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Architectures of visibility and invisibility: a reflection on the secret affinities of Johannesburg's cross-border shopping hub

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The inner city of Johannesburg, South Africa, is the site of an intense wholesale and retail trade in fast fashion. Here mostly migrant entrepreneurs supply billions of rand worth of Chinese apparel to local and cross-border shoppers from across sub-Saharan Africa. The retail phenomenon pulsates from the incrementally adapted interiors of modernist office buildings. The buildings now host secret shopping centres, with mini retail outlets and coffee shops transforming dormant interior corridors and stairwells into lively internal streets. This compressed urban environment caters exquisitely to the ambiguous needs of being both visible and invisible — to display and to conceal — in this urban context. Walter Benjamin's musings on the architectures and social positioning of mid-nineteenth century Parisian arcades offer insight into how adaptive, rogue architectures respond to mass consumption in contemporary Johannesburg. They support the argument that the arcades of "Jeppe" are deliberate, responsive architectures.

O centro de Johanesburgo, África do Sul, é o local de um intenso comércio atacadista e varejista de *fast fashion*. Aqui os empresários, em sua maioria migrantes, fornecem bilhões de rands em roupas chinesas para compradores locais e de fora, oriundos de toda a África subsaariana. O fenômeno da venda a varejo vibra nos interiores de prédios modernistas de escritórios, adaptados de modo cumulativo. Os prédios abrigam agora centros comerciais secretos, com mini lojas de varejo e cafeterias, transformando em animadas ruas internas os corredores e as escadarias adormecidos. Este ambiente urbano comprimido atende primorosamente às necessidades ambíguas de ser visível e invisível – mostrar e esconder – neste contexto urbano. As reflexões de Walter Benjamin sobre a arquitetura e o posicionamento social das passagens cobertas de Paris de meados do século XIX ajudam na compreensão de como as arquiteturas tomadas e adaptadas respondem ao consumo de massa na Johanesburgo contemporânea. Elas apoiam o argumento de que as passagens de "Jeppe" são arquiteturas deliberadas e responsivas.

Keywords: appropriation; arcades; cross-border shopping; ethnic entrepreneurialism; informality; Johannesburg; transgressive architecture

Chaos spilled out into plain view like secrets of the urban unconscious. — Muschamp, "Art/ Architecture"

Introduction

"So, I'm shopping and selling and shopping and selling. It's my best thing! I've been doing it for twenty-four years now — since I was twenty-one!" Lucy Chakale[1] shouts over her shoulder to us. We are trying keep pace with her as she threads her way through the crowds along "Jeppe" Street. "I come once a month to get new bags," she adds, heading into the labyrinth that is Lancet Shopping Centre.

On the lower floors we pass shops that are little more than single walls displaying rows of T-shirts or shoes; large shops with room to browse amongst the shirts and dresses; shops displaying plastic dishes, porcelain tea sets, 3-D pictures of Jesus, mirrors, buckets, blankets; curtain shops; L-shaped shops; kiosks tacked onto the fronts of shops that are themselves only modest-sized rooms. We peep into stores that use only the lower halves of mannequins. These trunkless figures, lined up in squadrons,

> display tight-fitting jeans. We pass archipelagos of brand-label shoe shops, each just a corner or inlet packed to the brim and separated from its neighbour by a row of display shelving.
>
> If Lucy has had any doubts that she'll find what she's looking for, they are immediately assuaged in a tiny shop at the far end of the third-floor passage … Lucy is buying handbags for her customers in Lusaka. "What's your stock price?" she asks [the Ethiopian shopkeeper] as she picks up a shocking-pink bag. "Seventy Rand?" She tests the zipper and slings the bag over her shoulder, measuring its length against her waist. "I'll take it," she says. (Zack and Lewis 2018, 1)

This extract, from the photo book *Johannesburg: Made in China*, is set in the north-east quadrant of the inner city of Johannesburg, South Africa, where many hundreds of micro retailers service a booming agglomeration economy of petty traders. Many shoppers here are not the end customers but the intermediary buyers of goods that are widely distributed. Hawkers from surrounding black townships, smaller urban centres and rural areas of South Africa as well as small-scale merchants from other countries in sub-Saharan Africa arrive on a daily basis to buy cheap Chinese-made clothing, shoes, household wares and accessories. Most of the trading spaces are tiny and are fashioned through subdivision. Some are makeshift counters or wall spaces. Most are inserted into surplus modernist buildings that have outlived their usefulness as office space and medical suites and have been appropriated and converted into informal medium- and high-rise shopping centres. The precinct, associated with the city's major rail, bus and taxi interchanges, hosts an extraordinary array of inventive micro-retail architectures. This unstoppable cash economy, much of which operates amidst strained public infrastructure and below the radar of formalised planning and regulation, is not supported, and often even undermined, by municipal policing services. Shoppers and shopkeepers call this area "Jeppe," derived from the original name of Rahima Moosa Street, one of the most congested arterial roads that traverses the neighbourhood and that hosts the epicentre of the hub.

Previous research and policy work into inner-city development has highlighted the location of this cross-border shopping precinct and the threats — such as crime and graft — faced by shoppers and shopkeepers (Inner City Partnership 2017). Media attention has centred on outbursts of xenophobic incidents and on municipally-led evictions of street traders (Zack 2015). Tanya Zack's ethnographic work in researching this trade primarily through the perspective of Ethiopian traders in the area has provided descriptions of the space, the nature of business, the supply chains, the nature of competition and business risk as well as personal risk in the area, social relations and exclusion, and the impact of municipal crackdowns on informal trading in the area. It has alluded to the area as pioneering a new shopping typology in the city (Zack 2015; Inner City Partnership 2017). Authors have described the area as crossing the boundaries between the informal and the formal (Zack 2013; Le Roux 2014). Le Roux (2014) describes the detail of the area in terms of flows and connectivity within and outside of buildings.

This paper extends the observations into the strategic architectures of Jeppe by delineating the variety of arcades, forms of shop spaces, and treatment of doorways, displays and circulation space. It further extrapolates from these forms to the interplay between secrecy and display that is so necessary in the mercantile roles that the area occupies in Johannesburg. It demonstrates how these forms operate both similarly to and differently from Walter Benjamin's sense of the imaginary that arcades in mid-nineteenth century Paris conjured and the social form they projected. This is achieved alongside a reading of Benjamin's reflections on Parisian arcades as well as through our own reflections on Jeppe.

Emergence of Jeppe

Like the enclosed lanes of mid-nineteenth century Paris, the emergence of the shopping hub of Jeppe was informed by several conditions.

