

Healing Urban Fractures

INSIDE A PANDEMIC

**Vulnerability, imagination,
innovation in the City of Tshwane**

Urban Studio

Annual Reflective Report

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01

INSIDE A PANDEMIC

STEPHAN DE BEER

Covid-19 is not really the great equalizer, as some would have it. Instead, ways more visible than before, it illustrated the cruel inequalities that face humanity. And only some have the ability to protect themselves from the virus, whilst others are placed at greater risk. Whereas Covid-19 reveals our common and interconnected humanity, it also puts on vivid display our cruel and calculated inhumanity.

but, because this takes place in the global South, the world does not come to a standstill and hardly anyone gives it a thought.

The cruelty of debilitating poverty and the criminality of inequality are not called out for what it is. Instead, it is regarded as inevitable. We even resort to Jesus, interpreting his response to Judas, saying, **'The poor will always be with us!'** suggesting that Jesus thereby condoned poverty and inequality. What Jesus really did was to turn on the farcical Judas, pretending to care for the poor, whilst he not only exploited the poor, but was also about to betray Jesus for money².

THE PANDEMIC, AND OTHER DEATH-DEALERS

Many have commented that Covid-19 is not the only pandemic we face at this time. Annually 7 million children die of preventable diseases¹,

¹ World Health Organisation, 2020, 'Child Mortality', <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/topic-details/GHO/child-mortality>, accessed 8 November 2020

² Theoharis, L., 'Understanding "The poor will always be with you"'. Presented at the Vineyard Justice Network's 2015 Forum: 'Jesus, the Kingdom and the Poor', 16-17 October 2015, <https://kairoscenter.org/understanding-the-poor-will-always-be-with-you/>, accessed 6 November 2020

Not only do we live inside the global Covid-19 pandemic. For many in the sites and themes highlighted in this report, negotiating daily living inside the pandemic is not so much different from negotiating life before the pandemic: hustling for piece jobs; avoiding the abuses of law enforcement agencies; fending off sexual predators; fighting possible evictions; securing a safe space to stay; or ensuring at least one meal per day for your children. Homeless persons in the City of

less than the threat of temporary Covid-19 shelters closing down.

Substance users who had access to shelter and opioid replacement therapy- finding a moment of stability and a real sense of hope, sometimes for the first time in many years - faced the streets and relapses into substance use, as the lockdown levels were relaxed, and the pressure to maintain temporary shelters subsided.

The cruelty of debilitating poverty; the scourge of gender-based violence; the anxiety of teenage girls in neighbourhoods with no access to safe, decent or private sanitary facilities; food deserts amidst massive wastage of food; are daily occurrences all across the world. In this report, they are named as real death-dealers in our own city, even though they do not affect everyone, as Covid-19 does. Those who make the decisions and dictate the future trajectory of the city



Fig 1. People standing in a queue to receive food aid amid the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak, at the Ifireleng Informal settlement, near Laudium suburb in Pretoria.

Tshwane, during Covid-19, feared the possible infection with the virus

cannot be 'infected' by those who are poor, landless or violated sexually. Their general distance from the most vulnerable and contested spaces in the city means that they mostly remain unaffected by these death-dealing tentacles holding thousands captive³.

often comes in the way of threatening local livelihoods or the right of people to be in the city, through attempts at replacing people with more profitable endeavors.

In many of the sites, the presence of elected politicians does not necessarily translate into these communities -and the most vulnerable in these communities -either having a voice, or experiencing having fair and proper representation. A lack of visionary political leadership, a managerialist approach to urban governance, and consultative processes that do not include communities authentically in collaborative decision-making, have left many of these communities in a state of perpetual abandonment and decline. Salvokop, the Woodlane Village, and parts of the West Capital Precinct, are visible demonstrations of that fact.

URBAN VULNERABILITY AND (LACK OF) VISIONARY POLITICAL OR BUREAUCRATIC LEADERSHIP

In the City of Tshwane, we entered the Covid-19 lockdown being a city under administration. This meant we did not have elected ward councilors actively engaging their constituencies and serving their communities, except where they considered this their vocation and not merely a paid position. Some ward councilors continued to serve their communities whilst others went undercover.

But, even before the city was placed under administration, with hindsight we can say that successive local governments led by different political parties, often failed the communities featured in this report. These communities in many instances experienced slow but real decline, disinvestment, and disinterest. When there is interest shown, it

The bias of this report, and the theological conviction that undergirds our reflection, is to prioritize the most vulnerable in considering urban planning, policy-making and investment, in order to level playing fields. It is our submission that the well-being of

³ In 2016, 18,2% of the population of the City of Tshwane – about 600,000 people – was living informally, with all the associated challenges. Source: City of Tshwane, Office of the Executive Mayor, 2017, Annexure 1: Integrated Development Plan 2017-2021, Final Draft, May 2017, <http://www.tshwane.gov.za/sites/Council/Office-Of-The-Executive-Mayor/201721%20Draft%20IDP/Annexure%20A%20-%20COT%20IDP%202017-21%20PDF.pdf>, accessed 8 November 2020

the city should be assessed through how it includes and creates proper access to sources of well-being to those inhabitants of the city that are most excluded or marginalized. Not only the City of Tshwane, but cities and urban political leaders across the world, struggle to engage urban vulnerability in decisive, imaginative, innovative and radically inclusive ways. Shoshana Brown⁴ speaks of how it took a pandemic to expose New York City afresh to its food and health care inequities. And in the megacities and towns of India, millions of urban poor people were driven out. In her essay, **The Pandemic is a Portal**, Arundhati Roy⁵ describes the horror of not belonging, when it matters.

“As the wealthy and the middle-classes enclosed themselves in gated colonies, our towns and megacities began to extrude their working-class citizens— their migrant workers – like so much unwanted accrual. Many driven out by their employers and landlords, millions of impoverished, hungry, thirsty people, young and old, men, women, children, sick

people, blind people, disabled people, with nowhere else to go, with no public transport in sight, began a long march home to their villages... Some died on the way.

They knew they were going home potentially to slow starvation. Perhaps they even knew they could be carrying the virus with them, and would infect their families, their parents, and grandparents back home... As they walked, some were beaten brutally and humiliated by the police, who were charged with strictly enforcing the curfew.”

And yet, there are also real attempts in other places to embrace the most vulnerable urban populations politically and otherwise. The Partnership for Health Cities convened online platforms where cities as diverse as Chicago in the USA and Colombo in Sri Lanka, shared good practices and innovative ways of supporting vulnerable urban populations during Covid-19⁶.

“A session for mayors addressed safely loosening physical distancing measures, and a second session later

⁴ Brown, S., 2020, How cities can provide rapid relief for vulnerable people during the Covid-19 crisis, *The Commonwealth Fund*, 24 April 2020, <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2020/how-cities-can-provide-rapid-relief-vulnerable-people-during-covid-19-crisis>, accessed 7 November 2020

⁵ Roy, A., 2020, *Azadi: Freedom. Facism. Fiction*, London, Penguin Books, pp.209-210

⁶ Vital Strategies, 2020, No one left behind: Supporting vulnerable populations in the COVID-19 era, 15 May 2020, <https://www.vitalstrategies.org/no-one-left-behind-supporting-vulnerable-populations-in-the-covid-19-era/>, accessed 6 November 2020

in the week guided cities' public health teams on enhancing services for migrant, homeless, incarcerated and other disadvantaged populations.”

In the City of Tshwane, after a false start, a remarkable recovery occurred in how it dealt with homelessness during Covid-19⁷. In only 21 days, 25 temporary Covid-19 shelters were created, accommodating 1,800 people, and offering primary health care, psycho-social programmes, harm reduction support, and family reintegration programmes in all the sites.

This was enabled by key officials in different municipal departments, creating the environment for collaborative action, in which the City of Tshwane joined hands with the Tshwane Homelessness Forum, more than 20 NGOs and FBOs, and researchers from the Universities of Pretoria and South Africa.

Although marred by alleged corrupt dealings with food contracts to some of the shelters, and discontinuity in terms of collaboration between the City and its broad range of partners, the fact remains that the collaborative interventions made

were unprecedented, and significant gains were made. The new administration in the city since November 2020, would do well to attend to the innovative, collaborative model that emerged during this time, and to build on its successes.

CONTESTED SITES IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE: CAN INCLUSIVE FUTURES BE IMAGINED?

The Urban Studio is a deliberate attempt to accompany selected geographical sites and themes in the City of Tshwane, where socio-spatial contestations are in the order of the day. At the same time, these sites and themes offer the promise of a radically inclusive and flourishing city, should innovative and courageous urban interventions be made.

A great concern is that the solution for the challenges facing some of these communities are mostly not sought from within. External plans and investment threaten the futures of residents in places like Salvokop and Woodlane Village, as they might have to make way for more **'desirable'** developments. Instead of truly participatory

⁷ De Beer, S., 2020, Homelessness and Covid-19: the miracle of Tshwane, *Spotlight Africa*, 23 April 2020, <https://spotlight.africa/2020/04/23/homelessness-and-covid-19-the-miracle-of-tshwane/>, accessed 4 November 2020

planning and developmental processes, external consultants call residents to once-off meetings, where the residents are merely informed what the programme of action will be, without having solicited any input or participation either from residents -some who have resides in these neighbourhoods for over 30 years -or from other long-term institutional partners and land owners that invest in these neighbourhoods on a daily basis.

In places like Burgers Park, the presence of strong anchor institutions, and the high percentage of property ownership probably contribute to the relative well-being and stability of this neighbourhood, as compared to some of its immediate surrounding neighbours. In the past, the Burgers Park neighbourhood also demonstrated its ability to self-organize in ways that enabled resistance to possibly negative external impacts on the local people and their interests.

The fact that the largest percentage of land in the West Capital Precinct is state-owned, has not translated in fast-tracking the redevelopment of these areas. To the contrary, an innovative and ground-breaking social housing

development like the Thembelihle Village took 18 years to complete, from inception, due to officials in the city blocking the project for at least 12 years; and a lack of political leadership failed all those years to override crooked bureaucratic processes. Schubart Park and Kruger Park still stand as monuments of a complete failure of urban governance, having affected a few thousand people detrimentally.

A place like Eersterust, from the perspective of the landless, is simply forgotten, first by the apartheid rulers and now by successive post-apartheid governments. A sense of fragmentation also hinders decisive action to overcome different forms of violence that plague this community. Churches now consider safe space for victims of gender-based violence. This should be accelerated with all the support necessary.

Mamelodi East has literally exploded in size over the past 30 years. Predominantly informal, it has often been the dumping ground for people being displaced from all over the city, or it became the entry point into a city that is still extremely divided spatially. The distance from economic opportunity and the lack of significant

investment in the neighbourhoods of Mamelodi East, condemn thousands to perpetual marginalization.

Instead, this should be considered a new growth point in the city. In the same way as places like the Menlyn Mall and the Woodlands Boulevard Mall have been drivers of investment, tailor-made and innovative investment need to be designed and implemented in partnership with the communities of Mamelodi East. This should not be done in the way in which the Denneboom informal traders are displaced as a result of a new mall development. It should be done through building on the existing local asset-base, complementing and strengthening it, instead of displacing it.

The work of the Urban Studio is to accompany local communities through research, capacity-building and documentation of local processes. Its bias is inclusive urbanism, imagining processes and mechanisms that could replace traditional urban developmental practices that rarely honour the assets, agency and imaginative capacities, of local residents and institutions.

The question behind this report and the work of the Urban Studio, is simply:

CAN INCLUSIVE FUTURES BE IMAGINED?

It is fairly simple to renew urban areas through the kind of investment that ordinarily displace the poor. To imagine inclusive urban futures **—grounded in a different kind of political, moral and human imaginary—** would require a prior decision to invest (only) in innovative processes that will foster, build and ensure radically inclusive urban neighbourhoods. Development proposals that perpetuate segregated cities—socially, economically or racially—should be challenged.

FROM IMAGINATION TO INNOVATION: STRATEGIES FOR COLLABORATIVE URBAN CHANGE

Once a city resolved to place their most vulnerable populations centre stage—imagining their complete integration into a city that will be truly and deeply inclusive, innovative strategies are required to enable such an imagination into reality. In reflecting upon the urgent demands made upon health care strategies during Covid-19, Begun and Jiang⁸ draw from the insights of complexity science. They suggest that effective health services that responded effectively

⁸ Begun J.W. & Jiang H.J., 2020, Health Care Management During Covid-19: Insights from Complexity

and at high speed during Covid-19, were characterized by three complementary processes, namely **communication, collaboration and innovation.**

The kind of urban change that will integrate vulnerable populations fully and effectively into the urban fabric as participants and contributors, and that will support the holistic flourishing of diverse neighbourhoods such as the ones featured in this report, requires innovation. But innovation without on-going communication and collaboration between the various stakeholders that make up the city, will never be optimal. Local governments should spend much more time on carefully cultivating broad-based collaborative partnerships as vehicles for long-term and locally-owned urban change.

