation exclusively devoted to the land use control using the mechanism of zoning with a strong influence of the local legacy of land title restrictions. The legislation included the Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950; Community Development Act No. 3 of 1966, Regional Services Councils Act No. 109 of 1985), Industrial Development Act 22 of 1940; and Black Local Authorities Act No.102 of 1982 (Mabin, 1992).

By 1950s and 1960s, a "full apartheid system" was enforced and the remaining black and mixed areas in the city such as Fietas and Sophiatown were erased and relocated to the south (Bremner and Subirós, 2007: 44). This was manifested in the urban landscape through the growth of Soweto, what emerged as, "a large, sprawling urbanised area without true urban amenities" (Beavon, 2004: 121). There was also the establishment of an Indian township in the south-west named Lenasia and Eldorado Park for Indian and Colored people respectively to the south and east of Soweto. Expansion occurred separately mainly to the south of the mining area (Beavon, 2004). The exclusive modernist vision of the city was not only evident on the landscape; the sanitized racial landscape was also reflected on the marketing of the city. In the advertisement of the city, the exclusive image of what Johannesburg was and stood for, remained focused on white areas. In the foreword of the Mayor where he outlines the city's attractions, the tone towards non-Whites is unmistakably sinister as "the colourful Bantu Reserves" are described together with the National Kruger Park as an object of tourist attraction outside Johannesburg (De Frietas, 1964: 5). As Mbembe (2008: 44) cogently puts it, the native then was "a thing that always seemed slightly human and a human being that always seemed slightly thing-like". An exclusive vision of the city is presented which reflects white dominance and excludes the black experiences of Johannesburg (Rogerson, 1996).

By the 1960s and 1970s, Johannesburg had reached its full splendour as the world's "gold capital" (Bremner and Subirós, 2007: 42, 44). Books written on Johannesburg were assertively rhetorical in their titles: De Frietas (1964) in a tourist profile of the city has the title, "The Golden City"; Eliovson (1965) in her multilingual book entitles it "Johannesburg: City of Gold *Goue Stad Stadt des Goldes Cite de L'or Cittá dell'oro*"; and, Telford (1969) in his exploration of some of the sites of Johannesburg, titles his book, "Johannesburg: Some sketches of the Golden Metropolis." Much of these books on marketing tended to stay inside

a functionalist apolitical paradigm. They give a partial picture of Johannesburg's character by focusing on the city's "greatest industry of gold" without reflecting the quintessential contradictions and glaring inequalities existing at that point in time. The intellectual fruit of this imagination is what Herf (1984) calls reactionary modernism referring to a paradox in which the apartheid government sought to build a modern city of a cosmopolitan character while rejecting racial inclusivity.

In contrast to this, the projection of the golden image of Johannesburg in the vernacular radio stations in the country was more nuanced. Kansas City, the late Radio Zulu personality affectionately presented the city as: "*EGoli kwamjohana kandaba, kwandonga ziyaduma; kwamntanami wendelephi na*!" (see City Press, 24 November, 2004; Hilton-Barber and Hopkins, 2007). This literally translates to: Johannesburg a city of many stories; a place where the walls rumble; a place, I would not find where my child got married. This adage, while often presented with affectionate mood by vernacular stations, recognized the complexity of the city with its multiplicity of events, contradictions, and complications.

Collapse of the racially exclusive image

Because of the contradictions inherent in the apartheid city, trade unions engaged in numerous crippling strikes e.g. the school children rose in revolt in Soweto, the mass democratic movement reformed, and the United Democratic Front appeared openly on public platforms. Protest images were on the rise in various forms of display such as novels, songs, events, paintings, etc. The renowned South African Mongane Serote, poet and writer came with the poem *No Baby Must Weep* (1975). From then, the "Poetry of a Fighting People" according to Ndebele (1983: 44) was the norm. The images of protest were captured by writers and novelists as well as in songs. Rogerson (1996) observed that the problem reached its lowest point in Johannesburg's centennial celebrations of 1986 where wide resistance was experienced from the black population against its projections of modernity and success. Johannesburg's image was becoming more and more tarnished by opposition to racial segregation and apartheid; the divided city and landscape were highlighted through "a new form of political witness; one which dwelt on the visible divisions between white and black, privilege and poverty, light and darkness" (Rogerson, 1996: 142). Beavon (2004: 197) observed that steps were then taken "to give Apartheid a more 'humane' face."

