



UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEMPORARY CHARACTER OF BRAAMFONTEIN, JOHANNESBURG

Towards a renewed understanding of urban
renewal in cities in the South

Abstract

Work on urban renewal internationally focuses on a vast range of topics, including gentrification, increased criminalization of poverty, rent-seeking behaviour, and neoliberal urbanism. These arguments tend to centre the interests and actions of certain actors, prioritize certain forces (such as economic ones), and thus tend to predict a particular set of outcomes. In adopting a southern urbanist epistemology, and Jennifer Robinson's reimagined comparativism through a reconceptualized 'case', this research shows how predominant assumptions regarding the drivers and outcomes (both social and physical) of urban renewal do not necessarily apply in the case of Braamfontein, an instance of urban renewal in Johannesburg, a post-apartheid city in the south. The findings examined here include policy narratives and empirical referents to culture-led strategies of urban renewal and ways in which they speak less to market-orientated objectives, and more to socio-political ones; how the findings in Braamfontein speak to literature on gentrification, studentification, and youthification, showing that urban renewal and gentrification are not the same processes, and that studentification does not necessarily lead to youthification or gentrification; how attempts to suppress informal trade have led to the proliferation of itinerant strategies on the part of hawkers, and have in turn led to enhanced relationships between informal traders and the formal economy; and, finally, how the presence of communities self-identifying as foreign or gay are shown to be driven by forces other than those that the literature typically predicts.

Key words: southern urbanism; urban renewal; neoliberalism; Braamfontein; creative class; gentrification; studentification; protest; informal economy; gay-friendliness

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Introduction

Braamfontein is one of the oldest suburbs in Johannesburg, lying just north of the central business district (CBD). It has historically been home to the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and other higher education campuses, and more recently plays host to a budding local art and fashion scene, as well as being home to new technological innovation hubs. I began to spend a lot of time in and around the suburb while studying at Wits.

Most frequently I would walk alone or with friends from the Wits Art Museum (WAM) across Bertha Street and into bustling Jorissen Street, typically packed with fellow students, daily shoppers, commuters, parking guards, hawkers, policemen, private security guards, taxis, busses, and cars, all competing for the limited space on the sidewalk, and in the road. After crossing a block, I would likely turn right onto De Beer Street, where I would find myself walking alongside the ground level of the Jorissen Place building. Here, the scene changes drastically. There are no taxi ranks or bus stops, and no shops to walk into, no policemen, and rarely security guards. The only people I ever encountered here were fellow walkers and an elderly woman with a baby sitting on the pavement and begging.

Continuing down the next block on De Beer, the scene changes dramatically again. The streets have a quiet, 'artsy' buzz. I pass restaurants, a comedy club, my favourite bar and club, coffee shops, graffiti, public art, and niche clothing stores. Aside from the informal car guards, private security guards and street cleaners, the people who pass through or spend time here are students or young adults in creative industries. This is generally my stop, I take out my laptop, and start an assignment about the ills of gentrification.

If instead I left campus to find lunch, I'd head to Love Food, on Ameshoff Street. This meant crossing Bertha and turning left to walk two blocks. I would pass a bustling Chesa Nyama, which was always bursting with students smoking hookah and drinking beer, university residences, a spaza shop, and a busy hair salon. I pass students, many of whom were sitting on the benches drinking beer, as well as customers and employees of the spaza shop and salon socializing outside. On Ameshoff, I walk past another popular hair salon, and a PostNet store jammed with students, before reaching my final destination, Love Food, where the scene changes significantly once more. Now, the road is composed of large, private commercial and financial headquarters. No shops or restaurants are in sight. The road is wider than any other in Braamfontein, the pavements are decoratively paved, and tree-lined. It is so quiet here that one can hear birds chirping. Aside from the private security guards and cleaners, the people found outside here are the white-collar employees of the corporates dominating this road.

In this short walk through Braamfontein, and along the other routes I travelled in the neighbourhood, I was always struck by how rapidly the look and feel changed as I went. This diversity and dynamism become all the more staggering when one understands that the entire suburb falls under the same city improvement district (CID), as well as other similar and overlapping urban renewal initiatives, both private and public. Drivers of urban change, such as urban renewal initiatives, have been thoroughly theorized in academic literature, as have their outcomes. Furthermore, scholarship on urban renewal in Johannesburg is a rich, diverse, and thought-provoking body of work that has been the source of inspiration informing my research focus, including my attempts at interpreting Braamfontein. And, while this work has been formative to my development as a scholar, the conundrum I found in Braamfontein

prompted me to pose some challenges and present some complications to this earlier work. For while the trappings of gentrification and other well-theorized phenomena of urban change are indeed present in certain parts of Braamfontein, I also came across processes in the same space or adjacent to it that confound this reading. I found in particular that by looking at street-level experience of urban processes, and purposefully refusing to assume a related driver, I uncovered a number of alternative explanations for urban outcomes.

The work on renewal in Johannesburg is characterized by a distinct divide, which my research attempts to bridge. In one camp are theorists using international arguments described above, such as Martin J. Murray (2008, 2011), Sophie Didier *et al.* (2012), Elizabeth Peyroux (2006), and Mpho Matsipa (2014), who focus on popular tools for urban renewal, including CIDs. The other camp prioritizes the complexity and multiplicity of instances of urban renewal in Johannesburg, where the diverse set of local developmental goals and practices produce a vernacular process that does not neatly fit within the aforementioned international camp. These scholars include Jennifer Robinson (2002, 2006, 2011, 2014), Aiden Mosselson (2017), Mfaniseni F. Sihlongonyane (2015), and Melissa T. Myambo (2018). Other neighbourhood or project specific research includes work on Maboneng, Braamfontein, and township renewal (Rogerson, 2004; Siyongwana and Mayekiso, 2011; Burocco, 2013; Myambo, 2018).

The epistemological project of southern urbanism offers a productive perspective on the divide found in literature on Johannesburg and the conundrums that Braamfontein presents to existing theory. Central to this is its focus on contextual particularity, the locatedness of theory and the ways in which it travels, the incorporation of geographically and disciplinarily diverse material, and cross-border relations (Roy, 2014; Parnell and Oldfield, 2014). Thus, like

many other southern urbanist scholars, I suggest that work on the urban must pay more careful attention to the profoundly complex and context-specific interrelationships between urban conditions, urban outcomes, urban policy, and urban theory, where each aspect shapes the other in various ways, at various scales, and between various geographies of knowledge.

This necessitates that a study on urban processes, like urban renewal, attends to what policies, other tools of spatial governance and actors are at play, what historical conditions have shaped the given urban space, and the complex ways in which forces at this scale interact with the same ones at a global scale, to produce particular outcomes at the local level. Only with consideration to all of these factors and relationships can theorizing cities in the south and elsewhere be fruitful and comprehensive.¹

Another challenge that southern urbanists such as Robinson (2002) address, is how to bridge the theoretical incommensurability between research on wealthy and poor cities to produce a non-binary and non-singular understanding of urban conditions and outcomes across the globe. This thinking comes to the fore in new critiques of the planetary urbanisation thesis, in that it argues that despite empirical similarities, every instance of urbanisation takes place under deeply contextual conditions whose impact cannot be ignored (Lees, 2016: 135). This thesis is evident in Robinson's (2014) reconceptualization of the case in a reimagination of comparison.

¹ This is all the more necessary in light of the contradicting, often inaccurate, and dated information provided via online sources and academic research regarding the various initiatives or management schemes that operate in Braamfontein.

This work crucially informs the methodological and analytical processes of the present research, as I try to understand why certain dominant currents of scholarship on urban renewal in global cities and in cities of the south correspond in their interpretation of the urban renewal process as predominantly neoliberal. I argue that this results directly from the complex threads of interrelations between theory, policy, and outcomes, and thus the pronounced equivalence of the empirical phenomena of urban renewal, as these strategies largely originated in the West and have been variously reconfigured in the South. However, I found that despite these analogues, the outcomes of urban renewal that I encountered in Braamfontein were remarkably varied, and, as such, reducing the drivers of these processes in cities of the south and Braamfontein to the effects of neoliberal capitalist dynamics is insufficient.

This research thus uses a southern urbanist epistemological basis to look at theories of urban renewal through a mixed-methods research approach at a sub-suburb scale using methods such as land-use mapping, ethnographic observations, key informant interviews, and documentary analysis. In so doing, it is an exercise in bridging the epistemological incommensurability of wealthy and poor cities in urban studies through considering a range of spatial and social forms that stretch beyond and irregularly within the suburb, under similar and overlapping urban renewal regimes. Following this, it is also a challenge to singular understandings of urban processes by focusing on how they are experienced on the street-level.

In doing this, this thesis draws differentiated urban outcomes together and into both global-reaching and locally specific explanations. Drawing on Robinson's reconceptualization of the

case in a reimagination of comparison, this research asks how the street-level usage and experience of urban space interact with various social, cultural, policy, and economic forces to create the specific urban characteristics of Braamfontein? In answering this question, I hope to contribute to the southern urbanist project of establishing a non-binary reading of cities across the globe, as well as contribute to the growing body of research on urban renewal that takes into account locally-generated explanations for global trends.

Structure of Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis speaks to the literature, offering a broad overview of the development of southern urban theory, before moving on to the planetary urbanisation thesis, and Robinson's reconceptualization of the case in a reimagination of comparison. Thereafter, for the purpose of analysing the various regimes of renewal that operate across Braamfontein in the third chapter, a brief overview of neoliberalism and how it pertains to urban development and renewal is provided. The second chapter then provides an overview of the mixed method approach used to conduct this research. The third chapter offers a brief history of Braamfontein, an in-depth look at the primary bodies that are responsible for the regeneration of the area and their respective and joint initiatives, and an overview of recent changes (or phenomena) that have occurred in the suburb.

The fourth chapter lays out the findings of this research. It presents the findings of the street mapping and data capturing process, describes the look and feel of each zone of analysis, presents zone-specific data, provides vignettes of my interactions with people in each zone, and looks at empirical similarities and differences across these zones. The analytical chapter

that follows draws together the findings of the empirical research by considering a range of social and spatial forms and times as new analytical starting points for understanding urban phenomena that exist under various themes of scholarly work through mobilizing Robinson's reconception of the case in a reimagination of comparison. These themes include strategies aimed at attracting the creative class, gentrification and studentification, protest action, informal economic strategies, and diversity and integration.

Finally, I revisit the common conclusions that emerged in the analytical section. These include forms of sociality and outcomes that fall outside of culture-led explanations of urban renewal; how the history of a space interacts with its contemporary conditions to produce outcomes that research and theory have only understood in one way; forms of sociality that exceed common neoliberal conceptualizations of urban renewal and gentrification; activities that disrupt the visions of modern city-ness laid out in the narratives of urban renewal that operate across Braamfontein; and instances in which the outcomes of the renewal initiatives that operate across Braamfontein invite conclusions that contradict those found in much of the existing literature.

Chapter 1: Planetary Urbanisation, the Comparative Gesture, and Neoliberal Urbanism Through Southern Urbanism

The currents of scholarship on urban renewal in global cities and in cities of the south are alike in their interpretation of the urban process centred on neoliberalism. This results directly from pronounced similarities in the empirical phenomena of urban renewal across these cities and regions, as the strategies, which originated in the West, are reconfigured in the South as

they get institutionalized with local rationalities (Ong, 2007; Gonzales, 2011; Karaman, 2013). An emphasis on the varied nature of those trajectories of urban change is prevalent in the southern urbanist canon and comes to the fore particularly in new critiques of the planetary urbanisation thesis. These critiques hold that while the nature of urbanisation is planetary, in that new spaces are being absorbed and reconfigured into and by various contemporary processes of urbanisation, every instance of urbanisation takes place under deeply contextual conditions whose impact cannot be ignored (Lees, 2016: 135).

Before delving into these contemporary debates, it is worth outlining how the field of urban studies arrived at this seeming paradox. The field as it exists today developed in response to the rapid expansion of the world's urban population over the last century and its predicted positive trajectory, and thus an urgency to understand the variety of profound and unprecedented urban change that has accompanied this growth. This rationality broadly forms the ontological basis for all schools of urban thinking; however, despite this, the various schools of thought that exist today can be significantly distinct from one another. This is because the epistemological perspective of each school is developed in response to and/or as a rejection of those of other schools (Parnell and Robinson, 2017). As a result, each school has fairly divergent understandings of how urban spaces are produced, the challenges faced by urban spaces, and the possible solutions to these challenges.

In a recent article, Susan Parnell and Jennifer Robinson (2017) identify a split in approaches, with one new field being 'urban studies' approaches.² The field is composed of a wide range of initiatives, all with the overlapping desire to 'treat the geographical differentiation of the urban effectively' (Robinson and Parnell, 2018: 23). Parnell and Robinson (2017) explore these new theorizations under the themes of: 1) searches for theoretical integration in ideas of planetary urbanisation; 2) 'differentiation of knowledges' through 'strategic regional and feminist/identity perspectives'; and 3) methodological revisions such as 'assemblage theory and comparative urbanism'.

It is within this field of 'urban studies', or, critical urban studies, that my research lies, as I look at the diverse outcomes of locally reconfigured neoliberal strategies of urban renewal in one suburb. I explore methods for dealing with the intersection of congruence and incongruence when it comes to the empirical outcomes of localized neoliberal urban renewal strategies in Braamfontein, in terms of both the desired outcomes laid out within the strategy documents, and the outcomes typically predicted in academic literature. Thus, it is necessary to explore recent developments in the field of urban studies, particularly those that critique universalizing urban theories that assume coherence between the desired outcomes laid out in urban renewal strategies and the outcomes predicted in academic literature. To this end, I now turn to recent approaches to southern urbanism (Scott and Storper, 2014).

² Parnell and Robinson (2017) use the term 'urban studies' particularly unconventionally in this article – whereas they use it to refer to a group of different fields of study, including feminist, postcolonial, and southern urban theories, it is typically used to refer to the field of urban studies as a whole.

The epistemological perspective of southern urban theory developed in response to a belief that most of urban theory is characterized by the 'prioritization of ideas that speak predominantly to cities forged by the industrial revolution, the realities of Anglophone parts of the world, and an associated tendency to overlook the rapidly growing cities where traditional authority, religious identity, or informality are as central to traditional urban narratives as the vacillations in modern urban capitalist public society.' (Parnell and Oldfield, 2014: 2). As such, their epistemology holds that all urban environments are unique, and that research methods and theory must pay careful attention to this. This holds a few key ideas.

Firstly, it emphasizes the importance of geography, specifically in the contextual particularity of cities (as cases) and the locatedness of theory and the ways in which theory travels to 'exceed and even transform its geographic origins' (Roy, 2014). Further, it requires a 'geographical realignment' involving the incorporation of 'multi-sourced and interdisciplinary material' developed out of a geographically diverse range of cases (Parnell and Oldfield, 2014: 1), while still paying attention to the inter-place relations that make up the variegated and dynamic socio-spatial and temporal configurations (Gervais-Lambony, 2014: 357). It also requires the incorporation of a multiplicity of theoretical styles and methods, research questions, and political views (Parnell and Oldfield, 2014: 1).

Southern urban scholars argue that there is not a singular 'urban story', and thus their goal is to 'create linkages between places that hold promise for productive solidarities' towards understanding urban outcomes across the world (Derickson, 2015: 651). This requires that the study of urban spaces identifies and engages 'new starting points' of analyses to generate alternative theorizations and to dislodge and regenerate existing ones (Robinson and Roy,

2015). To this point, a range of theoretical sensibilities and methodological approaches exist within southern urban work, including the 'ordinary city' (Amin and Graham, 1997; Robinson, 2006), 'worlding cities' (Roy and Ong, 2011), 'provincializing global urbanism' (Sheppard *et al.*, 2013), 'urban assemblages and actor network theory' (Bender and Farais, 2013), and 'comparative urbanism' (Robinson, 2011).

In various ways these approaches address concerns regarding generalizing and universalizing perspectives that understand urbanisation as a singular process. In the next section, I explore the debates about planetary urbanisation in contemporary scholarship, particularly those between staunch advocates of planetary urbanisation (e.g. Jamie Peck, 2015, and Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, 2014) and those, mostly the aforementioned southern urban scholars, who argue that for planetary urbanisation to be useful, it must be reconfigured.

Planetary Urbanisation

Brenner and Schmid (2014) argue that post-colonial and post-structural approaches have manifested in the creation of fragmented epistemologies and multiple, divergent ontological assumptions. As a means to resolve this growing trend towards particularism and essentialism, Brenner and Schmid (2014) propose the planetary urbanisation thesis, as originally conceived by Henri Lefebvre. As a reflexive epistemological framework that brings together polarized understandings of places far apart, as well as a characteristic of the empirical contemporary condition, Brenner and Schmid (2014) argue that planetary urbanisation should be central to understanding how urbanisation is changing the world.

While they claim that this proposal does not stand in opposition to post-colonial and post-structural urban theories, their critiques of these theories - aside from their stance on Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong's (2011) call to provincialize urban studies - largely suggest otherwise, and, as such, their work has been hotly contested. In responding to these critiques, Brenner (2018) tries to clarify that planetary urbanisation is but one possible solution to what they understand to be a realm of diverse possible solutions to understanding the urban. Brenner (2018) reemphasizes the alignment of the planetary urbanisation thesis with post-colonial approaches, particularly that of Helga Leitner and Eric Sheppard's (2016) engaged pluralism, using it to argue that planetary urbanisation should not be understood as falling under one simplistic label or being a distinct body of thought.

While in opposition to the empirical possibility of urbanisation as an overarching planetary process, post-colonial and post-structural approaches to urbanisation do acknowledge the existence of inter-city flows and the generative possibility of the planetary urbanisation thesis when it comes to understanding complexity. Such authors include Colin McFarlane (2010), Parnell and Robinson (2012), and Sheppard *et al.* (2013). In taking this line of argument, many authors, including Sheppard *et al.* (2013) and Peck (2015), reject Brenner's (2013) theorization of planetary urbanisation, arguing that it has come to construct urbanisation as a force that produces locally contextualized instances of globalization and neoliberalism, and thus has become universalizing. These scholars move away from the original Lefebvrian conceptualization of planetary urbanism to engage Gayatri C. Spivak's (2003) notion of planetarity instead, which keeps open the possibility of understanding the urban through alterity, and the possibility of the plurality of worlded urbanism.

Robinson and Roy (2015: 184), working from the southern urbanist canon, similarly propose that continued engagement with the notion of planetary urbanisation is possible, however, only when the need for 'contextually specific yet theoretically reflexive investigations' is prioritized and thus urbanisation is seen as 'historically produced and differentiated'. For this purpose, Robinson and Roy (2015) suggest that a methodological revision is required, and to this point they propose Robinson's reimagined comparativism, a theory that understands the existence of a multiplicity of interconnections that tie urban outcomes together.

Among those who argue most strongly for the planetary urbanisation thesis is Peck (2015). Engaging both neo-Lefebvrian political-economy approaches (i.e. Brenner and Schmid, 2014), and post-colonial and post-structural approaches (i.e. McFarlane, 2010, and Parnell and Robinson, 2012) to understanding the urban, Peck (2015) tries to show how in various ways both offer inadequate matrices for the task of understanding contemporary urbanisation. While none of these approaches actually entirely rejects the theory of planetary urbanisation, Peck (2015) suggests that only political-economy approaches are characterized by ideas of planetarity, and that in direct contrast, post-colonial and post-structural approaches are characterized by particularism. While I am not entirely in agreement with this point, I affirm Peck's (2015) line of reasoning that these two approaches, the planetary and particular, are not incommensurable, and that, in a similar vein to Robinson and Roy (2015), the comparative methodology can help to bridge this gap. This moreover suggests that Peck (2015) sees the comparative gesture and the planetary urbanisation theses as intrinsically linked, the former being constitutive of the latter.