Whilst the processes of communication, collaboration and innovation apply to urban governance and development in its broadest sense, Brown⁹ speaks of three interrelated processes that any city should adopt and implement, was it to ensure safety nets for its most vulnerable populations and neighbourhoods.

Speaking specifically of health care and urban vulnerability in New York City during Covid-19, Brown writes¹⁰

“While we cannot end structural racism and break intergenerational cycles of poverty in the midst of this crisis, there are three interrelated efforts that every city can undertake to provide some relief to people hit hardest by COVID-19 and to establish an improved infrastructure for addressing health beyond this crisis. None of these steps is enough on its own; they must be implemented in concert and developed at levels commensurate with local need, demand, and priorities.”

The three processes she proposes are:

1. **ENABLING SOCIAL CARE PROVIDERS WITH TECHNOLOGY**
2. **SCALING THE COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKFORCE**
3. **FOCUSING ON THE SOCIAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH**

Brown argues that low-income workers placed themselves and their families at high risk, **‘in ways that privileged people are spared’**, to access food and unemployed benefits during the pandemic. Through these three interrelated processes people will

⁹ Brown, 2020, Science, *NEJM Catalyst Innovations in Care Delivery*, October 9, 2020. DOI: 10.1056/CAT.20.0541

¹⁰ Brown, 2020, Science, *NEJM Catalyst Innovations in Care Delivery*, October 9, 2020. DOI: 10.1056/CAT.20.0541

be supported to stay home, whilst accessing the social care and support they require.

This has been clearly demonstrated through the collaborative approach to establish 27 temporary Covid-19 shelters for homeless communities in the City of Tshwane. Site managers in the NGO-managed sites were all connected to each other through Whatsapp technology; resource distribution was managed through a shared application, and urgent placement of people who needed shelter was facilitated in a similar way. It was the first time that technology was utilized at such a scale to provide a safety net for homeless persons in the city.

This was further enhanced by a large network of social and health care volunteers. Site managers, social workers, community health workers, peer counsellors, clinical assistants, and occupational therapists, all contributed to span an extensive net of care.

Thirdly, the availability of shelters facilitated adherence to medication, diagnosis and treatment, as well as emotional and

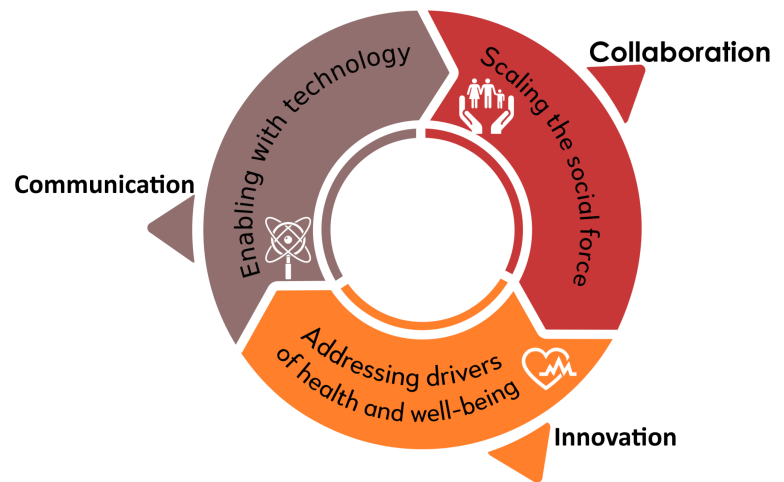


Fig 2. Strategies for Collaborative Urban Change

mental well-being through daily psycho-social care. The social drivers of health have been successfully addressed and there was no reported incidence of infections with the virus in any of the Covid-19 shelters in the City of Tshwane.

During this time a Helpline was created by Lawyers for Human Rights to assist people facing evictions from their homes. Within days more than 1,000 persons called in and was assisted to prevent their eviction, something that was prohibited during the hard lockdown levels.

Of course, Brown's proposal relates not only to health, but to

the general well-being of vulnerable urban communities. Her proposal is for innovative safety nets including the use of technology, expanding the social care workforce, and ensuring that the drivers of health and well-being are addressed. Such strategies require prior commitment from urban leadership dedicated to build inclusive cities, in which vulnerability will be replaced by resilience, access and agency.

ADDRESSING URBAN VULNERABILITIES THROUGH VALUE-DRIVEN URBAN GOVERNANCE

A resolve to address urban vulnerability in decisive and transformative ways, needs to be undergirded by value-driven forms of urban governance¹¹, or, even a certain kind of urban spirituality. Again, the pandemic can teach us in this regard. Even though there is still much more to be understood about Covid-19, a significant contributor to fast infection rates in some contexts, was the **denial** of the seriousness of Covid-19 by political leaders. Similarly, a denial to comprehend deeply both the drivers as well as the effects

of urban vulnerability, prevents decisive action to address and reduce vulnerability. Urban vulnerabilities can only be overcome through a deep **acknowledgment** of its existence and impacts.

Once lockdown happened, the reality of food shortages and the concentration of homeless persons, now even in traditional suburbs, could no longer be denied. This was because that which is often rendered invisible in urban policy and the public mind, gained much more **visibility**. Part of the obligation of activist scholarship is exactly this: to make visible what is rendered invisible; to acknowledge vulnerability and its depths, where denied.

In the context of Covid-19, the idea of social distancing was peddled by political leaders and the media. And yet, those most vulnerable needed tight support systems and the proximity of people who cared, more than ever. Instead of distance and isolation, it became important to learn the art of **proximity** amidst the pandemic. Only proximity can breed **solidarity**. In Cape Town, different movements reframed

¹¹ Cf. De Leeuw, E. & Simos, J.(eds), 2017, *Healthy Cities: The Theory, Policy, and Practice of Value-Based Urban Planning*, New York, Springer-Verlag

the challenge during Covid-19, suggesting instead that we should practice physical distance and social solidarity. This was a crucial corrective. And yet, social solidarity would also require physical proximity at times. This was the risk taken by those who sought to ensure social care and health support of vulnerable populations during lockdown.

As vulnerable communities experience the solidarity of partners standing with them in their struggles -contrasting the apathy towards their challenges which is often the norm -they gather confidence to practice a new sense of agency, drinking from their own wells, developing their own resources, and increasing their own resilience. Over time, such solidarity helps to slowly reduce the depths of vulnerability previously faced.

Urban vulnerability results from deep urban **wounds** -at a personal, communal and spatial level. In considering the West Capital Precinct, the scars of forced removals from Marabastad and illegal evictions from Schubart Park, are visible to see. The Urban Studio is committed to contribute to **healing** urban wounds and fractures.

Healing the urban scars of places like Marabastad and Schubart Park, would include dealing with the psychological, emotional and racial wounds of the apartheid city, but also the more recent evictions by post-apartheid local governments; but it would also manifest itself in the actual construction of beautiful spaces that will include either those who were forcefully removed (if still possible), or of others who historically would not have been deemed welcome in this part of the city.

The sites and themes surfaced in this report tell of neighbourhoods where inhabitants often experience profound **un-freedoms**. These un-freedoms result from the perpetuation of the apartheid city structure; the denial of people's right to the city and its resources; but also an exclusion of people from making their own urban spaces and determining their own urban futures. In many of these sites, the most stable occurrence is of daily injustices meted out against people.

Inside the pandemic there is a new awareness, for those with eyes to see, of the profound inequalities, oppressions and un-freedoms, still encountered by

the majority of urban dwellers. Value-driven urban governance would not speak intellectually only of **(in)equality, (in)justice** and **(un-)freedom**, but would carve out strategies for long-term **liberation and change** that are tangible, that can be measured, that can be seen and felt, even by a little child.

In many of the sites we reflect upon, the inherent beauty of these places and their people, is overshadowed by the ugly realities of neglect, abandonment and estrangement from people's own spaces. The **soullessness** of urban governance has to be replaced **with soulful engagement**, carefully luring out the **beauty from within and from below**, allowing for local communities to claim their own voice, to practice their own agency, and to innovate with bold imagination, where bureaucratic urban management processes fail to go.

Value-driven urban governance, or a spirituality of urban governance, that places the city's most vulnerable populations and neighbourhoods at the core, will embrace an acknowledgment of that which is wrong, making visible that

which is rendered invisible, creating proximity where there is large-scale abandonment, fosters solidarity where there is apathy, carefully heal where there are deep fractures, and develop strategies to arrest and overcome un-freedoms, injustices and inequalities that are written into the urban fabric. This can only be done by soulful, faithful urban leaders, that acknowledges the inherent -and potential -beauty of every urban inhabitant and every urban space.

BEYOND 'NORMALITY': FINDING THE EXTRA-ORDINARY

With reference to the 'rupture' of the Covid-19 pandemic, and our 'longing for a return to *normality*', Roy¹² writes:

“ Nothing can be worse than a return to normality. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. ”

This reflective report does not engage all the neighbourhoods and political processes in the City of Tshwane. It provides insight into the contestations, challenges and

¹² Roy, A., 2020, *Azadi: Freedom. Fascism. Fiction*, London, Penguin Books, p.214

promises of six urban neighbourhoods in the City of Tshwane, as well as the reality of street homelessness as an urban theme.

In each of these sites, and in relation to street homelessness, the temptation might be to return to 'normality', which, in this case, would mean to do things as we have always done them, which resulted in deep fracture and destroyed enormous potential. Such a return to normality has to be resisted.

Instead of being communities together, or managing urban spaces, as were done before Covid-19, could not the pandemic also in the small microcosms of these urban sites, be a portal enabling them **'to break with the past and imagine their world anew?'** Could not, in the ordinary spaces of everyday urban dwelling and vulnerability, extraordinary transformations be imagined, allowing communities to achieve the unthinkable, and a city to be truly inclusive, and its people and

spaces remarkably resilient and beautiful?

THE URBAN STUDIO¹³

The Urban Studio is committed to accompany neighbourhoods as a partner and a participant, in solidarity with the future aspirations of local residents and stakeholders.

Upon request we seek to contribute through research, documentation, capacity-building, advocacy and awareness-raising, and strategic communication.

We do this as an expression of our commitment to advance and broadcast where community-based action and reflection (praxis) could contribute to transformational change.

It attempts to practice an option for the city's most vulnerable populations, as faithfully and as best as we could.

¹³ De Beer, S., 2020, *Clown of the City*, Stellenbosch, African SunMedia, pp.99-118

02 WHEN OUR DEMONS ARE UNLEASHED: COVID-19 IN OUR CITY

LANCE THOMAS

On March 11, 2020, the Director General of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declared the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (better known as Covid-19) a **pandemic**.

The word **pandemic** evokes, in my mind at least, the strange image of demons floating around the city, trying to scare and possess people, thus making them ill. This image is due to me confusing the etymology of the words **pandemic** and **pandemonium**. The etymology of the word **pandemic** is derived from the Greek words, **pan**—meaning **all**; and the Greek word **demos**—meaning **people** (from which we get the English word **democracy**—i.e. the rule of the people). Because I conflate pandemic with pandemonium, I end up with the

Latin **daimonium** (Greek: **daimon**) which is an evil spirit or demon. Pandemonium is thus loosely translated as **all the demons**.

Pandemonium is also the name of Milton's city of demons in **Paradise Lost**. Here the capital of hell is in fact called **Pandemonium**. Little had I realised just how apt a description this would prove to be under the Covid-19 lockdown, and how demons, which were previously veiled or invisible, would rush to the surface as 'ordinary' people retreated to their homes. The pandemic was, for the majority perhaps, more like pandemonium, in the sense of all the city's demons being unleashed.

When President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the national lockdown, the demons that pervade our cities were

quickly exposed. The President had legislated that everyone, not deemed essential workers, were to remain at home. Churches, schools and businesses were closed. This pronouncement also put many homeless people in our city in an extremely precarious situation. Our President, hopefully through reading the letter sent to him by the National Homelessness Network, tried to make provision for the homeless, but through poor implementation the disconnect between policy and implementation -or the will to implement policy in a humane way-quickly became evident.

For the sake of brevity, I would like to list some of the demons that Covid-19 has exposed. In Tshwane, nearly two thousand previously invisible people on our streets were lumped together into the Caledonian Stadium close to the city centre. People who have been socially distancing for many years were now placed in close confinement with their vulnerability to the disease clearly evident to anyone who cared to look. Fortunately, there were a few churches, NGOs, Civic organisations and people of good will who were not willing to look the other way and offered their assistance.

