

PROJECT OUTLINE

The city council of Johannesburg has, in recent years, attempted to regenerate the inner city of Johannesburg, through new social housing as well as commercial space. In many of these instances – new commercial buildings have been constructed without much thought being left to the reuse of the existing. This project intends to uncover and expose an "uninformed" method of reuse which can be reformed successful as well as sustainable and maintainable on the level of an average citizen.

The idea that the city can be "regenerated" lends itself to using the existing to build a future for the city. Although many people feel that regeneration means "new", a change this mid-set of Johannesburg's urban community is needed, for a slow and meaningful process of regeneration to be born out of new forms of urban modelling.

LOCATION



PROJECT FOCUS

PUBLIC SPACE AS POINT OF ENTRY
The streets of any city can become a point of entry into an urban community. They are a space of interaction between all urban actors without feelings of territorial tensions. By investigating the streets of this area, one is able to grasp the public realm and intricate workings of the society instead of intruding on their more private (and somewhat "shady") internal spaces. It is also felt that the ground floor levels of the buildings may be a suitable point of regeneration which could benefit not only the Ethiopian informal trade but also many other South African communities which make use of these pavement spaces for trade.

AERIAL VIEW



BUILD-A-DELVERS-STREET



DELVERS STREET

In order to understand the community as a whole, it is vital to be able to understand its parts. This is achieved through the study of a single street within the area, namely Delvers Street. Situated in the heart of this urban community, Delvers is a typical street of the area, with its human scale and complex workings in contrast to the dominating modernist surrounding buildings.



DELVERS STREET
References:
1. G. Simons, 2001. *Reclaiming the Urban: Street-making in a post-urban condition*. London: Routledge.
2. G. Simons, G. & Simons, G. (Eds.), 2001. *The evolution of informality in post-urban conditions: the case of Johannesburg in the context of post-urban conditions*. London: Routledge.
3. Simons, G. & Simons, G. (Eds.), 2001. *The evolution of informality in post-urban conditions: the case of Johannesburg in the context of post-urban conditions*. London: Routledge.
4. Simons, G. & Simons, G. (Eds.), 2001. *The evolution of informality in post-urban conditions: the case of Johannesburg in the context of post-urban conditions*. London: Routledge.
5. The City of Johannesburg, 2001. *Johannesburg: An African city in change*. Johannesburg: City of Johannesburg.
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1. REUSE OF URBAN SPACE & BUILDINGS

The inner city of Johannesburg, within the last decade, has become a place of great **derection and degeneration**, lending itself to the impulsive re-appropriation of many of its existing, **vacant buildings**. Recent formal redevelopment of the city has been at a building scale. In contrast, a study area within the inner city has used the **vertical stacking of immigrant trade** within a group of mid-twentieth century modernist buildings, up to their sixth and seventh floors. A new urban model has grown out of this community, mainly consisting of Ethiopian immigrant traders catering for the **urban poor**. The robust modernist buildings contain this high-level of activity but it seems to **burst out onto the pavements** of the area – re-appropriating this space as well.

A. REUSE OF THE BEST FORM

The typical vast **horizontal shopping malls** of South Africa have forced the internalisation of a **public act of trading**, forcing the shopper to become a spectator. This urban community has used the existing modernist buildings as a **vertical shopping mall** and have invited the idea of **trade as social capital**. This ecological use of space may not be of a **high technological form**, but is a type of advancement needed in a developing country – whose technological resources are not readily available to the average citizen.

B. REGENERATION OF URBAN SPACE

Urban space should not be something that is **dead or inert**, but should become an unprocessed, **living part of urban life**. An important part of the study area is how they mediate between their types of **lived and learnt space**. Modernism was rooted in the idea that the **street is strictly a circulation space**. In contrast to this way of thinking, the research community has transformed the street into a **space of social manifestation** – giving it a new sustainable function of social integration.

