

## **The Implications of Informality on Governmentality: The case of Johannesburg in the context of Sub-Saharan urbanisation**

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Actors in fluid African urban environments try to make collaborative action work, collective responsibility enforceable, and instruments of power effective and legitimate. These efforts give rise to an uneasy tension between the adoption of normative discourses concerning urban management and governance, the ways in which urban residents attempt to adapt to a vast range of new opportunities and crises, and the role of the city as a place of experimentation.

The capacity to generate stability—in livelihood, household organization, community ties—often now requires a continuously improvised pursuit of whatever ideas, practices, experiences, social cooperation and participation people can “get their hands on.” As African urbanization was not a function of industrialization, but rather a locus of penetration, administration, and social and spatial experimentation, urban survival has depended largely upon using the sheer heterogeneity and density of individuals as a primary resource.<sup>i</sup> Because African cities were, in most cases, arbitrarily situated places of engagement between different economies, logics, and ways of doing things, an incessant practice of “re-positioning”—i.e, re-orienting to others as they re-oriented themselves to you—dominated. For example, colonials wanted to use the city to administer large swathes of territory. Africans often used the city to figure out ways of releasing this territory from the colonial gaze. But they also sought to make something outside both the claustrophobic demands of the so-called customary or the constant uncertainty of raiding, war and enslavement. In turn, the city was to become a platform enabling Africans to change the surrounding areas.<sup>ii</sup> So cities were an intricate criss-crossing of motivations and tactics, and above all, dependent upon this engagement of social, spatial and power differences.<sup>iii</sup>

Notions of engagement permeate throughout everyday practices, where shifting the boundaries that divide work, religion, politics, geography, economics becomes an important aspect of managing everyday existence. Assumptions and domains are unsettled for the express purposes of continuously putting new identities, experiences, rules, and structures in “face of ” each other, and thus diversify the kinds of opportunities and resources that might be applied to everyday problems.<sup>iv</sup>

These shifting engagements are not only compensatory. What Pardo described for the urban underclass of Naples, largely holds true in urban Africa as well.<sup>v</sup> People attempt to construct a proper and fulfilled life through an entrepreneurial orientation that depends upon diversifying the kinds of situations and persons with whom one transacts. A continuous interaction among these diversities is pursued. The workplace, the home, the neighborhood—as well as various processes of production, consumption, investment, favor giving/receiving—are used as sites for individual initiative and for diversifying one's socio-economic position. The all too frequent problem in African contexts is the parasitic appropriation of this resourcefulness by the political elite who dominate much of the external engagement with the larger world. In other words, where these actions otherwise infused with deeply moral valuation are steered into the instruments of crass accumulation for the few.

The accumulated years of popular disillusionment with the state, the labor-intensive demands of securing basic needs, the entrenched “negotiability” of justice, and the effects of internationally mandated and supervised economic reform processes has largely overwhelmed the effectiveness of urban practices prioritizing social reciprocity and the continuous interaction of complementary diversity.<sup>vi</sup> As a result, the mechanisms through which local economies expand in scale and coalesce into new political formations are often unclear, as well as often murky and problematic. They can entail highly tenuous and frequently clandestine articulations among, for example,

religious and fraternal networks, public officials operating in private capacities, clientelist networks mobilizing very cheap labor, foreign political parties, and transnational corporations operating outside of conventional procedures<sup>vii</sup>. With these economic scenarios come more flexible configurations of associational life, more deterritorialized frameworks of social reproduction and political identity, as well as autochthonous preoccupations with belonging<sup>viii</sup>. Consequently, the efforts to "juggle" contradictory scenarios of well-being become more volatile and uncertain.

Here, we want to take up the substantial transformations that have occurred in the inner city of Johannesburg during the past decade, amplifying the increasing informalization of everyday life.. Such informalization raises the critical question concerning what is to be governed and how? What are the objects of governance, and how does governmentality act to construct its objects? For conventional notions of governance emphasize the need for individuated, clearly identified units--be they individuals, households, associations, or institutions.<sup>ix</sup> Even as the scope of governmentality expands to include "relations" and "complexities" of all sorts, the role of government remains that of occasioning moments of clarity.<sup>x</sup> But to what extent is such clarity sustainable in relationship to such processes? At just the moment where governance hinges most critically on the partnerships of clearly demarcated social and institutional units, there is a substantial rearrangement of the basis of household and community life in ways that are not clear.<sup>xi</sup> We intend to discuss some aspects of the informalization process in Johannesburg, but more importantly provide a critical assessment about how municipal government has attempted to address it.

## **Part II: Informalization and the Johannesburg Inner City**

Race-based zoning of urban residential communities kept blacks out of the inner city for several decades. Accelerating white movement to the suburban areas, coupled with economic recession, pushed up vacancy rates in the neighbourhoods of Hillbrow, Bertrams, Joubert Park, Berea and Yeoville. Although officially illegal until 1991, blacks had begun moving to what was known as "grey areas" in the mid-1980s.

The accelerated turnover of populations has itself provided a feasible cover, if not necessarily a major motivation, for the sizeable immigration of foreign Africans to Johannesburg.<sup>xii</sup> This migration, in turn, has substantially shaped the nature of inner-city life and commerce, further contributing to a process of internationalization, where informal jobs and trade--both local and cross-national consistently battle for advantageous spaces of operation. Because the inner city is one of the most circumscribed and densely populated urban spaces on the continent, with neighborhoods such as Hillbrow made up of row after row of high-rise apartment blocks, this socio-cultural reconfiguration has taken place with a large measure of invisibility.