> Most of the Paris arcades come into being in the decade and a half after 1822. The first condition for their emergence is the boom in the textile trade. *Magasins de nouveautés*, the first establishments to keep large stocks of merchandise on the premises, make their appearance. They are the forerunners of department stores. (Benjamin 1999, 3)

Jeppe came into being following a post-1990 boom in the wholesaling of Chinese apparel and homeware in Africa and, in particular, the lifting of trade barriers in a post-apartheid South Africa. A secondary boom followed in the run-up to the 2010 FIFA Football World Cup when the market was flooded with soccer regalia. The marketplace for affordable apparel found a ready host in the surplus modernist buildings of an inner city that had been abandoned by commercial use in the last decades of the apartheid regime when a combination of white flight and trends towards office suburbanisation saw the emptying out of medical and office suites in the traditional central business district. The Johannesburg inner-city grid layout comprises compact city blocks measuring 62 m x 62 m. On these blocks a pressed retail environment of large numbers of micro selling points emerged as an ethnic entrepreneurial enclave.

What started as a quiet encroachment of space in the mid-1990s, when Ethiopian political asylum seekers rented space in an almost empty office tower on Jeppe Street, grew first incrementally and then in rapid bursts to become a burgeoning economic enclave created through the dramatic occupation and subdivision of space. At the time of writing, hundreds of Ethiopian retailers dominate trade in medium- and high-rise buildings on 16 city blocks. And along with South African and foreign traders, they make up a retail enclave that services cross-border shopping in many more blocks. A network of interrelated shopping spaces now criss-crosses this part of the inner city and redefines the block-like modernist form of individual, distinct buildings. The small shops compete on price and variety with established department stores — several of which have closed down in the inner city in recent years.[2] It is not a shopping hub that was predicted or pre-planned. It was neither encouraged nor supported. It was created — one shop at a time — by a productive, entrepreneurial class of migrants. These histories link Jeppe's streets, buildings and merchandise to what Amin (2007, 102–103) describes as "a world space of many geographies of varying spatial reach and composition." Those geographies are spatial, financial, cultural and social.

Our process of reading Jeppe derives from bringing together ethnographic and architectural approaches to a collaborative study of the area in 2017. As an urban planner, researcher and writer, Zack is involved in an ongoing investigation into Jeppe as a migrant entrepreneurial enclave. As a practicing architect, urban designer and university lecturer, Thireshen Govender is researching the architectures and urban morphology of this area. Our collaboration offers an architectural ethnography that describes and discusses the emergent social and economic practices across a 53-block area (see Figure 1). As part of our study we documented all cross border-related businesses in this study area as well as the multiple renovations and adaptations that were undertaken to create retail spaces.

Walter Benjamin and the reading of Jeppe

This reading of Jeppe is enriched by thinking about the neighbourhood in conjunction with Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* which offers multiple texts that zoom into the minutiae of arcades and zoom out to locate these arcades in the socio-historical context of Paris.

Like Benjamin's arcades, those of Jeppe are found to be highly responsive to their social, spatial and economic condition. Reading our work in this way offers a way of reflecting the roles and operation of the area against the contemporary forces of African urbanism. Despite its obviously chaotic aesthetic and presentation, the outcome reveals this to be a deliberate and highly directed mass of retail spaces. Indeed, the key architectural features of an arcade — directionality, protective cover and multiple stimuli — may well offer metaphors for the deliberate architectures of Jeppe that are focused, are responsive to a range of external and internal elements, and provide an adaptable shield of secrecy and enticement.

The *Arcades Project* is itself a display and a layering of treasures. Benjamin's musings on the arcades of nineteenth-century Paris reflect on their relationship to and representation of an era of early capitalism (Muschamp 2000; Cohen 1989). But they do more. Influenced by surrealism, the *Arcades Project* explores the "real" and dreamscape character of enclosed Parisian lanes.

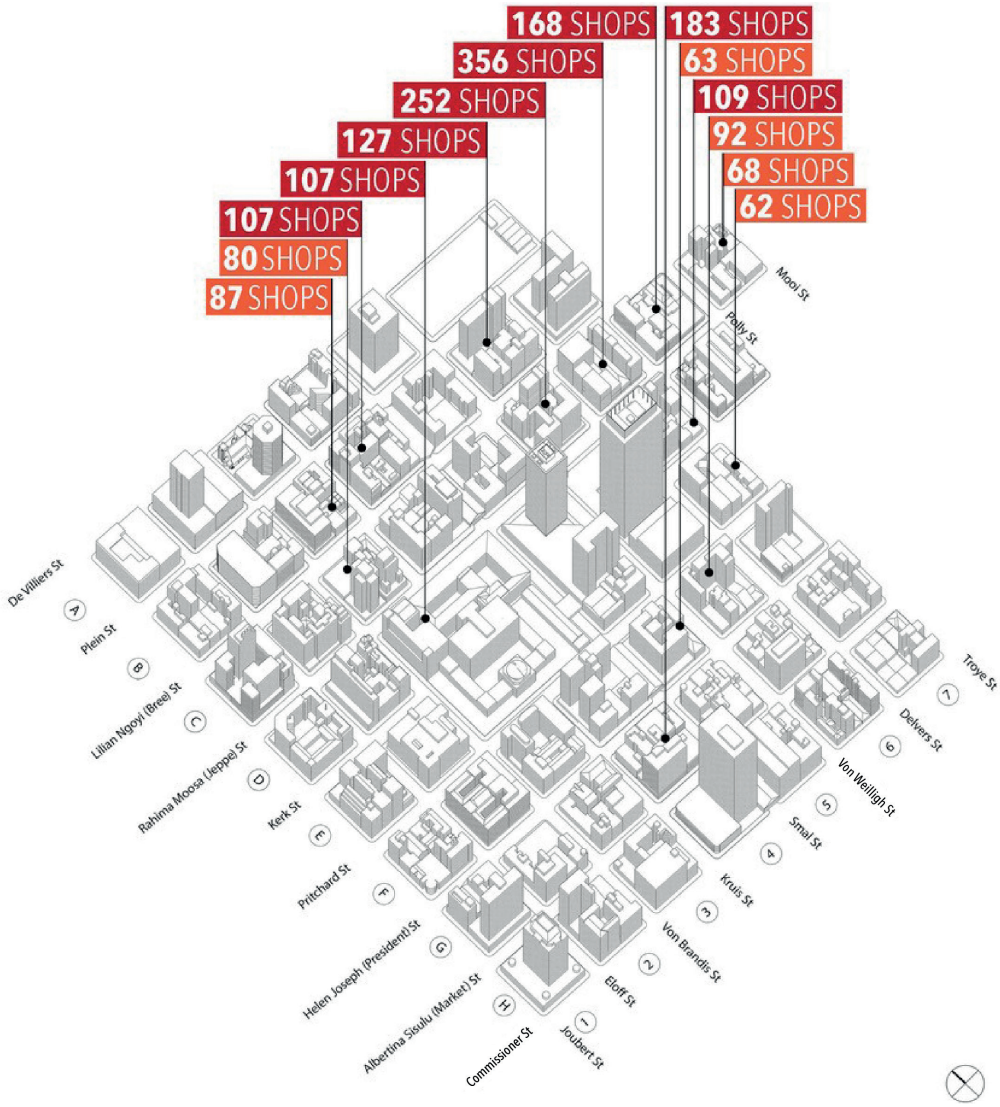


Figure 1: The 53-city block study area, illustrating the existing built form through which the cross-border economy thrives.