C. SPATIAL TYPOLOGIES OF URBAN

The interface between the buildings and the street (via the pavement), is an essential part of the community and how it functions. This interface mainly occurs in two ways (Bobic, 2004), through the **interface area** (the street market) and the **transition points** (entrances into buildings). On Delvers street many of the entrances are seemingly hidden due to bustling movements of the street, visually overwhelming goods displays and the non-retail functions of the surrounding buildings.

2. ECONOMIC VIABILITY

The Ethiopian community of "Little Addis" form part of the **informal trading sector** of Johannesburg, and have been building up their economic through their **resources of merchandise, social capital and high-quality urban and commercial space**.

Their economic viability is amplified through their **high-density retail**, and resourceful use of space – providing different scales of commercial opportunities which provides the **diversity** of space within the community. The shop tenants are not land-owners and therefore are subject to exploitative rentals of their shop spaces, and the large amounts of money generated by these four city blocks have **not been used by the landlords to upgrade the buildings** and therefore the tenants of the buildings are unable to formalise their informal conditions. The street, which is owned by the city, offers an opportunity for the upgrade of the region while allowing the tenants to improve their commercial situations, freeing them from the exploitative conditions they are forced to trade in.

3. SOCIAL EQUITY

"Little Addis" (as the community is referred to) has made use of their **social ties as a backbone to building this urban society**, which are most noticeable (as an outsider) in the **street market present on Delvers Street**.

A. VIABILITY AND ITS SPATIAL NOTIONS

The city is a **sphere of kinetic evolution**, where we can use the **past to generate the future** of the city, as it has occurred physically in "Little Addis". A key element to the development of Johannesburg is its **urban actors**, each taking a specific role in its progress. The relationships of these actors are a fundamental **growth stimulant** within the future preservation of the city.

B. PUBLIC SPATIAL PRODUCTIONS

Public space becomes this **podium for the connections of a society** with its urban context. The seemingly ambiguous space within this study area keeps the **diversity of public place** going and allows for the **multi-use of street pavement for security, trade and social community interaction** as well as for (as in most African cities) highly itinerant social structures (Simons, 2004). One way in which the study area has survived is through their **connection to the city life** and its inhabitants feeding its conviviality. It feels as though the endless pedestrian movement is simply augmented by the Ethiopian community feeding off of the everyday movement of the people.

The spatial productions of the community found on the street of Delvers has scaled the monolithic streetscape, originally designed with a modernist vision, down further optimizing the space of the street to a human scale.

C. GOVERNANCE OVER INFORMAL TRADE OCCURRENCES

URBAN EXPERIMENTATION vs GOVERNANCE
The study area within the inner city of Johannesburg has become a sort of **experimental urban model**. Many of the appropriations by the immigrant traders of the existing buildings and informal trading stalls on street level **do not comply with legislature** in terms of health and fire regulations, but their understanding of human interaction with the goods on sale and with the buildings and people themselves shows an intuitive grasp of the social relations of urbanity. The question, therefore, lies between the **balance of this urban experimentation and morphology**, and the **ability for governance over it**. How can we balance between the trial-and-error self-governance that is occurring in the area and being able to plan for the future preservation and growth of it without removing from its uniqueness?

CULTIVATION OF FORMAL TRADE
As discussed by Gotz & Simons (2001), the idea of forcing an **"identity re-construction"** on informal traders through coercing the traders into a "survivalist trade" where they are **not cultivated to grow into formal traders** but are forced to trade to live, places a pressure onto the community which may have a straining effect on the trade and therefore their ability of "becoming" (Gotz & Simons, 2001). This governance should be transcended through **various forms of self-management**, highly evident in the community in question, which has certainly used their own initiative to make their urban context work for them. Their economic, social and political sustainability is also affected by time, power and indefinable bonds which shape the area's future perpetuation.