Because the overwhelming majority of South African black inhabitants of the inner city are recent arrivals to Greater Johannesburg, conditions are wide open for intersection of many groupings. Long displaced to the periphery of the city, the absence of stable black institutions within the inner city also contributes to the perception that it is becoming an increasingly desperate place, living on an edge without a strong core of cohesiveness.

What is perhaps most significant about the transformation of the inner city is not so much its character but the speed with which it has occurred. The sheer rapidity of demographic and economic changes has created uncertainty as to what is possible to plan for and do.<sup>xiii</sup> The uncertainty has caused sudden and substantial divestitures of all types. These divestitures further impede adequate monitoring by adding a large volume of transactions to the quick pace of change. Insecurity is intensified and, with it, the practice of getting rid of property and position at a cheap price.

In response to these changes, a large measure of xenophobia prevails, where foreign Africans are blamed for an overcrowded informal trading sector, the growth of the narcotics trade and general deterioration of the inner city.<sup>xiv</sup> Many South African residents believe that it is because

of such a foreign presence that government authorities and the private sector are unwilling to make investments in upgrading and service provision.<sup>xv</sup>

The present realities of inner city Johannesburg amplify the need to reconceptualize notions of belonging and citizenship as they apply to the elaboration of urban governance away from logics of group or territorial representation. These realities indicate the need to generate concrete acts and contexts of social collaboration among residents inscribed with multiple identities, rather than in overseeing and enforcing modulated transactions among discrete population groups. For the dissipation of once relied upon modalities of solidarity, the uprooting of individuals from familiar domains and the ghettoization of individuals within highly circumscribed identity enclaves is an explosive mix of intensifying and amorphous urban conflict.

Efforts on the part of urban government and civil society to reconstitute viable territories of belonging and accountability --through an array of decentralization, popular participation, and subsidiary measures—may have the effect of making more visible a certain impossibility for individuals and groups to secure themselves within any durable context. As governmentality is relocated to the particularities of discrete places, the responsibility of citizens to embody and display the correct normative attitudes toward managing their individual performances as entrepreneurial agents is also entrenched. Urban politics then operates, not as a locus of mediation and dialogue among differing experiences, claims, and perspectives, but the proliferation of technical standards through which every citizen's capacities are to be compared and judged. In such a politics, everyone is to be found “wanting”, and group identity is reaffirmed as both compensation and insulation from expanding fields of interaction whose implicit objective is to reiterate the compartmentalization of individuals.

The narcotics enterprises that constitute an important component of the inner city economy are commonly seen as the purview of Igbo-dominated Nigerian networks. While such composition may be generally true, such enterprises are by no means ethnically homogenous nor formed on the basis of national identity. Rather, in a business that has little recourse to appealing to law or official commercial standards, the appearance of ethnic or national homogeneity conveys a certain impenetrability. This is an impenetrability from both external scrutiny, infiltration, and competition, which allows the enterprise to incorporate the diversity of actors it often requires in order to constantly change supply routes, markets, and so forth.

In the commercial culture of the inner city narcotics economy, the discrete tasks of importation, circumvention of customs regulations, repackaging, local distribution, money laundering, relations with legal authorities, territorial control, market expansion, and plotting traffic routes all are complementary yet highly territorialized domains. Usually discrete “units” administer each domain so that disruptions in one domain do not jeopardize the entirety of trade. Nigerian syndicates, which use the hotels in Hillbrow to accommodate a large transient population that in turn serves as a mask behind which to consolidate a steady clientele of drug users including sex workers, have instituted an interesting governance structure.<sup>xvi</sup>

The hotels, now largely managed by Nigerian syndicates, become discrete “localities”, housing not only workers in the drug trade, but also Nigerians working in a wide range of activities. The syndicates dominate the governing committees that are established for each hotel, with their concomitant sets of rules—for example, no-go areas are often established for Nigerians and fines for various infractions that are then used for legal fees. But, Nigerians who are not involved in the drug economy are also counted upon to provide a semblance of internal diversity, even if they are often used and manipulated.<sup>xvii</sup>

Yet, the domains must be well integrated—in such a way that complicity and cooperation become the prevailing practices. But within each domain, each operator has a specific place and is expected to demonstrate unquestioning loyalty. This is the case even if the illicit nature and the practical realities of the trade create an incessantly open space for participants to “take their

chances” and seek greater profits and authority outside the hierarchies that each syndicate must attempt to rigidly enforce.

Thus, it is apparent to most inner city residents the hotels, residential buildings, and commercial enterprises that belong to which syndicates and to which nationalities these syndicates in turn belong.<sup>xviii</sup> Yet, since any particular narcotics enterprise handles only certain facets of the overall trade, and leaves itself increasingly vulnerable if it expands in efforts to dominate more functions and more territory, spaces also must be maintained that clearly belong to “no one.” It is precisely within these spaces, however, that anything might happen, that are contested and unpredictable, and that are often subject to the most vociferous claims of belonging.

The drug economy, with its “hyperactive” sensibilities and codes of belonging, could largely entrench itself in Hillbrow and Berea, because a highly dense, highly urbanized area with massive infrastructure was being vacated—both in terms of its former population and in terms of financial and governmental resources. The modalities of operation of the drug business tend to “provincialize” certain parts of the inner city—i.e., localize it in terms of clearly marked territories and “fiefdoms.” But the definitiveness of organizations and territories is more a necessary “performance” than descriptive of actual operational practices. The more entrenched and expansive the drug economy becomes, the more it must proliferate ambiguous interfaces. Such interfaces include those between supposedly discrete groupings, between illicit activity and legitimate investment, between declines and consumption patterns and increased availability, and between inner city Johannesburg as an increasingly well known site of the drug economy and other more invisible and thus often advantageous sites of operation.