This was accelerated by the removal of the influx control legislation in 1986 which led to the consolidation of black presence in the city. An influx of Colored and Asian families, together with a steady inward movement of black African residents entered into Johannesburg's inner city. From a ratio of seven to one in 1960 for white to black employees in the CBD, the ratio changed to two white employees to every one black employee by 1970. In 1990, the situation was closer to one is to one (one white worker to 0.85 black workers) (Inner City Ivukile, May 1995). Christopher (2001) noticed a further slow desegregation in residential areas between the period 1990 and 1996. By 2000, more than two-thirds of the inner city population was black, with whites making up only around 20% of the total (Oelofse, 2003: 92).

The poignant irony of the desegregation was that it was accompanied by a public perception of crisis especially in the media (Crankshaw and White, 1995). Media reports highlighted that, "Crime had turned the once beautiful Jozi into unfamiliar scary jungle" (*Sunday Life*, 29 September 1996). One journalist lamented, "Teenagers are victims of weekend rapes in Johannesburg!" (*Citizen*, 6 January 1998). To which another journalist despairingly sighed, "Our hopes are shattered, the death of window shopping" (*City Press*, 20 April 1998). This mood of pessimism led to the rapid decline of property values in the inner city. About 20% of top-grade offices in the city centre were leaving, the Anglo American Properties (Ampros) sold its prime properties in the CBD, including the once precious Carleton Centre for a mere R100 million (*Business Report*, 11 July 1997; *Sunday Times*, 9 June 1996).

Re-inventing Johannesburg as an African City

From the early 1990s, there was a strong sense in the city's Democratic Party-led administration that something had to be done to address the negative perceptions. This led to the re-imaging of Johannesburg as a "Gateway to Africa" because of its geographical location in the early 1990s (Johannesburg, 1992). This period also instigated a shift in the city's thinking by branding Johannesburg based on its locational advantages. The unrivalled advantages of the city as a communications hub, its linkages to the information highway, and site of the national Stock Exchange were proclaimed as making Johannesburg the ideal location for those directly involved in the financial services sector (Johannesburg, 1994). Under the backdrop of increasing competition from other localities in South Africa for primacy, both private enterprise and city authorities started on "a comprehensive marketing drive to upgrade the city and its image" aimed at both international and local consumers, tourists and investors (Rogerson, 1996: 142). The catchphrase used during the 1990s was "Johannesburg – Economic Hub to Southern Africa" which focused on geographical advantages and emphasized Johannesburg's role as a financial hub (Rogerson, 1996).While the idea of Johannesburg "exceptionalism" was embedded in this trope, the drive was now on underscoring the city as a distinctive one.

In addition, there was a shift towards depicting Johannesburg as an inclusive city, moving away from its historical racial exclusivity. Rogerson (1996) points out that the 1993 bid for the 2004 Olympic Games placed an emphasis on inclusivity, reconciliation and empowerment of the previously disadvantaged. He (p. 143) observed that Johannesburg presented itself as "South Africa's most integrated city, carrying the torch for a new Africa". He noted that identification and pride in the city was exemplified by the interest in urban design and redevelopment of areas within the city. A key aim of these projects was to shape "the external image of the city" (p. 145). This was signifying a change of political conscience and a discursive shift towards reckoning with African identity and embracing Africa as a "home continent". This also marked a departure from the previous attempt by the apartheid city government to re-image Johannesburg as a 'Gateway to Africa,' as an outpost of Europe (Johannesburg, 1992). Now, the ANC administration was assertively viewing the city as part of Africa.