BECOMING AN AFRICAN WORLD-CLASS CITY
The city of Johannesburg has become a place of great **diversity and heterogeneity**. It has become a shell for the **coexistence of different cultures and races**, lending itself to accommodating difference and new forms of change. The consistency of the research area is unclear because of the fact that many of the buildings in the district have been **tagged for redevelopment**, but the traders' reshaping of this area is ongoing and dialogic. The area has the ingredients for a unique urban renewal, something that the city of Johannesburg Council has so heavily focused on achieving in the past decade within this formerly vacant city, with the vision of the city becoming an **"African world-class city"** (The city of Johannesburg, 2001).



NOTION 8-B: SHALLOW GROUND FLOOR SHOP TYPOLOGY

These shops have used the former shop windows as shops within themselves – demonstrating the efficient use of the building facade for economic benefit, as well as low maintenance and storage space. The shallow, intimate shop is raised off of the ground with the owner sitting in it above ground level.

VOID-APPROPRIATION

A study of the re-inhabiting of modernist buildings within 21st century Johannesburg
Johannesburg, South Africa

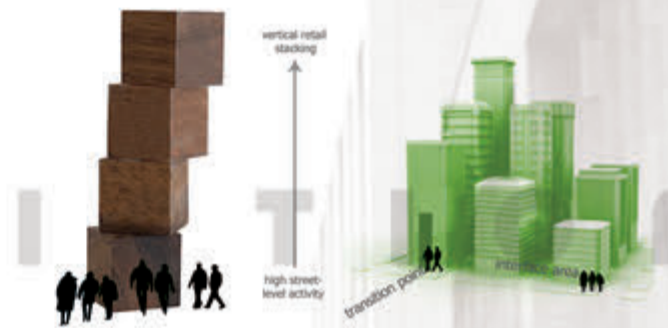


Image 1: The ideas behind the reuse of the buildings within the research community



Image 2: Buildings within the study area have not seen the benefits of the income generation from the informal trade of the community



Image 3: The city of Johannesburg as a sphere of evolution



Image 4: The evolution of Delvers Street in terms of layering over the existing, from the 1950s to the 2000s



STEP 11 The research project intends to allow the city council to be **free of their own identity** as the powerful "hand of authority" while engaging with "Little Addis". While the project is not trying to **undermine the important role of a council** in regulating a city, it is important for it to gain a good humble relationship with its "subjects" in order for positive change (Gotz & Simons, 2001) within this fragile Ethiopian community, because if the community always has to defend itself against the city, then how does this allow for a platform of change?

STEP 21 The way that this limitation has been overcome is by materialising the spatial productions of this street and its street market through an **interactive do-it-yourself kit** and not just an instance as captured through the section explored above, demonstrating to the "interactor" an **overall sense of the area**.

STEP 31 Engagement with the kit allows for the understanding of all the **urban makers**.
MOVE - one is able to move and reposition physical space makers and urban makers.
ADD - one is able to add more layers to the model to establish new interactive layers.
INTERACT - one is able to interact with the model in order to fully understand all its parts.

CONCLUSIONS

RECOGNITION



The first step to ensuring the future evolution of this urban community into a viable urban model on all levels, would be **recognizing the social gain** in injecting time and endeavour into **small scale inner-city growth** and to be able to supplement this growth through **new city improvement plans** which evolve as the city goes into the future.

TOOLS FOR DEVELOPMENT



In order for a positive governance over this area of study, there needs to be a **new method of engaging** with the formal elements of "Little Addis", and therefore a smaller scale change over the area in order to upgrade it over time. For a sensitive governance to take place the **"Build-a-Delvers-Street" kit of parts** can become a constructive tool for shaping a new Johannesburg city.

DIIALOGUE



As in many developing cities, a **dialogue between the users of the city and the counsellors** over the city does not happen effectively. This project intends to suggest a new method of **incorporating and merging the interchange** between "the governed" and "the governors" so that the existing and informal parts of Johannesburg can become a tool of development for the council as much as the new and formal.



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14-17 April 2010 Holcim Forum: Student Poster Comp