These acts of kindness were met with compassion by relevant Departments in the City of Tshwane, responding to this generosity, and an exorcism of these demons were enacted. More than 20 temporary shelters were constructed and people who had been tortured by the demon of namelessness on the street, were now restored to their previous humanity. This model of holistic healing demonstrates what collaboration between the City, educational facilities, churches and civil society can achieve when working together.

Unfortunately, in Cape Town the story was not as positive, and an opportunity for exorcism was flouted. Instead of following the leads of Durban and Tshwane, the City of Cape Town opted to move the homeless community to the sand dunes of Strandfontein, denying the humanity of homeless persons by not even bothering to explain to them where they were being taken and why. As one homeless person, who was caught in this craziness, and now writing for Cape Argus, says, '**this camp was a prison**' There was little care for the needs of fellow human beings. Strandfontein resulted in even more inhumane conditions than homeless persons found on the streets.

This unbridled inhumanity was reflected also in the way ordinary citizens and city officials responded to homelessness elsewhere in Cape Town. A couple in Sea Point, who tried providing food to the many homeless and jobless left destitute by the pandemic, had their vehicle -a Mini Cooper- burnt, for caring for homeless persons. This car has now become a symbol of resurrection and protest on the beachfront of Sea Point. It was a living symbol that resurrection was possible, in spite of the supposed triumph of evil.

Another horror image in Cape Town was that of Bulelani Qholani of Khayelitsha, being dragged naked outside of his home, as city officials moved in to destroy it. This happened while city officials informed South Africans that they were simply protecting city land, in spite of the President's call that no evictions should take place during the Covid-19 lockdown. It is ironic that Khayelitsha means **'new home'** when indeed it is, for many people, no secure and safe home at all.

These horror stories are not limited to Cape Town. The day after the lockdown was declared, two waste pickers, who make their daily living off collecting recyclables

and selling them to scrap dealers, were arrested for being on the streets. These are people who cannot eat if they do not work. What is more demonic is that this hapless pair were arrested but never processed and thus ended up in prison, completely unregistered, which means that they never appeared before any court and thus were lost in the prison system.

If it were not for the concerns of non-clerical ministers of the city, in the form of the Lawyers for Human Rights, who knew these two personally and went looking for them, they would still be in prison, because there was no record of them. What is even more scary is the fact that these two guys met three other men in the prison caught in the same situation. Luckily the demons of inhumanity and regarding the homeless as subhuman and not deserving of any care by the state, was exorcised by the ministry of these lawyers who have lived an **'option for the poor'**. In the absence of ecclesial ministers, who chose rather to minister to a select group of people in their **'online churches'** the Beatific Vision had to be actualised by God's other servants

We heard reports nationally of Ward Councillors taking much needed

food, destined for starving people who were unable to work under Covid, and using it for political point scoring, or for feeding close family and friends. We heard daily reports of how the **'Stay home, stay safe'** slogan of government contradicted the demon of gender-based violence, where home was anything but safe.

I learnt a number of simple things during lockdown:

- What we hear and assume about the good we do is a lie, as we are caught up in a meta-narrative that keeps us docile as we try and outsource our responsibility for our brother and sister to leaders who are not necessarily concerned about others.
- The narrative that homeless persons are lazy is flouted by the fact that many homeless persons had to remain on the streets, working, just to have a daily meal, whilst the rest of us retreated to our homes.
- The church exists, not for the poor but for the middle classes, catering mainly for those with internet connections.

- Government's investment in shelters and other safe places for vulnerable urban people, is dismal. There are far too few places of safety in all our cities.
- Local governments are very ill prepared to deal with disasters such as what the Covid-19 pandemic surfaced.
- Laws and bye-laws often protect certain people, whilst homeless persons are often not deemed human enough to experience the same legal protection.
- With the right care, mobilised when all spheres of society collaborate, many of the demons pervading our cities can in fact be exorcised. I think especially of substance users, having access to shelter and opioid replacement therapy, finding a moment of stability and a real sense of hope, sometimes for the first time in many years.

Amidst all of the above, as churches closed their doors and went online, a new type of church was developing on the streets, all over Tshwane: a church whose deity was not locked inside a building and had to be visited on a Sunday. What unfolded

under COVID-19 was a new type of church that resonated with the pain of God's people. The ministers of these churches were **'essential workers'**, putting their lives on the line every day in order to bring healing to those tormented by multiple demons.

Their rites of exorcism were to offer spaces of healing and life. They mediated what I believed Christ calls us to: **'The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that you might have life, life in all its ful-**

ness' (NIV: Jn10: 10). I have wondered what such **'life in all its fullness'** might mean for all our churches, generally speaking, but particularly inside a pandemic, when pandemonium breaks loose•

03

URBAN STUDIO AN OVERVIEW

JUDE NNOROM

The Urban Studio seeks to advance a community-based urban praxis through its strategic engagement with six geographical sites in the City of Tshwane (CoT) and to the theme of street homelessness.

The Studio unveils local experiential knowledges in these sites of urban contestation and struggle through its use of the city as a classroom for action, reflection, dialogue, learning, and research. The Studio's primary partners are the Centre for Faith and Community (CFC), based in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria, and the Tshwane Leadership Foundation, an ecumenical grassroots organization. The Studio has a range of secondary partners - community based organizations that are active in these sites and other

spaces in South Africa, as well youth movements, churches and other organizations seeking to become agents of inclusive urban transformation.

The Urban Studio operates on five key functions or strategic objectives: urban immersions; building leadership; doing engaged research; documenting and strategic sharing of information, and advocacy for change.

The Urban Studio's immersions are always alongside existing community - or faith-based actors working for change. We document and reflect on existing actions and contestations, supporting local initiatives through building leadership and doing engaged research. Where required, we share information strategically to help shape alternative narratives

that support local advocacy for change.

The Urban Studio employs a trans-disciplinary methodology of action, reflection, dialogue and research, in advancing her community-based urban praxis. In each site, the Studio seeks to collaborate with practitioners and communities seeking to find realizable and workable solutions for existential problems, by engaging in capacity-building and education, advocacy and support for community projects.

With the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, and its impact on the most vulnerable people in the sites of the Studio, new forms of collaboration emerged between the Studio and its six sites. COVID made more visible socio-economic fractures and inequalities that mark these sites, but also unveiled opportunities for strategic interventions in the areas of social housing, and the necessity of building the capacity of community based organizations who were not deterred by the effects of COVID and went out to provide basic needs for their communities especially during the period of the hard lock down.

This report will focus on the activities of the studio which are different from site to site and offer proposal for 2021. In some sites, the Studio seeks to empower local organizations through capacity building and education while in others, its focus is on advocacy and demonstration projects.

Through these activities, the Studio aims to inform research and trans-disciplinary curricular development.

- The Studio has created a website as part of its process of democratizing knowledge to curate and archive issues coming out of the different sites to facilitate research and the production of knowledge. It can be visited at www.urbanstudio.org.za.
- In order to enhance effective collaboration, the Urban Studio is ensuring community associates in every site, to alert us about events happening and issues arising in these sites•

04 BURGERS PARK RECLAIMING THE CORE

The Burgers Park area of the inner city is the oldest residential neighbourhood in Tshwane. Only a small remnant of the historical core remains. At the heart of it all sits Burgers Park, a public park first laid out in 1870. Across the road, the Melrose House is a national monument, and inside the park the house of the city's first chief horticulturist is a reminder of the area's early glory. The stately building of the Tshwane Central Station, designed by architect Herbert Baker, and the beautiful Barton Keep house on Justice Mahomed Street, built between 1886 and 1888, are other glorious examples of architecture from a bygone era. The Victoria Hotel has seen better days but has once been a central beacon, as was

the Berea Cricket Grounds -reduced to a skeleton by a fire and abandonment, and the Old Fire Station, currently occupied by an artist community.

The City Hall is another landmark building currently unoccupied after renovations that were supposed to turn it into the offices of the Executive Mayor, but upon completion was handed over worse than before renovations started.

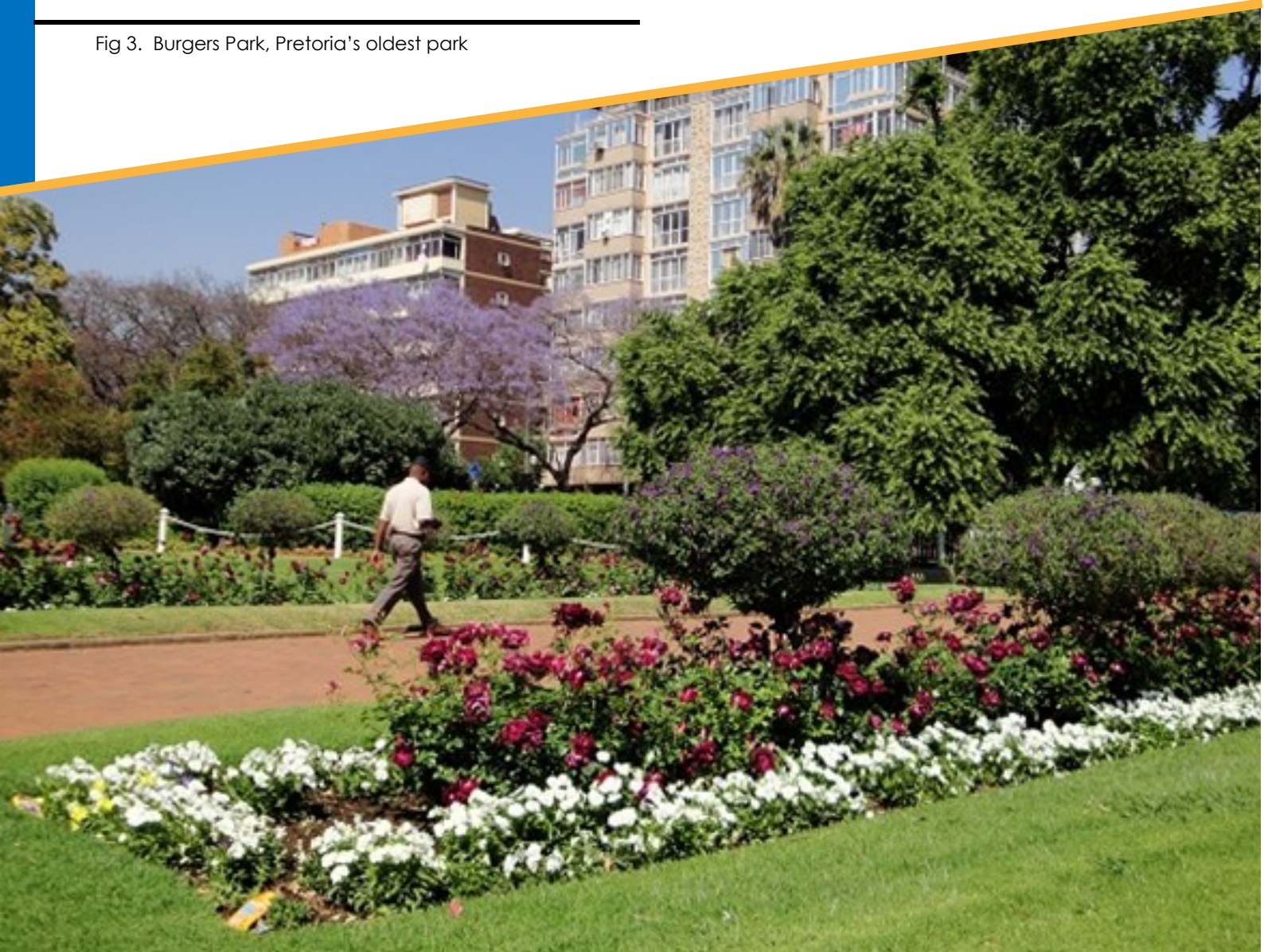
Over time, almost all the stand-alone houses were demolished to make place for a high-rise residential area. Today, the majority of erven in the Burgers Park neighbourhood are occupied by high-rise residential apartments, student housing, social housing and housing for older persons. A number of churches-both traditional and emerging, and

both in traditional church buildings and shopfronts -are active in this area. Both public and private schools and a number of NGOs are actively present in Burgers Park.

Being a 5-10 minute walk from the Central Business District with multiple headquarters of national government departments, there are a number of well-utilized hotels in

the area, in some ways having been anchor institutions, alongside the churches, when the area went through rapid transition in the 1990s. Whereas these hotels used to accommodate many tourists in the 1990s, shifting demographics and negative discourses about the inner city saw tourists moving east, but most of the hotels repositioned themselves well to accommodate

Fig 3. Burgers Park, Pretoria's oldest park



government functions and related visitors to the city.