Much has been made about the xenophobia of black South Africans regarding the influx of their “brothers and sisters” from the north. Foreign Africans have been subject to incessant harassment at all levels of South African society, thoroughly dissipating the once flourishing sense of excitement in the early 1990s that the country was going to be a place of opportunity for all Africans who seemed to share the experience of liberation

The anathema towards foreigners has been particularly pronounced in the inner city, where despite concrete interactions being minimal, foreign Africans have been most visible. The inner city has been seen as both a proper extension of the major black townships of Soweto and Alexandra—in terms of a more centrally located space of habitation for former township residents and space of operation for township gangs and businesses—and a place of escape from the townships. In this latter role, those who felt “squeezed in” by township family and community dynamics could live more independently and anonymously in many large apartment blocks which dominate the inner city landscape.

But as blacks had almost no presence in the inner prior to the late 1980s, due to group area laws, the rapid influx of black South Africans—both from inside and outside the metropolitan region—far outpaced the development of local institutions. For years, children residing in the inner city continued to commute to Soweto for school, and most of the trappings of “community life” were located outside of the inner city. Once the demographic shift was complete, and more significantly, a resultant vacating of critical social infrastructure and commerce, there were few institutions remaining to be “taken over” by the inner city’s new residents. While there has been a proliferation of fly-by-night academies and the development of several effective community associations, a broad range of schools, social service organizations, churches, cultural and recreational centers have been depleted. It is through these very organizations that a sense of belonging in urban areas is conventionally cultivated.

Not only were many black South African inner city residents trying to escape the oppressive and often implosive features of township politics—with their incessant struggles over who got what resources—but there was little to work with in terms of trying to forge any viable sense of community. This task was further complicated by both the accelerating social differentiation registered in black social networks by virtue of the vast expansion of black public sector

employment and the accelerating visibility of HIV/AIDS in Johannesburg. Both of these phenomena were increasingly accounted for in terms of discourses of witchcraft. Why some individuals were now making decent livelihoods or others remained poor or grew poorer, or why some people remained infection free while others died quickly were being explained as a function of witchcraft. As Adam Ashforth shows in his remarkable book on Soweto, witchcraft permeated family relations, to the extent to which basic household units became, for many, the most dangerous places within an already dangerous city.<sup>xix</sup>

Within an inner city, where jobs are scarce, everyday life precarious, and the need to mobilize available social capital acute, the very act of counting upon those close to one becomes a practice which leaves individual vulnerable to further difficulties. As has been repeatedly pointed out by Graeme Reid, manager of the Inner City Programs for the Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, a critical problem for local governance has been the instability of household composition within the inner city.

Families who reside in an apartment unit for several months frequently disperse, with new household arrangements being established in other parts of the inner city or elsewhere. In part, this instability is directly related to the intensifying uncertainty permeating everyday kinship relations. A person cannot interweave the details of their daily life too closely to those of family members. If something goes wrong, if one member discovers that they are HIV positive, or if a growing divide in economic capacity becomes apparent, one then leaves themselves vulnerable to witchcraft accusations and thus vulnerable to being ostracized or even killed. As a result, the very process of mobilizing social capital that is needed in order to elaborate a viable sense of belonging is precisely that process which becomes the most difficult to perform. In this absence, the apparent capacity of foreign Africans to elaborate a sense of supportive social connectedness becomes particularly threatening, as it is perceived to provide immigrants with an undo advantage to thrive in this urban environment.

While immigrant networks do depend on always activating a sense of mutual cooperation and interdependency, such ties are also often more apparent than real—especially as a complex mixture of dependence and autonomy is a work in relations among fellow compatriots. For many foreign Africans in the inner city, Johannesburg is neither the preferred or final destination, especially at present.<sup>xx</sup> Its continental location and the degree to which the South African economy is increasingly intertwined with other African national and regional economies makes the city more accessible, despite the entry and stay regulations proffered by the government, than other European or North American destinations. The city's geographic location facilitates the petty to medium-scale conventional and unconventional trade activities that characterize a significant percentage of immigrant economies. From official commercial markets to informal ones in both Congos, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, to name a few of the predominant national settings, a substantial amount of their inputs either originate or pass through South Africa in a trade frequently controlled or at least mediated by South African-based immigrants.<sup>xxi</sup>

Thus in a fundamental way, the recent history of the inner city—its demographic shifts and the lack of attention paid to it during the initial stages of this shift—and the practices incumbent in the economic pursuits of many of its residents present an enormous challenge for local governance.

### **Part III: Governmentality in the inner city: new experiments**

The inner city of Johannesburg, then, presents a rapidly changing, highly fractured, and deeply contested urban milieu. In this context, we have argued, residents feel obliged to feign exaggerated, almost theatrical commitments to particular spaces and place-traversed connections, and defend these against "outsiders" assumed to be trying to "lay claim" to the resources and opportunities accumulated and configured thereby. A more general commitment to the inner city as a community of neighbours, peers, potential partners in business ventures, or even compatriots in social action, is absent. This is a place to pass through, to run to and to run

from, not a place to collaboratively contest or co-invest in for the longer term.

In such an environment, furthermore, government efforts to provide services, social development or security in ways that assume a collective desire to stay and be together are not only tenuous. They may also be highly perilous. Attempts to configure viable domains in which discrepant identities and interests can belong together run the danger of miscarrying. They invariably invite their "subjects" to partake in the offered sense of belonging by assuming new fixed sets of shared standards of behavior. They therefore force urban actors into the cul-de-sac of having to confront their own ability (or inability as the case may be) to perform as self-responsible, accountable individuals. This expected self-reidentification via government may be too high a hurdle for many. And so, precisely by asking residents to disregard their traditional informal means of navigating urban complexity and uncertainty as now somehow inadequate to the demands of an orderly and productive urban existence, these projects invite pointed refusals. These refusals took the form of reasserted parochialism – reaffirmed commitments to the most exclusive bonds and particularistic connections. Precisely by trying to structure new surfaces of collective identification and mutual endeavour, government may invoke the passionate re-expression of the identities of gangs, clans, associations and cartels.

