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SECTION B

AREA-BASED TRANSFORMATIONS



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12 Between fixity and flux: Grappling with transience and permanence in the inner city

YASMEEN DINATH

Restless city

How to upgrade and regenerate an inner-city environment where nothing is permanent but not everything is transient either? This seems to be the dilemma facing the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. Does it rebuild an inner city that caters for a transient population and transient activities or does it rebuild it based on an assumption that greater stability is needed and that permanence is a legitimate aspiration? It seems that these choices lie at opposing ends of a continuum that the municipality has battled to position itself on when planning its interventions in the ever-changing spaces of the inner city.

Since pre-colonial times what is now the centre of Johannesburg has been the site of entering and leaving, staying put and moving on – a constant shift between transience and permanence. From the comings and goings of successive tribes of BaTswana, BaSotho and Matabele (Brodie 2008), to the arrival of Dutch settlers, to the appearance of prospectors, tradesmen and mine labourers – it has been a place of entry and exit, place-making and displacement, settling and struggling, a place where very little stays constant but some come to stay. Throughout these comings and goings, the spaces of the central city have played a number of different roles, some of which have been permanent while others have been transient and fleeting responses to the temporal and socio-political context of the day.

The bricks and mortar (or corrugated iron and timber) of the area we know as the inner city were put in place over the past 124 years. Each layer of the city's physical fabric successively represents a spatial form that tried to suit the function of the day, but the physical make up of the buildings signify only a small part of their story. The inner

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city has played multiple roles through time and is still required to fulfil many competing, simultaneous agendas. This dynamism has been matched by an inconsistent, fluctuating and at times incoherent governance response. Rapid spatial change as a result of social, economic and political forces has exacted a considerable toll on the state. The question of how to design, plan, manage, in some cases 'control' and maintain this space in flux has plagued city administrators since 1886.

While much has been written about the pitfalls of the local authority's neo-liberal approaches to urban regeneration in the inner city (Murray 2008, 2011), and yet more has been written about the experience of migrants in the city (Kihato 2007, 2010; Landau 2006, 2009; Simone 2004), the various ways in which the local authority has grappled with governance of the inner city in the post-apartheid era has not yet been fully examined. There has been less scholarship on the ways in which the local authority has grappled with understanding the inner city as a place of simultaneous transience and permanence and what it has chosen to do about this. One possible exception is the work of Lindsay Bremner (2000, 2002, 2004), which goes a considerable way in addressing some of these and other broader issues relating to regeneration in the inner city. Another exception is Chapter 13 of this volume in which Claire Bénit-Gbaffou examines the governance of fluidity and flux in the context of the great diversity of the inner city's north-eastern suburbs.

I begin the chapter by exploring how transience and permanence have always formed part of the inner city's DNA, from its days as a mining camp to the uncertain days of the demise of apartheid, and I argue that transience and flux have always presented a challenge to city government. I draw on my experience as a municipal official tasked with guiding spatial planning policy for regeneration efforts in the inner city, and after a brief description of the inner city as it is today, I discuss the two impulses that have driven the municipality's approach to inner-city regeneration in the past decade of spatial change. The first impulse is the municipality's impulse to create fixity, discipline and aspirational iconic physical spaces. The second is to implement reactive and quick-fix solutions to some of the more enduring phenomena that have arisen in the inner city. I also discuss how systemic barriers within the city administration make more relevant and effective management difficult in the context of the fixity and flux of the inner city. Rather than concluding with a set of normative suggestions, I re-emphasise that systemic hindrances within the city arrest its ability to manage the inner city amidst and despite the area's fixity and flux.

Emerging through permanence and transience: a brief history

From the early days of colonialism in Africa, Johannesburg's inner city represented the gateway to southern Africa. The discovery of gold and the ensuing gold rush led to a rapid influx of people to the area and this made proper state-led planning a challenge. Johannesburg was never expected to be a permanent settlement. It was thought that once the gold deposits had been depleted, the mining camp would pack up and move off in search of other fortunes (Brodie 2008).

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From transience to permanence: a city struggling into being

This assumption of Johannesburg's limited life expectancy, of it being a transient place where people might sojourn temporarily, had an impact on its spatial layout and form. A crude and rudimentary street layout developed by a land surveyor formed the basis of the inner city we know today (Beavon 2004; Brodie 2008), and this short-term, crisis-driven approach to planning and urban development has been difficult to shake off, particularly in the inner city.

The role and function of the early mining camp was unequivocally to serve the interests of extracting gold deposits as quickly and profitably as possible. Once the extent of the Reef was determined, and the city's permanence was accepted, it began to be imagined as a longer-term destination where wealth could be made and markets accessed. Bricks and mortar were then laid down in ways that supported the city's role as a centre for colonial wealth and power in sub-Saharan Africa.

While the first survey plans and stand demarcations for the inner city date back to October 1886, formal regulatory state intervention in the spatial layout and land use came about in 1931 when the first town planning scheme was prepared (Zack and Silverman 2009). Prior to this, when boer farmers arrived after escaping the Cape Colony, they simply grabbed space and crudely demarcated it using a one-hour horse ride as a way of determining the boundaries of a farm, irrespective of any claims to land by the local native inhabitants (Brodie 2008).

This rush on space has endured to the present day in the inner city. Whether the stakes have been a high-yielding property investment, a site for gold extraction or a bolt hole on a discarded, unused piece of land to secure the most marginal of footholds in the city, the demand for space within these few square kilometres has presented a constant challenge to the state's impulse to plan, control and regulate. Some of the claims on space in the inner city are transient and others are more permanent and therein lies the rub.