> The organized masses of historical objects — the particular items of Benjamin's display (drafts and excerpts) — together give rise to "a world of secret affinities," and each separate article in the collection, each entry, was to constitute a "magic encyclopaedia" of the epoch from which it derived. An *image* of that epoch. (Eiland and McLaughlin 1999, x, emphasis in original)

These texts are instructive for probing the elements of the intense shopping hub of Jeppe. The imagery, terminology and analysis might usefully suggest ways of examining the creation and design of these shopping arcades in inner-city Johannesburg in a contemporary epoch of late capitalist mass consumption.

One reading of Jeppe is of a disorganised mass of competitive, opportunistic entrepreneurialism catering to a retail-hungry continent and inserting itself into the cracks of a formally planned city. This Jeppe is competitive, opportunistic and at least in part extra-legal. Yet it is neither an accidental space nor is its development random and undirected. An examination of the shape of

retail and the spatial forms it takes reveals architectures that are deliberate and bound to social relations (Koskela 2002). Far from being a jumble of shops and kiosks, this shopping enclave is created through the cumulative effect of hundreds of individual intentions and exquisite responses to a suite of social, business and security requirements and risks.

Yet Jeppe cannot be separated from the temporal scale. It is a locality produced by a migrant population that is plagued by uncertainty in a host country in which a liberal migration policy has not translated into security of their immigrant status. It is produced by and in response to the manifold forces of globalised late capitalism. Appadurai's (1990) suggestion of various "scapes" — through which we might view the international and, indeed, human shifts that warp the relative stabilities and affect politics (and space) in unprecedented ways — offers dimensions for examining newly evolving cultural practices and social forms. His contribution of "ethnoscapes," of people who are in flux — and who dare not let their imaginations rest too long as they navigate a world of shifting global politics, ideologies, capital, production and technology — provides a way of making sense of the hybridised influences that shape Jeppe. This article is interested in the agency that an ethnic entrepreneurial group exercises in the localised space. In this respect Appadurai's extension on his earlier thesis goes beyond a description of the multiplex global dynamics that such an entrepreneurial group may draw on and respond to. He argues that the production of locality is a deliberate and conscious effort to "sediment" from a global menu of circulating forms and forms of circulation. His provocation that "the local is not just the accidental site of the fusion or con-fusion of circulating global elements. It is in fact the site of the mutual transformation of circulating forms" (Appadurai 2007) neatly fits the argument of a deliberate localised architecture in Jeppe. The following section describes the designs that are employed in Jeppe. It is followed by a discussion of the designs alongside a reading of Benjamin's work.

An opportunistic architecture: design tactics in Jeppe

There is a familiarity between the marketplace of Jeppe, born of appropriation, subdivision and adaptation, and the nineteenth-century Parisian arcades, which were created through consortia of local merchants who would purchase pedestrian lanes and convert them into enclosed passages through similar practices of subdivision and creation (Cunningham 2013). But one and a half centuries later, in a different location and era and under different conditions, similarly appropriationist architecture is serving a different agenda of concealment, exposure and transformation. In this case the materiality of Jeppe is examined against the conditions of mercantile competition as well as of threat that motivate the design and composition of space.

Maudlin and Vellinga (2014, 10–11) conceptualise appropriation as the intentional acts of social or political subversion of the originally intended use of buildings. The buildings of Jeppe were designed under a segregationist regime to serve a wealthy capital-owning class; their targeted remodelling serves a marginalised, even excluded migrant group. Remodelling occurs through the intentional creation of covered shopping streets that respond to the particular architectural constraints of high-rise modernist structures.

The spatial configurations of this cross-border shopping enclave are replete with innovative informal adaptations made to 1960s modernist towers. Although the enclave occupies what was surplus space in post-apartheid Johannesburg and much of the shopping space is self-designed, self-built and extra-legal, it is more than improvisational. The conscious responses to external conditions and internal social dynamics, and the multiple designs of shops and of the arcades that they cling to, are intentional, deliberate. Despite many designs not meeting official planning approval, they are legitimate architectures serving specific social requirements. In this respect the design begs to be categorised not as informal but rather as what McFarlane (2012) calls informality and formality folded into one another, where both are forms of practice.

In this area the basic building envelopes and their core internal structures are largely intact. Inside, a series of incremental, handmade adaptations are made. The adaptations are customised

to the shopkeeper's needs — specifically the needs of exposure and concealment required by trade in a context of intense market competition, crime and police harassment. Figure 2 illustrates the complex conversions from office use to retail, restaurant and storage space that occur around vertical and horizontal passages and stairwells (the circulation space) of the Medical Arts building — a typical modernist building in Jeppe.

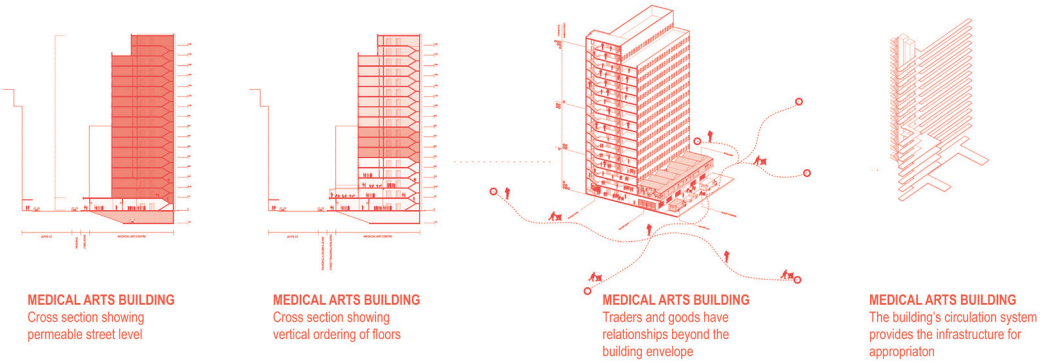


Figure 2: Appropriation and social ecosystem of modernist buildings.

A tale of two shopping arcades

At a concrete level the description of the arcade (with its "glass-roofed, marble-paneled corridors" lined on both sides with "the most elegant shops") that Benjamin finds in the 1852 *Illustrated Guide to Paris* and cites in his *Arcades Project* (1999, 31) offers pointers to the arcading of Jeppe — the description of internalised corridors that extend through the length of buildings (or whole city blocks) and are lined with shops, "so that the arcade is a city, a world in miniature." Such miniature worlds abound in Jeppe. This section describes two buildings that house such worlds before analysing a number of "rogue" architectural devices that have been developed within them and their surrounding buildings in response to the conditions of the shopping hub.

