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The public realm: part of a balanced city

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2015-02-09
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/16937

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THE INDUSTRIAL FUNCTION

The C.B.D.is the single most important manufacturing district in the P.W.V. consisting of a variety of small industrial establishments. According to Watson it is the third largest area of activity in the C.B.D. and it's second largest employer.It's activities range from engineering works , car works, cloathing,footwear,foods, service related industries and specialised operations such as jewellery manufacture.

Industry is currently regarded as a non conforming use and a threat to the urban environment.Watson states,"... the process of building communities involves the need to create work oportunities.We need to revise our approach to to the relationship of labor, machinery and capital in respect of urban enterprise. City centres are the incubators of industrial enterprise and this function is one of the fountainheads of the human need of self realisation and of urbanisation itself."

Oosthuizen (1977 : 159)

WAREHOUSING AND WHOLESALING.

The major demand of this function is its vast space requirement,it demands as much space as the industrial sector but only employs 1\3 of the persons that industry does. It is important as part of the urban mix for products on demand, but for items of slower turnover, possibly warehousing could be located outside of the core and not take up valuable space that more productive,labour intensive,uses need.

GOVERNMENT AND MUNICIPAL

This function is dispersed and beyond the convenient limits of the C.B.D. ; at present it has little to do with the city core and is a use that could be reintroduced to enrich the mix of uses in the C.B.D.

CULTURAL AND ENTERTAINMENT FUNCTIONS

There is at present no core concentration or district so to speak - the consequence of this is " that there is nothing to attract people other than the performance itself, with the result that night life .... is quite absent. It is the diversity of interaction spured by cultural interests that makes us human, that creates a design for living, a pattern to be shared to enrich our lives and our social relationships and, above all, to counter the inherent provincialism of suburban life."

Oosthuizen (1977 : 160)

The Market Theatre precinct is beginning to operate as a theatre core with about four theatres dotted about the precinct.

RESIDENTIAL

Existing accomodation within the C.B.D. is obsolete and in need of renewal. The major portion of housing is offered outside of the C.B.D. A major portion of job opportunities are to be found in the C.B.D., this gives rise to transport needs usually in the form of a private motor vehicle. Time spent travelling constitutes a waste of money as does the consumption of energy used in travel.

The residential function should be integrated with the office, retail and industrial patterns, as a means of conserving energy. Housing also " provides a unifying element in the matrix of diverse uses, by means of a vital core of human presences at all hours."

Oosthuizen (1977 : 162)

At present the cost of housing makes housing provision uneconomical especially in the C.B.D. where rates and taxes are extreme. In order to make housing development feasible in the inner city, adjustments to the rates or the bulk factor would have to be considered.

URBAN ATMOSPHERE AND ENVIRONMENT

Watson states, " Evolution in the structure of the urban scene is based on evolution in the structure of society ....for society to realise it's potential, there must be a place where there is social interaction, where mind meets mind ....we need a place of maximum intensity of social concentration and this place can be only the City Centre."

Oosthuizen (1977 : 169)

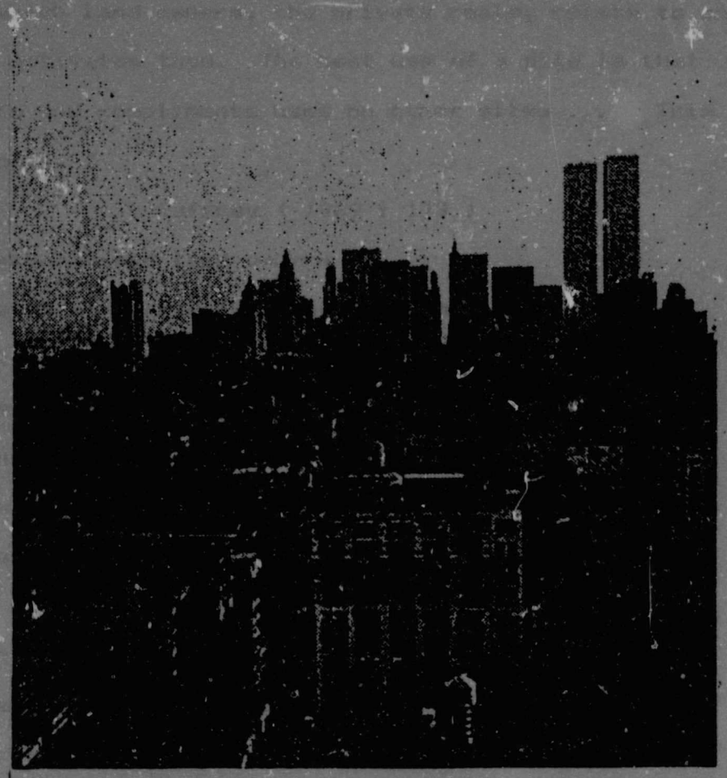
However the city centre, or core as Short calls it, of Johannesburg is seen today as consolidating itself with office use predominating. Maybe the " place of maximum intensity of social concentration " is located in the frame of the CBD, and not in the core, at a major transport termini. With 70 % of Johannesburg workers using public transport this seems a far more likely venue for " the place of maximum intensity " of social opportunity and informal economic advancement. " Should the opportunity not be seized timeously, then by default, we shall have encouraged an imbalance between the urban behaviour patterns of our diverse communities to the detriment of all. The social vacuum that will be created if we fail to resolve these problems, will destroy whatever success we may have achieved .... for we have lost command of our total environment and we could be facing a breakdown of our civilization."