When the British gained control of Johannesburg, they wanted the inner city to represent the success of the British colonial forces in Africa. Ornate iconic buildings were erected in the colonial style and other artefacts of British rule punctuated the urban space (Brodie 2008). With bold new buildings, plush neighbourhoods for mine managers and functional suburban housing developments for workers coexisting with tented camps, labour hostels and locations demarcated for 'non-white' race groups, the tenuous relationship between transience and permanence still characterised settlement and development in Johannesburg. The local authority tried to formalise and regulate activity but with mixed success. From the wanton women of the red-light district Frenchfontein, to the bootleggers who made many a man merry with illegal liquor (Brodie 2008), a spirit of insurgent urbanism undermined the authorities' attempts to make good places in the expectation of making well-behaved and compliant citizens (Holston 1998).

During the 1930s when South Africa abandoned the gold standard, foreign investment poured into the city and iconic skyscrapers became *de rigueur* in the city centre, with corporations vying to outdo each other for the most impressive symbol of power and

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wealth in the city (Zack and Silverman 2009). The pace of formal development in the inner city increased rapidly and the scale of buildings changed dramatically. By the late 1930s, the inner city operated as the smart wealthy CBD of Greater Johannesburg. Its spaces were delineated to serve business interests, maximise productivity and display wealth and power.

Mining and business activity had come a long way since the days in which the first prospectors set up camp in what is known today as Ferreirastown, and mine labourers had been effectively squeezed out of the CBD. As early as 1904, the municipality cited the outbreak of bubonic plague among Africans as the reason for banishing black people from the central city. Thus the geographic alienation of African, coloured and Indian people from the city centre began well before the apartheid regime was formally implemented. The Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and the Slums Act of 1934 were but two instruments that were used to prevent people of colour from living or trading in the inner city (Beavon 2004; Brodie 2008; Zack and Silverman 2009).

Under apartheid, with its formal spatial segregation through the demarcation of group areas, the inner city symbolised the entrenchment of white control over the economy and its resources. The local authority took increasingly harsh measures to quell any practices it deemed insurgent urbanism. At the same time it attempted to create landmark iconic spaces and buildings that projected white success and supremacy. However, while the local authority seemed to have the inner city and its users beautifully under control, and a veneer of functionality and stability veiled the inner city, this hid a darker underworld. For the black majority, the inner city could be a place of transience only. They were allowed to shop in it (albeit in black shops) and some were permitted to enter the city daily to sell their labour, but their attachment to and presence in the space was otherwise not tolerated.

Nevertheless, the South African economy's favourable growth rate during the 1960s meant that 50 tower blocks were built in the inner city, increasing office space by more than 30 per cent. Yet, almost simultaneously, a massive decline began to set in. Restrictive parking regulations and the construction of the freeway system in the early 1970s sparked the beginning of capital flight to more attractive decentralised nodes such as Rosebank and Sandton (Zack and Silverman 2009). The ostensibly well-managed, well-functioning inner city began a downward spiral that lasted almost 30 years (Zack and Silverman 2009).

A new kind of permanence as the city slips

As apartheid failed, its demise was most stark in the so-called 'greying' of the city, in areas where the authorities could no longer prevent the entry of black people. This was keenly manifested in the inner city. Its spaces were reclaimed, appropriated, and secretly infiltrated by the various groups of South Africans who had been excluded from its streets, apartments and public spaces. The state machinery that had been set up to prevent black people from entering the CBD collapsed in the 1980s. For the inner city, the end of influx control meant that it was called upon to serve a size of population and a scale and spread of uses for which it was never designed. The edifice of a beautifully managed CBD was unmasked as a transient and a false state of being that was to be swamped by tumultuous change.

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In addition to the failure of the state to keep black people in homelands and townships, the country's ailing economy contributed to rural–urban migration as people came in search of economic opportunities. This meant a local influx into the city by people who had previously been excluded (Brodie 2008). For different reasons this time, the city once more became the site of arrival for the poor, a place to flock to in search of a better life. This placed a massive strain on the physical infrastructure of the inner city. As landlords of residential high-rise apartments in Hillbrow saw the opportunity to charge exorbitant rentals to 'illegal' black inhabitants, subletting and overcrowding increased densities and placed excessive demands on public infrastructure. Public spaces, no longer the reserve of a minority white working class, were appropriated as spaces in which to hold mass gatherings, eat, play, sleep, sell, love, pray and steal.

The resulting flight of capital left many spaces vacant; but these spaces were soon claimed by new entrants to the city, often illegally. The built environment of the inner city became desperately contested and subject to a range of transient and permanent claims. The local authority battled to maintain, clean and regulate the inner city, let alone grasp the fundamental implications of an inner city on the brink of a new wave of local and sub-Saharan immigration. The city authorities could no longer control the ways in which inner-city spaces were being used and misused. While the fundamentals remained unfathomed, the city focused on aesthetics. A number of urban design and beautification projects implemented during this time (the development of the fountains outside the City Hall, for example) seemed like desperate last-ditch attempts to create iconic landmarks in the inner city as it slid into decline and the local authority lost more ground in trying to save it.

It can be argued that a predisposition to transience is ingrained in the DNA of Johannesburg's inner city, and this seems to have set up a path dependency for city governance, trapping it in the space between accommodating transience and building for permanence.