A common element of buildings in Jeppe is the high density of very small shops. Another is the arcade, in its various iterations and with the manifold characteristics of a labyrinthine architecture. The two buildings under examination here, Joburg Mall and Pan Africa Building, offer examples of these architectures. They are both located in the block bounded by Rahima Moosa and Lillian Ngoyi (previously Bree) Streets in the north and south, and Delvers and Troye Streets east and west. This city block hosts the highest concentration of stores in Jeppe.

The three-storey Joburg Mall building was developed in 2001 on the site of a parking lot. Its design of inward-facing shops clustered along a block-long arcade is mimicked at various scales in the rest of Jeppe, including in the adjacent Pan Africa building. Pan Africa is a remodelled office tower block. It was completed into 2014 but is undergoing ongoing micro remodelling. The intensity of trade and the nature of the architectural typology create a (in South African terms) rare five-storey vertical shopping scenario (at basement, ground and first to third levels) with accommodation from the fourth floor upwards. Shopping occurs on the ground floor and extends via stairwells to the upper levels.

The shopping environment of both buildings is effectively a series of vertically stacked arcades, linked by the stairwells. Customers navigate narrow corridors that lead past shops facing inwards. Inventive architectures have carved multiple stores that maximise display areas and the number of trading spaces. An abundance of goods is crammed into every possible space, along walls and into corners, along passages and in the stairwells that make up the buildings. As if the

background music, a procession of half-mannequins and the fluorescent lighting were not enough information for the customer to process, large posters on the walls advertise further shops in the basement and on the levels above. On offer is a dreamworld of fashion, Benjamin's "eternal deputy of Surrealism" (Benjamin 1999, 64).

Creating no interruptions to the flow of pedestrians and a clear line of sight from the street of what is on offer inside are fundamental requirements for attracting shoppers. The strength that is accorded these conditions is seen in the architectural and engineering efforts that the owner of the Pan Africa building insisted on when he instructed that the lift shaft be moved away from the centre of the building to create an uninterrupted arcade through the building (see Figure 3). Pan Africa's arcades brim with 77 shops on five floors. This aggressive arcade-like strategy also carves its way through numerous spaces in the surrounding buildings in Jeppe. Next door the four levels of arcade-like shopping in Joburg Mall comprise 62 shops and kiosks.[3]

Pan Africa's plans and its small shops have municipal approval. Yet the smaller kiosks that attach to shops, the informal subdivision of shops, the restaurant that stretches onto the landing and passageway, and the coffee shop located on the stairwell do not. In this way the architectures



Figure 3: Arcades in Jeppe are carved through the street level of the building, connecting opposite streets of the city block, June 12, 2017. © Thireshen Govender

combine formal and informal practice and the outcomes of the tenuous social contracts amongst shopkeepers and between shopkeepers and landlords build economic opportunity and ultimately "a sense of city" (Simone 2010; McFarlane 2012). It is a cityness carved into "gray spaces" of uncertain legality, where the state neither acts to remove nor to endorse the economic activities (Yiftachel 2009). Within these spaces there exists a wilful, directed architecture. It is evident in the building elements that comprise Jeppe. I turn to these now.

Arcades

"Typically sheltered beneath an iron and glass roof, the arcade was a block-long pedestrian passage nestled between two masonry structures. It was lined on either side with small shops, tea rooms, amusements and other commercial attractions" (Muschamp 2000). The reimagined city lanes of Paris whose glass coverings and small shops protected bourgeois shoppers from the elements whilst offering sensory delights are reflected in the reimagining of office towers in Jeppe. Like Parisian arcades the passages and spaces within Jeppe around which shopping clusters are secondary streets (Le Roux 2014). Much like Benjamin's (1999, 42) image of the pedestrianised "street of lascivious commerce" that is dedicated to the arousal of desire, the value accorded the arcade in Jeppe is immense. The remodelled external and newly created internal pathways of Jeppe are lined with visually enticing displays spilling from multiple trading spaces. Similarly, at street level the sidewalk avenues of trade described by Zack (2013), with hawker stands facing shopfronts, are effectively open-air arcades. But Jeppe's arcades are congested and frenetic. Many are hard to find. They are not geared to the *flâneur* or the browser but rather to the urgent shopper and the ever-present possibility of theft or a police raid.

Not all the arcades offer uninterrupted views or flows. Many of the passageways gouged into buildings are narrow and maze-like. Arcades can also take on miniature form: at certain corner sites a large shop might be subdivided, with two connected passages slicing through the shop. Small cubicle shops are inserted on either side of what now becomes an L-shaped arcade connecting two streets. This arrangement or stores fronting onto an internal arcade increases the "street frontage" of shops and offers shoppers the opportunity to linger (Zack 2013). It also has a safety benefit for shopkeepers as the whole space can be shut if necessary. The passage design offers them easier surveillance of both goods and people: the circulation space combined with them sitting at the front of their stalls allows them to monitor their goods as well as oncoming customers. In this way they have better surveillance than is possible on the street front. Camera surveillance is also possible. Higher up in the building it is less possible to create arcades that offer long site lines: here existing and new passages are connected to generate a maze-like circulation space (see Figure 4).

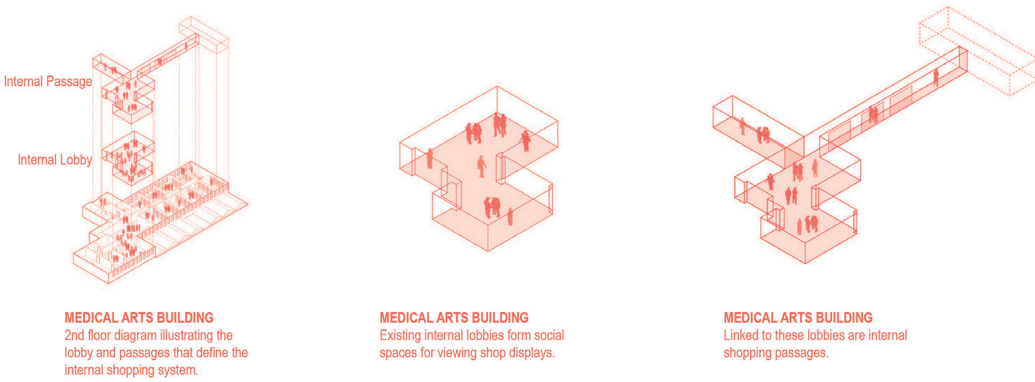


Figure 4: Internal passages lined with shops form mini arcades.

These informally constructed horizontal tributaries, themselves flanked by kiosks, may connect the main shopping axes of two buildings to create interleading labyrinths. Joburg Mall's first floor is connected to the adjacent Africa Mall in this manner. Elsewhere, the building's circulation space doubles as retail and social space with restaurant tables and shop displays spilling into passages and shops extending their displays outwards. Even stairway landings are at times appropriated as miniature coffee shops (see Figure 5).