In the 1990s the residential neighbourhood changed in a very small space of time from a 100% white to 90% black population. This had implications for the composition of local churches, the nature and demand of local business, and the exodus of resources from the area to the south and east of the city. Much of the disinvestment was based on stereotypes about the inner city, and on institutional racism that equated black with bad, shaping the decisions of investors¹⁴.

At some point in the late 1990s and early 2000s a strong local civic forum was created, which contributed to the well-being of the area. It offered property owners' education to the large number of first-time black home owners buying residential apartments in the area. It informed the trajectory of the Gautrain, preventing the demolition of 7-10 apartment buildings. At some point the local ward councilor was collaborating with a

property company trying to force the sequestration of 18 inner city buildings. This was prevented through activism from this Forum and almost all 18 buildings, that back then had serious financial problems and municipal debt, were supported to now be in a solvent and well-run state.

Socially, Burgers Park always accommodated a significant homeless population, and substance use and commercial sex work have often been visible in this area, especially at certain times of the day, and in certain areas. Churches and faith-based organisations have engaged constructively with these groups, offering them services as well as possible pathways to re-integration.

In 2006, a collaborative urban management training programme was developed between the Berea-Burgers Park neighbourhood, the City of Tshwane, the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies in Rotterdam, and the University of Pretoria. 20 representatives from the community, the City and Gauteng

¹⁴ Refer for more extensive reflections on the changes in the Burgers Park area to the following sources:

De Beer, S., 2014, Whose knowledges shape our city? Advancing a community-based urban praxis, *De Jure* 47(2), pp.218-230

De Beer, S., 2017, *Mother bird hovering over the city: space, spirituality and a community-based urban praxis*, Unpublished PhD-thesis, University of Pretoria, pp.131-226

FIG 3. Jansen, C., 2011, Burgers Park, Pretoria's oldest park, <http://www.carolizejansen.com/Burgerspark.html>, accessed 7 November 2020

Province underwent an intensive urban management training programme, both in Rotterdam and in Tshwane, which culminated in the development of an action plan, known as the Berea-Burgers Park Regeneration Plan. Sadly, this plan was never implemented, as responsible for implementation was given to the City, and they failed to activate it, still 14 years later.

Burgers Park, like many other inner city or transitional neighbourhoods, does not have a single narrative and have to deal with many contestations. The Park itself, being an

award-winning Park, also at times carry the effects of poor local government management, and the greenhouse, fountains and other assets have been in steady decline. On the other hand, the Park is very utilized by the local community, and particularly children and young people, find it a very productive space. Annually, the Feast of the Clowns has become a feature in the Park, offering a week-long space in which the community can participate in live concerts, a range of activities, and awareness-raising programmes around social justice.

CERTAIN CURIOSITIES ARISING FROM THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD

Why has Burgers Park resisted going the route of so many other similar inner city neighbourhoods in South Africa, that experienced complete decline? Is it the presence and commitment of local hotels? Is it the active religious institutions in the area? Can it be the presence of strong NGOs and FBOs and their investment in the area? Is it because a large

percentage of residents are government officials working in the central business district? What could the relative stability and well-being of this neighbourhood be ascribed to?

At the same time, however, why is it that economic lungs such as the Paul Kruger Street precinct, running from the Central Station, have a different

dynamic, with larger national franchises struggling to make ends meet whilst smaller businesses seem to flourish?

Thirdly, why do government assets such as the Berea Sporting Grounds, the City Hall and Old Fire Station, and - sometimes - Burgers Park, seem abandoned and left to their own devices? If these assets - in the heart of the neighbourhood - can be protected and nurtured, they could help sustain the well-being of Burgers Park?

Fourthly, why, if agency is shown by the local community in organizing an extensive urban education and planning programme, fully funded, does the City fail to honour such agency and commitment, and simply disregard the commitment shown and investment made?

It is the assertion of this article that Burgers Park belongs to the core or heart of the city, and if the heart is not well, the city will be sick. It is a further assertion that, comparatively speaking, this neighbourhood defies

conventional wisdom about inner city areas and offer much potential and promise. It is a third assertion that the future well-being of this neighbourhood lies with the local community itself: reclaiming the core would probably require local community-led processes, bringing together churches, NGOs, hoteliers, property owners, small and bigger business, and school principals, to carve out a common vision and agenda for the future of this area.

Perhaps, once the Berea-Burgers Park Regeneration Plan was developed in 2006, the local community should have created an implementation vehicle to implement parts of the plan they had control over. In the absence thereof, a huge investment seems to have been wasted.

Unless those who use the area daily -living, playing, working and doing business there -reclaim the core, the core will always be at risk of being claimed, tainted and violated by external forces. The status and promise of the Burgers Park neighbourhood need to be honoured -and the best place to start is from within!•

Burgers Park

Strategic focus

Collaborative inner-city management of mixed-income, mixed use precinct

Activities: 2020

1. Revisiting the Berea-Burgers Park Regeneration Plan
2. Brainstorming ways forward with local community organisations
3. Capacity-building for community mapping
4. Mapping of the major stakeholders in the area
5. Collaborating with the Department of Geography at the University of Pretoria in developing a geocoded map of the area
6. Visual documentation of the challenges and visions for this inner-city neighborhood

Proposals: 2021

1. Drafting a letter inviting the major stakeholders to a mini-consultation
2. Preparation of a well-grounded proposal for a mini-consultation for all major stakeholders to create possibilities of local community ownership
3. Reviving the local community forum as the vehicle to carry out proposals on the site
4. Documenting the unfolding process and building on the 2006 Berea-Burgers Park Regeneration Plan
5. Commissioning a well-researched article on the challenges and opportunities of implementing inner-city changes

05

SALVOKOP (UN) CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

David Harvey¹⁵ speaks of **'creative destruction'**, referring to it as the process whereby government and private sector collude in allowing the decline of a local neighbourhood to a point of no return, after which they reckon they have the moral obligation to 'restore' the neighbourhood and the ethical right to do so through evicting 'unwanted' populations.

This process is playing itself out on the state-owned land of Salvokop, a small neighbourhood in the centre of Tshwane, right behind the Tshwane Central Station¹⁶.

Birthered in 1892¹⁷, the apartheid government gave this land to the Railways to build 174 houses for railway workers. Also present in the neighbourhood is the Jopie Fourie Primary School and a former Christian Reformed Church, that now hosts the Inkululeko Community Centre. Since the 1990s the neighbourhood changed demographically and today it is a predominantly black neighbourhood. A large number of non-South Africans reside in Salvokop, particularly in the backyard dwellings and in two small but growing informal settlements.

It seems strange that a government-owned precinct in which all the houses are owned by the Department

¹⁵ Harvey, D., 2017, Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 610, pp.22-44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097888>

¹⁶ For a more extensive reflection on this neighbourhood, see also: De Beer, S., 2014, Whose knowledges shape our city? Advancing a community-based urban praxis, *De Jure* 47(2), pp.218-230

¹⁷ Van den Heever, A., 2006, *Field Public Space Infrastructure*, Unpublished MArch (Prof) dissertation, Pretoria, University of Pretoria, p.20

of Public Works, have been left to decline to a point where managing the area has become incredibly difficult. Almost every house has a number of backyard dwellings, and illegal erections of structures - housing either churches or shebeens or day-care centres - are allowed even though all such activities are forbidden by the legal agreement the legal tenant of the house has entered into with the Department. The only explanation for the complete lack of management can perhaps be

found in Harvey's notion of "creative destruction".

The proximity of this neighbourhood to the central business district, only separate by a foot bridge onto the Tshwane Central Station, provides access to the city and its resources and makes it an attractive location for newcomers to the city.

Today this is contested space and the future of the people living in Salvokop, some since birth, is increasingly uncertain¹⁸.

¹⁸ Kgosana, R., 2020, Pretoria's old 'white village' of Salvokop now plagued by hopelessness, 13 January 2020, <https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/society/2227209/gallery-pretorias-old-white-village-of-salvokop-now-plagued-by-hopelessness/>, accessed 30 October 2020

FIG 4. Kgosana, R., 2020, 'Pretoria's old 'white village' of Salvokop now plagued by hopelessness', *The Citizen*, 13 January 2020, <https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/society/2227209/gallery-pretorias-old-white-village-of-salvokop-now-plagued-by-hopelessness/>, accessed 4 November 2020



STATE-OWNED LAND

Being state-owned land, instead of using it to model a truly inclusive, post-apartheid neighbourhood, displaying high levels of diversity, a mix of uses and a mix of income groups, the bulk of the vacant land is earmarked for new government department headquarters. Statistics South Africa already has headquarters completed in this precinct in 2016, at a cost of 2 billion rand. Next the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Correctional Services would be given similar office parks, even though this

would leave a large number of existing inner city buildings empty. To make way for the Statistics South Africa property, two shelters for street boys were demolished, and in return the Department of Public Works built a 70-bed shelter completed in 2016. Since then this facility stood empty though.

Current plans for the area only earmark the development of the government precinct and is rather quiet and non-committal as to the future of the current residents. The Danish Government is committed to partner with the South African government to recreate Salvokop into a smart city. Yet, the inclusion of long-time residents, non-South African migrants, and very vulnerable backyard dwellers would make this be a really smart neighbourhood.

Whether that would be achieved is currently very uncertain as none of the government stakeholders has either pronounced themselves on this or made any commitments to this effect.

Some years ago, a local social housing company, Yeast City



Fig 4. Salvokop

Housing, developed 82 social housing units in the precinct, on church-owned land. They modeled the inclusion of backyard dwellers in affordable and sustainable ways, as 50% of their tenants used to live in backyard dwellings in Salvokop. This modeled the possibility of including the largest percentage of current residents in a future Salvokop, if there was the political will.

Currently, though, it seems as if government is more committed to erect monuments to self, than to integrate low-income residents sustainably into the inner city, providing them proximity to social, economic and educational opportunities, and thereby contributing another brick to the remaking of the apartheid city.

The future of Salvokop might still be one in which current residents might have a stake. But that would

depend on those living in the neighbourhood now. If a community is characterized by apathy and division, it probably deserves the future that will exclude them. But if a community can get itself mobilized, to drive a collective agenda, grounded in a common vision, there might be hope.

Communities such as Salvokop hold much promise to contribute to -and showcase - a new city. Such promise is often diluted by the lack of clear vision on the part of both government, local communities and private sector. Who will shape the future of Salvokop and who will be able to call it home, a decade from now? Will the final word belong to the (un)creative destruction of top-down government planning collaborating with the unbridled greed of capital's profit? Or will the people govern?•

Salvokop

Strategic Focus

Advocating for inclusivity in the urban redevelopment of public land and preventing displacement

Activities: 2020

1. Supporting informed participation of Salvokop residents through
 - Communication with National Minister of Public Works, Patricia de Lille, on the importance of including all stakeholders in discussions concerning Salvokop
 - Meetings with the Head of Urban Planning in the City of Tshwane and the city planner responsible for Salvokop

The City promised to

- clarify the process of the Danish project
 - ensure participation by including members from the community
2. Visual documentation of the site with interviews of the major stakeholders in the area
 3. Monthly capacity building of some members of the Youth through the Activist school

Proposals: 2021

1. Collaborating with the Department of Geography for a geocoded mapping of the area.
2. Walking alongside the Salvokop Development Forum, Salvokop Residents Forum and the newly formed Salvokop Youth Group, all seeking to make change in Salvokop
3. Producing academic and popular articles on the potential of Salvokop to become an example of a socially inclusive neighborhood within a government precinct
4. Strengthen advocacy to prevent forced displacements

06

WEST CAPITAL PRECINCT DRY BONES

The West Capital Precinct¹⁹ is what the long-term vision and plan for the western part of the inner city of Tshwane is called²⁰. This area stretches from Church Square and Paul Kruger Street in the east, to Pretoria West, and from WF Nkomo Street (old Church Street) in the south to the natural boundary of the Apies River in the north.

It is an area rich with history and heritage, but also deeply scarred by the wound of apartheid forced removals, and more recent local government failure that displaced thousands and left once-flourishing low-cost housing facilities to be mere skeletons.

SKELETONS

Much of the vacant land in the West Capital Precinct used to form part of vibrant but poor urban neighbourhoods, known as the Cape Malay Quarters, Asiatic Bazaar and Bantule, today just called Marabastad. E'zkie Mphahlele²¹ writes lyrically about life in this community in *Down Second Avenue*. Displaces between the 1960s and 1972 through forced removals to surrounding townships for black, Coloured and Indian people, the scars of that past is still too evident in Marabastad.