Fixity and flux in the inner city today

In the democratic 'new South Africa', post-1994 and into the second decade of the twenty-first century, the inner city has arguably experienced its most rapid changes and has presented authorities and citizens with their most demanding challenges. Consistent with its previous history, however, these challenges have manifested as a tussle between forces of fixity and flux, and between influx and flight.

The inner city as a political priority

The inner city's role as an arrival point for local and foreign migrants intensified post-1994. It became a new home (however transient) to those previously exiled to the fringes of society. It also became a place to hide, earn a quick buck, or search for a job. Simultaneously, it became a place to escape, a place to leave quickly before the going got too tough.

For city government, the inner city had become an ailing goose that once laid golden

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eggs. When the City of Johannesburg realised that the inner city had fallen into disrepair, the inner city became more than just an area in decline, it became a political symbol, a very visible open sore and a symptom of a government struggling to cope with its new-found responsibilities. 'Saving' the inner city from itself and 'fixing it up' became a priority. The inner city became a project. It became a site of visible political intervention, a site where confidence needed to be built in the new government. These demands called for tangible, demonstrable projects that would demonstrate the state's ability to turn around the inner city and address its needs. It was critical that the inner-city challenges be tackled in ways that would project a new government that was competent, able and committed to bringing positive change to the city and the country. At the same time, urban regeneration and revival of declining downtown areas was a topic of much focus globally, and a growing international discourse on urban, and in particular inner-city, 'regeneration' filtered into the thinking of governments when the search for solutions to inner-city decline began. Thus began the story of fixing up the city and of building investor and voter confidence in the municipality's ability to clean it up.

The inner city today: what we think we know and what we don't

Johannesburg's inner city has transmogrified drastically since the mid 1990s. Multiple public and private initiatives have altered its cityscape; the marginalised have continued to find a footing, often in increasingly derelict spaces; forces of regeneration and decline have competed for the right to remake space; and human, traffic and even economic congestion pervade some parts of the inner city while other parts continue to experience abandonment and decay.

Even its spatial extent is a matter of debate – where the inner city begins and ends is difficult to pinpoint and has changed as land uses and demand for space have unravelled in different ways along its edges. The area I refer to as the inner city for the purposes of this chapter is depicted in Plate 47. From the days of the first mining camp, this area became the trading hub of Johannesburg. It was surrounded by a ring of high-density, working-class residential areas interrupted by the east-west mining belt to the south. The heart of the old city remained a trading hub for many years. Until the 1970s the inner city was Johannesburg's CBD: it housed the major concentration of office space, including the headquarters of mining houses, and was the home of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the city's legal fraternity, the High Court and magistrate's court, the seat of local government, and the most significant proportion of street-front retail activity in the metropolitan region. While offices and large-scale retail suburbanised from the 1970s onwards, the inner city remains significant in the fabric of Johannesburg. In the past 20 years, the roles that this ex-CBD has had to play have multiplied considerably.

The inner city also houses the most significant multimodal transport interchange node for the city and its region. Each day thousands of people pour into the inner city in order to access various modes of (road- and rail-based) transportation that will take them to other parts of the metropolitan area, region, province and continent. The result of all this toing

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and froing is that the inner city has a daily influx of transient users for which it must be habitable, safe and user-friendly.

Perhaps one of the most significant features of the inner city has been its role as a home to a wide range of people seeking temporary or more permanent abodes; to some it is a home away from home and to others it is the only place they call home.

The CSIR's 'National Overview of Spatial Trends and Settlement Characteristics' report (2009) stated that in 2007 the inner city housed 401 904 residents. The 2011 Census results indicated a total of 359 755 residents (Stats SA 2012). But official statistics tell only half the story. Since the mid 1990s, declining economies in South Africa's rural areas and the increased porosity of the national borders mean that thousands of economic and political refugees have legally and illegally entered Johannesburg's inner city seeking a means to survive. The reality is that many undocumented transient people manage to remain invisible to the state in the interstitial spaces of the inner city, and as a result participate only partially in inner-city development; the number of people who actually reside in the inner city changes on a daily basis.

Ground-level retail activity as well as financial and mining services form the mainstays of the inner-city economy. Less formal enterprises have increased dramatically in the inner city and this has a significant impact on the use of the streetscape and on the ground-floor street interface of buildings. At the same time, multinationals such as AngloGold Ashanti, Zurich Insurance and ABSA Barclays Bank have committed to the inner city by locating themselves in high-quality built stock.

Land uses have also changed dramatically. Many derelict office buildings now function as residential accommodation, some legal and refurbished for working-class urbanites while others are illegally occupied by job seekers desperate for a place to stay. The influx of people choosing to live in the inner city creates a greater demand for social infrastructure and services, yet these are in short supply and this is something the municipality is seeking to address.

On the one hand, the density of human population, the transience of life, activity and space and the unknowability of the inner city make it a haven for criminal underworld activities – human and drug trafficking, prostitution, child prostitution, building-hijacking, illegal trade in counterfeit and contraband goods are all present in the less visible parts and especially the not yet upgraded spaces of the city. On the other hand, the physically upgraded and heavily reinvested parts of the city have attracted trendy coffee shops and global food franchises. Chic young professionals are claiming these as alternative recreation spaces in which to see and be seen. Other young professionals have taken up residence in the low- to middle-income housing stock provided by developers such as AfhCo and CityProp, making the city their place of choice in which to live, play and work.

Parts of the inner city remain an affordable choice for entrepreneurs – those starting a small retail concern who wish to rent a tiny trading spot in a subdivided store (sometimes no more than what used to be a display window) or young professionals offering services from a single office where rental is still low. Thus Johannesburg's inner city offers many the opportunity to get a foothold on the economic ladder.