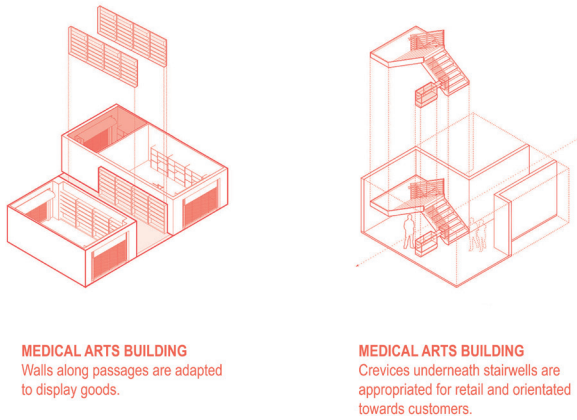


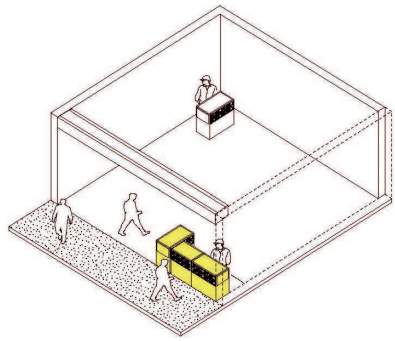
Figure 5: Passages and spaces under stairwells appropriated for retail.

Shop architectures within the arcade

The spatial tactics of Jeppe pivot on display and defence. Much of the architecture is wrapped up in the ambiguous relationship between revealing and concealing. This is true also of the Paris arcades, but the intertwined economic, spatial and social relations that attend these twin objectives in the two cities — and the eras of study — differ. This section discusses the spatial tactics within Jeppe alongside a reading of Benjamin's *Arcades Project* to argue that the designs of Jeppe constitute deliberate architectural practice.

The micro shops that attach to the corridors and landings take on various forms. The L-shaped shop occurs inside buildings and on street fronts. It is created by the subdivision of a square space into a smaller square and one wraparound L-shaped space. The latter shop offers a very narrow entry point and less visibility of goods to the passing customer. It has surveillance advantages and offers its customers security to linger once inside but has less frontage. The square shop, on the other hand, is all about frontage. It may be as small as one square meter. It is often very compact and is modelled to create additional display and storage space, to maximise frontage, to increase security and to enhance visibility. In some cases, trading spaces are single surfaces, such as a bracket attached to a wall in a stairwell. Small shops that attach their displays to surfaces of existing infrastructure, such as columns, doors and walls, are ephemeral in that the goods are assembled and removed daily. Other tiny shops, known as *teletafi* ("parasite" in Amharic), are made up of glass display countertops located in a larger shop (see Figure 6). This symbiotic practice offers a way of sharing the rental burden and giving opportunities to independent retailers of mobile phones, jewellery or perfume.

Concentrated clusters of shops selling similar merchandise (such as shoes) may appropriate basements of buildings. In some cases corridors open into spaces further subdivided or fanning out into archipelagos of mini shops with little distinction between them. The street interface of larger shops is often a small entrance that offers limited possibilities for display and marketing depends on a sales tout who guides customers into the enclave (see Figure 7).



TYPE 20. TELETAFI
46 m² (L), 3 m² (S)
No access, counter, shop in shop, inhabited, external

Figure 6: *Teletafi* shop.

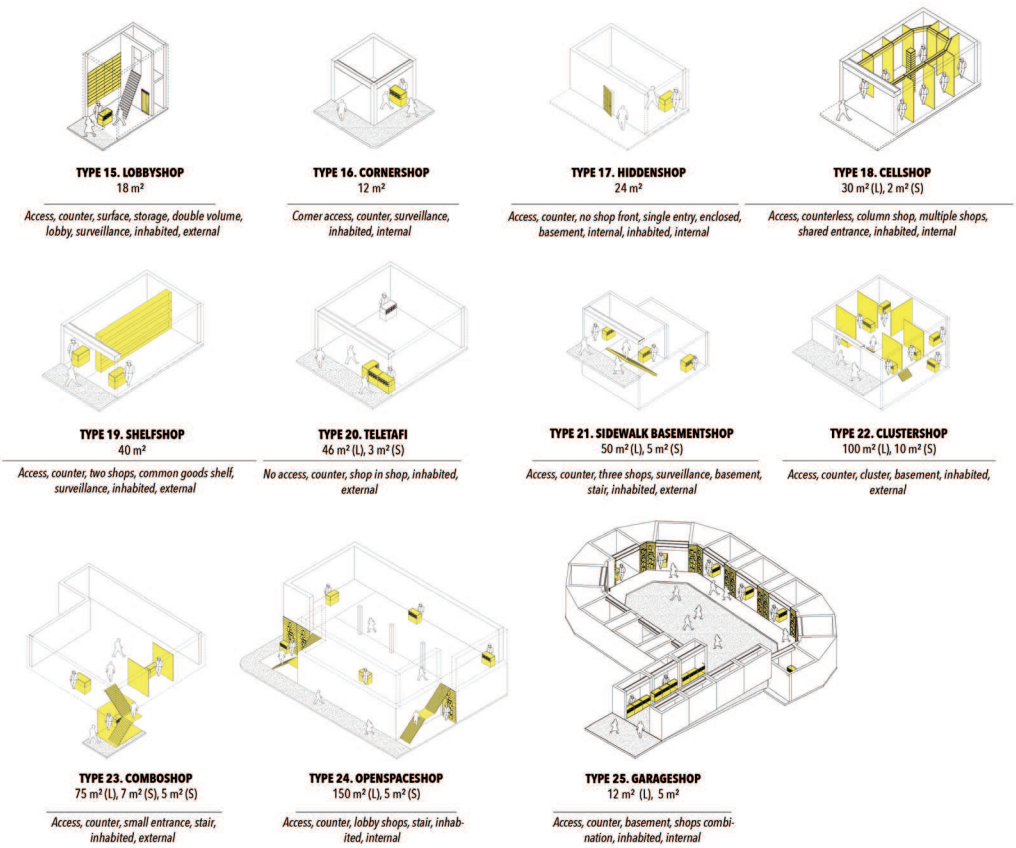


Figure 7: Shop taxonomy — studying the various retail appropriations and spatial configurations.

Flexibility and hard architectural design innovations

At first glance the scale of trading in Jeppe is unassuming — multiple petty traders do not cut the image of a roaring commercial centre. The small shop sizes present challenges to shopkeepers aiming to attract attention. The alteration of space into even smaller shops occurs quickly and does not make much impression. It is the collective volume of trade in the streets and arcades of Jeppe that unashamedly invite mass marketing and wholesale trade. Shopping in Jeppe is a tactile experience: unlike the descriptions of displays in Parisian arcades there is no mysterious window dressing here. Instead, enticement is sparked with displays of clothing or of small items, including makeup, socks, hair accessories, handbags, wallets, trinkets, hats, grooming aids, face creams and costume jewellery, occupying every inch of floor-to-ceiling shelves and counter tops, whether crudely fashioned from boxes or elegant glass cabinets. Additional hooks allow for goods to also be displayed on the side walls and on the overhead reveals of the shopfronts.