By the mid-1990s, the political discourse of Africanization/African renaissance was underway urging a wistful return to "traditional African practices and beliefs" (Maloka, 2001: 4). Bremner (2000: 189) observed that a sense was ringing that beyond linking to the city's inherent identity of its founding feature as a Eurocentric city, it sought to incorporate its Africanness by invoking *Ubuntu*. According to Nussbaum (2003: 21), "Ubuntu is the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community with justice and mutual caring". Therefore, upon the election of new metropolitan local councilors in 1995 under the ANC leadership, the Johannesburg Inner City Development Forum (a partnership between government, civil society, labor, and the private sector) came up with a new re-imaging initiative to make the city the "Golden Heartbeat of Africa" (Rogerson, 1996). This initiative was launched in 1997 at the presentation of the Inner city Urban Renewal Strategy. Its pilot project represented a "shift from a high-profile, leisure-industry driven public/private regeneration strategy to one focusing on people's living and working environments, employment creation and social equity" (Bremner, 2000: 190). Such emphasis was concomitant with the national zeal to be instrumental in building socio-economic transformation in the country. The "Golden Heartbeat" image therefore was seeking to project Johannesburg not simply as a trading hub of Africa but one from which "goodness flows from within" (own insert) galvanized by processes of participation, partnership and the spirit of "Ubuntu" (City of Johannesburg Inner City Business Plan, 2004).



Figure 2. The image for Johannesburg's Olympic bid.

Source: Rogerson (1996).

At the launch, President Thabo Mbeki's recognized Johannesburg as a thriving *African* city with a vision to become "Golden Heartbeat of Africa". In his reckoning speech, the President drew his analogy of an *African city* from the song of the towering South African musician, Hugh Masekela:

> There is a train that comes from Namibia and Malawi,
> There is a train that comes from Zambia and Zimbabwe,
> There is a train that comes from Angola and Mozambique,
> From Lesotho, from Botswana and Swaziland,
> From all the hinterland of Southern and Central Africa.
> This train carries young and old, African men who are conscripted to come and work on contract in the golden mineral mines of Johannesburg.... (Government of South Africa, 1997)

This speech was definitely occurring in a political climate in which the South African government and the City Council of Johannesburg were calling for the African voices to be recognized and accepted in the country in general as a counter-force to the global western-centric dominance of cultures in the city. Through the idioms of this song, the African image(s) were seen as an important metaphor to forge a sense of national multicultural identity through which government could prioritize and initiate redress, whereby transformation was conceptualized in terms of wealth and income redistribution for previously disenfranchised groups. Habib and Bently (2008) noted that this refashioning of the meaning of the African was intended to constitute not only a critique of the economic inequities created by colonial apartheid, but also as a direct resistance to its legacies.

Therefore, the insertion of the African image in the vision of Johannesburg was supposed to mark a departure from dominance of the totalizing western meta-narratives which up-till-

then broadly defined the character of the city. The emphasis on an African image was a means of re-inserting an African identity into public discourse, but not a despairing entity but a thriving multi-cultural identity. In a way, the promotion of the African element constituted not only a critique of the symbolic inequities created by the Eurocentric apartheid city but also a direct engagement with the South African populace in recasting the image of the city. A further notable signifier came from Tomlinson (1999) who observed a shift from exclusion to inclusion in the city and noted the pertinence of an African vision and the need to articulate it with confidence.

As the search for a new vision was underway, the city was slowly spiraling into a state of financial and institutional crisis and collapse in the meantime (GJMC, 1999: 18) and was declared bankrupt by 1997 with a debt of approximately R300 million for the electricity bill (Bremner, 2004: 88). In response, the city established what it termed a Transformation Lekgotla which was a committee of 10 (later 15 people), headed by a consultant, Mr Ketso Gordhan who was responsible for the financial and institutional restructuring of the city. This committee had to meet a set of specific austerity measures which included: carrying out "a targeted programme of cutbacks, corporatisation, and selling off of municipal assets" in order to change the face of the City and transform the institutional design of the Metro (Pape and McDonald, 2002: 6). In dealing with the financial crisis, the Committee developed "city development strategies" (CDSs) that were termed the iGoli plans: iGoli 2002; iGoli 2010; and iGoli 2030 which are "an axiom of international development hegemonic thinking, actively encouraged by international development organizations such as the World Bank and the Cities Alliance" (Lipietz, 2008: 136).