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Years of successive precinct-based upgrading initiatives have resulted in, or perhaps exacerbated, the sense that the inner city is made up of a patchwork of rather disparately developed precincts – some of which have been virtually untouched by private or public upgrading efforts while others have received a full makeover and have transformed dramatically in character and user-profile. A further layer of spatial differentiation is evident in the management of urban spaces through demarcated improvement districts. These are managed in partnerships between the city and private property owners in an area who make a monthly monetary contribution (governed by legislation) towards supplementary cleaning, security and place-marketing services within demarcated precincts. These arrangements help the private sector to safeguard their investments, prevent blight and fill the gaps in the state-provided level of service to these areas. There are five legislated and three voluntary city improvement districts in the inner city (CJP 2012) and not all of these are contiguous. This creates sharp contrasts on adjacent city blocks, whereby one receives superior levels of urban management, safety and cleaning compared to its state-reliant neighbour.

The cumulative impact of the colliding roles played by the inner city and the various interventions it has received means that the inner city is always a heterogeneous space in flux; things come and go, some stay and others don't. As such it is extraordinarily difficult to fully come to terms with, and 'managing' the inner city is necessarily about managing between and despite the simultaneous forces of fixity and flux.

Managing between transience and permanence, fixity and flux

The city's approach to regeneration has evolved since the mid 1990s. Fraser and Cox (2012) trace it from its origins in the discourse on global inner-city regeneration to the present-day area-by-area, block-by-block public environment upgrade and urban management approach. Throughout its evolution, inner-city upgrading and regeneration in Johannesburg has been plagued with the dilemmas of being a part of the city where nothing is permanent but not everything is transient either. From conception to design to implementation, many inner-city regeneration projects have stumbled on the simultaneous frictional forces of transience and permanence in the inner city. The impulse to stabilise collides with forces of insurgent citizenship that shift constantly. The municipality has had a tough time accepting and reconciling these two forces of change in the inner city.

The impulse to fix, discipline and dazzle

The impulse to physically create order in the inner city and to pin down shifting actors and practices in the urban public realm has manifested in a range of municipal inner-city regeneration projects that have mostly been bricks and mortar type solutions, fixed spaces with definite boundaries and common physical elements. Some of these projects will be discussed here.

An analysis of the city's strategic spatial planning documents for the inner city over the past two decades,[1] when combined with reflections on practice within the municipality

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over the past four years, points to two main driving forces behind the impulse to clean up and fix in place inner-city urban practices and actors. The first is the desire for discipline and order. This is by no means unique to the city's municipality. The assumption that good places make good people has been a popular modernist idea that has informed city planning and still does in certain parts of the world. The second causal factor for this impulse is the need for iconic expressions of political competence, strength and a trustworthy local administration. The quest to create bold flagship iconic symbols of power or of global competitiveness and investor-friendliness pushes the municipality toward implementing grand built solutions to perceived lack or dysfunction in the inner city. Upgrading the built form of the inner city has yielded many positive results. Many parts of the city have been visibly improved and renewed through public environment precinct upgrades.

In 2006, the Inner City Summit culminated in an Inner City Charter that spelled out 127 commitments to changing conditions in the inner city. The Charter was signed by private-sector actors and the municipality (a few years later the representation would be contested as additional groupings, including youth representatives, argued for participation in inner-city deliberations). As part of this process the city committed R2 billion worth of capital investment to inner-city regeneration over five years. This Inner City Regeneration Fund was established to upgrade the inner city area by area, choosing adjacent and contiguous areas strategically to eventually cover the entire inner city (Garner 2011). The catch was that once a precinct of the inner city had received capital funding for a public environment upgrade in one financial year, the municipality was reluctant to allow for further spending in that area in subsequent years. Each area had just one chance at being upgraded. In Year 1, most of inner-city capital expenditure for public environment upgrades happened in Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville. In Year 2 the upgrades followed an arc inward from the eastern residential areas toward Doornfontein and included some of Fordsburg. In Year 3, the focus for public environment upgrade spending shifted to the commercial core of the inner city with some attention to the western parts, such as Fordsburg and Pageview (Garner 2011). Since 2011, money has been spent on the old Chinatown area and the Westgate precinct in the south-western corner of the inner city.

While in the past six years some of the inner-city upgrading budget has been spent on transitional housing projects such as 3 Kotze Street, the MOTH (Memorable Order of Tin Hats) Building on De Villiers Street, and Europa House on Plein Street (Garner 2011), a large proportion of capital expenditure allocated to inner-city upgrading has gone into physical public environment improvements.

Many of these projects made headlines and helped to recast the inner city in a positive light. In 2009, a study conducted on behalf of the Johannesburg Development Agency, which showed exactly what the yield of investment in public precinct upgrades in the inner city had been, gave further impetus to the permanent bricks and mortar type approach. The results of the study showed that in the specific areas where the Agency had between 2001 and 2007 spent R540 million, the private-sector investment leveraged as a result of the city's expenditure and upgrading efforts totalled R5.8 billion (on upgrading and refurbishments)

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(JDA 2008). The impact in these areas was reduced property vacancy rates and increased rentals. To its credit, precinct-based upgrading does make a difference to the everyday city user. It demonstrates physically a commitment to improving conditions in the city, even if those conditions are limited to the public environment. Well-lit, well-paved pavements and streets, public art and landscaping all give dignity to the experience of urban dwellers. They have successfully provided more humane environments to live, work and play in.