A high churn rate of goods is necessary and the ability to replace or supplement stock quickly is crucial. Holding minimal amounts in the shopfronts and restocking frequently reduces storage cost and allows retailers with small amounts of capital to manage their cash flow. Even the smallest stores sell wholesale quantities of merchandise. Many shops are lined with filled boxes. There is no time or need for the unpacking of goods. Instead goods become part of the design adaptations and innovations: boxes of goods may become furniture or counter space for display. Goods can be spatial categorisers, defining the boundaries between shops, or between the public and private parts of shops. Or harder barriers, such as cage-like screens, may separate two sections of a shop, the front public portions and the back where other more valuable or confidential activities take place. Shelving on doors allows for shop frontages to be expanded, whilst shelving affixed to walls above head height creates additional storage space. Finally, prototype display stands with easily hooked-on brackets create a shop window within the confines of a tiny space, with space for the display of multiple small items. Lightweight structures and furnishings can be easily removed and reassembled. Various panelling options are designed to maximise exposure and the display of goods. Shelving also doubles as shop partition. This is a hyper responsive market, where lightweight adjustments to shop size and orientation happen at short notice to fit the needs of the season or a new entrepreneur.

Architectures of display

There is both familiarity and dissimilarity between the exhibits in the retail spaces of Jeppe and Paris. Both are spaces of consumption that are steeped in ambiguity of formality and liminality (Glennie and Thrift 1992). Both arcades portray a sophistication in the manner in which they exhibit their contents to consumers, paying great attention to consumer, space, commodity and zeitgeist. The Parisian arcades lend a degree of spectacle to consumption, whereas Jeppe leans towards illusive expediency and efficiency.

Benjamin (1999, 18) suggests that "fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the commodity fetish demands to be worshipped." Both the Parisian arcades and Jeppe's arcade-like shopping centres provide sites of mass consumption and havens of fashion. The consumerist scenes in Jeppe resonate somewhat with Ludwig Börne's imagery of the almost violent onslaught of goods spilling from Parisian arcades (cited in Benjamin 1999, 60) (see Figure 8). In the twenty-first century, apparel sales have evolved to fast fashion through the proliferation of consumerism and globalisation:

> In an extreme display of agglomeration economics multiple traders sell similar branded and unbranded goods. It is an unglamorous tapping into the psyche of a nation of dissavers; where today's fashion is king. Nike-labelled shoes for R100, Lacoste shirts for R60, Bafana soccer shirts for R30 (a price that has dropped 30% since World Cup fever has lifted). (Zack 2013, 289)

Benjamin (1999, 18) talks of the way in which world exhibitions enthrone the "specialite" — luxury items — and so doing wrap the masses in a "phantasmagoria" in which they can presumably imagine access to a universe of delights. Moilin's descriptions of the rarefied sumptuous displays (cited in Benjamin 1999, 54–55) hardly approximate the brash show that is Jeppe. But Jeppe offers

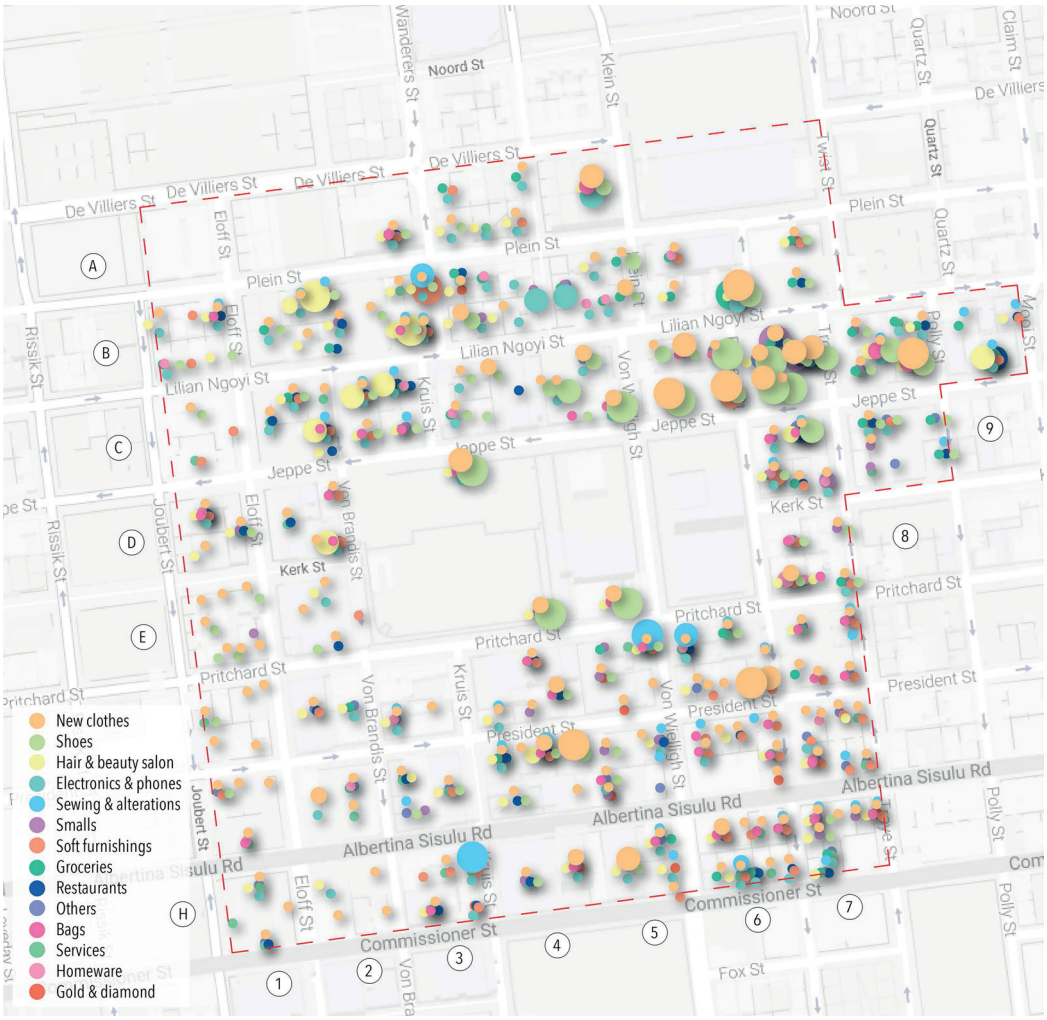


Figure 8: Map illustrating the agglomeration of goods and services.

its own access to more exclusive items. Here it is the sought-after counterfeit, designer-labelled goods that provide the peak of such association. A sprinkling of these is on display — single shoes, for example — to tantalise the customer. The bulk stock of these counterfeit goods may be hidden and access to them must be negotiated.