This marked the incursion of the instrumental logic of the market. IGoli 2002 was a 3-year transformation plan launched in 1998 to make Johannesburg work and to sell itself as "The Pulse of *Africa*". This brand image suggests that the city was by now decidedly content with its African context and amenable to its locational affinities. It was beginning to carve distinctiveness that was mediated by African realities whereby Johannesburg is seen as part of Africa and like the heart playing the role of pumping economic life into the continent. Coupled to this process was a unicity with a new outer boundary, a new political structure e.g. executive major and a set of corporatized service providers (in the form of utilities, agencies, and enterprises) created along the lines of new public management systems.

In order to enhance IGoli 2002, a long-term plan known as *iGoli 2010* was developed in 2000 for the transformation of the city towards achieving an overarching vision to be a globally competitive "World-Class African City" (City of Johannesburg, 2001: 147). In pursuit of this vision, albeit highly contested and marked by "relative failure of participatory approaches in delivering on pro-poor and inclusive outcomes" (Lipietz, 2008: 136), the city also launched an *IGoli 2030* plan which is widely acclaimed to be part of a globally competitive quest with strong neo-liberal overtones (Murray, 2008; Tomlinson et al., 2003). This plan sought to gradually reshape the city's economy and geography to ultimately transform itself into "a world-class African business centre with services and a standard of living on par with the capitals of the developed world" (City of Johannesburg, 2001). Although the city has since produced two Growth and Development strategies, namely GDS 2006 and 2040, both strategies are nestled on the brand vision to make Johannesburg a world-class African city (Figure 3).

Framing the global-African discourse[(1)]

The brand vision of a world-class African city vision encapsulates two dimensions: On the one hand, it embraces the world-class thesis which is a powerful strand of urban policy that emphasize the value of "going global" with the normative ambition of "moving

[(1)] Global-African is presented with capital "A" to signify the afro-optimism associated with the positive African image at this moment as different from the "African" associated with afro-pessimism.

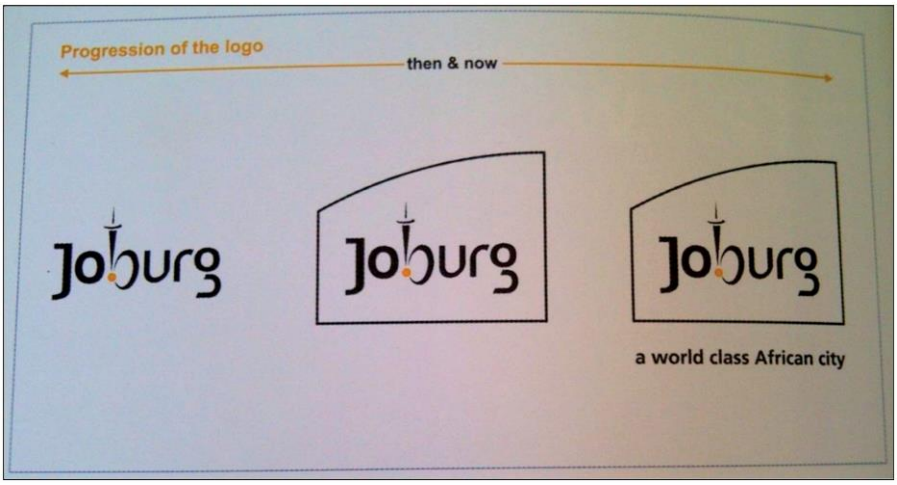


Figure 3. The evolution of the logo of the world-class African city.

Source: Mlaba (2010: 240).

up the hierarchy of world cities" (Friedmann, 1986; Sassen, 1994). On the other hand, it affirmatively adopts the *African* image, as a signifying metaphor for the embrace of the local cultural formations. This simply means the branding endeavor was not solely about the deployment of narratives of globalization but mobilization of local African images as well. As such, the adoption of neoliberal policies cannot be "understood through the trope of mimesis, essentially as a replication of Anglo-American models, principles and ideologies", because it is shaped and "reshaped by geo-institutional parameters" (Brenner et al., 2010: 188).

In this respect, the juxtaposition of the global and African elements captures the aspirations forged within narratives rooted in local historical African heritage and the one expressed through the tropes of western, capitalist modernity. It projects the sense that the city has an imaginary that bore a simultaneous presence in both. The fusion of the global and local brings together the international and the African into a global-African mix and puts an end to the often assumed bounded-systems of thought. A global-African imaginary represents the mixing encounter between and betwixt the global and local "sets of practices, bodies of knowledge, conventions and lifestyles" (Featherstone, 1996: 350). It is a blending of global and indigenous cultural forces whereby the global is actively affected by the local, and the local is impacted by the global.