In the 1990s a growing informal settlement developed on vacant land

¹⁹ Urban Studio, 2020, West Capital Precinct, <https://www.urbanstudio.org.za/west-capital-precinct>, accessed 19 October 2020

²⁰ Also see: De Beer, S., 2014, Whose knowledges shape our city? Advancing a community-based urban praxis, *De Jure* 47(2), pp.218-230

²¹ Mphahlele, E., 1959, *Down Second Avenue*, London, Faber & Faber

in the Marabastad area. Around 2,000 people lived here and ran informal businesses, supporting the taxi and bus industry and commuters, moving through this area on a daily basis. In 2002, under Mayor Simangaliso Mkhathshwa people were moved -officially voluntarily- to what is today known as Phomolong²². Most of the promises of infrastructure made to people were not kept. For being moved more than 30kms out of town, they were rewarded with an unserviced plot of land, with no access to economic opportunity and without the proximity of a concentration of people, movement and job opportunity such as was offered in Marabastad.

A third forced removal occurred in 2011²³. More than 1,000 families who resided in Kruger Park and Schubart Park -high-rise municipal housing complexes -were evicted from these poorly managed facilities. The City spoke of it as evacuation due to poor living conditions -which their mismanagement caused- but the Constitutional Court ruled that this was in fact illegal eviction.

The City, upon evicting people, also did not safeguard the buildings, and valuable infrastructure was stripped to the bone over a short period of time, literally leaving physical skeletons.

SHATTERED DREAMS AND SEEDY VULTURES

There are also other spaces in this precinct. A community of homeless persons resisted displacement in the early 2000s. Their advocacy, with the support of some faith-based leaders in the city, prompted the city to make available no.2 Struben Street as the only official overnight shelter for homeless persons in the city. However, in spite of the participatory process that indicated that the facility should be run by a credible NGO, the City opted to run the shelter itself. Today, and for the past 5-7 years, there has been no management of the facility²⁴. For a long time, this has ceased to be an overnight shelter, rather becoming permanent accommodation for many people, including people

²² News24, 2002, Marabastad squatters move to Mamelodi, 3 August 2002, <https://www.news24.com/News24/Marabastad-squatters-move-to-Mamelodi-20020813>, accessed 4 October 2020

²³ Bilchitz, D., Schubart Park eviction a dishonourable injustice, *Mail & Guardian*, 24 October 2011, <https://mg.co.za/article/2011-10-24-schubart-park-eviction-a-dishonourable-injustice/>, accessed 4 October 2020

²⁴ Tihabye, G., 2017, Dismay over state of homeless shelter, *Pretoria News*, 22 September 2017, <https://www.iol.co.za/pretoria-news/dismay-over-state-of-homeless-shelter-11317353>, accessed 18 October 2020

who can afford housing.

Across the road is the building of the Department of Home Affairs where immigrants queue up for asylum papers or to apply for legal documentation to remain in South Africa. Notorious for corrupt practices by Home Affairs officials, many sordid tales are told of abuse and victimization of foreign nationals.

A few blocks from these two spaces is a new student accommodation, replacing what -a little over one year ago -was still Huis Davidtz²⁵. Huis Davidtz was built decades ago to house lower-income old people in a retirement facility. Unhealthy labour practices caused a strike by workers in this facility. With support from a certain political party the protest intensified, and old people living in the facility were not cared for any longer. The owners of the property, all church people, instead of addressing the labour issues to rescue the future of the building, settled for the highest profit and sold off the property. This helped to deplete an already stretched sector in which the number of

affordable housing units for pensioners -who lack proper social support or relations with families who can accommodate them -is fast reducing.

In all these cases a combination of greedy owners, officials or fellow citizens, together with corrupt, inept or racist management, cause the violation of the poor and vulnerable in incomprehensible ways. The dream of the original constructors of Huis Davidtz, the dream of those who agitated for a decent overnight shelter, and migrants' dream of a better life for their families and themselves, lie shattered across this precinct. The western part of the West Capital Precinct includes the commercial, industrial and residential zones of Pretoria West -historically a working class white neighbourhood and today a rather diverse mix of people from different racial and economic backgrounds, and also very Afropolitan in its composition. The fabric of the area has decayed over the past two to three decades and needs tender, robust care.

²⁵ Matshili, R., 2019, Huis Davidtz Centre shut, residents moved, *Pretoria News*, 1 October 2019, <https://www.iol.co.za/pretoria-news/huis-davidtz-centre-shut-residents-moved-33748201>, accessed 18 October 2020

DISCONNECTION

One of the main factors in perpetuating the life-sucking forces that leave dry bones, is a sense of disconnection. In the late 1990s the Marabastad Development Forum was formed, and in conjunction with the Pretoria Inner City Partnership, birthed a beautiful and concrete dream for the resurrection of Marabastad²⁶. Under Mayor Mkhathshwa this dream was shelved and -in spite of the ambitious West Capital Precinct- no alternative imaginary owned by the local community has been birthed since then.

Stakeholders in the different regions of the West Capital Precinct hardly know each other. There is no platform for information-sharing community organizing, or the fostering of a collaborative vision and agenda from below.

The dream for the West Capital Precinct was created by city officials, some who have moved along

in the meantime. It is not clear who the custodian of this dream is, and a dream without a custodian and partners who can hold it together, is bound to vanish.

The disconnection of the city's official plans from the lived experiences and realities in the precinct; the disconnection between local government, civic stakeholders

Fig 5. Schubart Park, West Capital Precinct



²⁶ See the 'Marabastad - Urban Design', prepared by Aziz Tayob Architects for the (then) Pretoria Planning and Development Department & Pretoria Inner City Partnership, 1997, <https://www.co-arc.com/marabastad-urban-design/>

FIG 5. Verwey, H., 2014, 'Post apocalyptic Schubart Park', <http://hermanverwey.blogspot.com/2014/06/post-apocalyptic-schubart-park.html>, accessed 2 November 2020

and private business; and the disconnection among local community stakeholders themselves; might condemn this area to a bleak, incoherent and un-flourishing future; unless those with historical strong roots and connection to the space, and those currently calling this space home or place of income, take collective action to overcome the disconnected, and reweave what is broken.

A RATTLING SOUND

...one can hear a rattling sound. In the Biblical vision of the prophet Ezekiel, he is placed in a valley of dry bones. Yet, something was happening, and, over time, through a rattling sound, the bones moved together again, flesh were put to the bones, and life breathed into them. This could be a remarkable imaginary for the process of restoring an area devastated, not by a war of weapons, but first by a racist political system, and then by corrupt and inept governance that held little regard for the

city's poorest populations.

Ezekiel's was a **'restorative eschatological theology'**²⁷ that should be retrieved, argue Biwul, and claimed for African communities. In a context where the dream of Mandela, Nkrumah, Kenyatta and Nyerere²⁸ is **'gradually experiencing a growing downward spiral against their vision and dream,'**²⁹ a potent new imaginary is required.

The West Capital Precinct, in a real sense, is a small microcosm of the much larger dominant narrative and picture of destructive African urban governance. But also in this valley of dry bones -where the migrants from all over the continent gather in Pretoria West, and cultures and religions meet in Marabastad, and homeless people do their washing alongside Steenhovenspruit, and Thembelihle Village offers hope and home to 738 families, and churches offer a sense of belonging to tired urban souls -Ezekiel's vision could apply.

Eichrodt³⁰ speaks of the life-giving spirit at work in the valley

²⁷ Biwul, J.K.T., 2017, 'The vision of "Dry Bones" in Ezekiel 37:1-28: Resonating Ezekiel's message as the African prophet of hope', *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies* 73(3), a4707, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4707>

²⁸ Biwul, 2017

²⁹ Biwul, 2017

³⁰ Eichrodt, W., 1970, *Ezekiel: A commentary*, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, p.509

of dead bones as **'a major offensive against the forces of death, which must result in a victory for life.'**

Biwul³¹, drawing from this theological vision, speaks of **'the voice of Ezekiel, their African prophet'** who will soon say,

“*'Dry bones, live'*, and the noise form the rattling sound of a revived and reformed political, social, economic, religious, moral and environmental life will, expectedly, be heard for a realized hope.”

In this place of skeletons, shattered dreams and greedy vultures, disconnection yet small pangs of hope, a rattling sound might once more be heard. If the memory of haunted spaces can only be retrieved - from the old Synagogue where Mandela, Sisulu and others were on trial for their dream for a liberated people; from the corridors and play areas in Schubart Park where children learnt to live -and connected to the songs of Tshwane resounding from the historical church on Bosman and Madiba Street, and the hopes of the Hindu and Muslim worshippers still gathering in historical Marabastad,

and the exorcising dances of African traditional believers under the trees next to Steenhovenspruit; through such retrieval and connection the dry bones might be called to life, and the disconnected ones re-membered, and skeletons transformed into living organisms dealing life to many a tired urban wanderer.

USHERING IN A NEW THEO-SOCIO-POLITICAL IMAGINARY

A new urban imaginary is required to overcome the skeletons of this urban precinct. It needs to address the social exclusions and political failures. It needs to build on the theological hopes of those of different faiths who called this their home. It needs to reclaim space that was taken, violated and scarred. **'Now, dry bones, live!'** might not just be an esoteric prophetic vision but an urban rally cry for life•

³¹ Biwul, J.K.T., 2017, 'The vision of "Dry Bones" in Ezekiel 37:1-28: Resonating Ezekiel's message as the African prophet of hope', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73(3), a4707, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4707>

West Capital Precinct

Strategic Focus

Advocating for participatory, community-based planning of the precinct; social housing and restoring the homeless shelter

Activities: 2020

1. Building trust & partnership with the business forum
 2. Starting a conversation with the Hindu temple, a national heritage site
 3. Interface the work of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Pretoria with the Urban Studio
 4. Visual and advocacy documentation for re-imagining the precinct
-

Proposal: 2021

1. Encouraging a proposal for upgrading and management of the homeless shelter in the precinct
2. Advocate for the appropriate use of public land in partnership with Lawyers for Human Rights
3. Strategize on the formation of a local advocacy group – The West-Capital Forum – to participate fully in shaping future plans for the area
4. Curating and documenting already existing materials on the area into a permanent exhibition – virtual and physical

07 MAMELODI EAST

RECOGNIZING A COMMUNITY'S UNRECOGNIZED GLUE

On the database of the Centre for Faith and Community, we have mapped 90 community-based organisations, active in the Mamelodi East neighbourhoods of the Mamelodi Township³². They offer services ranging from early child development and the development of food gardens at schools, to substance use programmes and skills development for young unemployed people.

Resilient communities are communities in which local people and institutions develop and practice their own agency, and draw from their assets, to engage and overcome local challenges. Many of the neighbourhoods in Mamelodi East, especially, are relatively new having sprung up over the last

10-20 years. They are predominantly informal with varying degree of formalization and in various stages of people obtaining land rights. In case of heavy rains or flooding, these communities are particularly vulnerable, but on a daily basis economic and food security are huge challenges.

The role of community-based organisations, mostly under-resourced and under-capacitated, cannot be underestimated. Such organisations -as an expression of a locally engaged civic- might often be the unrecognized and invisible glue that keeps frail communities together. Their presence and service reduce harm and mitigate risk in concrete, physical ways. Their connectivity mediates a

³² <https://www.urbanstudio.org.za/mamelodi-east>



Fig 6. Mamelodi residents clash over basic services'

sense of belonging and for those initiating such organisations, volunteering in them or benefiting from them, these organisations are often meaning-making.

And yet, their real impact often goes unnoticed, is under-researched, not well-assessed, and hardly documented. Similarly, the role of faith communities in the

neighbourhoods of Mamelodi East, should be explored in greater depth³³. Do they serve as sources of resilience and hope, or as pacifiers of extremely vulnerable communities?

In an earlier project we mapped churches in the eastern parts of Mamelodi, with specific attention to ways in which they responded to

³³ Renkin, W., 2017, 'Responses to migration: Tensions and ambiguities of churches in Pretoria Central and Mamelodi East', *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 73(3), a4725. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4725>

FIG 6. Mitchley, A., 2017, 'Mamelodi residents clash over basic services', *Pretoria News*, 22 June 2020, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/mamelodi-residents-clash-over-basic-services-20170622>, accessed 2 November 2020

issues of migration, both local and transnational.

The Urban Studio, through curating an archive of information on the work of CBOs in Mamelodi East, would not only serve to document their stories and activities, but also to legitimize and broadcast what they do to the broader public. Simultaneously, in doing so, assessing real impact and shortcomings, could help identify critical areas for capacity-building, popular and civic education, and on-going research, that might serve to strengthen this vitally important societal sector. In the process of building a local information base, new networks of relationships can be shaped, that could become the vehicles for local transformational change. Competition

could be replaced with collaboration, and a collective agenda for local community transformation could be shaped over time.