Before addressing how comparativism informs this research, it must be noted that the ideas presented above speak directly to the problem this thesis seeks to address, being the contention between planetary and particular understandings of processes of urban renewal in general, and local phenomena of urban change in Braamfontein in particular. There are indeed signs of neoliberal urban renewal processes and outcomes in Braamfontein, that manifest in the same ways in which they do in northern cities that normally serve as case studies for neoliberal urban renewal. However, there are also undeniably local urban processes and outcomes that such studies of neoliberal of urban renewal cannot address successfully. I use the basic ideas presented in these planetary urbanisation arguments as a springboard to a grounded study of urban renewal in Braamfontein as a culmination of the planetary and the particular, through engaging the comparative imagination. As such, the next section works to situate this research within the body of literature on comparison in urban studies, the ordinary city approach, and Robinson's use of the 'case'.

The Comparative Gesture

This section highlights the nexus of planetary urbanism, comparativism, and the ordinary city, as it is here where I aim to ground myself theoretically, believing that the contemporary conditions of Braamfontein are best understood from this vantage point. Comparativism provides an inherently revisable theoretical space in which cities can at once be understood as being connected through empirically determinable processes that stretch geographic boundaries, and as being unique instantiations of local dynamics. This is the idea that frames my research – that the dynamics found in Braamfontein are a product of connections that the

space has to wider empirically determinable processes, but which remain unique, and thus exceeding universalistic theories of urban change, through productive local dynamics.

In concurring with Peck's (2015) call to stretch the geographic imagination to allow for more far-reaching urban theory, Robinson (2016) proposes comparativism as a new theoretical sensibility and methodological revision. Developed in response to a conceptualization of urban studies that provides accounts of global cities as the 'loci of world order' and third world cities as the loci of 'poverty, disorder, and informality', the epistemological basis for this school of post-structuralist southern urban studies is that the incommensurability of research on wealthy and poor cities and countries poses a threat to the discipline's ability to produce non-binary understandings of urban outcomes across the globe (Robinson, 2014). In order to produce urban theories that enhance knowledge of the urban by generating ideas that can be applied across a diversity of spaces, it is also necessary to develop a methodology for this comparative process.

This methodological shift requires that we move away from comparing cities that are similar, and rather engage a 'range of concepts (i.e. worlding, assemblage approaches, political-economy approaches, etc.) and question their applicability across a range of cases' (Robinson, 2016). This means we need to see urban theory as precarious and reversible and empirical referents as inherently unstable. With this established, it is possible for Robinson (2014) to insist on both the multiplicity of the empirical urban and the multiplicity of the possible conceptualizations and analyses of it. The result of this, Robinson (2014) hopes, is that urban studies ultimately develops a new 'geography of theorizing'. What is clear is that the ordinary city approach is central to Robinson's reimagined comparativism; however, it is not yet clear

how this approach will be used in my attempts to engage comparativism, particularly in research on the South.

As outlined earlier, the central narrative of southern urban scholarship is that urban studies privileges the experiences of western, developed cities over others, and that the focus must now shift to cities of the global south in building theories, if urban theory is going to continue to be convincing and productive. This call has led to a renewed focus on cities of the south through an ordinary lens, exploring cities on an individual basis, from the inside, and in a non-essentializing way. In being a particularly flexible approach, many strands of southern urbanism engage it in various ways.

For example, African and Asian scholars such as Parnell and Oldfield (2014) and Roy and Ong (2011), use it in their attempts to produce more expansive theory. It is also used by authors such as Edgar Pieterse (2008) and Parnell and Robinson (2012) to deconstruct the hierarchy of cities that exists within urban studies, and thus the ways in which certain urban experiences have been glossed over. This lens is also intrinsic to Robinson's attempt to resolve the divisions between the vastly different approaches employed by urban studies to understand developed capitalist cities and less developed cities, which subsequently allows for the comparative tactic to be used (McNeil, 2016: 80).

In adopting an ordinary city lens, Robinson (2014:64) asserts that it is possible for this reimagined comparativism to further the project of southern urbanism, and that a particularly useful tactic for this purpose is to engage the case study in conversation with broader

literature, where the case study is understood as a ‘city, a specific urban phenomenon or form, or wider circulating urban processes and phenomena’, such as policies and visions. In doing this, we can reimagine the relationship between cases and concepts in urban studies so that the theorizations produced are derived from the widest possible range of urban experiences, thereby creating an emphatically global concept of urban studies (Robinson, 2014).

If this global urban studies is to be responsive to the interconnectedness and unpredictability of urban outcomes, then the reversibility of urban theories is paramount. In order to allow for this reversibility, the comparative imagination must insist on a reformatted case that re-specifies the spatiality and temporality of the urban. By doing this we are better positioned to draw out the impact that contextual variations, including histories, have on the on theorizations produced in urban studies (Robinson, 2014).³

Drawing from the epistemological and methodological basis of comparativism, this research aims to confirm the importance and validity of southern and postcolonial urbanist approaches, including Robinson’s, through a critical analysis of how interrelated urban processes interact on the scale of the suburb in a city of the south to produce outcomes that at once look similar and different to those that have been theorized in the north. This will ultimately help uncover how local social formations interact with urban processes to alter outcomes away from what traditional conceptualizations predict. By putting the perspectives I gained from my grounded research in Braamfontein into conversation with broader

³ It is worth noting that there are many who disagree entirely with the ordinary approach to cities arguing that it flattens out diversity and difference (e.g. Richard G. Smith, 2013; Peck, 2015; and Donald McNeil, 2016).

literature and relational and reversible theorizations, this research is an act of comparison that adopts an ordinary city lens. In this way, I am able to see cities as being interconnected while remaining unique, and thus I am able to draw from my research a clear relevance beyond Braamfontein, Johannesburg, and South Africa.

Another important implication of Robinson's work for my own is her reimagination of a 'case', a formulation. In borrowing on this notion, my research will consider: 1) a range of processes that stretch beyond the area of Braamfontein, as well as those that stretch irregularly across the suburb); 2) the diverse array of social and spatial forms that emerge within a single urban setting; and, 3) the repeated instances and circulating phenomena within Braamfontein's multiple management regimes, thereby drawing distinctly differentiated urban outcomes across the suburb into the same framework of analysis. To this last point, Braamfontein seems to be a fitting case, as the lack of uniform outcomes for similar regimes of management suggests that what constitutes this urban space is a range of dynamics over and above urban renewal, and as such points to the need to embrace relational and revisable conceptualizations in trying to understand Braamfontein in particular, and the urban in general.

Neoliberalism

For the purpose of this research, neoliberalism will be understood through Ugo Rossi's (2016) account, which, drawing on Michel Foucault, describes neoliberalism as both a 'political philosophy' and an 'art of governance'. It looks also to James Ferguson (2010: 166), who defines neoliberalism as both an 'art of governance' and a 'class-based ideological project',

where the former refers to the set of doctrinal neoliberal elements developed in the 1980s in response to the failures of Keynesian economic policy and the 1973 oil crisis that triggered the subsequent stock market crash, including ‘the deregulation of state control over industry, assaults on organized labour, the reduction of corporate taxes, the downsizing and/or privatization of services and assets, the dismantling of welfare programmes, the enhancement of international capital mobility, [and] the intensification of interlocal competition’ (Peck *et al.*, 2009). These elements include increased police action, intensified security measures against ethnic minorities, and a ‘dépà vu of the austerity policies’ experienced during the Thatcher and Reagan periods (Rossi, 2016: 208).

Further, as a class-based ideological project, Ferguson (2010) understands neoliberalism as the ideological valorisation of free trade, flexible labour, and active individualism, in both institutional forms and political action (Peck and Tickell, 2002). In this sense neoliberalism is understood to have become so pervasive that it is now sustained not only by governments, economists, and the like, but also by cultural producers, like artists and writers. (Ferguson, 2010). Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant (2001) extend this by arguing that neoliberalism is so ubiquitous and culturally ingrained that it has informed the ‘cultural revolution’ (an idea that I will return to later) as much as it has the economic one.

Rossi (2016) highlights how any understanding of the impacts of neoliberalism is deeply affected by the scale of analysis. As such, cities and the ways in which they have been impacted by neoliberalism offer a valuable vantage point from which to ‘understand the complexities and intricacies of contemporary neoliberal economies’. In this, Rossi (2016) refers to the ‘urbanisation of neoliberalism’, which are the long-term characteristics of

capitalist cities, particularly the growth imperative, expanding consumption, and the commodification of housing, that have become central features of the neoliberal era and, as such, significant aspects of post-Fordist capitalist restructuring and development (Rossi, 2016: 211). The global neoliberal economic turn and its impact on cities is extensively documented (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Saad-Filho and Johnston, 2005; Harvey, 2007; Ferguson, 2010).

Tore Sager's (2011) work, which outlined the characteristics of neoliberal policy planning between 1990 and 2010 through a globally reaching literature review, is useful here in specifying what long-term characteristics Rossi (2016) is referring to. The 14 characteristics subsequently identified were grouped under headings according to the areas of urban development they influence, those being 'urban economic development', 'infrastructure provision', 'management of commercial areas', and 'housing and neighbourhood renewal' (Sager, 2011: 152). Within these groups, Sager (2011) cites various neoliberal policies, of which some are more or less relevant to this research, including 'city marketing', 'urban development by attracting the creative class', 'economic development incentives', 'public-private partnerships', 'public private zones and flexible zoning', 'property-led urban regeneration', 'privatization of public spaces and sales-boosting exclusion', 'gentrification', and 'privately governed and secured neighbourhoods.' (Sager, 2011: 152).⁴

In the present research this outline will be used to assess the extent to which the renewal regimes that operate in Braamfontein reflect neoliberalism, albeit in a way that is reconfigured by local rationalities, and the discussion that follows will be attentive to the

⁴ While Sager's (2011) research is not the most recent, it has not dated, as the planning policies they identify are abundantly evident in planning policy today, and as such, in literature on urban renewal.

interconnections that exist between cities of the South like Johannesburg and the cities which these policies are conventionally associated with, such as New York and London. While these policies could be read as imported rather than homegrown, authors like Robinson (2003), Peyroux (2006), and Sophie Didier *et al.* (2012) show, by drawing on recent local policy mobilities, that we must not think of neoliberalism's urban regimes, such as CIDs, creative urban renewal strategies, and tech-driven urban development, as imported and imposed blueprints, but rather as carefully selected policies that have been reconfigured by homegrown rationalities. Of these neoliberal characteristics and local mobilizations, the practice of urban 'housing and neighbourhood renewal', particularly in the form of urban renewal, is the primary focus of this research. The section below reviews this body of literature.

Urban Renewal

According to Peter Roberts (2017) all theories of urban change start with the consideration of a single interest, which, in the case of urban renewal, would be derived from concerns regarding the practice of urban renewal itself. These concerns may be economic, social, or environmental, with a focus on things like housing markets, displacement, culture, environmental sustainability, policy, planning, and many more. Literature on urban renewal, where a vast number of research priorities exist, from the nature of the renewal policy itself to cultural changes that occurred as a result of renewal, exemplifies this well. It is often found that there is a great degree of similarity between theory and practice in urban renewal literature. While this body of work is important as it has been foundational to the

development of much local literature, I keep with a southern urbanist perspective that takes seriously local literature, and thus turn directly to South African research now.

In Johannesburg, debates around urban renewal are active. As noted, the debates fall into various camps. One camp favours CIDs, including work such as Peyroux (2006), Alain Dubresson (2008), Murray (2011), Didier *et al.* (2012, 2013), Matsipa (2014). This body of work tends to focus on the origins of the CID as a tool of urban renewal, pointing particularly towards the developed, western cities in which they initially emerged, as well as their impact on the far-flung spaces in which they are implemented. Largely, CIDs are understood as neoliberal and entrepreneurial planning tools, with the capacity to be mutated and produce modalities that suit the environments in which they are implemented (Miraftab, 2007; Didier *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, research tends to focus on how well or poorly this tool is adopted into the Johannesburg urban landscape (Didier *et al.*, 2013).

Another body of research on renewal focuses on the inner city. This work prioritizes the complexity and multiplicity of instances of urban renewal in Johannesburg, where the diverse sets of developmental goals and practices produce a specifically “vernacular” process – one that is rather more homegrown and aligned with local development goals than the aforementioned camp ascribes to. Authors include Robinson (2003), who attempts to dispel a divided approach to cities as worthy or unworthy of inquiry, by turning to the Johannesburg CBD and showing how it is a space of multiple influences and thus how it exists as multiple things at once; Mosselson (2017: 1281), who writes about the phenomenon of ‘vernacular regeneration’, where private sector regeneration in Johannesburg is characterized by a ‘multiplicity of goals and practices’, such that it gives rise to an urban process that does not

fit comfortably into pre-given analytical frameworks; and Mfaniseni F. Sihlongonyane (2015), who works through the conundrum of neoliberalism versus developmentalism in urban planning in Johannesburg through the use of the world-class city title.

Further area-specific work includes that on township renewal, the Maboneng precinct, and Braamfontein. The work on townships as urban spaces is extremely large and complex. When the focus is turned to township renewal, common themes include township tourism/urban tourism (Rogerson, 2004; Booyens, 2010) and the renewal of townships as a part of the country-wide Urban Renewal Programme in the Mbeki-era (Donaldson and Du Plessis, 2013; Siyongwana and Mayekiso, 2011). In the Maboneng case, relevant work includes that by Myambo (2018), who critiques this inner-city development precinct for its exclusionary nature and displacing impact in relation to the working class suburbs that surround it; Shannon Walsh (2013), who writes about Maboneng as an instance of gentrification, and explores the idea of the right to the city from the position of the white middle-class suburbanite; and James J. Gregory (2016), who explores the development as an example of the powerful force creative industries have on urban planning policy.

In Braamfontein's case, work includes that of Laura Burocco (2013), who explores Braamfontein as a possible example of similar regeneration initiatives in global cities, concluding that it only partly fits this model; Didier *et al.* (2013) who examine Braamfontein as a part of their analysis of instantiations of South African CIDs cited above; Unarine Kwashaba (2017), who examines Braamfontein as an example of the creative city planning approach; and Gregory and Christian M. Rogerson (2019), who explore the impact of studentification in Braamfontein.

What is evident here is that the themes centred in South African literature on urban renewal do indeed focus on some of the neoliberal urban processes identified by Sager (2011). These include gentrification, displacement, culture and creativity led renewal, privately governed and secured neighbourhoods, and more. Because these themes were strongly reflected in the renewal initiatives that operate in Braamfontein, it is necessary to briefly review this literature.

Creative-led Strategies of Renewal

It was as early as the 1980s, a time when the global context was marked by 'interurban competition', that cities started using their 'heritage and cultural endowments' to attract investments, and thus when culture became entwined into the 'logic and circuit of valorisation' in cities as a result (Rossi, 2016: 215). It is argued that neoliberalism enabled this 'cross-national mobility of urban development patterns' in general, and in turn, 'allowed for creativity to become a global policy narrative mobilized by policy makers and administrators in order to create consensus around newly proposed or already existing urban regeneration initiatives around the globe' in particular (Rossi, 2016: 215).

The neoliberal emphasis on culture and creativity in urban renewal has been adopted by politicians and the political-economic elite alike and integrated into public discourse and has subsequently spawned 'wannabe' creative cities and neighbourhoods all over the world (Rossi, 2016: 215). The mapping of this trend derives primarily from the work of Richard

Florida (2002a) on cities and the creative class and speaks strongly to a trend in city-making where policy is often derived from urban theory (i.e. global or world cities).⁵

It is important to explore the diverse ways in which these culture-led initiatives emerge. Rossi (2016) notes a focus on festivals and events being offered as a way to enjoy the ‘vibrancy of city life’. Another is in the use of titles for the city or suburb, especially those that convey cultural value (Kong, 2007; Dupont, 2011; Rogers and Darcy, 2014; Rossi, 2016). Both of these are evident among the various regeneration initiatives emerging in Braamfontein, highlighting what should be seen as: 1) the impact neoliberalism has had in popularizing the centrality of culture to policy initiatives; and 2) what elements of culture, or, what cultural artefacts, are valuable in the context of Braamfontein as a suburb in Johannesburg, an African city; and 3) how urban policies that originated elsewhere become reconfigured to produce homegrown elements that vastly exceed neoliberal readings.

In the space(s) where the kind of creativity illustrated in these initiatives’ discourse is most evident in Braamfontein, there is a distinct look, feel, and narrative of gentrification. Gentrification is also a recurring feature of the close relationship it shares to urban renewal in academic literature, in general, and in Braamfontein specifically. The following section briefly reviews international and local literature on gentrification.

Gentrification

⁵ According to Florida (2003: 290), the creative class is composed of talented and creative professionals ‘who work in knowledge-based occupations in high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and health-care professions, and business management’, as well as a ‘super-creative core’ including artists and designers. The notion of the ‘creative class’ will be elaborated in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Generally, in literature, gentrification is largely understood as the displacement of working-class residents by private or state-led urban renewal initiatives, as the phenomenon was originally conceptualized by Ruth Glass in 1964.⁶ Neil Smith (1987) later made a significant contribution to this literature, from a distinctly production-side lens, with his 'rent-gap thesis'. A more recent definition that I find encompasses the multiple facets of gentrification particularly well is that of Perez (2004: 139) who describes gentrification as:

an economic and social process whereby private capital (real estate firms, developers) and individual homeowners and renters reinvest in fiscally neglected neighbourhoods through housing rehabilitation, loft conversions, and the construction of new housing stock. Unlike urban renewal, gentrification is a gradual process, occurring one building at a time, slowly reconfiguring the neighbourhood landscape of consumption and residence by displacing poor and working-class residents unable to afford to live in 'revitalized' neighbourhoods with rising rents, property taxes, and new businesses catering to an upscale clientele.

What is clear in the significantly different definitions provided by Glass (1964) and Perez (2004) is that the process of gentrification has mutated over time, and thus in its recent conceptualizations, there is a strong focus on the nature of this mutation and what this means for theory (Zukin, 1995; Atkins, 2002; Lees, 2003; Visser, 2003; Davidson and Lees, 2005; Lees *et al.*, 2015). Key concerns include the initiators of the process, the environment in which these processes take place, and the specific aspect of the environment that they influence.

⁶ Glass (1964) did not define the process *per se*, but described as a process that unfolds when middle class-individuals move into working-class areas, thereby displacing the working class and changing the social character of the space.

Closely in line with the planetary urbanisation thesis, Loretta Lees *et al.* (2016) proposes that gentrification too can be seen as planetary in its new-found global reach. As in the planetary urbanisation thesis, the planetary gentrification thesis argues that society in general needs to be more cognisant of the variety of ways in which global events or processes unfold locally and how this relates to events and processes happening elsewhere. As such, while planetary gentrification holds a few key characteristics central to the process of gentrification, including (re)investment into the secondary circuit of capital (real estate) and displacement, the thesis requires that researchers step back from the Euro-American assumptions that previously dominated the field and look towards the specificity of an instantiation of gentrification, particularly in southern cities.

This research is not alone in this endeavour, as recently many Southern or post-colonial scholars have set out to show that gentrification does not always result in the physical displacement of lower-income residents. Instead, gentrification can initiate a variety of forms of displacement, ranging from cultural displacement and a changing sense of belonging to the displacement of retail offerings (as exemplified in this research) (Shaw and Sullivan, 2011; Sullivan and Shaw, 2011; Gonzales and Wayley, 2012; Hyra, 2015; Janoschka and Sequera, 2015).

While my research centres upon urban renewal rather than gentrification, both academic and journalistic literature, on Braamfontein claims that gentrification is unfolding in the suburb, and as such, it would be remiss not to engage this point of view. Furthermore, while my work does not specifically analyse the suburb in terms of who has been displaced and why, my field

research did show the possibility of displacement in the future, mostly, however, with potential to affect retailers rather than residents. Should this take place, it is important to understand that while the resident base in Braamfontein has remained stable, being dominated by students, displacement is possible in other realms of the environment and could have serious knock-on effects, such as displacing the customer base of retailers in the area.