Area-based upgrading is difficult to achieve in conditions of constant change. One precinct is typically upgraded over a period of two or more financial years due to budget allocations. This incremental approach can accommodate some change of circumstances, use of space or new dilemmas that have cropped up. But area-based upgrading, when it is themed and intended to shape market forces, has proved to be a slippery slope for the municipality to tread in upgrading the city.

The creation of the Newtown Cultural Precinct and the Fashion District of the inner city are two cases in point. This is because delineating a precinct of the inner city to upgrade in line with a perceived economically viable theme/industry creates very little room for changes to the spatial location of theme-related enterprises or activities, for shifts in the flows of people and activities related to that theme, and for overall flexibility with regard to where best to locate related activities. It also places that area under immense pressure to perform a prescribed role against which performance will be evaluated, irrespective of the everyday realities of the area.[2]

The creation of the Newtown Cultural Precinct and the Fashion District was conceived in the Inner City Business Strategy of 2000. At that stage the municipality's drive for regeneration was based on a property-led approach to attract investment in property by cleaning up the public environment of key precincts and by funding iconic landmark developments that would create confidence in local property markets. At the same time, globally the trend in inner-city regeneration was to create themed precincts that relied on the predominance and spatial clustering of economic activities, much like the garment district and the financial districts of New York (Shand 2011).

The Newtown Cultural Precinct was seen at the time as the key to the municipality unlocking the roll-out of inner-city regeneration. Unfortunately, the focus on the cultural industries that were meant to support the notion of a cultural precinct was never really supported in the municipality's urgency to implement physical interventions using once-off capital funding. It seemed that the creation of these themed precincts translated only into physical interventions to clean up and repair the public environment and certain properties, but not into a focus on the needs of existing and aspirant cultural producers in its midst. In fact, a little-used audit of cultural institutions across the city completed by Avril Joffe in 1998[3] revealed that cultural producers and activities were spread across the city, only sometimes clustering in specific nodes. This was echoed in the background analysis conducted for the city as part of the Inner City Charter development process. The municipality's drive toward place-based regeneration and its unstinting faith in the ability of Newtown in particular to be 'the' cultural precinct of the city meant that much

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of the cultural production and innovation happening in the less visible parts of the city went largely unnoticed and unsupported. Today the Newtown Cultural Precinct is but one upgraded part of the city. It has failed to attract a clustering of cultural producers and it has failed to attract large-scale property investment. This is one example of where the municipality's impulse to fix and to create iconic landmark destinations has not been an appropriate response for an area and an industry in flux.

One of the earlier iconic expressions of the commitment to turn the city around came with the aforementioned Newtown Cultural Precinct and the development of the Mary Fitzgerald Square.

The development of the Mary Fitzgerald Square was a place-marketing initiative that formed part of the Newtown Cultural District project. While it was feverishly publicised and, together with the Nelson Mandela Bridge, made iconic as a symbol of the inner city coming back from its years of decline, it is also indicative of the city's impulse to apply urban beautification strategies and public environment management to the city's less formal, less organised spaces on the assumption that 'pretty places' attract the 'right kind of people' and help to dispel perceptions of urban decline, especially among investors and tourists. Iconic projects for regenerating the inner city can be a relatively short route to political kudos and can attract international attention through city marketing bids (Dinath 2006). A powerful critique of this impulse in regeneration of the public environment is eloquently covered by Bremner (2004: 62):

> Somehow Newtown's always becoming yet never belonging culture – theatres, museums, galleries and music venues – cannot quite counter their urban antipathy. It is going to take more than the fancy French lighting and strange midget-sized busts littering Mary Fitzgerald Square (which has just undergone a R4.5 million makeover) to change things.

In a similar vein, the Fashion District has also had limited success in becoming one of Johannesburg's must-see fashion destinations. Despite the initial implementation of the Fashion Kapitol structure and the Agency's capital investment in the physical environment, the city's adopted vision for Fashion District is still struggling to bear fruit.

Another approach to upgrading in the inner city that reflects the impulse to fix and clean up the inner city is the successive attempts by the municipality to accommodate and formalise informal trading in the inner city. Hawking or informal trading in the chaotic and cramped street space of Johannesburg has crept stealthily into the public life of the city since the days of the dusty mining camp that Johannesburg was in the 1890s. Indian immigrants who were hawkers plied their wares on rickety wooden wagons in the streets of the newly constructed central city. In those days they were just barely tolerated.

In the tumultuous years after apartheid, street traders have become one of the most significant and visibly messy claimants of space in the public life of the city. While their presence in the city may date back many years, suggesting permanence to this activity, the economy of street trading in the inner city is characterised by transience. Everything about it, bar its existence, is fleeting. Street traders in Johannesburg's inner city, as in

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many developing world cities, cater to a clientele that is on the go. Their spatial patterns of trade, need for shelter and storage, range of goods and services, and their target markets are, of necessity, flexible. In many cases street traders' need to evade the overheads and legal requirements of formal trading means that they can pick up and run off at a moment's notice.

Street trading in the inner city creates daily cyclical spatial patterns and flows of goods between trader and customer that are ephemeral – responding dynamically to what commodities are needed at which times of the day with varying regularity. For example, it is unlikely that a trader wanting to sell live chickens or a bag of four onions will do so to an office worker on his way to work at 7:30 am. However, if he positions himself on the right street in the evening or afternoon, he is better able to offer a cheap and convenient stop for fresh produce as office workers leave the city to get home and prepare dinner. The woman who sells warm woolly socks and brightly patterned gloves in the winter may want to change her offering during the hot summer months. She needs to be able to change her wares and perhaps therefore her spatial location in relation to her customers and competitors.