Has government in the inner city managed to negotiate this complexity? Has it provided viable new places of collective belonging, new spaces for social collaboration, without inviting renewed commitments to aggressive or defensive bunker identities? Has it, in short, succeeded in mediating the logics of belonging and becoming in positive ways without upsetting the naturally fine balance between them?

The answer is a mixed one. In some of its activities government has indeed fallen into all the obvious traps, and created conditions where the dynamite mix of contiguous parochialisms has exploded into urban conflict. In others, however, government has creatively provided just the right opportunities for the mediation of potentially discordant interests and identities. It has configured new arenas for urban actors to step outside the narrow confines of their existing exclusive zones of control and paths of interaction. It has facilitated new ways for once exclusive "identities" to start to intersect with each other. Additionally, it has done so in ways that do not increase the risks of being an individual and motivate a drastic "return to self" as a member of one or other group competing with others for the rights and benefits attached to their particular "place".

The final part of this paper will examine a number of urban development projects managed by the Inner City Office of the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council. Some, such as the development of a new neighbourhood market in Yeoville, seemed to make all the obvious mistakes. It unbalanced the existing mediations between belonging and becoming of vulnerable street traders, and precipitated a classic conflict based on re-asserted claims to particular spaces and modes of interaction. Other, such as a creative arrangement for user-management of a major taxi ranking facility, Park City, hit all the right notes. It exploited new interstices for otherwise violently opposed taxi-associations to collaboratively become something different, with identities unthreatened but with greater collective economic prospects.

#### *The Inner City Office: a project approach*

The Inner City Office (ICO) of Johannesburg's Metropolitan Council is widely applauded as amongst the most innovative segments of the bureaucracy of South Africa's largest local government. The Office functions as a project design and facilitation unit, structuring a range of urban environmental upgrade and social and economic development projects, most of these with various business and community partners. Over the last three years, since its inception in April 1998, the ICO has configured upwards of 40 large scale regeneration and development projects.

The Office has deliberately chosen what may be termed a "project approach" to governance in the inner city. The approach is held against the opinions of an array of critics, both inside and

outside the Council. High profile political representatives, for instance, have argued that the challenge of urban management in the chaotic environment of the inner city demands an approach that emphasizes blunt re-imposition of the rule of law. As they see it, a prestige projects approach may appeal to the sensibilities of wealthy investors who like the image impact of big urban upgrades. But targeted interventions aimed at making things happen in selected segments of the urban fabric invariably leave gaping holes.

The ICO's approach, critics aver, does not get close to imposing a necessary grid-work of urban order, a matrix of properly formulated and rigorously applied codes that stop the misuse of cityscapes and buildings. For them, the ICO fails because it does not clearly know its zone of application and apply the necessary prescriptions to bring this zone under control. In short, it cannot get Nigerian drug lords out of Hillbrow flats for the simple reason that it does not know who owns the building. It cannot stop rental exploitation of immigrant families because it has at hand archaic planning laws that allow for abandoned office buildings and factories to be used indiscriminately for lesser residential land-use rights.

The Inner City Office disagrees. It argues, by contrast, that development projects are the only way to understand and manage the textures and nuances of the inner city's society, economy and politics. The ICO Manager, Graeme Reid, repeatedly makes the point that one cannot intervene in the complex environment of the inner city with "pre-determined responses". Development projects, needing to be designed with specific micro-contexts and circumstances in mind, and negotiated with local stakeholders, are the only way to achieve the necessary sensitivity to the complexities of urban life and dynamics. "Conventional service delivery management cannot deal with nuance," states Reid, "Designing projects means you have to be attuned to the fact that the whereas the taxi associations are rigid and regimented, trader organizations are always weak and chaotic." More than this, he suggests, development projects provide concrete opportunities. They invite or expect beneficiaries to act in new ways for the sake of their own wellbeing in the inner city, rather than directly proscribing how they must not act for the sake of the cleanliness and order of inner city spaces.

How has the ICO, through its "project approach", come to terms with the deficit of belonging, residents' need for new possibilities of becoming, and in particular the intricate intersection between the two?

#### *The Rockey Street Market*

Since the early 1990s the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council has sought to find new ways to govern a burgeoning number of informal street traders in the inner city. "Uncontrolled" street trading is regarded as a major urban environmental and governance problem.

From the vantage point of government, a large number of hawkers, selling all manner of goods, from shoes to fresh produce, most from makeshift wooden stalls, and without access to transport, cleansing or storage facilities, presents various environmental risks and hazards. It adds to the image of a city center supposedly beset by "crime and grime", a malaise which has supposedly caused large numbers of formal businesses to flee to the pristine malls and office parks in the luxurious northern suburbs of the city. The unavailability of transport and proper means of storage means the foodstuffs are kept in ways that offend local health by-laws. A large amount of cooking fat is washed into storm-water drains, causing blockages of pipe networks. And traders' stalls jut out dangerously into busy roads and sidewalks, into the path of pedestrians and passing traffic.

Excessive street trading is also perceived as a governance problem. Traders, most situated in front of the doors and shop-front windows of formal stores, block entrances and lines of sight, and in many cases compete directly for the business of passing shoppers. Conflict between traders and formal shop-owners is a daily occurrence. On the highly congested pavements, contestation over prime spots is also rife, spawning violence between individual traders, conflict between trader associations, and, in turn, the growth of protection rackets. After one trader was knifed to

death by another in a disputed claim over a particularly preferred trading site on one of downtown's busiest walkways, the Inner City Office Manager Graeme Reid was moved to remark, "The state was completely absent there. We totally failed those women".