Conclusion

What this chapter aimed to do is to locate the reader within the academic debates that the findings of this research are in conversation with. Starting by identifying the epistemological perspective this research adopts, this chapter explored the leading debates in urban studies, aligning with southern urbanism and a planetary outlook. Thereafter, it examined a move among southern urbanists towards the ordinary city approach and comparativism, and in particular Robinson's reconceptualization of the case in a reimagination of comparison. Finally, the chapter's attention shifted to research on the development of neoliberalism and zoomed in on its relation to urban development and urban change, particularly culture-led strategies of urban renewal and gentrification. The findings of this research speak to this literature, serving loosely as a case study, which exemplified how this thinking applies practically.

Chapter 2: Research Methods

The research for this thesis has used a mixed methodological approach (Johnson *et al.*, 2007) and was conducted in two phases, one predominantly quantitative, and the other predominantly qualitative. In line with this, I conducted a land-use mapping exercise during my first phase, which I believed would give me a sufficiently grounded sense of my research site as a whole, fundamental to site-specific qualitative research exercises carried out later. In this process I took to the streets and noted every single street level unit I came across on a map. Afterwards, I entered all this data into a spreadsheet.

Because the nature or use of a space was not necessarily indicated in the name of the establishment, it became apparent that I would have to sort these into relevant categories. What followed was a process of establishing categories that were legible to various registers of usage, but which that still operated at the same level. I found that in each attempt at categorization, certain sets of data became less legible while others were highlighted. I therefore identified three separate schemes of categorization, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. These three are: 'specific type', 'land use type', and 'taxonomy'.⁷ This data was used to produce the charts and tables in Chapter 4, and was used to create an empirical overview of the ways in which the land is used in each zone. Through this process of categorization, it became apparent that this research would not be valuable if it focused solely

⁷ 'Specific type' is an observational categorization, where units are identified based on my interpretation of their most obvious purpose. This data is highly legible for those using this research but is too fine-grained to provide a useful overview of Braamfontein. Both 'land use type' and 'taxonomy' were established in an attempt to address this issue. The 'land use type' categorization indicates what type of institution exists at street level, in the broadest possible terms. In some cases, however, these terms were too broad to be a useful indication of what was actually happening on the street level. As such, the 'taxonomy' categorization breaks the former down further, seeking to create higher resolution categorizations but still in terms of the land-use rubric.

on the retailscape, as retail did not necessarily dominate the ways in which the land was used, and thus I extended my focus to the elements comprising the streetscape as a whole.⁸

After establishing a sense of the streetscape composition of the entire suburb, I set out to learn more about the frames of governance, forms of sociality, and aesthetics found there. This was done through qualitative research methods, including ethnographic observations, key informant interviews, and documentary analysis at the sub-suburb and suburb scale. Because it would not be viable to carry out this kind research throughout the suburb, I made a strategic selection of specific sites for this phase before heading into 'the field'. I established five 'zones' within the suburb.

I drew the criteria for defining these zones from the overarching purpose of this research, which is to complicate and further the understanding we have of Braamfontein as a site of urban renewal. These zones thus encompass areas that I believe: 1) represent concentrations of important/influential land use trends in the area; 2) represent commonly held (mis)conceptions of the area; 3) speak to the proposed developmental trajectories of the area; and 4) provide insights into the vast range of land use types and their resultant dynamics in the area. The five zones are shown on the map below.

⁸ All the units at street-level make up the streetscape.

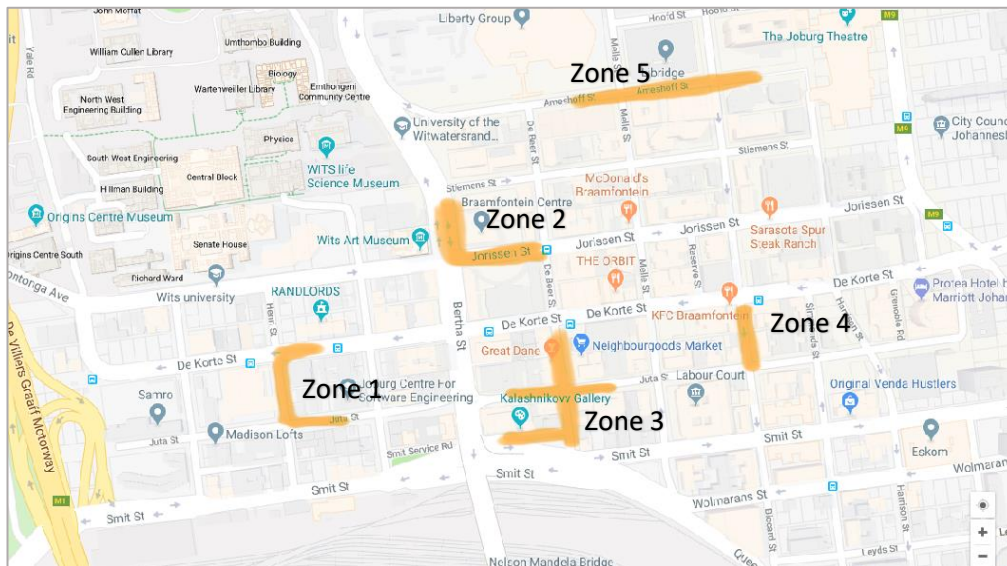


Figure 1 Zonal map of Braamfontein, Johannesburg (Taken from Google Maps and manipulated by author).

Thereafter I began participant observation. I spent an average of 1-2 hours a day out in various zones over a three-month period, during which time I logged a total of 40 hours of fieldwork. I would sit, stand, or walk around, in various inconspicuous spots I had selected in each zone, and take notes of everything I saw. The kinds of things I paid attention to included: who worked in the area or in particular establishments, who frequented these establishments, who was passing through, who was lingering, and the manner in which these actions were done.⁹ On many occasions during this process I was approached by people who either worked there, generally either informally or illegally, or, came to these places to socialize.

During this time, I conducted un-structured, conversation-style interviews with people in various parts of the suburb. While I conducted only four interviews in this way, I found that the conversations I had during my participant observation were equally useful. I wrote up my notes of these conversations as soon afterwards as possible. Towards the end of this process

⁹ It would have been ideal at this point in my fieldwork to take photographs to support descriptions of each of these zones. However, due to safety concerns, unfortunately I could not carry a camera or phone with me during my time of exploring the area.

I started conducting online research into the different management regimes that operate across Braamfontein. While doing this I quickly realized that the information that was available online was problematic. Consequently, I set out to identify and interview people who worked with these various initiatives. For these telephonic interviews, of which there were two, I prepared specific questions regarding the parties involved and the scope of the initiatives, and gave the interviewee the opportunity to talk openly about Braamfontein, the initiatives, and their opinions about both.¹⁰

¹⁰ Given the busy schedules of those who I set out to interview, it was only possible to conduct these interviews telephonically.

Chapter 3: Braamfontein – Shifting Context and Institutional Drivers

Robinson's (2011: 65) adoption of Walter Benjamin's challenge to thinking through the idea of modernity in her approach to comparison encourages a way of thinking that analytically draws together 'elements from cities and places distant in both time and space, with leaps of explanation reaching both back in time, as well as across to other places, to constitute the imminent interpretive space-time of globalizing urbanism'. This historical method thus insists on the empirical multiplicity of interrelated urban outcomes, and therefore the possibility of multiple conceptualizations of the urban (Robinson, 2011). My logic follows that Braamfontein should be read as a constellation of the past and present; of various actors and social systems; of various spaces; and of large- and small-scale regimes of governance and the ideas that inform them, both local and from elsewhere.

What follows is a discussion of the primary drivers of the spatial interventions implemented in Braamfontein. These include history as a driver as well as the different contemporary institutional drivers and their various initiatives. These range from municipal urban development agencies such as the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA), to private urban development firms, such as Play Braamfontein. These actors and initiatives were identified based on the seemingly significant role they play in the suburb as well as their profile in scholarship. I focus on how their various initiatives came about, the ideas on which they are based, and how they have been interpreted in recent academic literature, as drawn from Braamfontein scholarship, interviews and desktop research. This chapter thus acts to situate the reader in both time and place but also to make initial analytical attempt at understanding

the contemporary conditions of Braamfontein, through engaging existing scholarship and discourse analysis.

The Motors of History

Braamfontein's history is nested firmly in the history of the development of the Johannesburg CBD, dating back before the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand, as farmlands near one of the few fresh water supplies in the area (Latilla, 2014). Once gold was discovered, Braamfontein was officially declared an extension of Johannesburg and by the mid-1890s it had grown into a busy middle-class Afrikaans suburb (Burocco, 2014; Latilla, 2014). This growth came to a screeching halt in 1896 when a dynamite explosion destroyed the suburb. However, the subsequent reconstruction was swift and well-funded, and Braamfontein was seemingly fully functioning again within five years (Latilla, 2014; Burocco, 2014).

Jumping forward to the early 1950s, Braamfontein followed in the wake of the Johannesburg CBD's economic building boom, with the construction of high grade office blocks and five bridges between it and the CBD, intended to better connect the CBD to the white northern suburbs, where the CBD's consumers and white-collar workers lived.¹¹ This 'boom' that occurred in Braamfontein is also attributed to the early patterns of decentralization outwards from the CBD, compounded with the Council's relocating many of its offices from the CBD into a centralised complex on Braamfontein Hill, and the zoning of additional stands for

¹¹ One might note that there is roughly a 50-year gap in the history here. This is because history books have skimmed over this period entirely (Beavon, 2004; Burocco, 2014; Latilla, 2014). It is not clear if this is because the suburb progressed linearly as a suburb and so there nothing noteworthy to write about, or if it was because of something else.

commercial activities in the early 1950s (Beavon, 1998: 165). The impacts of this boom included bigger and established companies (such as Eskom, South Africa Breweries, and Shell) moving into Braamfontein, and the development of a few blocks of flats and hotels (Beavon, 1998; Beavon, 2004: 165). The development of the retail sector at this time however is reported to have remained minimal and uninteresting, taking up only 9.5% of total floor space in Braamfontein in 1965 (Beavon, 1998).

The later period of decentralization of businesses from the CBD in the mid-1980s impacted Braamfontein again, but this time informing a period of moderate urban decay as various institutions and businesses left the suburb (Burocco, 2014). The decay and abandonment of Braamfontein was however not as severe as that of the CBD; it was moderated by the very thing that had initially hampered development in the suburb – its relative distance and disconnection from the CBD core. The width of the train tracks dividing the two enclaves meant that some important businesses, including Sappi and Liberty, felt unthreatened by the CBD decline, and kept their headquarters in Braamfontein (Burocco, 2014). The presence of these anchor companies instilled a certain level of confidence in the area and meant that a number of buildings sustained occupancy rates high enough to keep them and the surrounding area maintained. These institutions continue to have a significant impact on decisions regarding the management and redevelopment of the area, as most of the CID funding comes from their levies (Burocco, 2014).

All research (albeit limited) suggests that the partial slump in Braamfontein, recorded from the late 1980s and early 1990s, turned around in the early 2000s as various development and regeneration initiatives began to be implemented by various bodies. Before I discuss these,

the complexity of identifying the various private and public actors and initiatives involved is worth noting. As mentioned above, online sources and academic research provide contradicting, often inaccurate, and dated information regarding the various initiatives or management schemes that operate in Braamfontein. It was difficult to establish the geographical scope of each initiative as well as the scope of the initiatives in their entirety (i.e. what exactly it is they do or have done).

As such, it is a worthwhile exercise unpacking the discourses of the primary bodies, their vision statements, as well as their actual interventions, as this allows me to lay out the characteristics of their ideal urban dweller and user, and thus helps to uncover the underlying interests of the institutions and thus the dynamics that exist between the users and the environments in which they find themselves.¹² The section below outlines the primary bodies and initiatives and their respective discourses of renewal, and their ideal subjectivities, as implied in their initiatives.

Institutional Drivers

The Johannesburg Development Agency

In line with the Joburg 2030 strategy to transform Johannesburg into a 'world-class African city' through economic development, the JDA acts to stimulate area-based development (mostly in the inner city), particularly through connecting public, private, and civil society leaders, with the hope of encouraging private investor confidence (JDA, 2010; Ntshona, 2013:

¹² How the ideal dwellers and users of these regimes of management are imagined is important, as in learning who is being attracted into the neighbourhood lends insight into the rationalities endorsed and promoted by these regimes.

46). Accordingly, the JDA set out to develop Braamfontein in 2002 through the Braamfontein Precinct Regeneration Programme (BPRP). This involved greening initiatives, improving sidewalks, upgrading signage, increasing the amount of secure parking, and increasing the amount of public space. These interventions were to stimulate investment in Braamfontein, particularly in the form of large corporates (JDA a, n.d.). This intention suggests that their vision for Braamfontein is to return it to its past commercial corporate-centric use, and thus its ideal urban dwellers or users are large corporates and their white-collar employees.

The JDA also views placemaking as central to the creation of successfully operating urban areas, and sees public art, arts institutions, and architecture as being pivotal to this (JDA b, n.d.).¹³ This ideology is clearly manifest in the multiple public art installations that the JDA has overseen throughout Braamfontein, as well as its involvement in the modifications of the Joburg Theatre Complex, the Nelson Mandela Bridge, and Constitution Hill developments. Prominent public art installations that have changed the face and fabric of Braamfontein, and relate directly to the aforementioned themes, include a series of interactive tree sculptures (See Figure 2 below). These trees are the product of a collaboration between Play Braamfontein and Trinity Sessions' works, as commissioned by the JDA and Department of Arts, Culture, and Heritage to develop public art in Braamfontein as a part of the Cultural Arc initiative, and thus part of all the involved parties' emphasis on art in urban renewal (Design Indaba, 2006).

¹³ In the JDA's Organization Profile brochure, placemaking is an 'events-based' idea whereby events are used to develop a specific reputation for the suburb. The various events that the JDA has co-ordinated from this purpose include yoga in Sappi Park, roller blading sessions in Grove Square, open mic sessions in Eland Plaza, and guided tours.



Figure 2 Trinity Sessions tree sculptures (Photograph taken by author).

By seeking to establish Braamfontein's identity through these initiatives, it is clear that the JDA has another ideal urban dweller and user in mind for Braamfontein, this being one who appreciates art, history, and architecture. This adds to the conceptualization of the ideal urban dweller and user as middle- or upper-class, culturally-orientated locals and tourists. The JDA's rationality around using festivals and events, the city's heritage and cultural endowments, and titles that convey urban value to try attract both businesses and middle-/upper-class culturally-orientated individuals and tourists into the area, all point to Rossi's (2016) claim that urban renewal goals are informed by city making trends established in the 1980s in developed western cities, and that now rely on the work of Florida (2002a).

As a counterpoint to these dwellers, it is evident in the JDA's work with the Metro Police Department in actively criminalizing informal traders in the area, that there is an urban dweller and user that both seek to discourage from the suburb. Through their partnership it is clear that those who work in and rely on the informal economy, being largely low-income individuals, are not wanted in the suburb. This rejection of certain activities speaks strongly to literature that links urban renewal with the displacing outcomes of gentrification.

Braamfontein Management District: Urban Genesis, BRAAM, and private collaborators

The following map places the Braamfontein Management District (BMD) as a CID (or Business Improvement District (BID) – the terms are used interchangeably in online sources) in Johannesburg relative to others.

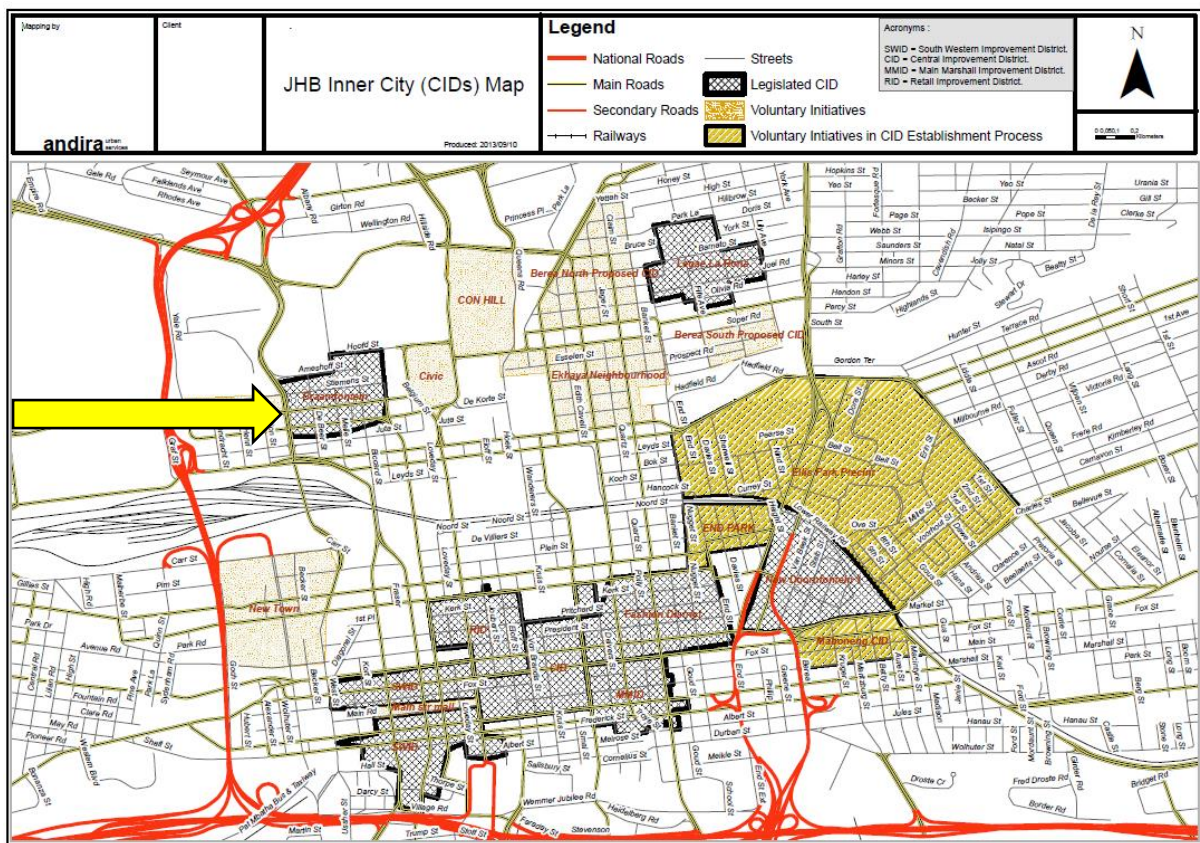


Figure 3 Map of inner city improvement districts in Johannesburg, highlighting the Braamfontein Improvement District (manipulated by author) (Johannesburg CID Forum, 2013).

This section of Braamfontein was formally designated as a CID by legislation in 2004, under the title BMD (Burocco, 2014). The earliest incarnation of the CID was a micro-scale safety initiative on Ameshoff Street and Simmonds Street launched Sappi, Liberty Group, and Nedbank (Burocco, 2014). This expanded later when other businesses joined and initiated an upgrade of the entire Hoofd Street area and the Civic Precinct (Burocco, 2014). Later still, the BMD area expanded again, now bounded by Hoofd, Bertha, Loveday, and Juta streets and

growing to include new kinds of actors including educational institutions, restaurants, and property companies. This incarnation functioned as any CID would, as a non-profit company, to which voluntary ratepayers in the area contributed in the form of tax levies for services including security, cleaning, marketing, and management.

A primary objective of this initiative (and typical of those of CIDs) was to make the area feel safe and clean. The body responsible for ensuring this is Urban Genesis – an ‘advisory and management services company’ specializing in urban management services (Burocco, 2014: 68). According to Urban Genesis, the company looks to international experiences and models to create mixed-used commercial nodes in the city that offer exceptional public spaces and subsequently attract further investment (Burocco, 2014). As such, Urban Genesis is thus responsible for employing Excellerate, the company that deploys security guards and cleaners in Braamfontein. With guards and cleaners dressed in recognizable uniforms and stationed strategically across the suburb, their presence is noticeable; however, more so in some areas than in others.