In the glocalization sense, Ritzer (2003: 193) presents it as "the interpenetration of the global and the local resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas". Within Robertson's (1995) schemata, the global and local are not variables at opposite ends of the spectrum but are fused together to form a glocalizing interrelationship. For Robertson (1997: 4), glocalization "means the simultaneity and the co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies". To this end, the metaphor of the world-class African city articulates "an interconnected global matrix over local experience" … creating "glocalities" (Meyrowitz, 2005: 23). Glocalities expresses the opportunity to reconstruct city images for the outside world—through global imaginations and the reinvention of new narratives of urban change for the purpose of local use with an African reference. It is a case of mixity between external image projection and internal referencing. It expresses a particular "off the map" character of Johannesburg as an ordinary city (see Robinson, 2002) and gives it a unique identity reflecting its urban brand distinction.

Invariably, the rise of the Africanization discourse in the 1990s led many urban management gurus, business schools and urban planning consultants (hired by the city) to become involved in converting management ideas into new products that could be consumed or sold through the metaphorical function of the world-class African city or global-African imaginary. The world-class African city metaphor became (at least symbolically) Johannesburg's established linguistic imaginary in the production of tourists products (e.g. tourist routes) and spaces of leisure, entertainment and foodatainment such as: the naming of museums after ANC leaders (e.g. Mandela Museum), theming of leisure places using the African metaphors (e.g. Newtown African Cultural Quarter), and the establishment of African restaurants such as Moyo, Gramodoelas, Sophiatown in Newtown within the inner city. These enterprises are presented as products in themselves that are marketed through the global-African imaginary to showcase an African cultural appeal that is globally intelligible.

Such products are constituted with complex hybrid cultural forms and references through mutual entanglements of global and local imaginaries. For example, Sophiatown is an African restaurant in the newly regenerated Newtown in the inner city that has become a metonym for the "old cosmopolitan" suburb of Sophiatown from which blacks were forcibly removed in the 1960s. Naming the restaurant after Sophiatown provides a strong local reference to the African experience but the world-renowned story of Sophiatown makes it globally intelligible. As observed by Mele (2000) in the Lower East Side of New York, political and cultural forces are used to influence the development of urban places into distinctive experiences. This indicates that naming Sophiatown itself was not just part of a commercial endeavor but a political expression.

Along this global-African imaginary, there is proliferation of logos, posters, adverts, architectural designs, fashion and art reflecting South Africa's own articulations of local and global fusions. The display of global-African inspirational aesthetics in the streets, galleries, walls, walkways, bridges, paintings, posters, etc. have become a display of social and cultural competence in the South African "community of practice" as reified into labels they use every day. The city of Johannesburg has become a propitious ground for the emergence of a historical avant-garde of global–local interplay. Somehow a new conception of the self-known as "the performance self" by Featherstone (1991: 187) has emerged in the consumer culture to place greater emphasis on "appearance, display and the management of perceptions". For that matter, the extensive use (albeit unconscious) of the global-African imaginary by corporations, government, communities, companies, and tourist operators suggests the consolidation of a South African multi-cultural identity augmented through transcultural practices.

By the early 2000s, the global-African imaginary had become embodied in the production, performance, display and articulation of South African products, services and spaces. This has led to the creation of goods, services and urban spaces whose images bears reference to indigenous African traditions but are also constitutive of global cultures. The multiple borrowings accompanied by creative innovation of people in different local, national and transnational contexts have bursts into the scene with hybrid modernities often captured by neologisms such as afro-style, afro-beat, afro-chic, afro-deli, etc. For example, it is noted by Farber (2010: 129) that fashion design icons such as *Sun Goddess*, *Stoned Cherrie*, and *Strangelove* (others are Loxion Kulca, Mzansi) epitomize the nuanced range of African and cosmopolitan aesthetics—"the garments and styles they design and produce comprise a range of modern day hybridized identity options in which African and cosmopolitan aesthetics are fused". Also Nuttall (2004: 431–432) looks at urban visual cultures at the Zone in Rosebank, a northern suburb of Johannesburg where the youth show-case their talent and self-image by "remixing and reassembling of racial identities" reformulating "the way the local and global intersect in South Africa".