This kind of flexibility is essential to the livelihood of the trader. Yet for city governance, urban management and spatial planning it is the kind of ephemerality and transience most difficult to accept and accommodate in the fabric of the city. The city has wrestled with the presence of traders in the inner city since the 1980s. Throughout the years it has attempted ways to formalise informal trade so as to better manage its impact on the streetscape. Efforts to 'deal with' the perceived messiness of informal trade have ranged from harsh measures to eradicate trading, to more accommodating approaches that go some way toward recognising informal trade as an inevitable part of the inner-city's transit and transportation facilities.

The impulse to pin down trading to designated points in designated areas has not, in the main, led to the kind of disciplined, orderly trading that the city hoped for. Attempts to create a fixed area-based physical solution for trading have often been met with resistance and mixed results. Some traders who have occupied designated stalls in designated markets have continued trading there in a semi-formal way. But the design and location of markets, their capacity and supportive services have repeatedly been found inadequate.

Prior to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the city developed a very ambitious plan to 'house' and therefore solve the 'problem' of inner-city informal trade by creating a series of what it calls linear markets in the inner city (MTC 2009). These linear markets are architect- and engineer-designed brick and steel structures that are constructed on the pavement space (or in some cases pedestrianised roadway) of inner-city streets. The designs proposed for each stall differ with the types of good to be sold, for example hot food vendors have gas ranges and food preparation tables designed into the stalls, whereas stall designs for clothing vendors have a place to hang garments for sale. This is an overt expression by the municipality's economic development department and the Metro Trading Company of their desire to fix, pin down and formalise or clean up informal trading.

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The linear markets (MTC 2009) are attempts to create formal, physical fixed shops in the street space. The proposed designs exhibit little understanding of the need for street trading to remain flexible, transient and not necessarily fixed, but able to serve a highly mobile target market. The designs are not able to cater for annual peaks and troughs in the demand for space for trading, nor to accommodate a change in types of goods vended as a result of changed economic circumstances, varying affordability and access to different types of wholesale goods. They are cement, steel and brick expressions of neatness, designed to order and control street traders. While one such market has been built in Quartz Street, its design had to be significantly modified from those in the Linear Markets Business Plan of 2009 (MTC 2009) to better accommodate trader activities. Still, the maintenance of street markets and their capacity remains a problem.

While some projects have exhibited the municipality's tendency to order and create physical, cemented, long-term solutions to challenges that are transient, ephemeral or constantly shifting, other projects exhibit the municipality's desire to create large physical spatial statements of power, political commitment or global competitiveness. These are iconic spatial flagship projects intended to give expression to the municipality's aspirations for global recognition and local legitimacy. Plans to shape space in the inner city through the creation of landmark iconic place-making projects periodically appear on the city's agenda, and are usually bold and ambitious in both scale and cost. The proposed Decking of the Railway Gulch in the inner city (CoJ 2010) is one such project. This project proposed the construction of a multi-billion rand mixed-use development over a period of 30 years, by decking over the railway lines that traverse the inner city. One of its primary aims was to stimulate investment in the inner city by radically increasing the supply of additional land for new development. The project proposed to completely change the Johannesburg skyline and many of its detailed design proposals focused on creating landmark public spaces and iconic high-rise buildings and leisure facilities for an international and national market.[4] It is as though the municipality has been constantly searching for the one big spatial physical landmark iconic project that will make all the difference to the inner city and put paid to persistent negative perceptions of the inner city from local and global naysayers.

The municipality's impulse to fix, order and clean up the inner city, as though it could be scrubbed clean and polished bit by bit until it is all 'sorted out', has been frustrated by the myriad expressions of insurgent urbanism, quotidian survival tactics and strategies that collide in inner-city streets and buildings on a daily basis.

Place-making forces that evade fixity

The impulse to physically reconstruct the city is a vital element of inner-city regeneration but when it becomes privileged as the dominant approach to regenerating the inner city, the municipality may limit its ability to respond effectively to space-makers that evade fixity and cannot be pinned down in a physical location through a built environment intervention. A range of activities and urban users have a profound impact on spatial change in the inner city for which the city cannot design and create a neat new physical solution.

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The 'Ethiopian quarter' is an example of space in the city that evades government's capital expenditure plans and impulse to fix or discipline. Tanya Zack[5] describes this spatial clustering of Ethiopian entrepreneurial activity and its beneficiation industries that support it as being part of what is informally referred to as 'the chaos precinct' of the inner city. This is a space where formal municipal planning processes have failed to intervene. One could argue that formalisation efforts in other parts of the inner city, such as in privately managed city improvement districts, displace residual trade into this more anonymous and less regulated environment.

Temporary uses of space, which are not officially recognised by city upgrading projects, also evade the city's impulse to fix. Skateboarders in Johannesburg are but one of these groupings and are active users of inner-city space. The geometry of the urban public realm created by the mix and density of inner-city buildings provides a myriad of exciting skating opportunities for professional and amateur skaters. In 2009 the Johannesburg Development Agency attempted to create a formal skate park to enliven the inner-city space and to cater for these marginalised users of the public environment who to date have been trying to make use of random building ledges, public street furniture and other inner-city public or private installations to practise their art. Unfortunately, the Agency has as yet been unable to secure funding to implement its plans for a skate park (Phasha 2011). In the meantime, skaters seize opportunities to skate less visible parts of the inner city. Their choices vary on a daily and weekly basis, depending on pedestrian traffic flow at various times of the day and week, the level of private or public policing of various parts of the city and the level of harassment or resistance they receive from less or more present building owners who fear that skating will cause physical damage or bring discomfort to their tenants (Phasha 2011). This is the kind of highly creative, ever-shifting, improvisatory use of space that the local government system finds difficult to respond to. Arguably, the creation of a skate park as a physical upgrade intervention may go some way towards catering for these marginalised inner-city participants, yet it will not neatly capture and contain their art form in a particular bounded space.