The use of the CID tool reflects the cross-national mobility of urban development patterns, which Rossi (2016) refers to as being enabled by neoliberalism. To this point, Didier *et al.* (2012) provide an outline of the correspondences between North American and European CID principals and South African ones. They understand the CID development model as a development tool linked to the rise of urban entrepreneurialism and the neoliberalization of policies and practices, much in the same way as Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell (2002) and Peck (2004) conceptualized this period. They explore the transfer and adaptation of this tool in Cape

Town and Johannesburg as an exercise in uncovering the extent of the local embedding of neoliberalism.

With this in mind, it is clear that the CID's ideal urban dweller and user in Braamfontein are the white-collar workers employed by the anchor companies, such as Liberty or Sappi. Their interventions suggest that these dwellers and users believe that without such interventions Braamfontein is unsafe and unclean. The BMD's inclusion of marketing as part of its initiative reiterates the JDA's belief that the area needs to transform its reputation. This hypothesis is further borne out by the kinds and locations of these interventions, which together suggest with some clarity that the people whose opinion of the area the JDA and BMD seek to change, and thus who they are trying to attract into the area, are big corporate tenants and their white-collar employees.

The most current manifestation of the CID, still under the management of Urban Genesis and working with Excellerate is called BRAAM. Below is a detailed map outlining this area.



Figure 4 Map outlining the Braamfontein Management District (Johannesburg CID Forum, n.d.).

While security, cleaning, management, and marketing remain central to this initiative, a much greater focus has now been placed on marketing. This is most notable in the Braamies website, which is a marketing platform for events, retailing, restaurants, and office spaces in the suburb. With BRAAM’s vision being to work towards the ‘creation of value within Braamfontein’ that directly benefits its community and attracts new capital investments into the area, the individual places that are included in the marketing effort are indicative of the kind of reputation BRAAM is trying to cultivate for the area. In particular this is one of fashion (particularly streetwear), culinary flair, arts and culture, music, and leisure.

The objects marketed by Braamies, which include streetwear clothing boutiques, record stores, coffee shops, art galleries, cultural events, markets, and more, are unquestionably deemed valuable to the suburb’s reputation, and since all of these items relate to art,

creativity, and culture in some way, this demonstrates a belief in the centrality of these themes to successful urban renewal, or, at least, to a successful manifestation of a kind of urban renewal.

The items marketed on Braamies suggests that despite BRAAM's claims that its work will benefit the entire Braamfontein community, it benefits only members of the community whose operations fit into the reputation BRAAM seeks to cultivate for the area and/or those who can afford to be a part of the organization. In this way, BRAAM's development programme largely ignores or rules out working-class and informal participants in the space. With low-income and informal users of the space being either ignored or pushed out, this reads as gentrification once more, although the displacement-aspect of gentrification here potentially impacts retailers in the area, rather than residents.

BRAAM's other activities includes providing services in addition to those provided by the city, particularly to address the street level problems of 'broken sidewalks, dirty pavements, and inadequate rubbish and refuse removal', 'rampant homelessness, informal trading, traffic congestions, unauthorized taxi ranks', and other associated issues that the organisation believes are responsible for the perception that Braamfontein is 'out of control' (BRAAM, 2018: 2). This suggests that they regard poverty and informality as bad for Braamfontein's image, and thus that their ideal urban users are specifically not homeless persons, informal traders, taxi drivers, or their customers.

South Point is a private property development company specializing in inner-city apartment and dormitory-style student accommodation (Burocco, 2014: 69). Established in Braamfontein in 2003, South Point now houses over 5000 students in 16 properties owned and managed in the suburb.¹⁴ South Point believes that its interventions in Braamfontein, namely the conversion of dilapidated commercial spaces into student accommodation and contributing to the development of public spaces and other amenities, drives the development of a 'youth-culture' and the 'cool' reputation of an area, both of which are seen as necessary and responsible for the successful regeneration of the suburb.

Drawing from this, we understand that their ideal urban dwellers and users are those who their efforts seek to attract, namely young, trendy, university-going persons (South Point, n.d.). While the relationship between urban renewal and students is not necessarily as popular in policy as, say, urban renewal and art, creativity, and culture, academic work does address this relationship, specifically under the theme of studentification (Smith, 2005). In this literature it is made clear that developers of student accommodation and renewal-focused property developers hold similar ideas about the negative impact that decaying infrastructure has on an area, and the positive impacts their upgrades will have.

A further alignment between these literatures and strategies of renewal is the accent on attracting a 'youthful' and 'trendy' crowd. They are, however, divergent in some ways, particularly in that developers of student accommodation, such as South Point, seeks to attract university-going individuals (who are rarely wealthy), while other property developers,

¹⁴ Two properties in their portfolio (Auckland House and B1ccard) offer non-student housing.

such as Play Braamfontein, seek slightly older, better established individuals with greater disposable income, colloquially referred to as 'yuppies'.

The Department of Arts, Culture, and Heritage: The Cultural Arc and the Wits Art Museum

The Department of Arts, Culture, and Heritage is responsible for ensuring the development, co-ordination, and preservation of the arts and sites of local heritage in Johannesburg (Burocco, 2014). In pursuing this, the department employed the idea of the Cultural Arc, which aims to link cultural institutions across the city through support from both private investments and educational institutions, with a focus on those in Braamfontein (Anheier and Yudhishtir, 2012). This involves supporting, re-developing, and connecting existing institutions, creating new ones, and facilitating physical and social accessibility through physical interventions (Anheier and Yudhishtir, 2012). Following this, the department invested heavily in Braamfontein, including the Constitution Hill Precinct development, the Civic Theatre, the Wits Art Museum (WAM), and the Nelson Mandela Bridge project. By encouraging private-sector investment, the department creates jobs and attracts tourists, and thus believes it plays an important role in urban renewal.

In seeking to establish Braamfontein's identity through art, history, and architecture, it seems clear that the Department's ideal urban dwellers or users are culturally-orientated individuals with the time and capital to access its projects, and are thus mostly middle- or upper-class locals and tourists. It is abundantly clear here that in local policy, art, culture, heritage, events, and architecture are central to strategies of urban renewal – be it its ability to attract investment, tourists, or wealthy locals. This appears to be an affirmation of Rossi's (2016)

argument regarding the cross-national mobility of urban development patterns that neoliberalism has allowed for and furthermore, the mobilization of culture for this purpose.

Play Braamfontein

Established in 2004, Play Braamfontein is a private property redevelopment company that specializes in commercial, retail, residential, and entertainment spaces. Owner Adam Levy argues that Play's interventions have helped transform Braamfontein from being a 'distressed' suburb, to becoming the 'aspirational epicentre of creativity in Johannesburg' (Play Braamfontein b, n.d.). Key thematic elements of its development rational includes the notion of a 'world-class' and 'utopian' space, an ethos of community building and of bringing 'people of all ages and backgrounds together', and the idea of creating fun and intriguing spaces (Play Braamfontein c, n.d.).

The spaces owned and redeveloped by Play Braamfontein are concentrated on Juta, Smit, and De Beer streets (Zone 3). Play's initiatives have encompassed both internal and external renovations to buildings, and public upgrades, including the Nelson Mandela mural, an eight-storey portrait created by an internationally famed graffiti artist; 'The Park', a small space grassed and fenced off from the road, with rotating art installations; and the interactive tree sculptures. Play Braamfontein has also been responsible for bringing events that originated in Cape Town to the suburb, including First Thursdays, a free public event where institutions such as art galleries, shops, and restaurants in the area stay open later than normal, and the Neighbourgoods Market, an artisanal food and clothing market that takes place every

Saturday. All of these interventions share an aesthetic sensibility that reads powerfully as gentrification.

These two events inform a temporary social change through the weekly and monthly buzz they respectively create in the suburb, as well as a long term social and physical change, as they attract new people and investments into the area through the reputation that Braamfontein has gained from hosting these events. Academics who have researched the changes Neighbourgoods has delivered include Wetu Memela (2015), who speaks about how the market has brought about the adoption of 'hipster culture' in Braamfontein; Omphile Lephadi (2015), and Simone Naiker and Jayne Rogerson (2017) look at the 'pull' Neighbourgoods has, particularly as an example of the developing trend of food markets with the ability to attract people into the inner-city who would not otherwise go there.

At present, there is no academic literature available on First Thursdays. Blog posts about the event (not from interested groups), however, make reference to art, fashion, food, alcohol, and parties, and frame the event in the ideas of luxury, gourmet, and buzz (Samakosky, n.d.; In Your Pocket, n.d.). Through my own observations I can add that the event brings a similar culture to the area that Memela (2015) suggests Neighbourgoods does. This speaks strongly about the relationship between the creative class and how strategies of urban renewal allow them to occupy the spaces in the inner-city, which they so desire to.

Play Braamfontein makes clear through its website, other promotional materials, and the kinds of events, spaces, and physical interventions in the area, that the focus is on art, fashion, design, and creative individuals. The information available on the Play website indicates the

belief that by doing this – in their attempts to bring a ‘world-class offering to everyone’ – they play a significant role in the regeneration of the city and Braamfontein (Play Braamfontein, n.d). Play Braamfontein’s ideal urban dweller and user is thus one with sufficient economic and cultural capital to access and appreciate the company's interventions, which points to such users being almost exclusively upper-class young adults, generally those working in a cultural industry or with an interest in engaging in culture as a leisure activity. In its vision and goals, Play Braamfontein’s work reflects globalized city-making trends, especially that of the ‘world-city’ title, as identified by Rossi (2016). It also speaks directly to the relationship between culture and urban renewal, and in its legible aesthetic, to the relationship between urban renewal and gentrification.

University of the Witwatersrand

According to Burocco (2014), the university’s historic presence in Braamfontein, and the fact that it was an open city campus until the mid-1990s, meant that it has always held a stake in the regeneration of the suburb. It was, however, only in 2010 that Wits began purchasing properties outside of its bounds for the purpose of future developments in the form of research facilities, entertainment centres, and for strategic trading. Wits has had two key areas of interest. Firstly, in taking up the vision of the Department of Arts, Culture, and Heritage, Wits has a particular interest in consolidating its role in the Cultural Arc initiative, hence the development of the WAM (Wits, n.d.). In this the university shares the logic of the JDA, the Department of Arts, Culture, and Heritage, and Play Braamfontein.

Secondly, Wits has also taken up the interests of the JDA in transforming Braamfontein into 'Africa's premier technology hub'. This development trajectory has led to the partnering with global technology giants (including IBM, Cisco, and Microsoft) and gaining support from local government and Telkom (Shapshak, 2016), in collective efforts targeted towards the development of 'tech hubs' including the Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct (the largest one), the IBM Trade and Research Laboratory, and the Digital Innovation Zone (Wits, n.d.). While limited to the western quadrant of the suburb, these developments have had a profound impact on the urban fabric there, particularly in the form of pavement widening, and additional streetlighting, parking, and security.

Socially, it has meant that younger, educated individuals move in the space between the hubs and the university, or nearby. Further, recent academic literature, such as Jeremy De Beer *et al.* (2017) and Erika Kraemer-Mbula and Chris Armstrong (2017), make reference to the ability of the Tshimologong Precinct, as a technological innovation hub with the ability to act as a space that grassroots and informal South African innovators can occupy, particularly because of its proximity to public transit (particularly Metrorail). Tim Kelly and Rachel Firestone (2016) speak broadly about tech hubs and their impact on the South African economy, citing the developments in Braamfontein as mix of spontaneous and organic developments from the private sector and calculated developments from the government and academic institutions. Jason Cohen *et al.* (2016: 118) focus on the idea of the 'smart city as a framework for city management', and the role young people play in bottom-up elements that make these projects successful through a Braamfontein case study.

Wits' leading role in these technological innovation focussed projects is premised on the belief that nurturing local producers and users of home-grown technology is an important step towards national development, and that Braamfontein is the perfect location for an African/South African epicentre for technological innovation, with its proximity to a large research-intensive university, big business, infrastructure (including transport systems and data networks), and people (Shapshak, 2016).¹⁵

While Wits' investment in technological innovation instead of arts, culture, and heritage does not necessarily align with the 'usual suspects' when it comes to urban renewal, it does speak to an increasing concern about the growing influence that universities have on urban renewal as large private land owners, and thus important decisions makers. Davarian Baldwin (2017) points to many instances, including the University of Chicago, Columbia University, and New York University, where universities use their economic power and extensive land holdings to influence decision making and facilitate the purchase of more land, much of which goes to the development of research centres similar to Tshimologong. Baldwin (2017) notes how these universities use tactics similar to those deployed by private developers, using eminent domain to take over land regarded as 'blighted', usually home to lower-income communities and informal businesses, and develop it in their image, which often has gentrification-like displacing impacts.

I believe that the presence of the Wits and its students from 1922, all the other colleges that have developed since, the retail and recreation spaces that cater to students, and student

¹⁵ For a detailed outline of how the Tshimologong Precinct came into being through university, private, and public negotiations, see Alan Mabin (2018).

housing facilities in the suburb, have played a role in limiting the extent of abandonment in Braamfontein, when compared to the CBD. The university's presence has meant that there was always a steady population of students in the area, which in turn facilitated perennial economic activity and residential occupancy, albeit probably at a fairly low level. Because Wits was a racially 'open' university, in that they accepted students regardless of their race, a case can be made for the university's role in facilitating the racial integration Braamfontein, in the apartheid years pre-1994.

While not speaking directly to this, Mabin (2018: 86) explores the nature of the relationship between the City and the university, particularly in the 'specificities of personal, organisational, informal, and structural interactions'. Mabin (2018) notes that with a R5 billion annual turnover, Wits wields a profound impact on its immediate neighbourhood(s). Mabin (2018) notes that because the majority of Wits students live in Braamfontein, the university is inevitably tied to the neighbourhood and the changes taking place within it. While much of this has been in the form of securing student accommodation, the university also has a great general interest in the area, particularly now as they attempt to expand and integrate into the neighbourhood through Tshimologong. While neither of these speak to the possible argument made above, they do show how the university exerts a substantial influence over the urban character of Braamfontein, and that its interests are likely to direct how development occurs in the neighbourhood.

Important to this research is Mabin's (2018) recollection of the period during which the campus was physically open to the city (1930s-1970s), and how this porosity, in addition to its being a racially 'open' university, meant that the university and its many resources were

available to township students. To a significant degree, this substantiates my suggestion that the presence of the university was responsible for creating a space of racial and economic diversity in a largely segregated city.

A continuation of Wits' role as a space of political mobilization includes the development of student-based protest movements in the area, in addition to the previous and ongoing protest action that has historically taken place in Braamfontein, a politically active suburb. The Fees Must Fall (FMF) protests from around 2015-2017, often departed from the gates of Wits, centring around the roads surrounding the campus and moving along to COSATU House. The suburb was often left littered after a protest, and thus protest action has been a point of contention between protestors and non-protestors, particularly people who work or own businesses in the area (Mulaudzi, 2018).

Despite the wealth of research conducted on FMF, few works address the relationships between protest action and the spaces in which it was conducted. The only academic text that speaks directly to the relationship between Braamfontein and FMF is Busisiwe Seabe's (2018) ethnographic account, where a few references are made to time spent in the suburb, either drinking or protesting there, or participating in protests that move through the suburb. While these protests have died down since the height of FMF, demonstrations still take place all around Braamfontein, most often outside one of the public offices in the area. While I was conducting my research in Braamfontein, I saw a week-long strike take place outside the South Point offices, a static protest outside the Labour Court, and three others that roamed around the suburb.

Recent Changes

Braamfontein has recently undergone a series of rapid changes, largely in the form of infrastructural developments. These changes have all occurred as a part of the various regimes of management in the area and thus involve public, private, and public-private initiatives, some being more formalized, long-term, and higher-budget, and others being less formalized, short-term and lower-budget. The scales at which these initiatives have been rolled out also varies significantly.

Major infrastructural developments in Braamfontein include that of Braamfontein Gate and the substantial renovation at the end of Ameshoff Street. While the former is outside of my research area, I believe it will have a significant impact within the suburb as the building has been converted to offer large-scale non-student accommodation, and thus will likely affect the overall composition of the users of Braamfontein. This serves to complicate the typical narratives of displacement when it comes to spaces of urban renewal such as Braamfontein, which are largely understood to be undergoing gentrification. Firstly, because the accommodation is affordable to the general public, it is not necessarily going to cause displacement along class lines. Secondly, because this building was previously office space, displacement will not be residential. Instead, the displacing potential of this development lies in the ability of new dwellers to overwhelm the retailscape and thus potentially increase the demand for different types of retailers, thereby pushing existing ones out of the area, or

potentially forcing long time users to go elsewhere for their purchases as existing retailers are overcrowded or change their profile.¹⁶

The extensive renovation at the end of Ameshoff spells the imminent opening of a large Food Lover's Market on the ground floor. I believe that this means a shift in lunchtime activity will occur in that those white-collar workers nearby will likely now leave their work cafeterias more frequently to shop externally at this establishment.

Smaller physical changes that occurred in Braamfontein over the course of my research, particularly in Zone 3, include the regular changing of the occupants of the pop-up store, the opening of a new thrift store, the opening of a new bar called Testament, and the changing of names and ownership of the store called Anatomy to Archive. This constantly shifting retailscape is worth noting, as it could be indicative of an unstable client base, and thus the failure of the urban renewal initiatives that manifest most profoundly there, being predominantly those of Play Braamfontein.

The underpinnings of most of these recent interventions are largely in line with the rationalities found in the narratives of the management regimes under which they were created. Thus, they are largely planned, formal, and legal changes that centre around safety, investment attraction, and both local and international tourism. The social and physical changes that occurred as a result of these interventions (or despite them), however, do not

¹⁶ Gustav Visser and Nico Kotze (2008) reference Cape Town's CBD gentrification in the early 2000s in the form of office-to-residence conversions, and while they do not unpack the outcome of this in detail, they do claim that those dwelling in these units are not markedly different from those occupying traditionally gentrified suburbs elsewhere in the city.

necessarily reflect their goals and ideals. As will be shown in the following chapter, social and physical changes have occurred in unexpected ways in relation to the initiatives outlined here, and in some ways actively disrupt the visions of the management regimes. They occur organically, informally, and are often illegal, largely centring around trade and protest. While they do not intersect often, in line with the distinct look and feel of the different areas of the suburb in which the activities predominantly operate, when intersection does occur, we find a variety of outcomes, including suppression, surveillance, and compromise.

Chapter 4: Findings – The Place and People

This chapter presents the findings of quantitative and qualitative street-level research in Braamfontein. It begins with the results of my initial street mapping and data capturing process for the suburb. Thereafter I provide a description of the look and feel of each zone, present additional zone-specific data, and embellish this with vignettes of people I interacted with in the area. Finally, I look at empirical similarities and differences across these zones, so as to ground the analysis in the following chapter.