Various measures have been introduced or proposed to manage the symptoms of over-traded streets. In 1997, the City passed strict new street trading by-laws, most focused on addressing the "public health" and "traffic obstruction" risks posed by the traders. At the same time, portions of the inner city were declared "restricted" or "prohibited" zones in an attempt to thin out the number of traders. Later, a by-law enforcement unit was set up in the Inner City Office to more rigorously impose these provisions. The City has also considered a licensing strategy – in one more bizarre iteration even extending this notion to a proposal to randomly assign each licensed vendor a marked space, a so-called "parking bay" on the sidewalk, from whence they would not be able to move without swapping their permit. These mechanisms, standard to the governmentality of police, have had little effect. Against a 10 000 strong street trading population with no other means of livelihood, and with limited manpower and resources, a governmentality based on the principles of isolate, designate, assign, and individually permit or prohibit is simply not viable, or appropriate. Another solution to the problems as interpreted was needed.

In early 1998, the Inner City Office embarked on an ambitious process to develop a "trader markets" strategy for the downtown area of Johannesburg. If a sufficient number of markets could be built, and if they could be organized in a way which provided street traders incentives to keep stalls within them, the prohibition on un-organised street trading proper could be enforced with more vigour in the knowledge that a satisfactory alternative had been arranged. A two year research and design process ensued, starting with surveys of street traders to determine their profit thresholds, and, by extension, feasible rentals for market sites as the way to recover likely construction and operating costs. A planning firm was contracted to map the busiest zones in the movement economy of the inner city, and isolate from an overlaying street plan of empty lots and convertible buildings the best sites to build markets. The Council established the Metropolitan Trading Company, a new special purpose vehicle. This was to be a means to receive grants from donors and other spheres of government and as a guarantee that the markets would be established and run on business principles with a view to gearing in investments from private sector partners. And eventually, in late 1999, the first of eight planned markets was constructed with provincial government start-up funds on Rockey Street in Yeoville.

Despite the clear logic of markets strategy, and a fairly elaborate process of consultation with affected traders in the run-up to its launch, the Rockey Street Market was a disaster on its opening. The problem turned on the issue of high rentals for stalls, but embedded in this was an invisible politics of street identities that the Inner City Office simply could not read.

The Rockey Street Market was built with R6,1 million of R8,3 million granted to the Metropolitan Trading Company (MTC) by the Provincial Government within whose jurisdiction Johannesburg falls. Although it was never the intention to recover this investment in the strict sense, the designers of the Market were adamant that a profit margin be structured into its operation as proof to future private equity investors that the enterprise could realize a return. The MTC estimated operating costs of the market at some R95 000 a month, for five internal management and administrative salaries, a cleansing and security contract, and miscellaneous items such as Council rates on the land. It further estimated some management costs in the MTC itself, which would need to be recovered from Council. It then pegged a required rate of return of some 25% (10% less than most large project finance lenders in Johannesburg would regard as a going concern). On these calculations, the MTC was able to gauge a required monthly income from traders rentals at R150 000. Shared between 300 sites, this meant a range of rentals of between R6,70 to R20 per day, depending on whether the stall was on the outer edge of the market and easily accessible to passing pedestrians, or inside the market facing one of the internal courtyards.

These calculations led the MTC and Inner City Office to a difficult conclusion, a conclusion

subsequently justified through a reformulation of the objectives of the market which would make it an extremely fragile project to facilitate a process of street trader "becoming". On the estimated rentals, the MTC and ICO concluded, no "survivalist traders", defined as vendors who were used to selling only sweets and cigarettes and other odd items for a few Rands a day, could possibly survive in the market. They simply would not be able to draw enough income to pay the daily rates of even the cheapest stalls. Since the establishment of the Rockey Street Market would go hand in hand with the prohibition of street trading in the broader Yeoville area, this meant that "survivalist traders" had to change their behaviour, their very concept of what they were doing in trading, if they were to survive. Only certain "entrepreneurial traders" would make the cut. These would include vendors who could eventually select the right products given the Market's pull-through of a particular profile of customers. These would also include those who could diversify their product range to minimize competition with adjacent stalls (a large number of street traders sold fruit and vegetables) and be creative at sourcing their goods at cheaper rates. The designers of the Market realized that they had no option but to be ruthless. If the first market was to lead to a successful markets strategy across the inner city, they had to hold to the minimum rental thresholds, and force traders to adapt or die. An estimated 30% to 40% of traders would probably not make it, the MTC believed.

Implicitly, then, the Rockey Street Market became a project of identity re-construction, of the making, through a reformatted community, of self-responsible and accountable individuals expected to act in entrepreneurial ways. Only by shrugging off the subjectivities of "vulnerable street traders struggling to get by" and becoming "businesspeople" could traders secure a long term place in the market.

Not surprisingly, though, the embedded implications for existing identities of belonging of this proffered trajectory of becoming caused considerable tensions. Two principle traders' associations operated in Yeoville at the time of the market's construction. The one, the Yeoville Traders Association was a local body made up principally of Yeoville residents used to hawking goods on the streets of this suburb. The other, the Gauteng Hawker's Association, was a much older structure with a murky history. Perhaps with some vindictiveness, ICO staff has speculated that the GHA was in fact set up by apartheid security apparatus structures in the old pre-democracy Johannesburg City Council. It was purportedly established as a sort "sweet-heart union" to contest the growing force represented by the once powerful African Chamber of Hawkers and Informal Business (ACHIB) led by a charismatic trader Lawrence Mvundla, in the early 1990s.