There is a cunning relationship to aesthetics and exhibition that defines both Jeppe and the Parisian arcades. It is a relationship that is additionally layered by the capacities of a digital world. In Paris, exclusivity was enhanced and reciprocated through the manner in which goods were rarefied in opulent displays and glass cases. In Jeppe, the displays are tangible and tactile. They are collected by hand. But they are often marketed and selected through a digital interface. Yet the primary (thus end) consumer is geographically removed from the shopping experience, connected only digitally to a merchant who is in a proxy relationship to the goods. Although the merchant will touch and feel the product, for the end user the tactile experience of the merchandise is secondary to the visual appeal — as exhibited on Facebook (by the intermediary buyer). This further exhibiting of merchandise by intermediaries extends the reach of the displays far beyond Jeppe. Real and surreal are enmeshed as the shop front effectively extends way beyond Jeppe,

via a digital interface. Shopkeepers will also communicate information about new products with loyal intermediary shoppers through social media. The digital connections between end customers, intermediaries and shopkeepers insert multiple agents into the distribution networks for the items. In a way the material reality and metaphor of counterfeit — embodied in the apparel and in its identity creation through its branding and the shoppers' digital marketing thereof — also expand. The phantasmagoria of Jeppe defies geographic boundaries and is accessible to townspeople and rural villagers across sub-Saharan Africa. In concert with a relationship of trust between customer and shoppers — who offer proxy eyes and hands — the realisation of access is possible.

Part of the tactic of display is of course direct marketing: "like the factories that produced the wares sold there, the arcade was an industrial machine. It relied on display, advertising, newspapers and the other new technologies of consumer manipulation" (Muschamp 2000). Jeppe performs its role as the premier sub-Saharan portal of Chinese fast fashion through a combination of word-of-mouth marketing, which relies on dense cross-national social networks, and explicit in-your-face publicity, which preaches its "proposal of transformation" (Berger 2008, 131) from boom boxes. Low-priced goods that bombard with colour and variety are exhibited for the passer-by to look at and touch. Bold posters, large price tags and signage that references biblical scriptures or to landmarks in the home countries of the shoppers advertise shop names and goods, and provide directions to shops that are not visible from the street (such as "MORE SHOPS IN BASEMENT"). Mannequins sporting fashionable jeans and dresses line stairwells.

The "ruse by which the dream forces itself on industry" (Benjamin 1999, 171) is not only enacted visually. Shops and restaurants located along less visible passages also rely on loud music and the aromas of incense, roasted coffee beans and cooked food to perform what they cannot perform visually. This sensory marketing resonates with the medieval narrow streets and bazaars described by Izenour, Brown and Venturi (1972). In these spaces there may be less need for signs as advertising as buyers pass by as pedestrians rather than in motor vehicles. Their proximity to products means that the products may advertise themselves, along with the vendors' sales pitches: "buyers feel and smell the merchandise, and the merchant applies explicit oral persuasion" (9).

Architectures of retreat and concealment

> It would be more accurate to say that Surrealism and "The Arcades Project" were both rooted in Haussmann's boulevards. Their construction exposed the decrepit parts of Paris that had long been hidden within the maze of medieval streets. Chaos spilled out into plain view like secrets of the urban unconscious. (Muschamp 2000)

Muschamp's views resonate with much of the unkempt streetscape of the most densely traded part of inner-city Johannesburg. And this contemporary city contributes the additional layer of the threat of crime to the dystopia.

In an urban enclave where sidewalks are in disrepair and where the threat of crime is palpable, Retailer A remarked of Jeppe: "There are no guarantees on the streets; in the shop you have security."[4] These internal worlds offer a sense of retreat that is reminiscent of Moilins writing on the Parisian arcades: "As soon as the Parisians had got a taste of the new galleries, they lost all desire to set foot in the streets — which, they often said, were only fit for dogs" (cited in Benjamin 1999, 53). In Jeppe trading hours are restricted to daylight hours. Retailer B explained that

> the latest we close is 5:30 pm for safety. On Fridays, the whole street is not safe. They start closing Smal Street at 4 pm because no one is safe. Security is an issue. The criminals here work with the John Vorster police: if you complain to the police they tell you to help yourself.[5]

The seamless linkage between common crime and criminal activities of the police is a thread in most conversations about security in Jeppe. Retailer C told of how customers have to hide their money to keep it safe:

> Sometimes they hide money in their pants. I feel embarrassed to take it. Sometimes we have to take customers to the back room because people have to take so much of their clothing off to get the money

> they are hiding. They are so frightened. I feel sorry for them. [Shoppers] get abused and assaulted by police. Bodily assault.[6]

Retailed D reported that crime is getting worse:

> I have been robbed four times. Once I was robbed by the metros.[7] I was on my way to stock up at Dragon City.[8] The metros stopped me and they searched me. They took the money I had put in my sock. It was R50 000 … Now there is a rule around here of R10 000. You can't carry more than that at one time … I also had guys open my boot at a robot and steal goods.[9]

Securing Jeppe: The arcade as pathway and doorway

Security is addressed at doorways. The attention to detail in both street-facing and interior shops is in the entrances. The glass arcades of Benjamin's Paris were a visual device (Muschamp 2000), providing a direct visual connection between the street and the interior of the building. The glass acted as a barrier, allowing passers-by to look but not touch; this enhanced the sense of exclusivity of items. But glass is mostly redundant in Jeppe. Few shops have windows. The goods are directly accessible to any passer-by. The entrances offer maximum access and maximum surveillance. A shopkeeper stationed at a compact shopfront can watch over the merchandise of the shop whilst keeping an eye out for any unpredictable activities at street level. When the shop is shut at night, or in the event of a police raid or a protest march, the entire experience is sealed off by heavy steel doors. Doors receive the greatest attention and extract the highest cost in shop fitting. Display shelves might be flimsy and makeshift, but the weight and reinforcement of doors are extreme. "They are now making doors that are filled with concrete," Retailed B said of some shops on the upper floors of Jeppe buildings. The doors "are so heavy, it takes 20 men to carry a single door up the stairs." Even the smallest shops and storerooms are heavily secured. In some cases, whole passages can be sealed off with roller shutter doors. In this regime of flexible and light architecture, roller shutters are an extreme architecture; yet they occur in front of most shops.

Being seen and being secret

The Jeppe arcades are at once an embodiment and a defiance of the global capitalist ideal. They bridge the artificial divide between formal and informal. Whilst they are casings for extreme consumerism and the haemorrhaging of fast fashion into sub-Saharan Africa, they are a conduit for distribution of goods via thousands of shopkeepers, tens of thousands of traders and the architectural responses to a demand for multiple entrepreneurs rather than monopolised retail. It is a subversive architecture of appropriation that challenges the prescriptions of the formal modernist city. It is one that poses as formal with its shops inside buildings and its displays of sumptuous items whilst operating informally in its breach of regulation, its sourcing and distribution of merchandise through informal channels and its socially transacted property market. It may typify "the informalised production of space" (Roy 2009, 81).