The Suburb

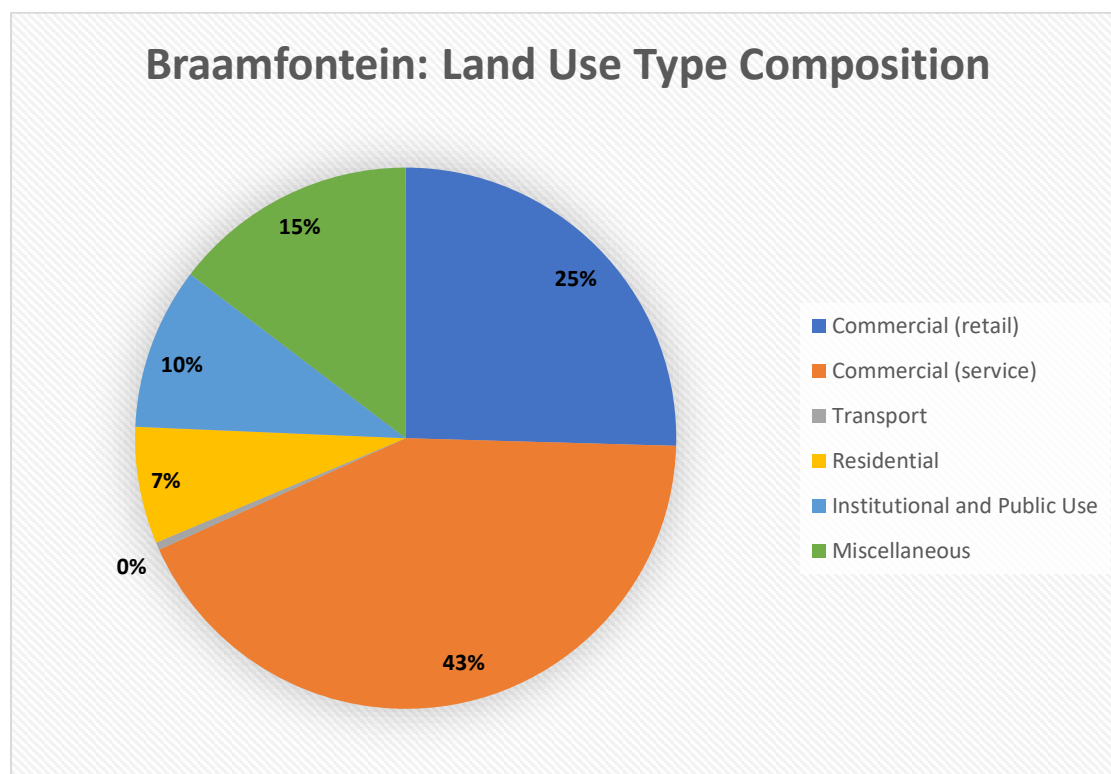


Figure 5 Braamfontein Land Use Type composition (based on field research).

Figure 5 shows that the land use in Braamfontein's streetscape is predominantly commercial, with service-sector units outnumbering retail-sector ones by almost two to one. Commercial

services operate at a range of scales and in various sectors, from large-scale insurance brokers like Liberty to small restaurants like Kota Palace or Post.¹⁷ Commercial retailers are the same by this measure, as they vary from large-scale, corporatized units such as Pick 'n' Pay, to small-scale, less formal units, like Beauty by Design and Fresh Out.¹⁸

The next largest portion is composed of land uses grouped under the 'miscellaneous' category, which includes parking lots, vacant spaces, building bases, construction sites, and the like. These land uses have a varied impact on the sociality of the surrounding space, depending on what they are; for example, building base spaces are quiet throughout the day, while construction sites are typically buzzing with people during normal work hours.¹⁹ Considering that these land uses offer different platforms for social interaction, and thus different outcomes, it is worth identifying each of them as a separate category.

Thereafter, 10% of land-use in Braamfontein comprises 'institutional and public use' spaces, which, much like 'residential land use' at 7%, is largely in the form of entrances that lead up to the land use above. Lastly, 'transport' land uses, in the form of formal and informal bus and taxi stops, sit at 0.5% of land use in the suburb.

¹⁷ Kota Palace is a local restaurant chain found between Zones 2 and 5. This budget-friendly restaurant served 'kotas' exclusively. These are large soft rolls stuffed with freshly fried chips, meat, and sauces. Post, found in Zone 3, is a different type of restaurant. Seating a maximum of 21 people, this small restaurant serves pricy café-style foods, including breakfast dishes like French toast, and lunch fare including pulled pork tacos and blue cheese and pear paninis.

¹⁸ Beauty by Design in Zone 4 is a small clothing store owned by a Nigerian man. The store sells both men's and women's clothing, in traditional African prints and styles, as well as western-style formal clothing, like suits, belts, and smart shoes. Located in Zone 3, Fresh Out is a small store selling exclusive Johannesburg-based streetwear brands, including Pessimistic. The clothing is expensive and inspired by western fashion trends. The shopkeepers here tend to be younger, trendy men of university-going age.

¹⁹ 'Building bases' here refers to the structure of the bottom of a building on the street-level, particularly when there is no use for it – it does not have any retail, service, or other offerings. It is simply the bottom, concrete, level of a building. While there is no formalized use for this space, such spaces continue to offer a specific sociality. Generally speaking, building bases produced quieter pavements.

The Zones

Zone 1: Institutions' Freeway

Zone 1, the only zone located on the western side of Braamfontein, stretches along sections of De Korte Street, Henri Street, and Juta Street.²⁰ This site was chosen for the strong institutional and public influence in the space. Key streetscape units include Wits, the Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, the THInK Research Programme house, and Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo House. The first two units are emblematic of the planned trajectory of Braamfontein as a South African technological innovation hub, as well as the strong influence of Wits here in the form of the Tshimologong Precinct.

The third unit speaks to the hub that Braamfontein has become for urban and regional governance institutions, which has important implications for the area. The presence of these institutions, including the Labour Court, the Department of Labour, the Department of Public Health, and the Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo House, as well as the offices of major unions like the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU), means that Braamfontein is, and always has been, an area that plays host to protests (Louw, 2017). The presence of Wits and the recent and ongoing FMF protests have also played a role in cementing Braamfontein's notably political character.

²⁰ Refer to p.35 for zonal map.

During my fieldwork however, it became apparent that including work in this zone would have exceeded the limits of this thesis as conducting research here with the same intensity as I did in the other zones would have surpassed the timeframe and the scope of this work. As such, I cut this zone from my observation phase; nevertheless, the institutional influence of Wits concentrates most materially here, and so while I did not conduct fieldwork here, the Tshimologong Precinct remains part of the analysis as it forms a significant part of the urban renewal initiatives that operate across the suburb today.

Zone 2: Bustle Boulevard

Zone 2 is comprised of sections of Bertha and Jorissen streets. This was chosen because of a few specific features that cluster here, in the form of larger, bulk-buying, lower-cost retailers. The western side of Bertha Street is taken up entirely by WAM. Along the eastern section of Bertha Street, the two main units of interest are (or were) the entrance to Rosebank College and the Chesa Nyama restaurant.²¹ The presence of Rosebank College points to the large number of colleges and tertiary education institutions that characterize and influence Braamfontein. The Chesa Nyama linked strongly to the narrative of student leisure in the area. However, soon after I identified this zone, this establishment closed down. While this did not serve to bolster my original hunch, it did resonate with the idea of retailscape instability, which is a theme that cropped up most strongly in Zone 3.

²¹ Chesa Nyama is both a specific type of South African restaurant and the name of a local restaurant chain. A chesa nyama restaurant is one where the diner chooses from a selection of meats at a refrigerated counter, which are then cooked on open flames, and brought to the table once cooked, alongside traditional accompaniments like 'chakalaka' (a spicy tomato and carrot sauce), pap (stiff maize meal porridge), and cooked spinach. Chesa nyamas are informal dining experiences where people generally order for the table and eat family-style.

The northern side of Jorissen Street is home to Pick 'n Pay and Pick 'n Pay Liquor, the biggest supermarket and liquor store in the suburb, Truworths and Identity, large mainstream clothing retailers, and Pep Cell, selling airtime, cell phones, and accessories. These stores attract a vast number of customers throughout the day, and thus make it an ideal location for the taxi (informal) and bus (formal) stops that also exist on this side of the road. On the other side of Jorissen Street is the Jorissen Place plaza, Clicks (a pharmacy, health and beauty retailer), an ABSA ATM, and the Jorissen Place building, housing the privatised municipal waste management company Pikitup headquarters, among other corporates and institutions. I believe that because of the facilities that cluster here, this was by far the most bustling spot I encountered during my fieldwork.

Throughout the duration of my fieldwork jobseekers hoping for employment with Pikitup gathered to wait in the Jorissen Place plaza. On a day-to-day basis the number of people waiting fluctuated significantly, from a handful to over a hundred. They waited outside with no discernible queue existing but rather some sitting, some standing, and some even lying on the ground, often gathering in groups and talking. There was one day when the Red Ants were present and in riot gear, however nothing further happened.²² I have not been able to find any media references for this, but the occurrence caused a distinct buzz, albeit in a small space. Outside of this, the activity in this plaza stands in opposition to the other side of the road, as it remains largely empty of foot traffic.

²² The Red Ants is a controversial local security, relocation, and evictions services company, infamous for violent forced removals in the inner city and surrounding townships of Johannesburg.

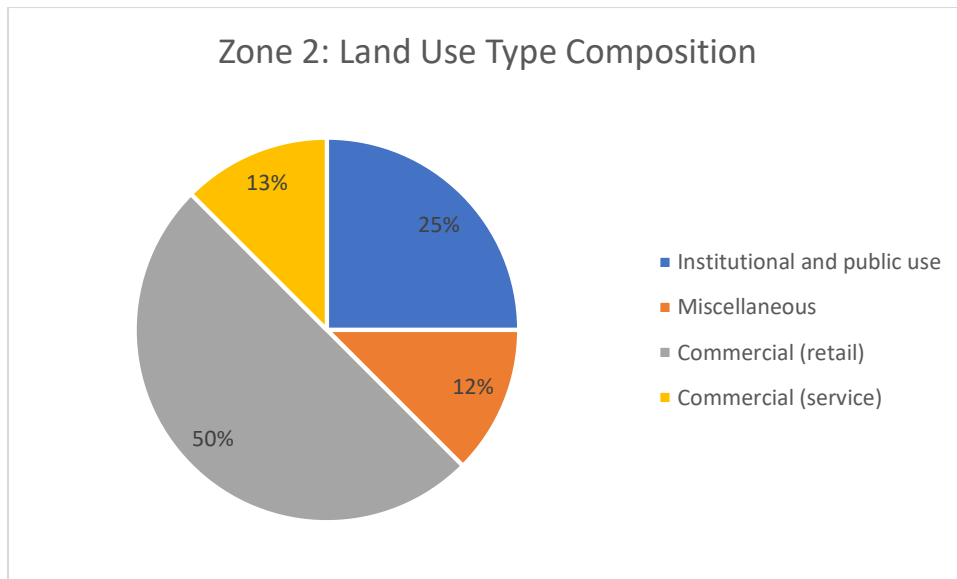


Figure 6 Zone 2 Land Use Type composition.

Table 1 Zone 2 Specific Type composition.

Specific Type	Tally	%
Art gallery	1	6,3%
Bank	1	6,3%
Cell phone store	1	6,3%
Clothing store	4	25,0%
Liquor store	1	6,3%
Mixed office space	1	6,3%
Parking lot	1	6,3%
Private higher education institution	2	12,5%
Religious institution	1	6,3%
Supermarket	1	6,3%
Toiletries and cosmetics	1	6,3%
Vacant lot	1	6,3%
TOTAL	16	

It was difficult to interview or conduct a less formal conversation with anyone in this zone because of how people tend to move here – that is, quickly and with the purpose of going somewhere else. The interactions I had here were with people who beg, and with a person handing out flyers outside the Rosebank College entrance. In different ways, these encounters pointed out to me how I was being read in this zone – one of the people who beg spoke to me in Afrikaans, and the friends of the person handing out flyers muttered ‘Cape

Town' as I walked past after a brief interaction with them. The references to Afrikaans and Cape Town serve as social indicators of whiteness, and Cape Town in particular operates as an indicator of wealth; both provide indications of what counts as the 'normal' passer-by here.

Zone 3: The Neighbourhood

Zone 3 is composed of a few interconnected roads, including Juta Street, De Beer Street, and Smit Service Road. The 'land use' composition here is skewed towards commercial services and retailing, as it is filled with busy clubs, bars and restaurants, as well as popular niche clothing stores and art galleries. Many of the buildings in this area are painted in bright colours and the streets are decorated with public art installations and graffiti. The miscellaneous space in Zone 3 includes a public (although fenced-off) park, as well as a pop-up shop space. In addition to the regularly changing pop-up shop, as previously stated, this zone was characterized by retailscape instability, with more stores, bars, and restaurants closing, changing hands, or opening here than in any other.

The streetscape composition and aesthetic here speak strongly to aspirations of western-style urban development and is likely to be the source of the regularly occurring assertion from online newspapers, magazines, and research articles that Braamfontein is a gentrified suburb (Gwata, 2014; Serino, 2015). What I aim to show in my analysis of this zone of culture-led urban renewal, and perceived gentrification, is how forms of sociality produced here exceed those theorized or predicted by dominant conceptualizations of urban renewal and gentrification. This is evident upon examining the space's 'gay friendly' reputation as well as

the centrality of fashion, and in particular streetwear, to how social life plays out here. I identify another form of sociality that exceeds dominant conceptualizations, specifically in the relationship held between the formal and informal economies, in this zone, and in a few others, later.

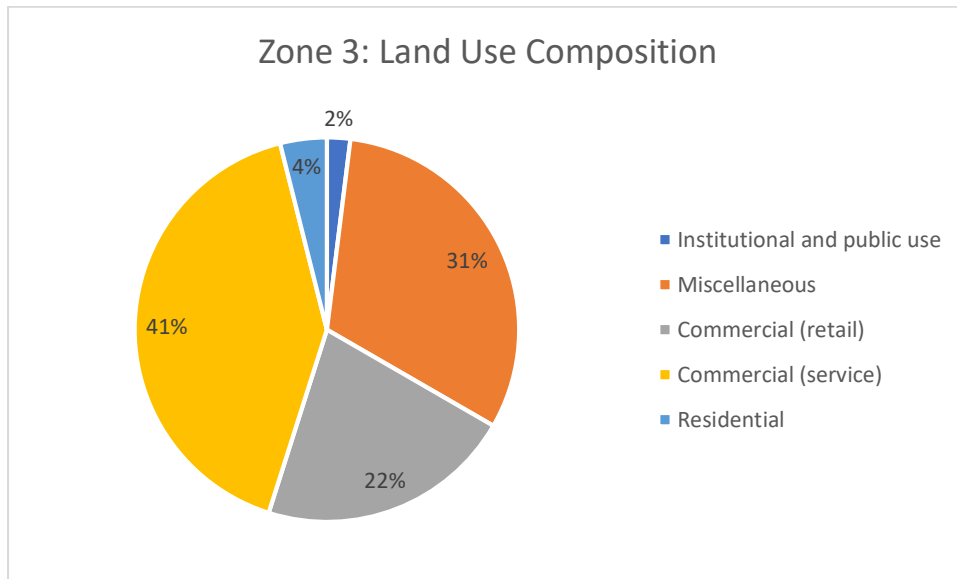


Figure 7 Zone 3 Land Use Type composition.

Table 2 Zone 3 Specific Type composition.

Specific Type	Tally	%
Advertising agency	1	2,0%
Art gallery	3	5,9%
Artisan food and clothing market	1	2,0%
Automobile service centre	1	2,0%
Bar	4	7,8%
Bar and comedy club	1	2,0%
Bar and hotel	1	2,0%
Building base	6	11,8%
Clothing store	3	5,9%
Kitchen appliances	1	2,0%
Musical instrument store	1	2,0%
Open space	2	3,9%
Parking lot	3	5,9%
Religious institution	1	2,0%
Restaurant	9	17,6%
Salon	1	2,0%

Short term student residential	2	3,9%
Sneaker store	4	7,8%
Sunglasses store	1	2,0%
Vacant property	5	9,8%
TOTAL	51	

The streets in this area tend to be dominated by students or other patrons in their mid-20s to early-30s, especially in the restaurants, bars, and clubs, as well as some less-formal users including car guards. I noted here that formal businesses shared a cordial relationship with informal workers in this area, where car guards would help bars and restaurants and assist their customers to find secure parking. I often heard them communicate on a first-name basis. The restaurants here tend to be ‘speciality-focused’, serving foreign foods, or offering small menus of popular fare, such as Unwrapped and Wing Republic. They are often filled with young people working on their laptops, having quick meetings, or socializing with friends.

The bars and clubs here include Great Dane, Kitchener’s, Testament, The Bannister Hotel, and The Goliath Comedy Club. Kitchener’s, Great Dane, and Testament specifically tell an interesting story about the development of ‘safe’ LGBTQIA+ spaces and communities in the area. Characteristics of this gay-friendliness and safety are that all spaces serve a queer-identifying clientele; Kitchener’s has safety policies set in place to protect their LGBTQIA+ patrons and hosts queer events; Great Dane is affectionately known as ‘Gay Dane’ among its clientele. This theme will be revisited in the next chapter.

All of the clothing stores tend to sell streetwear garments, with an emphasis on footwear, in the form of sneakers; this informs a particular pull to the area externally and internally, as people from outside the suburb come to these stores to make speciality purchases, and, in a

particularly interesting intra-suburb pull, students and other young people come to the stores to socialize in them. This phenomenon will be elaborated later on.

Because the restaurants and stores in this zone were the easiest sites from which to conduct my research, I had regular brief and informal interactions with the people working at them. I also interviewed two people working in the Dip Street store. To me, Dip Street was an interesting node in this suburb because it emphasized the importance of fashion (streetwear in particular) and demonstrated a unique characteristic of the sociality of the area, which spoke to the ways in which this zone is similar and dissimilar to Zone 4.²³

The interview I conducted here was with two men, Scoop and Steven. Scoop works at Dip Street and Steven designs and owns a local streetwear brand called 'Pessimistic', which is sold at Fresh Out, another store in the zone.²⁴ Scoop was busy decorating a pair of Nike sandals for a friend when I walked in, and he continued to do so throughout our conversation. Both men were wearing streetwear clothing themselves, with Steven in one of his own tops. They expressed their interest in clothing in other ways too, like chatting about other local streetwear brands, and bringing out a pair of extremely expensive jeans of an international streetwear brand to show me. All of this highlights the importance of fashion – particularly streetwear – in the space, and the connections this trend has to elsewhere. They reflected on their relationship with Braamfontein and the ways in which social life plays out there:

²³ One interaction that emphasizes the importance of fashion includes a day where I was wearing what I know to be a popular streetwear brand, and when I walked past the store and one of the employees shouted out from the window 'Nice t-shirt!'.

²⁴ All of my interviewees gave express verbal permission to use their real names.

'Yeah. We spend all of our time in Braam. I just go home to sleep. Otherwise, I'm here.'

'Yeah, we don't really go anywhere else, other than to Park Station and that other direction to get stuff from town.'

'We only hang out this side of Braam.'

'And other side of Braam is just for food.'

'Ja, we mostly hang out here or at Kitchener's or Great Dane. Or like on First Thursdays we will go to the Sneaker Lab for the monthly launch of their packaging, where each week a new designer makes the packaging that they will use that month.'

...

'I really like Braam. There is a community here and people are very connected.'

'Yeah, it's easy to meet people here. There are lots of artists here and they have a strong community that keeps people together.'

'Twitter is also an important part of what keeps people in Braam connected.'

...

'The students here are probably an important part of what keeps it cool. If there weren't students there would be nothing.'

Scoop and Steven, 11/10/2018.

What is clear from this conversation, as well as from other observations made in this zone, is that the social life of this space is a close knit one, as high value is placed on community. The value of community also predicates an emphasis on the 'local', something highlighted by the value placed by Steven on Johannesburg-based brands. This, in addition to the compelling

form of sociality that is secreted by these shops, suggests that in various ways, community operates through fashion, and thus arts and culture, here.

Another recurring theme in the interaction was social media, with both Twitter and Instagram being mentioned a few times during the course of the conversation. This indicates that the community here, or at least the one Scoop and Steven are a part of, is young, active online, and thus probably connected to globalized consumer cultures and sub-cultures, with this global connection being emphasized by the knowledge of clothing brands from South Africa and abroad. This global interconnectedness of knowledge links to the idea of students, youth, and coolness that South Point publicizes, and will form part of the analysis in the next chapter.

Zone 4: Global South Central

Zone 4 is likewise dominated by retailing and service units; however, both are less formal than those in Zone 3. The units here include several salons, convenience stores, electronic stores, laundromats, and other services of a similar type. For the most part, the owners, managers, and employees who work formally and informally in this zone are foreigners of African or West Indian descent.²⁵ These business units, and thus the zone itself, tend to cater to a lower-income clientele than the other zones, something which could be identified not only in the retailscape, but also in the aesthetic and demographic shift that occurs when moving into this place from the others. The units filling up the streetscape are smaller and more closely packed

²⁵ While this information about ownership was easy to derive here, the same does not apply for ownership in Zone 3.

together than in other areas; they are nameless or have generic names, such as 'Internet Café and Dry Cleaners', and 'Beauty Salon', and closely resemble each other.