There are many other examples of more or less insurgent forms of everyday urbanism (Crawford 1999; Holston 1998) that present a challenge to planners' and city officials' impulse to contain, order and stabilise the changing inner city. Most evade not only temporal but also physical fixity. These often frustrate municipal efforts at physical urban regeneration, threatening to render capital investment unsustainable or very quickly irrelevant. Other municipal regeneration efforts in Johannesburg's inner city have also proven to be difficult to sustain. Paradoxically, and at the opposite end of the time spectrum, is an impulse within the city's machinery to launch into a series of short-term reactive responses to challenges that are seen to be urgent.

The impulse to patch up quickly: episodic reactive gestures

The municipality's short-term, ad hoc, crisis-driven solutions to spatial change challenges that have presented themselves in in the inner city also detract from the city's ability to

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respond to the concomitant space-making forces of transience and permanence in the inner city.

Spurred into action often by vociferous mass protests, human danger or a barrage of negative media coverage, the municipality has often hastily leapt into formulating short-term fixes for what it perceives to be urgent problems. There is certainly merit in this approach as it channels energy into problem-solving and acts at the very least as a spotlight revealing complex sets of visible symptoms of urban malaise perhaps previously less visible to authorities. It forces city government to think, but to think fast. On the downside, hastily conceived measures to find a short-term remedy to an inner-city crisis often lock the municipality into a series of short-term interventions that cost time and money. The risk is that in replacing one 'Band-Aid' solution with another time after time, the focus on the longer-term solution is sacrificed. Perhaps even more worrying is the risk that a thorough comprehension and internalisation of the longer-term, more endemic or systemic problem underlying the symptomatic flare up is also sacrificed.

When short-term solutions are implemented, the city government and its affected citizens are given a temporary respite. The newspaper articles stop, the spotlight moves on to another pressing matter and the longer-term problem or matter to be addressed is easily shelved while fires are being put out (sometimes literally) elsewhere. In this way the city administration becomes locked in a cycle of short-term problem-solving in the inner city, hastily scraping together funds to do just enough to avert a crisis, community protests or legal action. These cycles can repeatedly divert human and fiscal resources away from longer-term, more sustainable and enduring programmes and strategies to address the root causes of these symptomatic flare ups in the inner city. This applies to situations where the underlying root cause or enduring unmet need is actually identified and known to municipal practitioners. In some cases, however, the link between a short-term crisis in the inner city and a longer-term more permanent force of spatial change, especially where that link is not immediately obvious, is not consciously realised or investigated by the municipality. The result is that short-term amelioration of a spatially manifested crisis in the inner city does not last long. Very soon the municipality is faced either with a variation on the original event or a simple repeat of the same crisis.

Since the early 2000s there have been various instances where the municipality, in choosing to adopt short-term fire-fighting strategies, has failed to make the link between the symptom it has hastily remedied and the underlying enduring condition from which that symptom arose. One such example is the municipality's urban management blitz campaigns. In early 2000, when the focus of institutional effort shifted more and more to enforcement through the urban management arm of council, block-by-block clean-up campaigns and urban management blitzes became an increasingly popular mechanism to very visibly and almost militantly clamp down on all by-law contraventions, illegal activities and criminal operations in the inner city.

In an urban management blitz operation members of the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department, building control, and all other enforcement- and service-related

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departments descend upon an inner-city block in order to clean up and fix all service and compliance issues before handing the block over to the area manager for ongoing day-to-day maintenance. The inner-city urban management team is assessed annually on the number of block-by-block clean-up blitzes carried out in a year. This is one example of a reactionary short-term quick fix that is not only unsustainable but also does not treat the endemic problem, instead addressing only one visible isolated symptom. While it has its short-term benefits of creating a clean, functioning block on the day (at best), it cannot address the here-today-gone-tomorrow activities on that block nor can it offer any real consistency in improving conditions for more permanent users of the space.

What these examples point to is a systemic handicap in the municipal regeneration apparatus to recognise and begin to systemically and sustainably commit to addressing the more permanent forces of spatial change acting on the inner city of Johannesburg.

Systemic hindrances to managing between permanence and transience

Based on participant observation in the city planning and regeneration annals between February 2008 and September 2011, and on a study of the municipality's inner-city planning documentation, I have identified three interrelated systemic barriers that make the municipality uncomfortable with the simultaneity of forces of informalisation and insurgent citizenship, and with more permanent changes that are embedding themselves into Johannesburg's inner city.

The first of these is political imperatives. The political need to visibly show constituents a spatial physical product that demonstrates the ruling party's competence and commitment to its people in the inner city is one of the key driving forces behind the impulse to spatially change the inner-city public environment. This is by no means unique to the current ruling party or to Johannesburg or to the world. Yet the fervour with which building and repairing space in the inner city is pursued and prioritised in Johannesburg is certainly driven by the need to use this space as a showcase of how government is capable of intervening.