Oosthuizen (1977 : 169)

There has also been a social trend that has gone against the continuance of the public realm as part of the city. It is the way commerce has introverted and become private, breaking the relationship it once had with the public realm. To illustrate this point an example is taken of change that has occured in an institution in the CBD. The institution is the stock exchange. At one stage the exchange operated between chains across the public street. It has now internalised its function. Activity has been removed from the public realm and relocated in the private realm. The function and purpose of the public realm is thus lessened.

What this means for the public realm is that there are less people using it. The less people on the street the less it operates as a self policing part of the city. The less it does this the greater the chance of crime. The more one's personal safety is jeopardised the less people want to use the street, and the public realm as a positive lively part of the city gives way to a nomansland that the public chooses to avoid. When this happens cities start to fail.

The investigation we have just been through seems to show a clear distinction in the function of public and private realms. The public realm seems to only be used to connect the private realm. The private realm in its dealings generates profit and the public realm through its connective function assists. The additional function that the public realm can have in generating profit is not explored. A look at the formal and informal urban economies follows. It explores the potential of the public realm as a profit generator in its own right.



THE SKYLINE OF THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
SYMBOLISING POWER AND OPPORTUNITY.
VIEWED ACCROSS LOW RISE WAREHOUSING

ECONOMIC THEORY

Economics is about material prosperity; it is about

" the management of concerns and resources of the community."

Fowler & Fowler (1986 : 306)

Resources are either finite or infinite. Finite resources are those that exist as part of the planet earth, such as land, water, air and fossil fuels. Infinite resouces are those that can be propogated such as birds and animals. Man is included in this group. Both types of resources are under threat as a result of global mismanagement. Cities such as Paris are the result of crossings of paths. These paths are the result of transporting resources from places of production to those of consumption. Places of production and consumption can be cities too. Johannesburg is a city that has sprung up as a result of production. It's product is gold. Gold is a finite material resource that is removed from the earth and traded. Gold provides a base for financial interaction. Johannesburg today is a financial centre for the southern region of Africa.

Mason Gaffney in "Land Planning and Property Tax " states

" What is good for the market is usually good for planning."

Planners and urban designers amend and guide the market. They are not at war with it. Planners and urban designers influence,

Gaffney (1969 : 178)

1) zoning
2) street layout
3) public constraints of cities.

In the city privately held land is provided with -"-avenues of linkage ", the public realm, by which land owners, the private realm, relate to one another. The market motivates them. The best use of a site is that " which most relates to and compliments uses on other sites ... This is what cities are all about. "

Gaffney (1969 : 179)

The concern of professionals and land owners is

" the overiding value of symbiosis among neighbours,"

related to complimenting site use. The interdependence of the parts is what lets them live.

" The worst nuisance a central land owner can commit is passive withdrawal of this land from the life of the city... The market tells him to participate. "

Gaffney (1969 : 179)

If cities are about the relationships of complimentary site uses, then the urban designer can intervene to ensure complimentary site use. Zoning specific to site and incentive taxation are ways of achieving this aim.

Capital added to people compatibly grouped (this implies good mutual access) interacting for profit (large, above cost surplus) is the driving force for the commercial parts of the city. Planning, design and the market working together maximise synergism - the " correlated action of a group of bodily organs ". Synergistic interaction produces market communities. Market communities are housed in districts. One such community is the financial community housed in the financial district.

The financial district is taken as an example of the formal sector of the economy operating in the private realm of the city. The informal sector of the economy exists in the public realm of the city. A look at the formal and informal sectors of the economy and their realms follows.

THE FORMAL SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY LOCATED IN THE PRIVATE REALM.

The financial district of London is the part of its urban fabric referred to as " The City "; " the city is made up of the square mile of financial and commercial buildings and offices between St. Paul's Cathedral and the Tower of London and between the Thames and the traces of the Old Roman Wall." London is a capital market providing finance for international trade. The largest gold market, international insurance market, main shipping and air chartering exchange, and largest concentration of foreign banks in the world are located here. One quarter of all the financial transactions that take place in the world do so in or through this square mile. The Russians sell their gold here, and ships lying in Singapore are hired and insured here. This gives some idea of the scale of operation of trade concentrated within this area.