Units of the same type tend to provide the same goods and services as the others. The pavements here are busy, although less so than in Zone 2, with customers, school children, people who beg, informal traders, car washers, and other pedestrians competing for the limited space. Owners and employees of these units tend to spend a significant amount of time outside chatting with each other and to those who work here less formally, including hawkers, weed dealers, and car washers. This indicates a feeling of cordiality among formal business owners despite their close proximity and obvious competition for customers. Likewise, there is a sense of affability among formal and informal business owners, despite the illegality of some of the informal work being offered. It is thus clear that a strong sense of community exists in this zone.

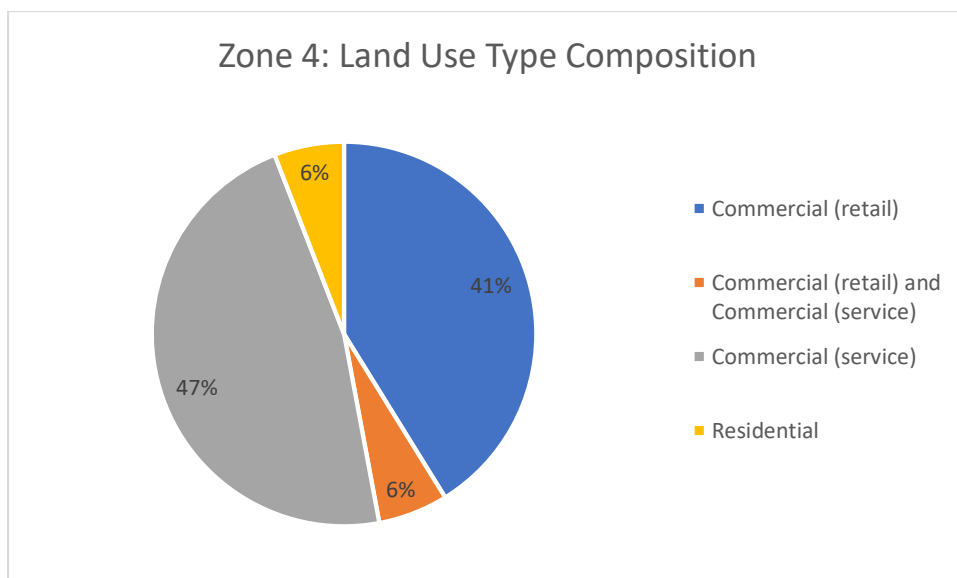


Figure 8 Zone 4 Land Use Type composition.

Table 3 Zone 4 Specific Type composition.

Specific Type	Tally	%
Bar	1	5,9%
Clothing store	1	5,9%
Convenience store	3	17,6%
Dry cleaner	1	5,9%
Dry cleaner and Electronics store	1	5,9%
Electronics store	1	5,9%
Furniture store	1	5,9%
Internet café	2	11,8%
Liquor store	1	5,9%
Restaurant	1	5,9%
Salon	2	11,8%
Short-to-long term residential	1	5,9%
Tailor	1	5,9%
TOTAL	17	

In Zone 4 I was approached by people more often than in any other zone. Consequently, I participated in a greater number of face-to-face interactions here than in any other zone. Of these interactions, those that were noteworthy included first, an instance when a group of men who gathered to drink and socialize on the same bench I was sitting at, invited me into their conversation, and second, a series of interactions I had with men who sold weed on the corner near the same bench. The first interaction arose when the men turned around to ask me what I was doing there, indicating that the presence of someone who looked like me was an anomaly to them. Nevertheless, they offered to share their beer with me and invited me to a party they would be attending later at one of the men's sister's flat. While this interaction was comparable to my experiences in Zone 2, made clear through their comments and behaviour how surprising my presence was, the interaction seemed friendlier.

My understanding, gleaned from asking the group what brought them to Braamfontein, was that they are friends and come here often to drink. The reason for this, they told me, was that this is where they used to drink when they all lived nearby, and also because they could

purchase cheap alcohol from the liquor store in the zone and then drink it immediately on the corner, making it more affordable. This indicated the power of the social meaning of this space as well as the deeply powerful attraction of price.

The other casual interaction I had was with two people selling weed on this corner. These two men were noticeably well acquainted with the people who worked in formal businesses in the suburb, highlighting the cordial nature of interactions between formal and informal (and illegal) businesses on this street. The first man approached me, asking if I wanted any 'ganja'. We spoke for a while, and eventually I tried to ask him about his relationship with Braamfontein, but because of a language barrier and his coy demeanour, my questions were left unanswered. Two weeks later I was approached in the same spot in a similar way by a different man. He sat down with me and talked for a while, telling me that he too sold weed here, and that the previous man worked for him. We talked about the suburb and he told me that he thought 'Braam is for students', and that Biccard Street was 'for foreigners'. He was a foreigner himself and explained that he came to Johannesburg five years ago so that he could make money.

I asked him how he managed to run his business in the midst of so many police and security guards, to which he responded that there weren't so many policemen in this part of Braamfontein and that the security did not bother him or his acquaintances, alluding to some sort of understanding or deal between them. He also said, referring to himself, that if you dress a certain way, the police would not bother you, which suggests that the police used profiling tactics to identify potential criminals.

I also conducted an interview with a male manicurist working at a salon just outside of the zone. He introduced himself as Dr. Ola. I went to the salon to have my nails manicured, and after explaining my research to Dr. Ola, he said that he was happy to speak to me about Braamfontein and to 'help me with whatever I needed in the suburb'. Dr. Ola told me that he had moved to Johannesburg from Nigeria to study at Wits, but ended up becoming a nail technician. He has been working at this salon for the last six years, and while he could move, he would not choose to, because he considers it to be the leading salon in the suburb.

He lives in Braamfontein, explaining that he chose the suburb over others because he speaks English, and if he lived anywhere else in the city, he would not be able to speak to anyone. He adds that despite the higher rent, as a foreigner, he was safer in Braamfontein. Once again, this highlights the importance of community in Zone 4, particularly with reference to immigrants.

Dr. Ola spoke further about safety and crime in the area, saying that the attempts to 'modernize' the suburb (i.e. 'develop' it) have meant that it has become congested, with more 'students, people, and new kinds of shops', and that this has attracted 'theft and crime' into the neighbourhood, and subsequently more police and security guards who stop and search people.

Addressing the 'modernization' of the area directly, Dr. Ola said:

'White developers look at black people and try to figure out how to make money. [Black people] like nice drinking places and spending money, so [the developers] develop these taverns (The Immigrant,

96 Public, Republic of 94). It's a good thing but it also a problem because it causes the congestion. What they need to do is create a recreation centre where people can relax and mingle. You need to mingle with people to be successful.'

Dr. Ola, 21/09/2018.

In the same breath, Dr. Ola expresses a personal concern with the 'modernization':

'The people trying to modernize the space [. . .] told the salons that they don't want them here anymore because there are too many and they aren't very modern.'

Dr. Ola, 21/09/2018.

What was most productive about this interview was hearing a first-hand account of the underlying conflict between the benefits and detriments brought about by the development regimes as experienced by those who work in the zone. Dr. Ola speaks to the benefits, but in a general way, noting how 'modernization' is good for the area. When voicing his concerns, his thoughts are honed, and relate to individual issues. Pertinent for this research is Dr. Ola's mention of how his business is seen through the eyes of developers – that is, as dated and uncompetitive. It further highlights the racially polarized ways in which some urban users perceive Braamfontein's developers and the people who frequent the neighbourhood.

Zone 5: Smoker's Alley

Zone 5 occupies the length of Ameshoff Street, and is made up of two distinct parts. The first and larger part, on the eastern side of the road, is composed of 'miscellaneous' units and larger service units, falling into either the 'category spanner' and 'financial services'

taxonomy. The nature of the services that dominate this area and the format of this land use have a distinct impact on the activity taking place at street-level. The land use format in this part of the zone is dominated by large corporate head office-type buildings. With these units taking up entire blocks, there is no space for day-to-day exchanges and the sociality that naturally secretes from these. Furthermore, there are cafeterias inside these units, thus giving the employees in these buildings little reason to leave the office.

In short, pavements here are quieter than in any other zone. Yet, a degree of street activity persists. Smoking, in particular, draws white-collar workers out of their offices and into the street, where they gather in groups of two or three, their access cards attached to lanyards around their necks, to chat quietly while finishing their cigarettes. The renewal initiatives that operate here dictate that the other people to be found on the street are private security guards and cleaners.

The second, much smaller part of Zone 5, closer to Jan Smuts Avenue, is composed of smaller-scale commercial service providers: two popular salons, a busy PostNet store, and a café-restaurant called Love Food. These fall into the 'personal' or 'leisure and hospitality' taxonomy. A level of streetscape socializing comparable to that of Zones 3 and 4 occurs at this end of the street, where those who enliven the street by chatting loudly outside include informal car guards, people working at the salons, salon clients, patrons of Love Food, and cleaners from the residential building nearby. This difference, from one side of the road to the other, and the correspondences of this part of the zone to Zones 3 and 4, is intriguing as it suggests a link between retail type and street activity. This idea will be returned to later.

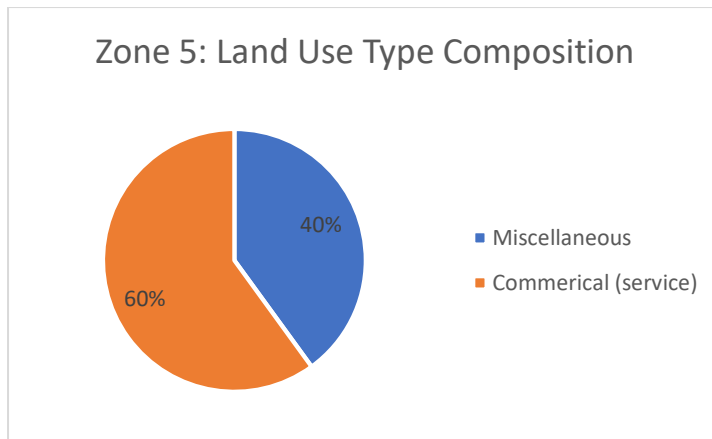


Figure 9 Zone 5 Land Use Type composition.

Table 4 Zone 5 Specific Type composition.

Specific Type	Tally	%
Building base	2	13,3%
Construction	1	6,7%
Insurance	4	26,7%
Optometrist	1	6,7%
Printing	1	6,7%
Public art installation	1	6,7%
Restaurant	1	6,7%
Salon	2	13,3%
Vacant property	2	13,3%
TOTAL	15	

Only two parking guards work here – Lebo and his right-hand man. This is unusual for Braamfontein as a suburb where parking guards are generally present in high numbers; however, not for Zone 5, which is devoid of most informal or pedestrian activity. I meet Lebo one day outside Love Food. Lebo was sitting on a stool near my table and asked me if I knew about the raffle being held at the tuckshop around the corner. Lebo is about 50 years of age, dressed in old clothing. He drank from a Black Label quart while we chatted. He tells me about working here:²⁶

²⁶ Black Label is a popular brand of South African beer.

'I like it here. The food here is the best, unmatched. People come all the way from Sandton to eat here. Jamie, the owner, markets the place very well. She is a genius. They serve English food here. My kids eat black food, so they don't know this food. I started eating English food when I came here and it's the best. I've been here in Braam since 1994, then I left for a bit but got fired and came back. I love it here. Even if I had a million Rand, I would still work here. It's home and people know me. It's my road'

Lebo, 23/08/2018.

The distinct cultural binaries that Lebo identified, which parallel those found in Zones 2 and 4, are intriguing. The close relationship that he, as an informal car guard, enjoys with the owners and managers of a formal business, is also noteworthy. This was highlighted when the owner of Love Food's mother greeted Lebo by name as she passed and in the way he was addressed by name by all the waiters who came outside to check if I was 'being disturbed'. Lebo was able to identify which cars belonged to who among those who work there, and jumped up quickly to help one of the kitchen staff unpack food from their car boot. This close and cordial relationship between Lebo and those who work at Love Food mirrors the symbiosis between the more- and less- formal economies that was found in Zones 3 and 4.

Lebo makes reference to the development initiatives, private security presence, and police in the area. He says:

'The student accommodation here is expensive, much more than Newtown. This is because of all the private security and street cleaners – it means they can charge more. The police also cause trouble here. They give out parking fines when there isn't any space to park legally. And then my clients get upset with me. The police don't have any understanding.'

Lebo, 23/08/2018.

This echoes the sentiments of Dr. Ola, whose view was that the renewal initiatives in Braamfontein have led to increased police presence, which, in various ways, puts pressure on marginalized people trying to make a living in the suburb.

Between and Among the Zones

Commerce-scapes: The impact of pricing, nature, and scale

While all presenting varied ratios of service and retailer institutions, Zones 2, 3, and 4 can all be considered commercial districts, whose amenities serve individual needs. Despite this significant similarity, distinct differences exist between them, particularly in terms of how social life plays out and the demographic the spaces attract. I suspect that these differences have to do with the pricing, nature, and scale of the retail and service options available in each zone.

In terms of pricing, Zones 2 and 4 offer low-cost goods and services, while Zone 3 offers high price-points. The first two areas thus cater to a lower income demographic, while the latter caters to a higher one. In terms of the nature of the retailing and service options, the offerings of Zone 2 and 4 serve 'everyday needs', of an immediate and utilitarian nature, such as hot lunches, groceries, cell phone shops, affordable clothing stores, and transport services, while Zone 3 is home to niche, boutique-style retail and service offerings. In terms of scale, Zone 3 and 4 are smaller business units with a distinctly 'non-corporate' (self-owned, entrepreneurial) feel, while Zone 2 is dominated by large-scale, corporate-controlled chain brands.

Zone 2 provides affordable everyday retailing and service options, at a large-scale and at a middle-to-low price point. This goes some way to explaining why this is the busiest zone in Braamfontein, particularly with a lower-income demographic trying to fulfil their daily needs. Adding to this bustle too, is the fact that major transport amenities exist here, as well as the temporary use of Jorissen Place plaza as a place for job-seekers to gather. This zone is busiest around lunch time as a result of the popularity of the hot food counter at Pick 'n Pay, frequented predominantly by people working in construction, cleaning, private security, and policing. The area's base-flow bustle, however, comes from people who access this area to make household purchases, including students, many of whom stream directly from Wits down the road, and people who use the transport amenities here for their journeys home.

Zone 3 provides relatively smaller-scale retailing and services when compared to Zone 2, and at a higher price point than Zones 2 and 4. It is fairly common practice for those working in the zone, particularly in retail, and more so, in streetwear and sneaker stores, to spend a significant amount of time socializing inside the store or at its street front, either among themselves or with acquaintances passing by. These are typically young people of colour, who live in the area and work in a creative industry, or students at one of the nearby institutions of higher education. There is always loud music playing (generally hip hop) and loud chatter, and when the employees are outside, shop windows are open and music blares into the road, as they smoke either hookah or cigarettes. They often share food and drinks, and exhibit physical closeness.

Zone 4 and Zone 3 are manifestly similar in a few distinct ways. First, like the aforementioned employees in Zone 3, the shop owners/managers of Zone 4 spend a significant amount of time socializing outside their stores. Second, the relations between the people who work in Zone 3 strongly mirror those between the people working in Zone 4, with people from both zones identifying and placing value in a strong 'community' feeling, especially where safety and creativity are fostered. The analogous land use composition of Zone 4 and Zone 3 results in both areas having many retail and service options that overlap and thus should be natural competitors. However, with this established and integrated sense of community, one does not intuit competition between the obviously similar stores in either zone. Third, the zones are similar in the scales of their respective retail and commercial offerings, as both are home to smaller business units having a markedly 'non-corporate' feel. It could be argued that the spatial equivalences these zones share in terms of scale could be responsible for the marked likenesses in the forms of sociality that precipitate from both of these zones.

Despite these similarities, Zones 4 and 3 are also profoundly different in a few ways. Firstly, those who spend time socializing outside their stores in Zone 4 are generally older (30s to 40s) males of foreign descent (Indian/Pakistani or North West/East African). They tend to engage with each other across retail outlets and the people here who are proprietors of less-formal businesses on the street, who are not necessarily friends coming to visit in their spare time, as in Zone 3. There is also generally no smoking, eating or drinking – they spend their time chatting. The offerings in each of the zones are also markedly different, with Zone 4 having an 'everyday' offering, and Zone 3 a 'niche' or 'speciality' offering, as can be discerned from the earlier descriptions. These offerings in turn conjure a different look and feel for each

zone; where Zone 4 is buzzing and somewhat chaotic, Zone 3 is calm, quiet, and relatively manicured.

The retailscape in Zone 4 compares to that of Zone 2 in terms of each zone's respective price-point and the 'everyday' nature of the retailing and service options available. Thus, offerings in both zones serve the 'everyday needs' of a low-income demographic.²⁷ What this means is that the clientele bases in Zones 4 and 2 closely resemble each other and are distinct from that of Zone 3. Zones 4 and 2 are by far the busiest zones; I believe this is because of the 'everyday' nature of their retailscapes. It is worth noting that it was in these two zones that I encountered the greatest incidence of 'illegal' activity, including weed dealing, public drinking, and hawking. This is noteworthy for Zone 2, as it has an extremely high police presence.

Boundary Crossers

While there is a wide variety of people inhabiting each zone, there are a few groups that are common to all of them, as their occupations require them to move continuously through the suburb. These groups include private security guards and cleaners, as well as hawkers, and reclaimers. Their movements are dictated by diverse needs and activities, including patrolling for the purpose of identifying and solving problems and seeking business opportunities that have been declared illegal. The nature of their activities is vastly different as well, where one

²⁷ The retail and service options in Zone 4 are nonetheless different from those offered in Zone 2 in terms of operational formality and scale.

can be seen as a requirement of their formal employment, while the other is a resistant practice necessitated by localized trading laws.

Excellerate security guards and cleaners are present in every zone, but there are disproportionately more of them working in Zone 5 than anywhere else. Hawkers are also found across all zones; however, there are somewhat fewer to be found in Zone 3 and in the eastern part of Zone 5. Because the movement of hawkers is driven by a search for business opportunities, it can be posited that the reason why they are barely present in these two zones is because these informal business operators perceive a lack of business opportunities there, or that their practice is likely to be policed.

A productive comparison can be made between the daily informal trade of the hawkers that occurs across the suburb and the once a week trading at Neighbourgoods Market. While both share an entrepreneurial foundation, where traders sell goods or produce (particularly fresh or cooked produce) that they have made or acquired (or sell them for someone else for a fee), the respective trading environments, the price range, and their clientele, set them worlds apart. Furthermore, while one is a practice of resistance necessitated by the illegalization of informal trade and/or a lack of formal employment, the other is an artisanal, curated, and high-profit practice that seems to be fuelled by the pursuit of cultural capital and personal passions, instead of subsistence as is the case with informal traders (Skinner, 2008). Thus, while both sets of traders sell their wares to passing clients whose decision to purchase is made spontaneously, meaning that the traders are not usually sought out, their respective trading environments and strategies are largely determined by economic privilege or the lack thereof.

The opposing modes of trade discussed above provide an example of what this chapter sought to suggest – that when analysis pays attention to places, people, and practices that urban theory tends to ignore and draws them into new comparisons, a deeper understanding of the contemporary realities of urban renewal in a city of the south can be better grasped.