The other political imperative that drives the impulse to build and clean up whole areas of the inner city block by block is the political pursuit of global competitiveness and credibility. Decoding the texts and discussions of municipal leaders talking about the inner city, there is a definite sense that successful governance and discipline of the inner city must be shown to the world (often with reference to visitors and foreign investors) through bricks and mortar physical interventions; through clean, neat, orderly streets; a legal, disciplined inner-city citizenry; a requisite number of parks, iconic landmarks and a physical 'modern' feel that conveys the message: 'Yes, we can too.'

Shifting patterns of street trading, temporary informal appropriations of space for lively street performances or complex layered networks of spatially dispersed less formal participants in the inner-city's fashion industry make it difficult for political leadership to present a stable physical environment as an aspirational space where people can find permanent residence and trade opportunity.

These transient ephemeral spatial change-drivers make it even harder for officials to

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realise politicians' dreams. Herein lies the second difficulty for regenerating the inner city in the face of transience and permanence. The institutional systems of the municipality governing the actions of its officials (though of course influenced by its politicians) render tolerance of informality and insurgent citizenship in the inner city almost impossible. Municipal officials and departments involved in inner-city regeneration are remunerated and retained based on a performance management system that, much like the political system from whence it comes, promotes short-term, finite, tangible deliverables. This system lends itself more favourably to once-off spatially fixed capital projects that are visible than to multi-year programmes or institutional enhancements that take a long-term view on accommodating spatially flexible practices in the inner city. Targets are set for departments and entities to achieve within a financial year. Where there is external pressure or legal obligation to continue with a particular inner-city regeneration project, then a project is sustained over a period of three to five years. If the pressure subsides or the vision for the inner city is changed (which it has done often), the project can be changed or abandoned. On the other hand, the same performance management scorecard system evaluating inner-city activities does not, in the main, make allowance for unforeseen circumstances that may unexpectedly need attention and resources during the course of a financial year. When there is a sudden crisis (much like a fire that needs to be quickly extinguished), a short-term, knee-jerk, stopgap measure is about as much as the bureaucracy can accommodate outside of the commitments of its pre-approved scorecards for that year.

The third and less obvious constraint to grappling with transience and permanence in the inner city is the institutional culture within the municipality and its approach to urbanity. There are many ways in which to interpret the inner city, to describe it, to read it and know it. While much of the academic literature published over the past decade depicts the inner city as a hard but exciting place full of vibrant change, creative expression, desperation, hope and fear, much of the internal official discourse within the municipality has been quite different. Flyvberg's suggestion (1998 in Dinath 2006) is that often those who possess power uncritically immerse themselves in their constructed rationality to the extent that the difference between the justifications they create to support this rationality is blurred with what they have constructed as the truth. As a result, those in power cannot themselves differentiate between what they represent as truth for public scrutiny and what their behind-the-scenes motives or justifications might be for that representation.

In finding ways of constructing the rationality of the inner city, two distinct official viewpoints have emerged within the corridors of power in the city. There are those within officialdom who view the inner city as a place that is slowly coming together but that must not get out of hand and must be pulled into shape, fixed up and sorted out on a daily basis. Words like 'blitz', 'clean up', 'crack down' and 'sort out' punctuate the discourse in this camp. A little way down the corridor from that sits the more visionary perspective – those officials who, tasked with envisioning what the inner city should be and giving expression to political dreams, enliven regeneration discourse with globally revered planning and design principles like active public spaces, pedestrian-friendly streets, the 24-hour city, accessible

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and affordable, inclusionary and vibrant. In this camp there are sometimes tentative suggestions that informality should be an integral part of the world-class African inner city. Yet nobody really quite knows how to make this a viable, digestible strategy or 'project' for the city to implement. Since these officials are often found in strategic and policy-related functions of the city, they have little real influence on weaving informality into the capital budgeting plans of implementing agencies such as the public utilities and the Johannesburg Property Company. Their ability to substantially influence city discourse and action on regeneration is limited to the production of words, language and plans that propose what should be and could be done. What further dampens this voice within the municipality is the absence or, where existent, the inaccessibility of empirical data supporting new methods of effecting inner-city regeneration.

These disparate ways of reading the city from within the municipality are often at loggerheads with each other. In these instances political expediency and budgetary limitations tend to determine what is implemented in the name of inner-city regeneration. Then physical-change projects or quick-fix episodic 'blitz'-type operations win the race for funding and implementation. Some would say that the municipality's role is to fix and make functional. Others argue that, in fixing up and making shiny, happy places, the city has missed the point and lost both the flexibility it needs to respond to transience and the tenacity it needs to provide for the more permanent people and activities that shape the inner city.

Insurgent urbanism will always be a force of transient change in cities, and the impulse in planning to fix, order and house will always be met with resistance in the spaces of everyday city life. Given the zeal to regenerate Johannesburg's inner city, the challenge is to find a mediated approach to effective implementation that allows all its participants to live with the ambiguities of permanence and transience and its government to implement renewal programmes that are flexible and sustainable.

Notes

1 See http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6664&catid=61&Itemid=114.
2 Interview with T Zack, Inner City Researcher and Urban Development Consultant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 29 May 2012.
3 Avril Joffe interviewed by K Shand, cited in Shand (2011).
4 The current status of this project is unclear. There is no evidence available of its progress and it is not mentioned in the 2014/2015 Review of the City's Integrated Development Plan 2012–2016 (CoJ 2014)
5 Interview with T Zack, Johannesburg, 29 May 2012.

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