A place to start could be **through establishing and offering a local CBO hub**. Through pooling information, knowledge, leadership and other resources, organisations are able to replicate and multiply the good they are currently doing, broadening their own asset-base and overcoming the odds through building strong collaborative agency. Such a hub could facilitate such pooling and sharing of resources, and support building such agency.

This could be a strong and visible recognition of the unrecognized glue -and the many people constituting its main ingredient -holding the community together•

Mamelodi East

Strategic focus

Advocacy & capacity-building of CBOs in fostering their agency for creating social infrastructure in an urban township

Activities: 2020

1. Identification of an on the ground contact person who will bond CBOs and FBOs in Mamelodi East
2. Interfacing the studio with the Social Entrepreneurship research project of the Department of Business Management at the University of Pretoria
3. Drafted a proposal on interfacing the Studio with the vision of the Pre-University Academy in Mamelodi
4. Visual documentation of the activity of one of the CBO's in Mamelodi East that responds to issues of substance abuse, homelessness and after school care

Proposals: 2021

1. Occupy and make use of the Centre's office space on the Mamelodi campus –as a CBO/FBO hub
2. Participating fully in the Mamelodi Learning Collaborative Mapping the NGOs & FBOs in our database to identify needs for capacity building
3. In collaboration with the Pre-University Academy, hosting an exhibition that will bring together CBOs & FBOs in Mamelodi with some members of different Faculties at the University of Pretoria
4. Explore possibilities of solidarity action research that will unveil capacities of community based agencies
5. Documenting activities and impact of CBOs/FBOs/NGOs

08 EERSTERUST

SMALL ENOUGH TO EMBRACE BIG ENOUGH TO DIVIDE

Eersterust is a small community of 29,676 people, according to the 2011 National Census, and only 4.9 square kilometres. Located about 15kms northeast of Tshwane's city centre, Eersterust is the first and main Coloured township in the city, and still today 83% of the population is Coloured, 14% black and 2% from other racial groups³⁴.

The majority of Eersterust's people come from families who have been forcibly removed from Marabastad, Claremont and Lady Selborne in the 1960s, due to apartheid legislation separating people according to their racial classifications.

Over the years, apart from Eersterust being a vibrant community, and in some ways closely-knit, over the years it has also been marked by gang activity, substance use, violence, and, increasingly, gender-based violence. In recent months, a growing concern about access to land and housing has surfaced, with poor residents living informally, questioning why much of government's housing interventions seem to pass by this community.

Despite the smallness of the community, some estimate the presence of 500 churches, literally a church for every 60 people. This includes mainstream traditional and charismatic/Pentecostal churches, storefront churches and a proliferation of house churches. This speaks of a

³⁴ See also this recently developed virtual resource: <http://www.eersterust.com/>

lack of unit among Christian churches, which also have a direct impact on the inability of the community to engage its most critical challenges decisively, and in transformative ways.

If Ray Bakke writes that we need a theology as big as the city, Eersterust as an urban community is small enough to fully embrace. And yet, without the critical felt needs and challenges that disable this community's flourishing being fully present on the agendas of the local church, the church would be unable to mediate such flourishing in holistic ways.

The Centre for Faith and Community

has been invited to journey with the community in Eersterust, and we have identified two specific areas where we would like to support local struggles and aspirations. Some collective of churches has identified the need for safe spaces, particularly for victims of gender-based violence³⁵. We were asked to accompany this process, both from a research and documenting perspective, but possibly also through building local capacity. Secondly, we have been asked to participate more deliberately in brokering tables of conversation about land and housing issues that have become more acute in recent times, without forced evictions, pending homelessness, lack of access to land rights, and slowness of government interventions³⁶.

If a critical mass of local citizens and organisations can foster a joint agenda to address the two issues above, important inroads would be made, both in terms of addressing two critical issues, but also in fostering the confidence of the local community in its own ability to make decisive and constructive change.

Fig 7. Eersterust



³⁵ Mahlokwane, J., 2020, Eersterust residents in march against gender-based violence, *Pretoria News*, 17 June 2020, <https://www.iol.co.za/pretoria-news/eersterust-residents-in-march-against-gender-based-violence-49476266>, accessed 4 November 2020

³⁶ Mothatha, W., 2020, Relative calm returns to Eersterust after land invasion, *SABC News*, 26 June 2020, <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/lm-relative-calm-returns-to-eersterust-after-land-invasion/>, accessed 4 November 2020

FIG 7. Eersterust our community, 2020, <http://www.eersterust.com/>, accessed 2 November 2020

Eersterust

Strategic Focus

Building the capacity of churches to create safe spaces for victims of GBV, and advocating for land and housing rights

Activities: 2020

1. In April a capacity building workshop on strategies for combatting GBV was held virtually with about 12 participants from different church groups in Eersterust
2. Mapping of the church assets in Eersterust
3. Visual documentation of the contested land (informal settlement) in Extension 4 in Mamelodi
4. Collaborating with Lawyers for Human Rights on land and housing rights in Eersterust
5. Engage local persons on deliberate research into some of the thematic concerns in Eersterust

09 WOODLANE VILLAGE IMAGINING A SPATIAL MIRACLE³⁷

Approximately 4,000 people live in an informal settlement, known as Woodlane Village by some, or Plastic View by others, situated in the new eastern suburbs of Pretoria / Tshwane. Across the road, a few hundred people live in the smaller informal settlement of Cemetery View. What makes these two settlements particularly interesting is their location opposite the Woodhill Golf Estate and the Woodlands Boulevard Shopping Mall, surrounded by upmarket security villages and lifestyle estates, and the Pretoria East Hospital, and adjacent to the Moreleta Park Dutch Reformed Church, with

7,500 seats, hosting predominantly white Afrikaans-speaking members, but now also having an English and vernacular church services.

For the past 10-15 years the golf estate, and other estates, and the informal settlements, were **facing off** in contestations over space, holding on to radically different imaginaries of what that part of the city was supposed to be. The church, being squashed between the informal settlement and the housing estates, with members conflicted over their position in relation to the informal settlements, found itself in a rather precarious position. From an initial position

³⁷ Adapted from a paper read at the annual Just Urban Imaginaries Colloquium of the Centre for Urban and Built Environment Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, 15 August 2019, titled "Imagining a spatial miracle? When golf estate, church and informal settlement face-off / each other – journeying in Woodlane Village (Plastic View) / Moreleta Park"

of not wanting to condone 'illegality' to a place of tentative solidarity, and experiencing animosity from the wealthier surrounding housing estates, the church had to face itself in relation to informality.

Thirteen court cases later, the informal settlements still exist, with legal protection through different court orders. The City of Tshwane failed to uphold a number of clear directives specified by the courts.

FIG 7. De Vos, P., 2017, 'Evening gospel', *Homelands*, <https://pieterdevos.ca/homelands>, accessed 4 November 2020

Fig 7. Evening church service in Woodlane Village



-
- 2006** - On the insistence of various homeowner associations, the City of Tshwane, the SAPS and the Department of Home Affairs, raided the informal settlement twice, burning or breaking down shacks. With the assistance of Tswelopele Step by Step, a local NGO, Impact Litigation Lawyers, and later Lawyers for Human Rights, took the matter to the Supreme Court of Appeal.
 - 2007**
30 May - the eviction by the City and the SAPS are deemed illegal by the Supreme Court and the City is instructed to rebuild the demolished shacks.
 - 16 August** - The Minister of Safety and Security does not comply with the court order and at 4am on 16 August of 2007 members of the SAPS and security personnel burnt down 50 shacks.
 - 29 August** - The Pretoria High Court holds the Minister in contempt, fine him with R 10,000 and issues a warrant for his arrest. The Police is given 12 hours to rebuild the torched shacks. This time they comply.
 - 2008** - A group of home owner associations approached the Court to seek a legal eviction of the informal settlement. The City claimed that it had no alternative space to move people to, upon which the Court compels the City to create a demarcated area on this vacant land, and to develop a plan for either the relocation of the informal dwellers in the vicinity or for their integration into an integrated development on this site. The City was given a certain period to do this.
 - 2009** - Based on the Court order, the City called for proposals for this land, to be inclusive of the informal dwellers. Three consortiums submit plans showing the viability of an inclusionary project of mixed-use and mixed-income, but the city failed to award the project to any of these Consortiums.
 - 2015** - Just before his departure as Executive Mayor, Dr Kgosientse Ramokgopa sought to sell this land, against the court orders instructions, to the highest bidder. Lawyers for Human Rights blocked the sale of the land.

2009-2020

The City breached the court order, failing to maintain the fence, access control and lights, and also failed to implement the redevelopment required by the court order.

Between 2006 and 2015 there was a total of 13 court cases related to the informal settlement.

THE CHURCH: LEARNING TOGETHER

One of the distinctives of the site is the mega-church looming over the informal settlement. The Moreleta Park Dutch Reformed Church is a 7,500 seater that was built in the early 2000 after they outgrew their original facility.

The story of Moreletapark Church in relation to the informal settlement is indeed intriguing. The church, being squashed between the informal settlement and the housing estates, with members conflicted over their position in relation to the informal settlements, found itself in a rather precarious position.

Initially the church's official line was that it will not touch the settlement because the settlements was illegal. Of course, theologically, this is an untenable position, as Jesus was controversially forever crossing boundaries to assert the dignity and inclusion of those labelled / excluded / deemed illegitimate.

One cannot pinpoint exactly where the shift happened. But, today, the church runs a preschool and primary school serving children from the

Village. A number of other NGOs offers services, hosted on the church premises. The church currently is going through a rezoning process, because the first grade 7 learners are completing primary school and the church wants to build a high school. It also wants to create purpose-built facilities for health care, recycling and economic activity linked to the Village.

In 2015, when then Mayor Ramokgopa wanted to sell of the land, the church became a friend of the court, standing in solidarity with the Village. This now, a far cry from their original position. It did not endear them to many of its members, and many of its neighbours in the estates.

Somehow the church's commitment also took its toll, on membership and on finances. As Moreleta Park learns to be a church in solidarity with their poor neighbours, the cost is becoming considerable.

Then there are Colin and Denise Dredge. They started out by feeding people in this community, as an expression of their Christian responsibility, coming from a rather conservative church background.

But in the face of human rights abuses, and illegal evictions, they were drawn in by the villagers to find legal support. Before long, they were outspoken supporters of the Village and their right to the city; becoming unlikely activists. The toll on them has been significant. Theirs was an expression of activist church.

In the shadow of the big church are also those of the village, worshipping in ways that blend African traditional religion and the Christian faith, requiring little resources; yet, resourcing themselves through a spirituality of resilience, tenacity, and holding their ground.

THE FORUM: FACING EACH OTHER

In 2019, the Woodlane Informal Settlement Forum was created, for the first time representing leaders from all these contesting communities, as well as NGO leaders and academics, now **facing each other**, and exploring the possibility of a collective vision for the sites on which the informal settlements are located.

It was the Church that played the role of broker to bring very diverse people to the table, launching the Forum by hosting a former Executive Mayor, Solly Msimanga, to hear his views on the Village. Although his and his officials' presence were rather uninspiring, concentrating on the large presence of foreign nationals instead, on the same evening the proposal to launch a Forum found traction.

The initial meetings of the Forum became very tense, between those still wanting to force people out, and those insisting on local solutions on this piece of land. Three sub-forums were then established, dealing with social development, safety and security issues, and urban development, housing and sanitation. Leaders from all the different communities -including the informal settlements- participated together.

Since its inception, new conflicts emerged, leadership battles surfaced- not even between those with resources and the informal settlement leaders, but among resourceful white people not seeing eye to eye. Currently, these contestations are being navigated,

but a strong sense is emerging from within prominent leaders in the gated communities and in the church, that the residents of Woodlane Village are there to stay. The challenge is not to displace them but to find the best possible way of integrating people into the fabric of this neighbourhood.

Perhaps the current contestation is between the problem-saturated conversations of those wanting to see the informal settlement be dismantled, and those daring perhaps to imagine a radically different future for this whole area.

There are practical concerns.

What to do if 40% of the informal settlement is made up of foreign nationals not covered by South African housing policies? How innovative can one become to also enable their inclusion? How does housing get provided when a large percentage of dwellers are unemployed? What could secure tenure look like? Is land ownership and in situ upgrading of stands an option? What are the housing types to be considered? What are the economic opportunities or futures

of this area to build a sustainable new village? And so forth

A NEW IMAGINATION

Against the backdrop of South Africa's divided history of socio-spatial inequality and fragmentation, can this journey foster a just spatial imaginary, eventually translated into a miracle of radical socio-spatial inclusion?

On miracle

Hanna Arendt frequently speaks of new beginnings, or the initiation of radical alternative possibilities, as 'miracle'³⁸.