Chapter 5: Braamfontein – A Renewed Look at Renewal

In adopting Robinson's reconception of the case in her reimagination of comparativism, this chapter offers a reading of Braamfontein, as a suburb undergoing urban renewal, that tries to bridge the perceived epistemological incommensurability of various cities and countries in this discipline. In doing this, it will consider spatial and social forms that operate irregularly within the suburb under similar and overlapping urban renewal regimes and through this, draw differentiated urban outcomes together in unusual comparisons via global-reaching and locally-specific explanations. Thereby, it will contribute to the southern urbanist project in establishing a non-binary reading of urban processes across the globe.

I look at Braamfontein as a case of urban renewal, examining how the adapted or reconfigured neoliberal urban renewal initiatives that have been implemented here and the historical characteristics, such as the racialized spatial history of Johannesburg and its inner city, a past of urban decay, the historical presence of academics and students, and the strong institutional influence of the university, intermingle in the suburb.²⁸ It is in this intermingling that I look at the spatial and social outcomes of renewal initiatives in Braamfontein, in relation to where they sit at the intersection of congruence and incongruence to both the desired outcomes laid out within the strategy documents of the urban renewal initiatives, and the outcomes typically predicted in academic literature.

²⁸ These neoliberal urban renewal initiatives, were, as explained by Rossi (2016), developed and popularized in advanced capitalist cities of the West, and subsequently mobilized and reconfigured in southern cities. These planning policies became popular in the West in 1970s to 1980s, and not too long after this, into the less-developed world, as a result of advanced globalization.

Narratives of Renewal and Decay: A Zonal Overview

Before delving into the key differences between debates of urban renewal and what was found during fieldwork, it is important to set the scene once more by exploring how the particular look and feel of each zone speaks to bodies of work on urban renewal and decay, in nuanced and diverse ways. Zones 5 and 3 embody two distinct narratives of urban renewal, with Zone 5 falling into a revanchist-leaning strategy of urban renewal (Smith, 2005), and Zone 3 being more culturally-led – both narratives being in line with predominantly western neoliberal ideas (Florida, 2002a).

Zone 5 speaks to a corporate version of urban renewal, with a focus on eradicating crime and grime and creating order through privatized security and cleaning, increasing street lighting and parking, widening pavements, greening strategies, and eradicating informality, so as to enhance the experience of the people who work there, and to attract large investments to the area. The resulting look and feel is a modern, western, affluent, business district.

Zone 3 speaks to a creative, culture-led version of urban renewal, with a strong focus on niche retail, dining, and leisure, with the aim of curating an experience that draws a particular set of customers into the area, and keeps them coming back. The customers that this zone seeks to attract are younger, multi-racial, wealthier people with an interest in art and fashion. The resulting look and feel is that of a neighbourhood in the thick of gentrification, typical of any developed western city.

The difference in how these narratives manifest is primarily discernible by aesthetics, and this suggests that both kinds of neoliberal urban renewal ideas made their way into Braamfontein through the bodies responsible for the spatial interventions and management of the spaces. In turn, what this finding highlights is how street-level observations of urban change are key for understanding which modes of urban renewal the primary bodies and initiatives responsible for the intervention in Braamfontein have been deployed and implemented.

Zones 4 and 2, on the other hand, look and feel much like areas in the Johannesburg CBD. They are extremely busy, populated almost exclusively by people of colour, characterized by informality to varying degrees and illegal activity in the forms of weed dealing and public drinking, litter-strewn (especially Zone 4), and occupied by affordable and low-cost retailing and service options. In this sense, the aesthetics of these spaces speaks to the same narratives of decay and disorder as those used to describe the CBD – as a ‘problem’ area in need of ‘fixing’ (i.e. renewal and management). These narratives of decay, despair, and chaos are comparable to those famously criticized by Mike Davis (2006) to describe cities of the south. The characteristics these spaces (Zones 2, 4, and the CBD) share, suggests that the management and renewal initiatives that target them are not only necessitated by ‘crime and grime’, but also by the presence of informal businesses and people of colour and, and thus signals the classed and racialized nature of management and policing of public spaces in this renewed area.²⁹

²⁹ It should be noted that an additional theme of ‘crime and grime’, as one that relates strongly to conventional practices of urban renewal, was identified during the fieldwork. However, because the findings merely affirmed what is typically found in literature, they will not be explicated here.

A notable congruence that I observed across in Zones 3, 4, and the western part of Zone 5 was the positive relationship between formal and less formal economies, particularly with car guards, homeless people, weed dealers, and reclaimers. Participants tend to know each other by name and to help each other on matters that cross over their territories, such as with deliveries to shops or restaurants, or when by assisting restaurant patrons to find parking. The only zone where this was not apparent was Zone 2. I suspect this is because of the commercialised nature of the retailing that takes place here, which does not allow for informal arrangements between the formal and informal economies.

The following sections examine the rest of the findings of this research, including policy narratives and empirical referents to culture-led strategies of urban renewal, how the findings in Braamfontein speak to literature on gentrification (specifically, studentification), protest action taking place in Braamfontein, the relationship between the formal and informal economies in Braamfontein, and the presence of two communities in the suburb, in the form of foreigners and LGBTQIA+ folks.

[Attracting the Creative Class](#)

A prevalent theme in the neoliberal urban renewal narratives in general, and in Braamfontein in particular, are attempts to attract 'creatives'. Much like Saskia Sassen's theory of 'world cities' has come to inform urban development policy, Florida's (2002a) work on the creative class and creative cities has also become an instance of the mutual influence between urban theory and policy, where their analyses of the value of culture and creativity in urban development has come to characterize popular development strategies. Florida's (2002a)

primary claim is that we have entered a period of capitalism in which creativity is central to the development of new industries and technologies, and the economic benefits that emanate from these. This narrative forms part of the neoliberal-presenting policies identified by Sager (2011) as ‘urban development by attracting the “creative class”.’

The policies that derive from this theory understand that in order to attract the creative class and their capital into an area, cities must develop spaces that this class would most naturally be drawn to. This tends to manifest in developing ‘hip neighbourhoods’, with a focus on the arts and a socio-culturally diverse atmosphere (particularly in terms of being gay-friendly), tech hubs, and developing amenities that these people might find attractive, like bike paths, ‘third places’ such as coffee and book shops, and entertainment and nightlife ecologies (Zimmerman, 2008: 232).³⁰

In Braamfontein two instances of this are present in policy narratives and as empirical referents. The first, and more direct one, is that of culture, creativity, and heritage (Zones 2 and 3); the other is the development of tech hubs (Zone 1). These relate to two unequivocal readings of ‘classic’ cases of neoliberal urban renewal through a creative-led strategy, including both as examples of the cross-national mobility of western urban renewal strategies as a product of neoliberal globalization, and gentrification, both in terms of aesthetics and limiting accessibility through pricing and securitization. Alongside these correspondences,

³⁰ See Lawrence Knopp (1990), Jon Binnie *et al.* (2006), Lees *et al.* (2008), Richard Florida and Charlotta Melander (2010), and Colin Giruad (2014). As outlined by Giruad, *gay gentrification*, or ‘*gaytrification*’, is a process in which white, gay males play a significant role in the gentrifying process, particularly in their role as displacer.

this research will show other empirical referents that point to ways in which they speak to less market-orientated objectives, and more to socio-political ones.

The Cross-National Mobility of Creative-Led Strategies of Urban Renewal

Steven Malanga (2004) shows how typified creative-led urban renewal policy rationalities are imported and used by policy makers in cities of the south, in the hope that by weaving these ideas into their development agendas at home, they will facilitate entrepreneurial ventures among residents that are similar to what such interventions produced in their city of origin. The creative-led strategies of urban renewal in Braamfontein fit within the conceptual frameworks of academic literature elaborating neoliberal urban renewal strategies developed in the west (Malanga, 2004; Miles and Paddison, 2005). With the JDA, the BMD (specifically as BRAAM), the Department of Arts, Culture, and Heritage, Play Braamfontein, and Wits emphasizing this through initiatives ranging from public art installations to weekly cultural events, it suggests that the urban renewal initiatives operating in Braamfontein are informed by market-orientated and neoliberal associations of the value of particular forms of creativity in urban renewal., however, these have also been clearly reconfigured through homegrown rationalities.³¹ The neoliberal nature of this intervention in Braamfontein is also evident in the public-private partnerships that were formed in creating it.

Neoliberal strategies of urban renewal that centre technological innovation, such as 'knowledge enclaves' or 'innovation hubs', are analogous to those centring creativity, as both

³¹ The JDA and Department of Arts, Culture, and Heritage are municipal and state bodies respectively, and their adherence to neoliberal logics should not be taken for granted.

are understood as attempts to attract the creative class and their capital (Sen and Frankel, 2005; Das, 2015; Somervuo, 2007; Cunha and Selada, 2009). Similarly, in this literature, technological innovation, largely in the form of tech hubs, in urban development in the south is generally conceptualized as a trend derived from the globalization of neoliberal capitalism for the purpose of stimulating economic development. Based on Tshimologong's similarities to technological innovation precincts in cities of the north, it is not a stretch to assume that the choice of this strategy as a tool for urban renewal in Johannesburg is derived from its reference to highly developed and profitable examples in the west. The neoliberal nature of this intervention in Braamfontein is further evident in the public-private partnerships that were formed in creating it.

Thus, it is clear in both cases that the emphasis on culture and creativity in Braamfontein are examples of the cross-national mobility of creative-led strategies of urban renewal.

Characteristics of Creative-Led Strategies of Urban Renewal as Gentrification: Aesthetics and Exclusion

This market-orientated and neoliberal character of the various forms of creativity in Braamfontein's urban renewal regimes links to creativity-based theories of gentrification. As defined in Chapter 1, gentrification here is understood as a market-orientated process in which class-based displacement takes place as a result of the work of private property developers and interested public bodies. Based on consumption-side views, these interventions are driven by their belief that culture, creativity, and related industries, are valued in such a way that people (i.e., the creative class) will seek out spaces characterized by these phenomena, and thus use these ideas to enhance the popularity and profitability of the

area (Zimmerman, 2008; Catungal *et al.*, 2009; Mathews, 2010). Based on this definition, it follows that creative-based manifestations of gentrification, either in the form of art or technology, have a distinct look and feel, as well as a typical style of management that results in exclusions of various forms. In Braamfontein, the distinct look and feel of this kind of gentrification clearly concentrates in Zones 3 and 1, in terms of the artefacts, events, and management strategies found here.

In Zone 3, one set of artefacts are tree installations (Figure 2), which demarcate this noticeably gentrified-looking part of Braamfontein, encompassing all of the artefacts and events that concentrate within it and generate its aesthetics. The artefacts and events contained by these trees include large graffiti murals, a 'public' park with rotating art installations, colourfully painted buildings, greening strategies in the form of wall planters, art galleries, culture-based commercial units (i.e. niche clothing stores), and regular arts and culture-based events.³² Other signs of gentrification in this zone include increased securitization, prohibitively high price tags on goods and services, and a lack of public seating. All these factors directly and indirectly inform patterns of exclusion.

In Zone 1 the signs of gentrification that link to the development of the Tshimologong Precinct centre around the securitized nature of the space, with private security guards visible outside, high surrounding walls, and access granted only by security guards or access cards. The streets here are wider, with a concentration on secured parking and streetlights. Thus, the creative-led initiative implemented here strongly reflects the process of gentrification in its securitizing

³² 'Public' is in inverted commas here as it would be inaccurate to call the park truly public, since the road is fenced off with access granted by a private security guard.

and sanitizing strategies, as all these security measures lead to direct and indirect forms of exclusion.

Thus, in Braamfontein, both cases of culture-led urban renewal read forcefully as gentrification, both in terms of their spatial interventions and the associated aesthetics, and the direct and indirect forms of exclusion that manifest there.

Creative-Led Strategies of Urban Renewal in Braamfontein and the Possibility of Socio-Political Improvements

It is often concluded that no positive-socio-political outcomes are possible from such seemingly market-orientated strategies of renewal as those discussed above (Atkinson, 2002; Slater, 2006; Lees *et al.*, 2008).³³ However despite their development being driven by a neoliberal urban renewal agenda and their clear links to creative-based gentrification, I argue that it is possible to identify goals and ideas that are not market-orientated in that they reflect a transformational agenda of this post-apartheid city, and thus indeed, outcomes that should be considered as positive socio-political ones. While these findings were not central to this research, they are worth noting as deserving further inquiry.

In terms of creativity, cultural, and heritage-based attempts to attract the creative class to Braamfontein, outcomes that reflect a particularly transformational agenda of the post-apartheid city, include the diverse racial and sexually-orientated groups of people who mingle here, especially at weekly and monthly events such as Neighbourgoods and First Thursdays,

³³ Those that do make reference to the 'positive gentrification thesis', which understands that the influx of the middle class into a neighbourhood attracts investments and allows for upward social mobility of the original, relatively lower-income occupants of the area, include Freeman, 2011 and Shaw and Hagemans, 2015.

and at regular night-time events thrown by the entertainment venues Kitchener's and Great Dane. Another example is WAM, where while accessibility may not be entirely 'transformational' in the sense that only people of an elevated socio-economic class are generally found here, we cannot dismiss the entire project as merely market-orientated and socially exclusionary. Reasons for this include the invaluable role WAM plays as a repository for the preservation of indigenous cultural knowledge systems (Wits, 2017).

In addition to this, I argue that the social (and potentially economic) value of the museum to the artists who show there and its visitors (despite their economic status) must not be underestimated.³⁴ The opportunities granted to African artists, as well as the exposure to local, African, and international art enjoyed by museum patrons including Wits students and members of the public, have obvious positive economic and social outcomes.³⁵

Similarly, in the case of technology-based attempts at attracting the creative class in Braamfontein, there is empirical evidence suggesting the socio-political value in what the Tshimologong Precinct does, particularly in the areas in which they target research investment, such as water systems and agricultural sustainability. The value here lies in how innovation in these areas might help to improve the quality of life of all South Africans, as well as generalized environmental impacts (Department of Science and Technology, 2017). Furthermore, by investing heavily in research, opportunities are afforded to those who would otherwise not be able to fund themselves (Department of Science and Technology, 2017).

³⁴ For a report on how the value of African art increased rapidly after being displayed at Zeits MoCCA, Cape Town's new museum of African art (Bax, 2017).

³⁵ See Beatriz Plaza (2008) for an example of work showing the possibility of theorizations of such strategies that do not focus on their displacing impact.

Investment in information technologies across the board may lead to empowering citizens through enhancing their access to information, as Subhash Bhatnagar's (2000) early research in India (a BRICS nation), suggests.

Gentrification and Studentification

In research on urban renewal and gentrification, the terms are often used interchangeably (i.e. Lees, 2016a). It is important to note, however, that they do not refer to the same processes. In Braamfontein the renewal initiatives that resonate most strongly with conceptualizations of gentrification, in the sense that low-income residents are threatened with replacement by relatively high-income earners as a result of the work of private developers, are those of South Point. However, South Point's interventions in Braamfontein involve converting predominantly commercial buildings into 'affordable' student accommodation; thus, the developments are not displacing anyone in the residential sense. Further, these interventions have not necessarily inaugurated a shift in residential class in Braamfontein, as the housing South Point provides is relatively affordable.³⁶

This case is interesting as it serves as an example of why it is worthwhile to look at the varied impacts of urban renewal, so as to produce nuanced understandings of urban processes like gentrification and studentification. Braamfontein is not a classic case of gentrification because displacement, or rather the potential for it, seemingly will not take place in the usual sense, and because most of the developments produced accommodation offerings that serve

³⁶ South Point's pricelist for Braamfontein shows that the accommodation offering is targeted at the low-income rental market. Single rooms are capped at R4800, while shared double and triple rooms go for significantly less per head, at R3850 and R3550 respectively (South Point, n.d.).

relatively lower-income earning individuals. Despite the renewal efforts in Braamfontein being cited as instances of gentrification, my research shows that if the essence of gentrification is the displacement of low-income groups by high-income groups (Glass, 1964; Lees, 2016a), then the initiatives operating in Braamfontein do not fit the typical scenario, and thus suggests that urban renewal and gentrification are not the same processes.

Adding nuance to understandings of urban renewal and gentrification is especially relevant in relation to my finding that the salons, and thus the immigrants that staff them, are in danger of being displaced by South Point. This is because it shows how understanding gentrification as a path-dependant process, for the most part limited to residential interventions and displacements, eclipses a recognition of processes of displacement taking place in other realms, such as the retailscape. Thus, in highlighting the need to pay careful attention to the realm in which displacements take place, it is also implied that more attention be paid to the lines along which this occurs, such as the effect on immigrant communities.

The value of students to the renewal of Braamfontein is well conveyed by South Point's labelling of Braamfontein as Johannesburg's 'capital of cool', as well as Play Braamfontein and Wits' linking the idea of youth, who enter the suburb mainly as students, to themes of vibrancy, energy, and ingenuity. In light of the commonly-held belief that the growing presence of students in an area leads to the deterioration of suburban infrastructure (Smith, 2005; Nakazawa, 2017), one would assume their presence would be undesirable to urban renewal regimes, particularly those that focus on attracting investment and new clients to the area through area upgrades and retail re-orientations. However, the renewal narratives

and expanding work of South Point and Wits suggest otherwise, and thus serve to nuance literature on studentification

Further, the relationship between students, or rather studentified areas, and youth in Braamfontein resonates with the work of Markus Moos (2016) and Moos *et al.* (2018), in which they unpack the relationship between studentification and youthification, pointing to the ability of studentification, a process that occurs in close proximity to universities, to shape future housing decisions, in turn informing a process of youthification, which is the influx of young adults between the ages of 25-34, of no particular class orientation, into an area (Sage, *et al.* 2013; Smith, 2005; He, 2015). Shenjing He's (2015) earlier work adds to this, showing how studentified areas in Guangzhou, China, create an environment where graduates choose to remain, thus suggesting that studentification can initiate a process of youthification. Moos *et al.* (2018) concur, further showing that there is a distinct possibility that areas of studentification and youthification will become gentrified.

Because South Point offers only rental options and only to students (except for two buildings), this research shows that a residential demographic shift from students to young adults, and thus from studentification to youthification, cannot be taken as a given. Furthermore, because the residential composition of Braamfontein is set to be dominated by students for the foreseeable future, with income of residents correspondingly capped at student levels, and assuming that most of those who live here are studying full time, it is safe to assume that residential gentrification, which is the kind of gentrification referred to in studentification literature, would not be possible here. These points are important as they add nuance to our understandings of urban processes, as well as how those urban processes might intersect.

An additional point about how this space of urban renewal offers insights into complex intersections of various dynamics, in this case, of a social nature, was brought to my attention in an interview with the Public Relations representative of South Point. Mr J. Talotta told me that the majority of the students living in South Point residences are ‘mostly black South Africans from outlying provinces, generally first generation in their family to go to university’ (Talotta, personal communication, 2018, October 17). He noted that this typically suggested ‘a slightly elevated class status because they could afford to go to Wits, a university out of their own province’.³⁷ This assertion is, however, challenged by the 2018 student protests targeting the already high rates levied by South Point, and the proposed increases (Mashishi, 2018). In summary, these points illustrate the complex racial and class dynamics emerging within a space of studentification and urban renewal in post-apartheid South Africa, which resonates with Lees’ (2016b) focus on the complex race dynamic of gentrification (spoken about synonymously with urban renewal) in post-colonial settings.

Urban Renewal and Protest

While extensive research has been conducted on protest and gentrification in various cities around the globe, the studied protests tend to address the actual gentrifying effects of the regeneration initiatives in which they take place. Research here includes work on Tomkins Square Park in New York (Smith, 1996), as well as in Germany (Naegeler, 2012; Novy and

³⁷ While I cannot say for sure what the age range of the general population living in Braamfontein is, with the dominance of South Point residences, and the information obtained in the interview above, it can be deduced that they tend to range between 18 and 24. The age range is thus considerably lower than that used by Moos *et al.* (2018) when exploring studentification. This suggests that the area might be dominated by undergraduate students who tend to study fulltime; thus, few would find for fulltime employment.

Colomb, 2013), Turkey (Kuymulu, 2013), and San Francisco (Marharawal, 2017). I have seen protests in Braamfontein before and during this research, although, as discussed in Chapter 4, these have been different in character to the protests studied in the work referenced above.