Though ACHIB's influence waned towards the end of the decade the GHA stayed around, evolving, as the ICO tells the tale, into an archetypal street protection business. GHA leaders, as the Council staff understand it, had developed a vested interest in controlling the transport of a large number of hawkers and their wares to and from various sites in the inner city, as well as the "security" of these traders. GHA leaders had no wish to see the development of markets that would provide on-site storage facilities, security through professional private security companies, and, ultimately, the development of previously dependent traders into stand-alone businesses.

In the run-up to the opening of the Rockey Street Market, all negotiations between Council and traders had occurred with the Yeoville Trader's Association. The ICO and MTC had believed that they had achieved a considerable level of buy-in. After all, they had received over 700 applications for an available 300 sites (an over-subscription which forced them to re-demarcate the market into 370 stalls just before opening) and up-front payment for stalls from some 65% of traders.

On the weekend before the official opening in early December, however, as the ICO came to understand it later, the Gauteng Hawkers Association began to mobilize against the market amongst Yeoville traders. The rallying cry was predictable, "The rentals are too high and have not been adequately communicated and consulted". The GHA instigation called forth an equally predictable response from the stronger Yeoville Trader's Association. If it was not to be regarded

amongst members as soft on traders' rights and compliant with Council plans, it had to take up, or rather be seen to take over, GHA's call. The Market opened on a Monday morning with a full blown Yeoville Trader's Association protest against the implications of the concurrent street trading ban and the Market's high rentals for the very livelihood of its members.

The sudden turn of events became a media fiasco for the ICO. It faced a heated attack, from a range of quarters, with claims that it was acting against the interests of poor traders. Critics argued that the ICO was authoritarian in forcing previously fluid street operators into a fixed and inflexible space. Additionally, it was accused of being insensitive to the conditions of people in poverty, and that its cost recovery approach had blinded it to the fact what was needed in Yeoville (and elsewhere) was a "social responsibility" project which protected a vulnerable group against crime and the elements. Some went so far as to argue that the City had concocted a mechanism for the sole purpose of making profit off trader's meager incomes.

After the fact, the Inner City Office was quite eloquent about what it was trying to do via the MTC and in the Rokeby Street Market. Faced with a barrage of criticism that it was acting in ways that were "anti-poor", the ICO was unrepentant. Providing a market that obliged traders, on pain of failure and indigence, to become something different than they had traditionally been was the most socially responsible thing that could have been done, the ICO argued. For on the streets of Johannesburg, all traders are trapped. All are vulnerable to various protection rackets that oblige them to make use of particular, usually uneconomic means of transport, storage facilities and bulk supply networks. And with the intense competition, virtually none can develop the market-share to accumulate enough capital to graduate to more productive and profitable ventures. Providing spaces within which "survivalists" are expected to, and can be enabled to, re-identify themselves as "businesses", is the only way to liberate many from the crippling and violent contestation and informal control of over-traded streets, and launch them into less fragile enterprises.

But such arguments were lost on a media out for blood and traders association enjoying a public stage, and a renewed popular legitimacy, from which to re-assert themselves as the embodiment of trader's interests. Faced with the prospects of individualization and re-identification of members, the associations re-affirmed, against exactly that which was offered as a means of escape, the identity of traders as vulnerable "survivalists" destined to have to vigorously defend their place against official prescriptions that would rob them of livelihood.

The MTC offered a two-month moratorium on rentals, and then extended this again until March 2000, in an effort to allow traders to acclimatize to the market. Although market occupation started to pick up gradually, protests and negotiations between ICO/MTC and the associations dragged on well into 2000. As the impasse continued, the Manager of the ICO began to explore drastic options to get the Yeoville Hawker's Association to accept the inevitability of the MTC's approach. "Our biggest mistake," Graeme Reid remarked in frustration at one point, "Was not to offer the Associations the Market's R20 000 a month cleansing contract to keep them quiet. We would have been paying a premium to get the Market accepted, but at least it would have brought them in."

#### *The Park Central Taxi Rank*

Graeme Reid's proposed solution to the hawkers associations' reassertion of traditional place-bound traders' identities may seem immensely cynical. But in some respects, just such an offer was precisely the key to making another, potentially much more explosive, inner city project of becoming work flawlessly.

One of Johannesburg's most deeply intractable urban problems has been continued warfare between the Province's major taxi transport associations. Competition over the right to operate the city's major routes, most running between the inner city and Johannesburg's major townships, Soweto and Alexandra, have frequently spilled over into violence. The taxi associations operate

like Mafia families, with invisible hierarchies, ruthless control over demarcated territories, and (many outsiders believe) an eye on using the "front" business of moving millions of people a day around South Africa's largest urban conglomeration as cover for the transport of illicit guns and drugs. Addressing the needs of this burgeoning, unregulated industry has traditionally caused major difficulties. The associations have a vested economic interest, and hence good political motivations, to run their operations (such as the ranking of vehicles) in separate locations in the city. They have a vested interest to disagree with each other over proposed official plans meant to benefit the industry as a whole, and to fight to aggregate to themselves the economic benefits from urban upgrade interventions. All of this has made taxi transport facility upgrading, aimed at providing better access to passengers, structuring contiguous economic opportunities such as markets, and addressing traffic bottlenecks from over-congestion, extremely difficult to target.