Scores of public and private radio stations broadcast throughout the country, and a dozen or more daily and weekly newspapers and periodical magazines publish and compete for readership on African designs, fashion, and trends. Some of these fashions are emblazoned with the national iconography or images of historical reference (see Narunsky-Laden, 2008) such that individual consumption of "Africanized" goods is associated with collective participation in South African nationhood. The consumption of "Africanized" goods (often sold with the national logo of *Alive with Possibility* national brand) in Johannesburg has thus become a marker of identity and of belonging to the South African nation. This has tended to foster a sense of unity among citizens and to inculcate in them a national consciousness, a civic pride, and a shared national purpose since this provide the symbolic and material markers of distinction.

The acceptance and legitimacy of the African image has provided the city with a socio-cultural identity frame that fits into the commercial production of urban spaces. In a way, turning the metaphor of the world-class African city into a marketable commodity has become a "good currency" for knowledge supplies coinciding with the renewed interests in African cultural images. Urban spaces are reconstituted as distinctive articulations of interconnectedness between images drawn from global and local scales. In his thesis, Sihlongonyane (2008) notes a particular mode of urban branding in the contemporary post-apartheid conceptual space of Johannesburg which he refers to as Afro-branding. Afro-branding arises from the inflection of African idioms, metaphors, allegory and simile in the creation of hybrid urban brands. Afro-branding is well embraced in the media along the global-African imaginary. Mlangeni (2008) notes how corporations have bought into the Afro-branding culture of practice. This is evident in the urban landscape where companies make their affiliation to the city known through advertisements.

Figure 4 shows an advertisement by Cell C, one of the cell phone companies advertising in the city using the expression "I love Jozi" which the city uses as promotional image. This advertisement is analogous to New York's "I Love New York" campaign which started in 1977 (see Godfrey, 1984). However, Johannesburg's campaign reflects the fusion of international practice and local idiom—"Jozi" as the local slang for the city. The intention of this practice is to draw interest, investment, and capital to the branded locale. It is rhetorically used to inform about the company's brand identity and is also used to illustrate affiliation with the new political and cultural order. So it is not just commodification of images but African images are used as vehicles for the pursuit of symbolic politics signifying support and allegiance. As such, advertising and/or buying itself becomes an act of signifying and generating societal support for the state and advancing the state-branded sense of multicultural nationalism signified by reference to the rainbow nation. Effectively, political legitimacy is intertwined with the business process of finding commercial relevance and procurement of brand extension. Therefore, the construction of legitimacy in the South African polity is not just sought between "politicians and local community members", (Bénit-Gbaffou and Katsaura 2014) but also between business and government.

The symbolic forms and representations underpinning the hybrid dimensions of global-African imaginaries can be linked to the concept of what Taiye Selasi, Nigerian/Ghanaian writer called afropolitanism in 2005. Selasi referred to Afropolitans as multilingual Africans with different ethnic mixes living around the globe—as she put it "not citizens but Africans of the world" (CNN, 17 February 2012). According to Minna Salami, who blogs as Msafropolitan (see http://www.msafropolitan.com/), "Afropolitans are a group of people who are either of African origin or influenced by African culture, who are emerging internationally using African cultures in creative ways to change perceptions about Africa" (ibid, CNN). For Achile Mbembe (2005: 28):



Figure 4. Cell C's "I love Jozi" as an example of Afro-branding advertisement.

Source: Mlangeni (2008).

> Afropolitanism is an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world. It is a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity — which does not mean that it is not aware of the injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the law of the world. It is also a political and cultural stance in relation to nation, to race and to the issue of difference in general.