Visibility both enables and threatens business in Jeppe and acts of exposure and evasion here are responses to power as much as they are the claiming of agency. The Foucauldian view that social processes are co-joined to the production of space (Koskela 2002, 295) resonates here as the gaze of institutionalised formality, whether in the form of private developers scoping property for purchase or city officials or police personnel, casts power over vendors who inhabit various layers of informality in their personal circumstances and their trade. Foucault's two-way gaze (see, for example, Izenour, Brown, and Venturi 1972; Berger 2008) is instructive in Jeppe where the gaze between vendors and various figures that pose a threat or a restriction to business is choreographed and manipulated through architectural tools that are intimately connected to social processes.

Bourdieu (1962) discusses and describes the vernacular architectures of concealment in Algeria. Like the design of retail in Jeppe, space in Bourdieu's Algerian village is primarily geared to serve community members. In the case of Jeppe the interior space is designed to serve customers who know how to navigate the internalised passages and upper floors. This not only protects the

retail space from the surveilling gaze of city authorities but also creates a sense of community and social unity within the confines of the ethnic entrepreneurial retail space. An instantiation of Bourdieu's two-way processes of "gazing" and "surveillance," vendors conceal their trade from the gaze and surveillance of the city at the same time as acting as "eyes on the space," keeping watch for threats.

Similarly, visibility for the vendors may simultaneously enable trade (as buyers are aware of who is selling what based on what they can see) and threaten trade (particularly when trade is informal, precarious and/or illegal). Similarly, city officials can use visibility and light to create a sense of control, orderliness and cleanliness, particularly through the creation of city improvement districts and processes of gentrification.

Under the surveillance gaze that is possible on the streets of Jeppe where shops and trader stalls are extremely exposed, both informality and the poor are at risk of being rendered deviant by authorities who would exclude "the other" in order to sanitise these apparent "zones of disorder" (Foucault 1980, 153) in an effort to make areas more attractive for those who are able to consume (Sibley 1995). This danger was born out in 2013 when the municipality oversaw the violent removal of over 6 000 street traders from the streets of the inner city. That action impacted negatively on the shopkeepers of Jeppe who lost customers and experienced direct harassment (Zack 2015).

Hidden architectures and spaces enable the gaze of surveillance to be avoided and represent rebellion against the power of surveillance. Vearey (2010, 42) discusses the strategic self-exclusion into hidden spaces by hostel residents in Johannesburg to escape the controlling surveillance and gaze by city officials in order to realise agency and autonomy: "through developing such a 'hidden space,' a capacity to resist the predominant model of formality is generated, manifesting in marginality." These concealing architectures and hidden spaces link to Fran Tonkiss' (2003) discussion on the ability to become invisible within the sanctuary of a big city.

Unlike the exclusive boutique architectures of Parisian arcades, the dance of secrecy in Jeppe is not about a defence against the poor. On the contrary, the objective is to lure those seeking lower prices. The platform for the unstoppable vending sways between the architectures of risk management and those of maximising opportunity. Its response to and control of the two-way gaze veers between the marketing of wares to customers and their concealment from petty criminals or corrupt law enforcement officers who might extract bribes or impose regulation in the space. Much of this is performed through the treatment of shop frontages. Specifically, this would involve the nature of goods displayed, how transparent the shopfront is to the shop interior, the size of the shopfront, whether it is manned or vacant, its relationship to the street and, lastly, its form of enclosure.

Conclusion

Both the Jeppe shopping centres and the *Arcades Project* occupy a space between the material and the surreal. The secret shopping centres in Johannesburg are disguised by the physicality of their buildings and their semi-regulated nature, whilst the *Arcades Project* is written with the influence of surrealism — recreating it as a kind of romanticised urban dreamscape/fairyland. In a way, Jeppe's shopping centres exist as a real-world, contemporary, concrete manifestation of Benjamin's idealised Parisian arcades.

This paper has described the extent of the shopping hub and surfaced the transformative nature of the informal encroachment and appropriation of the built form that has been instrumental to the shaping of a unique shopping district. This architecture of appropriation is a response to local conditions, to economic need and to the social dynamics within an ethnic entrepreneurial enclave. It is also innovative and has imagined and produced new forms of trade space that are leading an unrecognised urban transformation. These processes that attend city remaking in Johannesburg require what Dovey (2014, 45) calls a "re-thinking of architecture, urban design and planning in terms of theories of emergence, self-organization and assemblage."

These and other buildings in Jeppe are a platform for maximising trade space and exposure. This is done through architectures of transgression (Doron 2000) that refashion and reconfigure circulation space as well as the placement, shape and composition of trading sites. Architectural responses include subdivisions and alterations into multiple shops, as well as the appropriation of circulation space for more shops. The flourishing shopping mecca could represent a concrete, contemporary manifestation of Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, described as "the blueprint for an unimaginably massive and labyrinthine architecture — of a dream city" (Eiland and McLaughlin 1999, xi). There are several variations in the subdivision and multiplication of shops within and beyond the building confines. Multiple transitions are encountered in both vertical and horizontal directions in these buildings-turned-market. Remodelling occurs at the micro level of shop interiors, of breaking up retail space into several shops, as well as at the larger scale of expanding existing passages and landings into arcades or even linking buildings with new spines of retail.

The arcades and secret shopping centres of Jeppe epitomise the mass consumption of twenty-first century global capitalism. A reading of their devices through the iconography that Benjamin developed in response to the mid-nineteenth century centres of consumerism in Paris illuminates how these constructed internal worlds operate to provide respite from city streets and to offer a wondrous world of delights for sale and proposals for transformation whilst producing layers of concealment and exposure. It also generates stark contrast as to how consumer spaces are constructed by those who have rights to the city (Parisian bourgeoisie) and those who do not (informal, often illegal African immigrant traders and shoppers). These registers correlate with those of mid-nineteenth century Paris but are employed here for a contemporary post-colonial African inner-city neighbourhood that draws its raison d'être from globalisation, migration and a surplus of modernist-built form. Within this the arcades become metaphors and embodiments of the peculiar contestations that urban Johannesburg confronts between formality and informality, regulation and lawlessness, social exclusion and inclusion, marginalisation and access. In expanding also the intricate lattice of social relations and transactions between the multiple users of this space, they introduce and embody a deeply enriched urbanism.

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Notes
1. Names have been altered at the request of interviewees.
2. Max Katz, property agent at Synprop with a wide experience in the marketing of commercial property in Johannesburg's inner city, interview by Zack, April 4, 2018.
3. Counted by Zack, September 10, 2018.
4. Retailer A, trader in second-hand clothing in a shop on Market Street, interview by Zack, November 30, 2016.
5. Retailer B, merchant of new clothing in a shop in Jeppe Street, interview by Zack, July 12, 2016.
6. Retailer C, owner of four shops in "Jeppe," interview by Zack, November 21, 2016.
7. This is a term commonly used in the inner city to describe officers of the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department.
8. Dragon City is a large Chinese wholesale mall on the outskirts of the inner city.
9. Retailer D, trader of new clothing in a shop in Jeppe Street, interview by Zack, November 21, 2016.

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