In 1997, the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council embarked on a major project to construct a modern taxi ranking facility in a part of the city known as Jack Mincer park on the Southern edge of Hillbrow. The project was taken over by the Inner City Office on its establishment in 1998. The motivation for the initiative is summarised in a submission by the Inner City Office to Habitat's Best Practice database:

"Problems arising from the taxi industry are considered the biggest problem facing South Africa's inner cities. Nowhere is this more evident than in Johannesburg's Jack Mincer area where taxis invaded a 15 block area in the early 90's causing a rapid deterioration of the surrounding area. The infiltration of taxis in the area caused the roads to become nearly impassable and made proper sanitation impossible and crime inescapable. In the absence of formalized management, the central point, the Jack Mincer Park and parking garage deteriorated to a point where it became unsafe and a health hazard to the general public."<sup>xxii</sup>

As the Inner City Office envisaged it, the area desperately needed a facility that could help to "formalize" the ranking of over 2000 taxis, belonging to some ten competing "short-distance" taxi associations. The ICO targeted an unused and partially flooded underground parking garage as the focal point of the intervention. In rehabilitating and substantially upgrading the garage, the ICO hoped, it could make a substantial impact on a rapidly deteriorating urban environment, by getting a large number of mini-bus taxi's off the overcrowded inner city streets. It could also provide taxis with a space that would be economically beneficial, in that a greater number of users might be drawn to the industry where they might otherwise have used either buses or trains.

The Inner City Office mobilized some R14 million for facility upgrading in two phases. In the first stage, the Council itself devoted R8million to the reconstruction of the underground portion of the garage. R4 million worth of "free" construction services were secured from Grinkar Construction, by offering the property company the transfer of an adjacent site and building for it to develop into a new shopping center. In the second Phase, involving the addition of a rooftop level to the parkade to accommodate larger 35 seat taxis, the ICO geared in a further R6 million from the National Department of Transport and the Gauteng Provincial Department of Transport and Public Works.

With finances secured and construction plans drawn-up, the ICO was ready to build. The problem, however, was the taxi associations. How, the Inner City Office asked itself, could it possibly get 10 different associations, many of whom had frequently been at war with each other in the past, to work together to help plan the detailed operation of a rank that would properly serve the industry's needs? Even more challenging, how could it get these competitors to overlook their differences and use the rank together peacefully and co-operatively once the facility was built?

The answer was a new institutional space which not only provided a basis for collaboration amongst the associations, but which also secured the longer term financial sustainability of the

ranking operation.

The Inner City Office established a Rank Committee, representing all taxi associations, for the express purpose of guiding the development of the rank and overseeing the use of the facility by taxi drivers from the full range of associations. Two members from each taxi association are represented on the Rank Committee. With the ICO and the rank developers, Grinkar Property Company, this Committee negotiated in detail the various steps of the final design and construction of the rank. On completion of the rank, a number of operating agreements were then struck with the same Rank Committee (now reduced by natural attrition from ten to just six associations). The key accords were a User's Agreement and a Management Agreement.

The User's Agreement was aimed at structuring the usage of the rank by some 2000 drivers from the various associations, and directing the financial flows from user fees and other incomes. It had a number of motivations. Firstly, as Graeme Reid explains it, the ICO desperately needed active association involvement in the design of dropping off and picking up procedures, and the structuring of rights of use provisions with individual drivers. The Jack Mincer area of Johannesburg had, over the years, developed its own informal ranking management system. This system included invisible codes on when and where drivers could park, and a unique, largely incomprehensible street sign-language to control the movement of incoming and outgoing vehicles each trying to minimise the time needed to drop off and pick up passengers. Reid freely admitted that the ICO found this system inscrutable. But ICO was extremely worried about trying to replace an operating system that had historically enabled the daily movement of some 2000 taxis crowded in a few city blocks. "We just don't understand the informal system that makes this possible, but we want to re-demarcate and re-organize the rank to our specifications. Everything suggests that our plans simply won't work. If we don't try to mimic the system that already exists we will never be able to enforce." For the ICO, the associations had to become active participants in the control of Park Central's operations, and only a User's Agreement could provide this.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, only an agreement which formally recognized the *shared* use rights of separate associations – the Alexandra Taxi Association or the Diepmeadow Taxi Association or any other – could hope to obviate potential conflict stemming from maneuvers to capture the Rank. An agreement was needed to make associations collective partners in the benefits of the rank, with the rights to decide how these benefits would be distributed, and the right to choose whether any other associations besides themselves might at some future point be allowed access to the rank.

The User's Agreement set out a number of taxi association responsibilities. First and foremost, it required the associations to "reveal themselves", to specify precisely who their member owners and drivers were, and which vehicles belonging to the association would be utilizing the facility. The Agreement enjoined the associations to assist in issuing identification permits (in the form of windscreen decals) which named vehicle operator, association, registration and route, and required them to guarantee that all operators were legally licensed and registered. In one remarkable clause in the Agreement, the Rank Committee was obligated to ensure: "That all drivers have valid Public Driver Permits and valid Driver's Licences, and shall take all steps necessary to ensure that the driver's comply with all relevant laws and by-laws in the exercise of their functions and that the shall not engage in any unlawful activities".<sup>xxiii</sup> The Agreement further gave the associations, through the Rank Committee, the duty of sharing out holding and loading lanes and zones in the rank, and organizing the movement of taxis within these agreed demarcations. Finally, the Agreement made the associations responsible for collecting R20 a month (later changed to R1 per entrance) from each of their taxi drivers. This money was to be turned over to the Council where it would be kept in a suspense account for use on repairs and maintenance to the facility via the services of a Management Company.

It is not hard to see how this Agreement could have set the scene for conflict. Taxi associations were forced to reveal their workings to the City and each other, and re-present their previously amorphous membership base as a named and numbered list of self-responsible

individuals required to act as legally bound "operators." The Agreement automatically shifted the boundaries of spaces of belonging – it's very title spoke of "usage of a common area" and it gave the signatories the collective right to decide whether other associations not covered by the deal could be allowed access to the shared privileges. But, precisely for this reason, it could lead to the aggressive reassertion of exclusive identities.