The concept of "Afropolitanism" is presented (albeit seen as a capitalist stunt for middle and upper classes) as a new and unprecedented form of African cosmopolitanism and posits that Johannesburg has "developed its own brand of cosmopolitan culture" (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008: 30). Much of this literature which subscribes to Afropolitanism sees Africans as "local globals" to use Millers concept in the context of Trinidad, that is: a product of continuous "itinerancy, mobility and movement" of diverse peoples from all corners of the globe into and out of the continent and within its geographical boundaries (Mbembe, 2005). Therefore, it should be recognized that many Afropolitan designs within fashion (e.g. African Fashion International), architecture (e.g. Architecture Otherwhere), art (e.g. Africa Remix Exhibition, Afro-polis), literature (e.g. Afrapean magazine), and movements (e.g. Afro-punk) have become avant-garde expressions of global-African imaginaries around the world.

In this respect, *The Afropolitan* magazine which is produced in South Africa states that it targets "Individuals, who live cosmopolitan lives and seek all that is sophisticated and opulent, but however still manage to maintain a deep rooted consciousness of their heritage" (Afropolitan, 2011). The events that it advertises include, Afropolitan Jazz listening sessions, whiskey tasting evenings, food and wine pairing, golf days and a variety of discussion forums (Figure 5). The magazine's image typifies the endeavor to weave local cultural histories into the global present as collocations of Afro-modernity. The magazine is promoted by strategic



Figure 5. An example of *The Afropolitan* magazine as an example of Afro-branding in print media.

partner Kaya FM, a black middle class radio station and the Black Management Forum (BMF) (which stands for the development and empowerment of managerial leadership primarily amongst black people) and it claims to strive to unite and inspire like-minded people.

Dvornak (2010: 13) argues that through urban branding and Afropolitanism, the city of Johannesburg has realized itself as a symbol of Afro-modernity and has attempted to uplift itself and Africa into the global arena. He points out that Johannesburg has been inscribed and reconstructed as a shining symbol of the arrival of the Afro-modernity and the repositioning of Africa in a place of recognition in the eyes of the Western world (ibid). In other words, Afropolitanism is a bold step of negotiating the terms of recognition from the local to the global stage and vice versa, through the trajectory of global-Africanization. Most recently, the Maboneng Precinct, a neighborhood on the east side of the Johannesburg central business district, typifies similar endeavors in which architectural narratives and representations are used to communicate a global-African identity. The Precinct was developed by Jonathan Liebmann, a South African entrepreneur and developer, who was "inspired by his travels to other global cities" (van Wie, 2013: 54). He used art, architecture and events to create a hybrid cultural space. The precinct has a large symbolic branding value for the city as a whole. Its high end quality of African content epitomizes the visions of being a world-class



Figure 6. The 2010 World Cup Advertisement for Johannesburg taken against the background of the Hillbrow Tower.

African neighborhood. Similar to the Bilbao Guggenheim museum in Spain, the Maboneng Precinct demonstrates "architecture's potential to act as a brandscape in restoring the image of a city as well as in its capacity to spur economic patterns of growth and urban renewal" (Klingmann, 2007: 240). Thus, it can be argued that global-Africanization is a political culture through which the city articulates hybridity by drawing from many inspirations, references, and registers of cultural archives.

The city itself uses the global-African political culture as a means of tailoring the meaning of its events and projects. The reconstruction of local in response to and under the influence of globalization has become the discursive practice in managing the interplay between indigenous and global influences. In this respect, the slogan "A World-Class African Host City" was used for the 2010 Soccer World Cup in selling the event. Dvornak (2010: 11) observes that the Host City poster campaign and the branding campaign that accompanied it can be understood as symbolic communicator acting on the drive to signify the emergence of a newly-imagined, global-African identity, embodied in the virtues of the City of Johannesburg. The poster depicts Johannesburg as an urbanized, metropolitan, modernized hub—an Afro-modern city to reckon with.

The poster brought a mix of images to articulate an image of global trend and local styling/perspective. It shows the glimmering skyline of the city on the background, upon which the Mandela Bridge hovers above signaling Afro-modernity and showcasing a positive premiere position of the city in the global gaze. A set of rays in the form of rainbow colors cuts through the centre of the poster as if getting under the bridge across a black surface (table-like). The black surface bore the slogan *A World Class African Host City* written in rainbow colors (just like the rays) signifying the multicultural richness of the country. The image of the official access card to the World Cup venues is placed on the foreground

reflecting a silhouette image of a person kicking the ball next to yet another set of rainbow colorful rays (Figure 6). In this glamorous projection, Johannesburg is pitched as an Afro-modern place of multicultural social encounters and interactions. The city is presented as one of Africa's multicultural tourist destination with "a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance" (Horne and Manzenreiter, 2006: 2). The city reflects a re-imagined African identity, one which is glocalized and can compete and be recognized amongst other global cities as a new destination for leisure and tourism consumption.