“...to dispel the suspicion that hoping for or, more accurately, counting on miracles is utterly foolish and frivolous, we first have to forget the role of miracles have always played in faith and superstition...”

For Arendt 'miracle' is not 'solely a... religious phenomenon by which something supernatural breaks into natural events or the natural course of human affairs.' For Arendt, a miracle is 'whenever something new occurs', bursting 'into the context of predictable processes as something unexpected,

³⁸ Arndt, H., 2005, *The Promise of Politics*, (edited & introduction by Jerome Kohn), Schocken Books, p.111

unpredictable, and ultimately causally inexplicable³⁹. Arendt⁴⁰ says

“...every new beginning is by nature a miracle when seen and experienced from the standpoint of the processes it necessarily interrupts. In this sense... within the context of processes into which it bursts... each beginning corresponds to the religious transcendence of believing in miracles.”

This site, since 2004 became an interruption of dominant spatial patterns in the Moreleta area -in Arndt's definition, therefore, already a miracle.

THE POWER OF PROXIMITY

Perhaps such a miracle starts with proximity. Enrique Dussel⁴¹ describes praxis -the fusion of action, reflection and personal commitment- as

“...the actualisation of proximity, or the experience of being proximate, for one's neighbour. Praxis is the experience of constructing the other as person, as the end of my action and not as means. We are dealing

with a relationship of infinite respect.”

Facing off was all about contestation; to get rid of 'these people', never to have to face 'the other' as human. But in the process of facing each other, proximity holds potential to foster mutual respect. Spatial justice could now be considered, not only legalities or technicalities, but as human relationships.

In proximity, people start to respect the steadfast gentle leadership of Benjamin and his team in the village -the proximity of the Dredges connecting the village to legal support, annoyed the church and home owners no end, but made visible what the police and city wanted to wipe out at 4am in the morning; the proximity of a provincial government bureaucrat, living in a gated community and respected by his own, challenging the wisdom of yet another court attempt or further consideration of displacing people, initiating thereby a new kind of social contract, however tentative it might be; the proximity of the big

³⁹ Arendt, 2005, pp.111-112

⁴⁰ Arendt, 2005, p.112

⁴¹ Dussel, E., 1988, *Ethics and Community*, New York, Orbis Books, pp.9-10

church to the village, and of the village to the big church. Such socio-spatial proximity was always going to beg this question: what does it mean to be(come) human together in the here and now?

FROM UNMASKING TO NEGOTIATION

In this new space **'the overvalorization of people, places and activities contrary to reality'**⁴² are unmasked and undone. Davey⁴³ speaks of the new household of God in which **'revalorization'** of those previously devalued, **'disrupts and overturns existing expectations'**. Is this not perhaps what is occurring in this space: unmasking the **'overvalorization'** whilst revalorizing that which the resource-rich communities were hellbent on displacing?

There is the fragile possibility to forge a new collective praxis, as Sandercock⁴⁴ calls it, **'of communities and movements who refuse to let existing**

arrangements persist'⁴⁵. This is a proximity that mediates a new collective praxis, unmasking falsehoods and then resisting that which is considered unchangeable. These spaces now render the negotiation of alternatives possibly -what Soja describes as **'thirdspace'**⁴⁶.

“alternatives are trailed, spaces negotiated and communities of resistance are formed.”⁴⁷

PROPHETIC IRRUPTIONS, THROUGH ORDINARY DAILY LIVING

The disruptive presence of the Woodlane Village should perhaps be embraced as a prophetic irruption, or insurgency⁴⁸, breaking into a part of the urban landscape that traditionally disallowed the poor from habitation, except if it was for the provision of services or labour.

⁴² Davey, A., 2001, *Urban Christianity and Global Order: Theological Resources for an Urban Future*, London, SPCK Publishing, p.31

⁴³ Davey, A., 2001, p.108

⁴⁴ Sandercock, L., 1998, *Towards Cosmopolis – Planning for Multicultural Cities*, Chichester / New York, John Wiley & Sons, p. 18

⁴⁵ Davey, 2001, p.54

⁴⁶ Soja, E.W., 1996, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Hoboken, NJ, Wiley-Blackwell, p.96

⁴⁷ Davey, 2001, p.54

⁴⁸ Perkinson, J.W., 2017, 'Jesters, tricksters, taggers and haints: Hipping the church to the Afro-hop, pop-'n-lock mock-up currently rocking apocalyptic Detroit', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73(3), a4659, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4659>

Woodlane Village

The people of Woodlane Village demonstrate resilience in the face of insecure tenure and severe housing precarity, and great tenacity to retain their access to the city through this choice of location.

Theirs is

a lived spatiality, or quiet politics (cf. Hankins) practised by backyard dwellers, shack dwellers and other (homeless) migrants, (giving) us insight into the agency they possess, the choices they make, and the reason for those choices^{49,50}.

These are prophetic irruptions, perhaps, in four ways:

- It exposes the definite and ongoing challenges of spatial segregation, resultant socio-economic exclusion and the vastness of inequality

- It forces us to learn how to be human together in contested spaces
- It offers the promise of a new neighbourhood embodying spatial healing, racial healing, and new ways of becoming human together
- It invites the re-imagination of the church as it becomes incarnate in this precinct-aided by the brave stubbornness of two marginal people of faith who stood with the settlement as they took on powers much bigger than themselves.

Woodlane Village and its neighbours is the intersection and overlapping of hundreds of stories, becoming an intersectional space waiting to be storied anew, collectively, by those sharing proximity. We remain a quite onlooker, and participant of this journey, to see how the miracle continues to unfold•

⁴⁹ Bailey, A.; De Beer, S. & Hankins, K., 2019, Dwelling as just faith: Migrant housing, precarity and the activities of faith-based organisations in Tshwane and Atlanta, in De Beer, S. (ed), *Just faith: global responses to planetary urbanisation*, Durbanville, AOSIS, pp.189-222

⁵⁰ Hankins, K., 2017, 'Creative democracy and the quiet politics of the everyday', *Urban Geography* 38(4), 502–506. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2016.1272197>

Woodlane Village

Strategic focus

Advocating for the integration of an informal settlement into an upmarket suburb

Activities: 2020

1. Woodlane Village as a classroom for unveiling the intersection of legal, socio-economic, theological, urban planning, spatial and housing perspectives
 2. The Studio as participant in the sub-forum of the Woodlane Informal Settlement Forum
 3. Supporting the leadership of the informal settlement
 4. Visual documentation of some of the activities of FBOs in the area and the vision of the residents for the area
-

Proposals: 2021

1. To collaborate with Lawyers for Human Rights in following up on the work of the court manager appointed to address the various court orders
2. Collecting proposals and research done on the Woodlane Village to be consolidated into a virtual and physical archive
3. Supporting the local church and Informal Settlement Forum in their efforts to integrate Woodlane Village meaningfully into the local community
4. Engaging local stakeholders for a possible space in which to curate a permanent and developing archive telling the story and articulating the vision for this neighbourhood

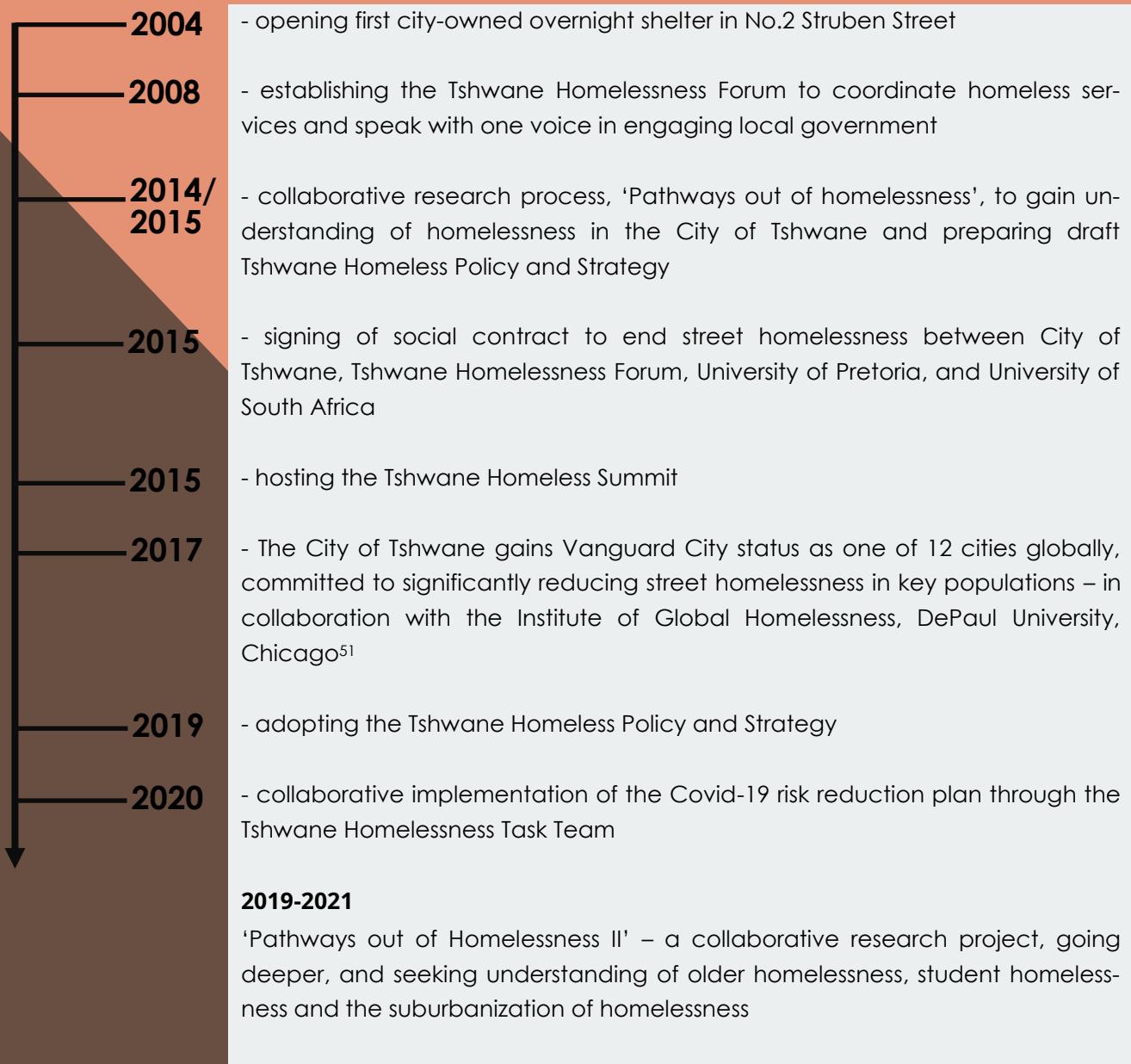
10 STREET HOMELESSNESS FINDING PATHWAYS OUT OF HOMELESSNESS

The Centre for Faith and Community has been actively involved in engaged research and policy processes related to street homelessness, since 2015. The Centre's Director, Stephan de Beer, has been involved with creating infrastructure, services and housing solutions to address street homelessness since the early 1990s.

The timeline on page 55 provides an overview of the unfolding process in the City of Tshwane, seeking to engage street homelessness in constructive ways, to will help facilitate sustainable pathways out of homelessness. For much longer, however, various NGOs were formed,

responding to urban social change, more generally, and to street homelessness more particularly. PEN, the Tshwane Leadership Foundation, Yeast City Housing, Sediba Hope Medical Care, Kitso Lesedi, the Homeless Upliftment Project, Popup, Kopano Manyano, Youthful Survival and Centurion Haven of Hope, all contributed in diverse ways over the years, through outreach programmes, psycho-social and health services, transitional housing, family reconciliation and skills and vocational training programmes. Shelters like Reliable House in Hatfield were formed and during Covid-19 new NGOs such as Tshimologo were birthed.

The timeline indicates the processes where collaborative interaction between NGOs, the City and Universities took place.



⁵¹ Institute on Global Homelessness, 2019, Tshwane South Africa, <https://ighomelessness.org/vanguardcity/tshwane-south-africa/>, accessed 16 October 2020

In recent years, the Community-Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) of the University of Pretoria and Doctors without Borders strengthened the primary health care, harm reduction and mental health support programmes with homeless persons. COSUP is a partnership between the City of Tshwane and the University's Department of Family Medicine, providing harm reduction programmes with street-based persons using substances⁵². During Covid-19 this was expanded to roll out primary health care to 1,800 homeless persons, with very positive effects.

The downside was that there was no budget attached to the adoption of the Policy, basically rendering the Policy dead on its feet.