Why did it not? One answer is that the arrangement offered an exciting new trajectory of becoming, made corporeal in the Rank Committee and its right to decide the share of use rights of a collectively beneficial facility, *which in no way compromised the existing identities* of the signatories to the deal. In fact, precisely by being co-signed with each association separately and together, the new zone of becoming was *conditional* on each existing terrain of belonging remaining intact. With the Rockey Street Market, traders associations were sidestepped in an attempt to provide a now atomized membership body with expectations of alternative ways of thinking about themselves and their operation. The User Agreement, on the other hand, focused the offer of new possibilities on the taxi associations as *associations*. It multiplied the spaces of operation of these associations without negating their existing modalities of pursuing economic opportunity, and hence without deconstructing their existing place and connection bound identities.

The User's Agreement was supplemented with a Management Agreement which illustrates the point even more sharply, and suggests that Reid's half-serious proposal for buying-off the trader's associations by giving them a cleansing contract was precisely how a regressive logic of belonging should have been managed in the Rockey Street Market. The effort required to manage a taxi rank on an ongoing basis, in terms of cleansing, security, structural repair, equipment maintenance, day to day troubleshooting, and long term capital replacement planning, is considerable. The Inner City Office simply did not want the ongoing responsibility of maintaining the Park Central Taxi Rank after construction. Accordingly, it put out a tender for a Management Company contract that would provide manage the facility on a daily basis in exchange for a lump sum payment. This payment would be derived from user fees as well as other revenues (including R1 million lease payments from a petrol company allowed to erect a station on the site, billboard advertising, and toilet facility use) being collected by the Rank Committee. At the same time, the ICO facilitated the formation of a closed corporation, *jointly owned by the taxi associations* represented on the Rank Committee, to bid for the contract. The taxi associations' new management company won the tender against a number of other bidders, and today this new formation receives back a large share of the money collected by the Rank Committee and handed over to the Council. The new company seals the rank collaboration by being one more space for becoming of associations that have been under no consequent obligations to adapt their own traditional modalities of cohesion.

By all outward appearances, the ICO appears here to have successfully structured a project that artfully mediates the logics of belonging and becoming, in perhaps the most dangerous arenas of particularistic group identification and economic opportunity pursuit in the inner city.

#### *Successful experiments in governmentality?*

It would be wrong to read up from these projects that the Inner City Office is systematically mapping out a new governmentality in its areas of jurisdiction. But the ICO's endeavours do suggest a dynamic, even if largely unconscious, process of experimentation with new ways to conceive the objects of urban management in complex and contested urban environments.

This paper has suggested that a recomposition of the relationship between space and economy is causing a fundamental reformatting of urban actor identities. A deficit of belonging, wherein agents start to lose hold of traditional places in which they feel secure and known, is calling forth its logical inverse, more frantic attempts to claim rights to places, physical or social, that embody connectedness, completeness, and coherence. Simultaneously however, urban actors are seeking pure spaces of mobility, in which ties to established territories of self-knowledge and

collective recognition are neither compromised by a multiplication of the arenas of action and identification, nor in themselves limit the room for maneuver across multiple sites of opportunity. The Johannesburg inner city presents a context in which precisely this pendulum between need for viable spaces of belonging and need for multiple spaces for becoming is beginning to swing ever faster.

The Inner City Office has intuitively grasped the fact that government in this context simply cannot mean better and more policing. A government that works by identifying as objects of application the current or immanent transgressions of urban actors, which objects then require ever more finely-tuned prohibitions, is a government destined for failure. Catalogues of government codes and prescriptions largely only manage to sublimate the sense of chaos in government itself. They represent a pre-determined response that does not bring government any closer to being able to know what urban actors want. It does not bring it closer to how actors arrange themselves and move to get what they want. Such a pre-determined response does not address how they can be induced or encouraged to reconstitute their wants and their ways of realizing these in arrangements and movements less potentially damaging to the sustainability of a social body as a whole.

Instead, the ICO has sought to intervene in the explosive milieu of the inner city through a series of development projects. These projects have proved to be intensely risky. Because they aim to configure institutional forms and arenas of interaction that necessarily require actors to re-identify themselves as more self-responsible and accountable, they invariably imply a re-negotiation of the current logics of belonging and becoming. They imply a facilitated mediation of the existing balance between urban actors' present, usually exclusionary, sense of identity and place and their willingness to engage new collectively beneficial possibilities of self. Such negotiations and mediations, as the Rockey Street Market debacle shows, may all too easily end up inviting the even harder reassertion of exactly those place-bound identifications which government wishes to supplant.

Where the Inner City Office *has* found success in its mediation of belonging and becoming, it is by seeking to *replicate or build on the true logic of becoming*. Structuring a shared space for a transversal mode of interactions, which does not aim to shut down or close off pre-existing place- and connection-bound identities as the condition for opening new ones, is precisely what has led the ICO to success in the Park Central Taxi Rank. The Rank Committee allows the associations and their members to "hedge their bets", to retain their existing identities, right down to the sign-languages of street ranking, while multiplying possibilities for the assembly of new interactions across these. It suggests an approach to governmentality that does not seek to force belonging to a new officially sanctioned community bearing all the marks of a "society well-governed." Rather, it is an approach which respects and confirms multiple existing urban identifications in the process of elaborating new ones contextually (almost certainly temporarily so) more appropriate to the exploit of fluid new social, political and economic opportunities. The Inner City Office has started to conceive modes of becoming as its primary object, and begun to find success thereby.

## Notes

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