Clarke (1967 : 16)

The key to the working of this financial district is networking. Telephones, cable and telex connect the financial district within itself and with the rest of the world. The district is also connected by roads, but is limited by a human scale factor. The banks, shipping, valuers and exchanges are all within walking distance of one another. Face to face meetings are possible. This is a result of the network of mutual support in the public realm.

The financial district of Johannesburg has been expanding greatly in the last ten years. First it colonised the Indian trading area around Diagonal St. It is now moving East along Kerk St. with " Bank City " and related projects. Gencor is developing in the south of the district and Anglo are building a new head quarters next to their existing flagship.

The formal sector operates in the following way. It locates its activities in the private realm but uses the public realm to network itself and communicate. The informal sector locates its activities in the public realm alongside the routes of communication. The informal sector benefits from the activity that is instigated by the formal sector. One such activity is the peak hour rush to and from places of employment and home. The rush is along certain routes and the informal sector locates itself along these routes to benefit from sales. One major area where this happens is at the Johannesburg station.

THE INFORMAL SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY THAT IS LOCATED IN THE PUBLIC REALM.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF - EMPLOYMENT AT PLACES OF MAJOR PEDESTRIAN CONCENTRATION

Stations and the major routes that connect the stations to the surrounding urban fabric have a long history as ideal spots for informal trade. It is at these points in the urban fabric that informal trade traditionally locates itself. It is also in these parts of cities that informal traders find that they can make livings for themselves. These are the parts of cities that should be called upon to perform more efficiently in the economy so that the full potentials of job creation at these points are realised. Informal traders create their own jobs and have little in the way of overheads. Unemployment in an economic system such as ours can mean poverty. The major purpose of urban design is to make cities more livable, to make them capable of supporting and sustaining life. By realising the life supporting potentials of these parts of cities the urban designer is assisting in job creation and through this the quality of mans urban existance.

The potentials of these spots are constrained by certain controls. The controls which constrain these potentials are over regulation by the state, local authority and formal traders. Designing these spots with the needs of the informal trader in mind along with deregulation of the controls can result in the full realisation of the spot potentials. Local authorities and formal traders have placed constraints on the activities of informal traders. Licenses to trade have always been a control on the number of traders in the streets.

According to law, people who trade in the streets without licenses are liable to have their goods confiscated and are subject to fines of up to R100. A license costs R10, but despite th[illegible] many people trade illegally. Some people have been trading illegally for over 58 years at the Johannesburg Station.

This situation reflects the wishes of the local authority and state bodies to limit the number of traders on the streets. The motives behind the controls are those that seek to rid the streets of undesirable elements and competition in trade for the formal sector.In 1925 the Licensing Officer for Johannesburg reported,

> " All renewals for licenses to hawkers trading under the cheapjack method were refused and consequently their are no cheapjacks in Johannesburg today."
>
> Rudman (1988 : 38)

A report in the Business Day reports a police colonel as saying,

> " We are going to crack down on illegal vendors who crowd business district arcades and block shoppers. "
>
> Rudman (1988 : 26)

The shopping that is blocked is the formal, off street trade. This is because shoppers find the goods that they need in the street at cheaper prices. Prices are cheaper because the informal trader doesn't have overheads such as shop rental built into his price.

The efforts by Councillor Mrs. Janet Levine and Councillor Mrs. Rae Graham on behalf of the informal sector have lead to the establishment of legal market areas for traders at the Hoek street mall, New Doornfontein and Kazerne bus termini, and at Faraday stat[illegible]

In 1986 ACHIB (The African Council of Hawkers and Informal [illegible]inesses) was formed with a 11 point charter that seeks to ease restrictions on trade and to provide an entry into the economy of the country for new traders. These actions reflect a move towards deregulation of the public environment. Formal traders still seem wary of change, but acceptable alternatives are in the offering.

ENABLING STRUCTURES

If we look in " The Global 2000 Report to the President - Entering the Twenty-First Century ", for some clue as to what cities will be in the future, we find :

> " The rapid grow of urban population will create unprecedented pressure on the public services by the year 2000. Waste disposal, water, health care, shelter, education, food and employment will be needed for approximately 1,2 billion additional urban residents ... * The degree to which public services are provided will ... determine environmental conditions in ... cities . "

This, then, we are told, is what will be. No clues as to how man will pass his time - in fact nothing about man except that there will be 1,2 billion more of him.

It tells us that there will be a great deal of people in the cities and that the cities are going to be called on to perform more and more intensely, as time passes, to meet basic human needs. But what of less basic human needs - about helping man to live spiritually ? Man needs to live - not just exist.

* This is a pre-AIDS figure.

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Name of thesis The public Realm: part of a balanced city 1989

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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