Then Covid-19 happened and the President of South Africa announced that temporary shelters had to be provided to all who were homeless. He provided no blueprint and it was up to municipalities to then discern how to give effect to the President's instruction⁵³.

In Tshwane, different partners joined a rollercoaster ride, working collaboratively in the Tshwane Homelessness Task Team, and more than 25 NGOs, churches and businesses joined hands with the City to create a rather remarkable response to street homelessness during the Covid-19 lockdown⁵⁴. A significant risk reduction plan was being implemented, accommodating more than 1,800 homeless persons within a 21-day period in 25 (finally, 27) newly established, temporary, Covid-19 shelters.

HOMELESSNESS & COVID-19 IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE

Research and policy work that was done since 2015, finally resulted in the adoption of the Tshwane Homeless Policy in July of 2019. This was very positive as, apart from Cape Town, the City of Tshwane was now the only city with such a policy to guide its homeless

⁵² Marcus, T.S., Heese, J., Scheibe, A., Shelly, S., Lalla, S.X. & Hugo, J.F., 2020, Harm reduction in an emergency response to homelessness during South Africa's COVID-19 lockdown, *Harm Reduction Journal*, Vol.17, 60 (2020)

⁵³ De Beer, S., 2020, Homelessness and Covid-19: political, institutional and theological capacities and priorities, *Spotlight Africa*, 15 March 2020, <https://spotlight.africa/2020/04/15/homelessness-and-covid-19-political-institutional-and-theological-capacities-and-priorities/>, accessed 12 October 2020

⁵⁴ De Beer, S., 2020, Homelessness and Covid-19: the miracle of Tshwane, *Spotlight Africa*, 23 April 2020, <https://spotlight.africa/2020/04/23/homelessness-and-covid-19-the-miracle-of-tshwane/>, accessed 12 October 2020


In all the shelters primary health care, harm reduction programmes and psycho-social programmes were made available. Some shelters were better at introducing individual development programmes and exit plans for residents. Many people were for the first time diagnosed with chronic illnesses they were unaware of, and could now be treated accordingly. Adherence by substance users to the harm reduction programme was much more effective because of access to safe and secure shelter facilities. A large number of people was reconciled with their families, others found access to employment, or to long term places of care. Unfortunately, as the lockdown levels were reduced some people opted to return to the streets.

As a result of this process 4 new permanent shelter facilities were opened, and two more are in planning. The City has committed itself to avail 1,200 new bed spaces for homeless persons but that process is currently uncertain. A new facility for 19 frail older persons coming from homelessness was opened at the Tau Village, and an old social housing facility was converted to integrate a 36-bed facility for older homeless persons, offering permanent low-cost accommodation.

The process of homelessness and Covid-19 is well-documented in a research report that was published in November 2020⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ De Beer, S. & Hugo, J., 2020, *Homelessness and Covid-19 in the City of Tshwane. Research Report*, Pretoria, University of Pretoria

Apart from the very local Tshwane-based responses, the Centre for Faith and Community also participated in other processes, reflected in the table here below.



2017	- launch of a National Homeless Network
2019	- formalizing the National Homeless Network
2020	- good progress is made by the Gauteng Province in drafting a provincial street homelessness policy
	- 2-day virtual conference of the National Homeless Network with 250 participants from across South Africa, and beyond
	- Submission to the Presidency, making recommendations for a national policy development proposal for street homelessness
	- launch of the Unit for Street Homelessness at the University of Pretoria, to commit itself to on-going homelessness research and policy work
	- launching Pathways, a collaborative operational centre, hosted by the Unit for Street Homelessness and Cosup, to support the City and NGOs in addressing street homelessness in the City of Tshwane more strategically and effectively
	- participating in online conversation with partner cities across the world, hosted by the Institute of Global Homelessness in Chicago ⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Institute of Global Homelessness, 2019, Covid-19 Homelessness Resources, <https://ighomelessness.org/covid-19-homelessness-resources/>, accessed 16 October 2020

NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS NETWORK

What started slowly as a network of friends, developed into a small but important network. During Covid-19, members of the network checked in weekly in a virtual call, both to prepare advocacy documents but also to share good (and bad) practices from different cities across the country.

The Network issued a number of press statements and wrote to the President's Office and the National Disaster Task Team on more than one occasion, to highlight the issues faced by street homeless persons during Covid-19.

In November of 2020, the National Homeless Network hosted a very successful virtual conference and meeting, solidifying itself as a platform for networking, resource sharing, joint research projects, and collective advocacy⁵⁷.

The National Homeless Network has the potential to provide a key support role to grass-root organisations but also policy-makers in crafting responses to street homelessness that can start to show real impact, ending

homelessness one person, and one family at a time. That, by the way, is similar to the title of a collaborative project we are a part of as the Centre for Faith and Community in the City of Tshwane.

'PREVENTING AND ENDING STREET HOMELESSNESS IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE, ONE COMMUNITY AND ONE PERSON' AT A TIME

With the support of Comic Relief, the Centre for Faith and Community is a research and documentation partner of the Tshwane Leadership Foundation and of Lawyers for Human Rights, in this particular project. The aim of this project is to contribute to the prevention and ending of street homelessness in measurable ways. Whereas the Tshwane Leadership Foundation provides specific services and, with Yeast City Housing, housing solutions to help address street homelessness, Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) engages in litigation, education and information, to help prevent illegal evictions, and thereby preventing further homelessness.

During Covid-19, LHR created a helpline which assisted more than

⁵⁷ Perrier, R., 2020, Homeless share in the conversation, *The Star*, 7 November 2020, <https://www.iol.co.za/ios/news/homeless-share-in-the-conversation-1155209f-487d-4a23-a02b-3052b90481d4>

UNIT FOR STREET HOMELESSNESS

1,000 people who faced illegal evictions, and the Tshwane Leadership Foundation opened two permanent housing facilities for older homeless persons, as well as two new temporary Covid-19 shelters for women and men. With the Department of Geography at the University of Pretoria, homeless shelters and services; contested land; land used by recyclers or reclaimers; and vacant land or buildings that are state-owned, are mapped, both to provide a quick overview of the relationship between available shelters and the concentration of homeless persons, but also to support strategic processes enabling access to land.

The Centre documents these processes, and supports practical intervention through evidence-based research. This collaborative project, just as our participation in the Homelessness Task Team, are concrete expressions of the methodology of the Urban Studio, using the city and actual challenges, contestations and responses, as classroom.

During Covid-19, it became clear that the Centre spends an extraordinary amount of time and energy on issues related to street homelessness, out of proportion to the availability of staff and resources for this purpose. At the same time, we acknowledged the critical necessity for this work, realizing that available research on street homelessness in South Africa and on the continent of Africa was rather sporadic and not continuous. We were given permission to launch a Unit for Street Homelessness, to be housed in the Department of Practical Theology, and to be managed by the Centre for Faith and Community. This Unit will

- (i) do research and policy work, supporting local, provincial and national processes, and
- (ii) manage the Pathways operational centre, with the Community-Oriented Substance Use Programme in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Pretoria, providing support to the City of Tshwane and local NGOs, in their operationali-

zation of the Tshwane Homeless Policy and Strategy.

The Unit will be a place of consolidating learning that occurred over many years in the context of seeking to understand, address and overcome street

homelessness; with the view of disseminating learning and research findings, sharing good practices, and influencing policy, strategy and investments that might scale what works, and incubate innovative new approaches to prevent and end street homelessness•



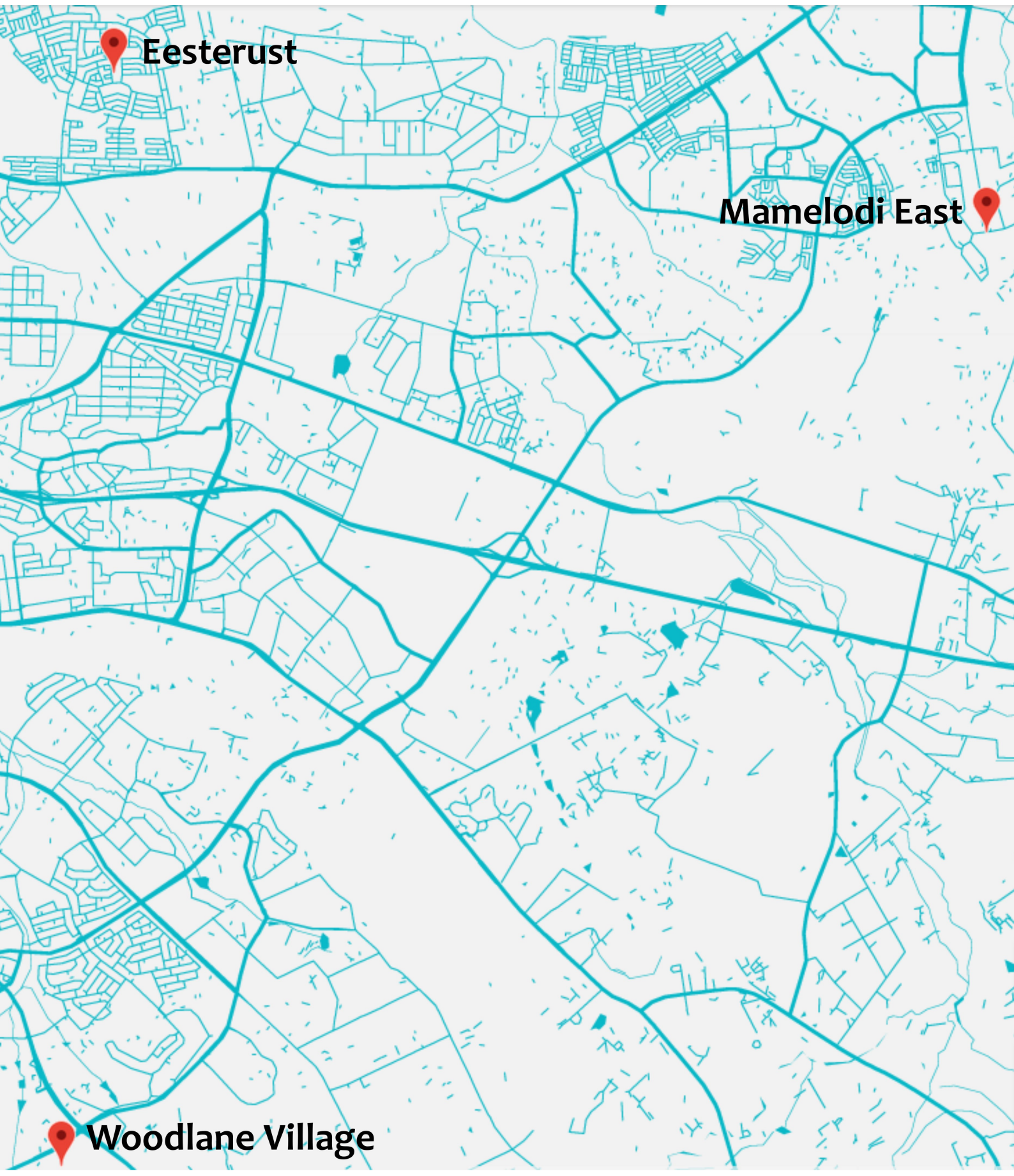
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Precint**

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Homelessness**

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URBAN STUDIO MAP



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 **Woodlane Village**

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EPILOGUE

The Urban Studio embodies close collaboration between a research Centre at the University and a local faith based organization committed to urban social change. The two entities have different knowledges, experiences and positionalities. In sharing these with each other, but also with the sites reflected upon in this report, rich reservoirs of resourcefulness open up, from which local communities and their leaders can drink.

This is indeed a case where 1+1 is not 2 but multiplied manifold times. The work of the Urban Studio is not to become grass-root practitioners or local community activists, but to support grass-root action and local community activism, through engaged, collaborative research that can inform and legitimize local action; but also through documenting and disseminating local narratives in ways that can contribute to debunk myths, expose urban falsehoods and help shape new, alternative or more inclusive urban imaginaries.

If Covid-19 has exposed the depths

of vulnerability more than ever before, it also inspired innovative responses to vulnerability, seeking to build resilience and overcome all odds. It did so, because perhaps Arundhati Roy is right, when she says **'Nothing can be worse than a return to normality.'** Normality is abnormal, cruel and exclusive for the majority of urban dwellers in our society. Therefore, **'pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew.'**

Inside this pandemic, and accompanying various contested sites in and around the City of Tshwane, it is ever so clear: without new imaginaries, the (ab)normality of the current status quo cannot hold for much longer. We need to imagine our institutions, our humanity and our urban fabric anew. The Urban Studio seeks for clues as to what such imaginaries might look like, learning from the hidden threads and nets that connect disconnected local communities, and that keep fragile local places strangely alive, and strong, in spite of their fragility•