Conclusion: The African city as a rhetorical expression

However, at the end of the day, the global-African vision of the world-class African city has produced a paradoxical presence and absence for the African. On the one hand, it has lifted the African images out of obscurity and rendered them more visible/recognizable by giving them a historically specific meaning so that black Africans felt like they are represented. This has added to the power of the city to spur identity ordering and class formation—creating the Afropolitan black middle class. By so doing, the city's vision has not only enlarged the possibilities of a multiethnic and multiracial public culture by popularizing the sign of the African; it has remapped the symbolic geographies of class and race by bringing African signs to a wider audience. On the other hand, the indulgent rhetoric of a world-class African city has disembodied the cultural meaning of African images and its popular elaboration by commercial performers has simply supplied another means of inserting *African* cultural signs to the dominant discourse of the commercial enterprise. In other words, the affirmation of the African images is occurring predominately through the forces of the market, where African images are subservient to the dictates of economic development. This means that the African images are recognizable only in relation to processes of commodity production and exchange within the protocols of late capitalism in the city. By subsuming the African images/symbols into a hegemonic discourse of commodification and consumption, city branding contributes to the depoliticization of local meaning, even meaning of resistance that Africans may want to articulate against the hegemonic order of the market.

In time, the city has produced and reproduced boundaries of inclusion and exclusion that mobilizes an underlying commercial logic in which African publics find affiliation as 'profitable' in a manner that marginalize and exclude those that are nonprofitable. Therefore, invoking the African image has simultaneously created a connection and disconnection of black Africans from taking part in the transformative politics of framing the new meaning and reaping the commercial benefits of its framing. For example, while Maboneng typifies the endeavor to regenerate the inner city through multiple global-African inspirations, it has been criticized for being part of the capitalist *reconquista* in the inner city (Rees, 2013). Chow (1993) points out that the hybridity *of such plac*es is hegemonically constructed in the interest of dominant sectors in society and so their brands are inimical or ambivalent towards the "Other" such that people living in informal settlements are perceived as subjects for "eradication", "elimination", and "zero tolerance" (Huchzermeyer, 2009: 61). Indeed, Murray's (2011) incisive analysis of Johannesburg describes how these new sites of sequestered luxury caters to the comfort, safety, and security of affluent urban residents and produce a new spatial dynamic of social exclusion that effectively barricades the mostly black urban poor from full participation in the mainstream of urban life. Also Mele, author of *Selling the Lower East Side* has acknowledged that "The local culture has been under prey from the forces of real estate development" in such projects in his *New York Times*' (21 May 2008) interview.

In the final analyses, the city vision represents a global-African imaginary through which the city of Johannesburg articulates an Afro-modern bearing a dialectical relationship between hegemony and hybridity. Hegemony is realized in as far as the "urban strategies

of wealthier cities exert strong influence in the formulation of urban initiatives in poorer country contexts", (Parnell and Robinson, 2006: 337) augmenting what Sen (2001: 19) terms "unfair inclusion" whereby African images simply remain a metaphorical device of the elite to secure the victory of bourgeoisie capitalism. Hybridity emanates from construction of cultural interactions across diverse global and local representations in so doing "providing a way out of binary thinking, allowing the inscription of the agency of the subaltern, and permitting a restructuring and destabilisation of *occidental* power" (Prabhu, 2007: 1). Therefore, the conceptual terrain of the global-African imaginary is ambivalent, paradoxical and contradictory indicating that there is an awkward cohabitation in the use of world class and African imagery in the city vision. This awkward cohabitation points to the fact that the city vision does not describe a sheer site of cultural mixture, where the global and local interact, but a communicative practice constitutive of, and constituted by, socio-political and economic arrangements that need to be continuously negotiated in their differential spectres of power.

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