The protests elaborated in the literature tend to contest the land use of the given area, while the protests in Braamfontein are not specifically linked to problems in the area, but are instead about provincial service delivery, or national in reach, as in the demand for free education. Such protests are located in Braamfontein because of its being home to many local and provincial government departments. These include the Department of Labour, the Department of Education, and the City of Johannesburg's municipal headquarters and departmental offices. Because of its unique nature, the protest action in Braamfontein disrupts the version of westernized modern city-ness that the regimes of renewal have constructed this space to reflect. By invoking the freedom songs and protest dances that were part of the liberation struggle during apartheid, protestors in Braamfontein weave a distinctive aesthetic and history through the streets that bring to the fore a recent history that reads as distinctly non-modern and undeveloped (Jolaosho, 2015). Omotayo Jolaosho (2015) suggests that the use of these songs and dances today is indicative of the partiality of South Africa's democratic transformation, where the injustices of apartheid persist in the form of structural inequalities. Thus, it can be argued that the protests illustrate how past and present are similarly characterized by inequality, and that the freedom songs and protest dances are a visible thread that links them together.

Each time I observed a protest during my fieldwork, I noticed that the numbers of police and private security deployed would increase. I also know that when protests move through the suburb, shop owners lock their doors, keeping their customers inside too. I have heard business owners express intense disdain at the actions of the protestors, especially in reference to the destruction of property and tipping of dustbins. Their reception of protestors is thus one of fear, hostility, surveillance, and management, despite the fact that the lived experience of inequality that the protests demonstrate are shared by many inhabiting and traversing the neighbourhood.

Informal Work in Urban Renewal: Symbiosis and Itinerant Strategies

Unlike the hostile relationship between protestors and the formal economy, the informal economy (in the form of hawkers and car guards) tends to share a symbiotic relationship with the formal commercial sector. Similarly, unlike the reception of the protestors, as one of fear, hostility, and surveillance, hawkers seem to occupy a blind spot with public and private law enforcement. This complex relationship unfolds in the face of official attempts to suppress informal trade in Braamfontein. Indeed, it can be concluded that attempts to suppress informal trade have led to the proliferation of itinerant strategies on the part of hawkers, and have in turn led to enhanced relationships between informal traders and the formal economy.

Much like the protestors, those working in these precarious sectors, such as hawkers or informal car guards, in Braamfontein, but also in Johannesburg and South Africa as a whole, highlight the lasting impacts of apartheid's systematic racial exclusion through bringing to the fore the strategies that those who have been historically oppressed and excluded must enact

in order to make a living (Jolaosho, 2015). With their presence and activities defined by their informal, and/or low-economic status, particularly within the curated and securitized Zones 3 and 5, their presence weaves a visible local history of race and class dynamics into spaces where their practices seem undesirable, disruptive, and oppositional. In local public policy and narratives of renewal in Braamfontein, this is clearly the case, in the sense that the city has outlawed hawking, which is regarded as one of the 'problems' that contribute to Braamfontein being seen as 'out of control' (JDA, n.d.).

In his work on the relationship between informal traders and urban renewal in Quito, Ecuador, Alan Middleton (2003) describes much the same kind of repression of informal economic activities as is found in Braamfontein. Other forms of research on informality and urban renewal, particularly through culture-led explanations, exists too (Borup, 2006; Stern and Seifert, 2010; Grodach, 2011). The focus of this research, however, is largely on how the informal arts sector (i.e. community-based arts) operates in spaces of urban renewal and how it relates to the formal sector.

Locally, much work on the informal economy exists, touching topics such as the government's informal trading policy (Pezzano, 2016), the informal waste sector (Rogerson, 2001; Samson, 2004), Johannesburg's attempts at incorporating the informal economy into the formal one (Bremner, 2000; Rogerson, 2004; Lund and Skinner, 2004), and many others. South African research on the relationship between urban regeneration in Johannesburg and the informal economy speaks broadly to the local policy and the various attempts it has made at supporting the informal economy and incorporating it into the formal one, particularly within CIDs and BIDs (Bremner, 2000; Mapetla, 2008; Peyroux, 2006; Winkler, 2009). This work

offers insights into how informal workers are affected by the city's incorporation strategies, most of which point to the inadequacies of said strategies and the forms of the indirect suppression that accompanies these. It looks also at the trading strategies that emerge as a result. While these are useful accounts, they do not help to understand a case such as Braamfontein where informal trade has not been supported or incorporated, but rather overtly suppressed by policy, and itinerant strategies emerge to evade this.

Based on the two key findings of this section, two potential conclusions can be drawn. Being careful not to insinuate that it is not the case at all, these observations complicate the general theorization that informal activities and low-income persons are always displaced by urban renewal regimes. It also means that this research contributes towards literature that rejects a binary and oppositional understanding of formal and informal economies, showing that in the face of overt suppression policies, a survival strategy for informal workers is working with and alongside the formal sector (Bromley, 1979; Roy, 2005; Angotti, 2013).

[Inclusion and Diversity in Urban Renewal](#)

The presence of people self-identifying as foreign and gay is understood as an element of socio-cultural diversity in urban spaces. This diversity tends to be understood in literature as driven by or driving creative urban processes like gentrification and studentification (Florida, 2002b; Hubbard, 2012; Pottie-Sherman, 2013; Frenzel, 2014;). The presence of both communities in Braamfontein was identified and once examined showed to be driven by forces other than those that the aforementioned literature typically predicts.

In line with Lees' (2016b) work, the findings of this research emphasize the importance of understanding the possibility of nuance in the racial and/or ethnic dynamics of urban renewal. This is especially true in South African cities where working in a post-apartheid context means one has to consider the lasting effects of racial exclusion and how they have meant that class and race dynamics have come to be intertwined. Thus, much like representing displacement as a result of urban processes as possible solely in the residential realm, representing displacement as a result of urban renewal solely in class terms, as gentrification was originally conceptualized, is an insufficient argument for anywhere in the country.

My research adds to this by bringing a multi-national dimension into focus, particularly where it found that the diverse and uneven environment that urban renewal initiatives in Braamfontein have created, where different areas offer vastly different experiences, has led to the area becoming host to a large community of immigrants, particularly African and South Asian communities, especially in Zone 4. The interview with Dr. Ola sheds light on this phenomenon, as he explains that his decision to live in Braamfontein instead of the CBD is dictated both by safety concerns tied to his status as an immigrant, and the value of living in an English-speaking neighbourhood.

This intriguing insight into the safety that spaces of urban renewal provide already-marginalized people suggests that conceptualizations of neoliberal urban renewal must consider how, either intentionally or unintentionally, these spaces are created in such a way that they can and do attract people other than the creative class or white-collar

professionals.³⁸ It is hard to say if this attraction was a pre-renewal condition of Braamfontein. However, in an interview with the manager of the co-working space I used in the suburb, they pointed out that in 2010 there were only 10 salons here, while in 2018 my research counted 46. Knowing from my interviews with Dr. Ola and the co-work space manager that salons are staffed largely by immigrants, particularly of pan-African descent, my research shows that there is a clear overlap in the periods during which immigrants began to concentrate in Braamfontein (particularly in the service industry) and renewal initiatives being rolled out. This suggests that the influx of immigrants into this area is part of recent urban processes, such as renewal.

This resonates with Mosselson's (2017) focus on the importance of allowing for nuance and complexity in theoretical frameworks regarding urban change. It also speaks to the work of Yolande Pottie-Sherman (2013) who writes about the symbiotic relationship between private developers and the Chinese community in a revitalizing area of Vancouver, where the nightly Chinese market serves the purposes of the private developers in attracting tourists, middle-class families, and members of the immigrant Chinese community. In a similar vein, Fabian Frenzel (2014) writes about how regenerating areas in Johannesburg for the purpose of tourism, specifically 'slum tourism' where the social fabric of the area must remain unchanged for the success of the initiative, has the effect of safeguarding local communities against displacement. While Pottie-Sherman (2013) theorizes that the creative class's desire for cultural consumption drives this symbiosis, thus falling into dominant understandings of

³⁸ This phenomenon emphasizes that gentrification and urban renewal are not the same thing.

urban renewal outcomes, it also signals the possibility of a relationship between private developers and immigrant communities that is not characterized by displacement.

The findings of this research reiterate the findings of the aforementioned research confirming the possibility of complex ethnic dynamics of urban renewal and gentrification; however, this points less towards culture-led explanation of socio-cultural diversity (as in driven by the so-called 'creative class'), and more towards local contextual explanations. In doing this, this research reiterates that Johannesburg's pan-African communities, or other marginalized communities, such as informal workers or poor residents, are not always displaced by urban renewal initiatives, and points further to the work of Pottie-Sherman (2013) and Frenzel (2014), which suggests that in some ways, they might instead be incorporated and well-served by it, even though the risk of displacement, as suggested above, might still be present in these pockets of relative safety.

Gay-Friendliness

Socio-cultural diversity, particularly in terms of sexual orientation, is generally understood to characterize spaces of urban renewal globally. While Visser (2014) claims that the ways in which such instances of neighbourhood change link to broader social processes (like sexual identity formation and attitudes towards such subjectivities), remain underexamined, he does show that there is a substantial literature on how the consumption of sexuality-based leisure services, such as gay friendly and/or gay owned establishments, relates to urban renewal globally (Hubbard, 2012). In this literature, which draws on Florida's (2002b) work, the 'gay friendliness' of zones of urban renewal, in terms of their sociality as well as in the

goods and services provided within them, is largely understood as simply a product of the attempts of urban renewal initiatives to target the creative class's valorisation of socio-cultural diversity by curating retail and residential offerings that attract gay people to the area. The findings in Braamfontein, however, indicate otherwise.

In another body of literature, Visser (2014) claims that the typical explanation of gay-friendliness in zones of urban renewal is indeed the case for the present urban fabric of De Waterkant, a gay-friendly suburb in Cape Town. They go on to expand upon a more nuanced explanation, relating to how gay leisure facilities moved into this area during the 1980s and 1990s because of escalating harassment of gay people in the CBD (where these facilities previously existed), the general decline of CBD, as well as purely coincidental happenings, such as large buildings in De Waterkant becoming vacant at around the same time. In an earlier paper, Visser (2003) elaborates on the capacity of historic events that initiate processes of urban change to create spaces of gay leisure, in particular referencing how processes of urbanisation such as the mining rushes in Johannesburg, drew people in from rural areas in the 1920s and 1930s, away from their families and communities, and provided them with space to practice personal autonomy that they had not had before (see Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron, 1993 for socio-cultural details of this community).

The gay friendliness of Braamfontein concentrates in Zone 3 in hospitality and leisure institutions like Kitchener's Carvery Bar, Great Dane, and Testament. However, it is not clear that this sociality exists because of the renewal initiatives that operate here, thus indicating, among other things, the value of a historical analysis like Visser's. While there is a growing

body of scholarly work regarding gay spaces in Cape Town, there is a deficit of similar work in Johannesburg.

Of the work I could find that engages Johannesburg's gay spatial history, I came across a recurring reference to the 'Heartland Project' in Braamfontein (Visser, 2003; Graziano, 2004; Matabeni, 2011; Canham, 2017). This was an attempt to create a 'gay hub' by consolidating gay leisure activities in the area, which began in about 2002 and came to an end in about 2004. The origins of the Heartland Project, be it private, public, or joint, could not be conclusively determined from online sources. Following Jonathan Cane's (2019) adoption of Halberstam's (1998) 'scavenger methodology', it can be deduced that despite being shut down, its existence is indicative of the gay leisure scene that existed here in the early 2000s.

Based on excerpts from the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) archival collection, it was also possible to ascertain that Braamfontein was a gay-friendly space since the late 1980s, particularly through the many gay bars and clubs that have since closed their doors in the suburb (GALA, n.d.).³⁹ This shows that Braamfontein has consistently been host to gay leisure spaces and communities, well before the renewal initiatives kicked off in the suburb. While the reason behind this is not clear, and warrants further study, I have a hunch that in the same way that the concentration of other differently-focused NGOs in Braamfontein is understood, Braamfontein historically being home to LGBTQIA+ organizations such as GALA and GLOW, and thus an LGBTQIA+ community, has something to do with the proximity of a large, liberal higher education institution as well as a liberal residential base.

³⁹ There are no scholarly articles relating to how and why Braamfontein's less-recent past as a gay-friendly space occurred.

Above we saw two different approaches to understanding the gay-friendliness of urban spaces. The first approach draws on Florida's (2002b) work, which understands the gay friendliness of an area as a result of a process of urban renewal that concentrates products and services that are attractive to LGBTQIA+ folk. The other approach references Visser's research, which focuses on how historical circumstances shape presently gay-friendly spaces, in addition to other contemporary conditions. The findings in Braamfontein confirm the latter argument, as they suggest that the renewal initiatives' emphasis on inclusivity and diversity have not been the sole driving force in the diversity found in Braamfontein, particularly in the sense of its gay-friendly character. In doing so it points to various historical reasons, including the LGBTQIA+ leisure facilities that developed here, the LGBTQIA+ organizations that concentrated here as a result, and the presence of a liberal higher education institution.

Conclusion

The findings of this chapter illustrate how the urban renewal regimes that operate across Braamfontein are, in various ways, linked to the cross-national motility of urban development patterns popularized in what can be considered capitalist, neoliberal cities. Yet, they also show how local conditions, past and present, and the rationalities and agendas that are borne out of them, intermingle with these neoliberal urban renewal initiatives to produce outcomes with which these initiatives are not typically associated. In doing this, the findings of this research emphasize Lees' call to pay attention to the history of a city when examining its current dynamics, and point further to the existence of multiple, overlapping histories, from colonization, to apartheid, to the democratic recent past. Further, by emphasizing

instantiations of local life and relationships that occur outside of those typically identified and conceptualized in the literature on urban renewal, this chapter initiates discussions on valuable alternative sources of influence on the materiality and street-level experience of a city and urban areas undergoing renewal to which more attention should be paid. Also, some noteworthy commonalities emerged between and within the points raised in the sections above. These will be revisited in the context of the entire thesis in the Conclusion below.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to demonstrate the potential of pursuing the goal of southern urban theorists in paying more careful attention to the complex and context-specific interrelationships between urban conditions, urban policy, urban outcomes, and urban theory. On this foundation, this research engaged a planetary notion of urbanisation, and Robinson's reconceptualization of the case in a reimagined comparativism to ask: what are the social, cultural, and economic forces that act together on the street-level to produce the specific urban characteristics that make up Braamfontein? Thus, to show how the outcomes of urban renewal were remarkably varied, and, as such, why reducing the causes of these processes of urban change and their spatial and social outcomes in cities of the south to capitalist dynamics is insufficient, this research involved a grounded study of the dynamics of urban renewal playing out on the street-level in Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative information that was gathered over the course of this research, it was possible to identify patterns regarding how certain land uses, or certain characteristics of land-uses, secrete certain forms of sociality. However, before these phenomena could be analysed in relation to any urban processes that might be playing out in Braamfontein, they first needed to be contextualized both historically and in terms of the contemporary forces that operate across the suburb. The third chapter aimed for exactly that, providing a brief history of Braamfontein, an in-depth look at the primary bodies that are responsible for the regeneration of the area and their respective and joint initiatives, and an overview of the recent changes that have occurred in the suburb.

The fourth chapter outlined the findings of the fieldwork. It presented the outcomes of the street mapping and data capturing process, described the look and feel of each zone, presented zone-specific data, provided vignettes from people or groups of people that I interacted with in each zone, and identified some empirical similarities and differences across these zones. The fifth chapter drew these findings together.

Some common conclusions emerged. These include forms of sociality and outcomes that fall outside of culture-led explanations of urban renewal; how the history of a space interacts with its contemporary conditions to produce outcomes that research and theory has thus far not understood or only partially understood; forms of sociality that add nuance to common neoliberal conceptualizations of gentrification and studentification; and activities that disrupt the visions of modern city-ness laid out in the narratives of urban renewal that operate across Braamfontein.

Certain forms of sociality and outcomes identified in Braamfontein exceed culture-led explanations of urban renewal, such as those market-orientated creative rationalities of Florida and his contemporaries. These include the distinctly socio-politically motivated rationality within the renewal initiatives centring culture, creativity, and heritage and technological innovation; the gay-friendly character of Zone 3; and the concentration of immigrants here. The first finding here is self-evident – in showing that a purely market-orientated conceptualization of these strategies is flawed by identifying various socio-political rationalities informing them and potentially their outcomes. More research would be required to establish this second point.

The second and third findings disrupt culture-led explanations of urban renewal that understand the socio-cultural diversity of renewed areas to be a product of the renewal initiatives' strategies to attract them. In both cases, it was shown that the presence of these communities points less towards the typical culture-led explanations commonly used and more towards historical ones. These findings exemplify how the past intermingles with contemporary conditions to produce a range of familiar and unfamiliar outcomes, and thus uncovers forces that research and theory have yet to pay attention to. While I cannot prove this at this stage, a logical conclusion that could be drawn in the case of both phenomena, both of which revolve around feelings of security for minority groups, is that the historic presence of a liberal university has created a space where marginalized communities feel safe, albeit for different reasons.

Revanchist conceptualizations of urban renewal and gentrification implicitly understand that certain people, phenomena, or relationships stand in direct opposition to the environment that neoliberal regimes of urban renewal attempt to construct. In Braamfontein both rationalities and forms of sociality that exceed these common neoliberal conceptualizations were found. These rationalities include those socio-political motivations behind initiatives of culture, creativity, and heritage and technological innovation, and the form of sociality was found predominantly in the cordial, or even symbiotic, relationship that exists between the formal and informal economies that operate here. In illustrating this, I add to the body of literature that unpacks urban renewal and its potentially harmful effects, by showing that despite the competitive, profit-driven motivations of the regimes that operate here, when implemented in a city of the south, it is possible that local transformational agendas are capable of creating forms of sociality with the capacity to surpass it.

From the outcomes of the renewal initiatives that operate across Braamfontein, it was possible to draw conclusions that add nuance to assertions made in dominant literature (Lees, 2016a; Moos, 2016; Moos *et al.*, 2018). This includes the observation that studentification does not necessarily lead to youthification or gentrification. These conclusions were drawn by showing that the dynamics of a housing market dominated by student rental options prohibits studentification from leading to youthification or gentrification.

Two activities and groups of people encountered in the field whose presence disrupts the visions of modern city-ness held by the regimes of renewal that operate across Braamfontein were protestors and those working in the informal economy and protestors. Their disruptive nature lies in the particular aesthetics of their actions, which weaves a distinctly South African history back into the present, back into spaces that have been created to look distinctly western and thus removed from this past. While not contributing directly to literature on urban renewal, the different ways in which they are received by permanent community members, one being fear and resentment, the other being cordiality or indifference, emphasizes the importance of not assuming that activities are disruptive to the management goals and uses of a space, nor that they will be met with resistance by the local community if they are.

Overall, all the findings drawn from paying attention to instantiations of local social life as valuable sources of influence on the materiality and experience of contemporary urban condition, come together to show that a form of modern city-ness and urban renewal exists outside of those described in dominant literature. It also shows that neoliberal rationalities,

conceptualizations, and outcomes can exist hand-in-hand with imperatives of socio-political development, alternative practices of shared urban life, and locally unique outcomes.

These findings have various implications for scholarship on urban renewal in general, and Johannesburg and Braamfontein in particular. By engaging an alternative starting point for a phenomenon largely understood as monolithic, this research opens up a new line of explanation, and thus points to an area that requires further research. This research should aim at understanding 1) how post-colonial continental migratory patterns lead to the concentration of immigrant communities in certain urban areas; 2) why immigrant communities concentrate in certain urban areas and not others; and 3) the histories and present of gay and queer geographies in Johannesburg. The findings here regarding the relationship between the formal and informal economies in Braamfontein have implications for applied fields such as urban policy and design, particularly in elaborating how repressive policies breed resistant practices in these realms.

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