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PROLONGING THE GLOBAL AGE OF GENTRIFICATION: JOHANNESBURG'S REGENERATION POLICIES†

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Abstract New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom are not restricted to cities of the global North, but are being imported by municipalities of the global South as 'world class' enabling precedents. Johannesburg may be added to the growing number of cities that are adopting economic competitiveness, responsive governance, social cohesion, and social mix strategies to facilitate urban regeneration, so that free-market economic strategies rather than social policies may act as catalysts for change. However, such strategies may lead to the social and spatial exclusion of poor inner city residents and not to a Just City conceptualization for urban planning.

Keywords economic competitiveness, social cohesion, urban regeneration

Introduction

> It is said that Johannesburg has been built up and torn down no less than five times since it first appeared on the highveld in 1886. And each time it has re-emerged even uglier than before. (Matshikiza, 2004: 481)

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At a lecture to the American Planning Association, Sir Peter Hall suggested that many command centre cities of the global North have experienced a 'renaissance'. Hall's (2005) lecture pointed to numerous examples of cities that have witnessed a significant turnabout after decades of decline. This lecture also reiterated the findings of symposium papers presented at the Resurgent City conference hosted by the London School of Economics (LSE). Here, speakers portrayed cities of the global North as 'coming back [due to] globalization, more intense competition, and the rise of the cultural economy' (LSE, 2004: 1). These key requisites, they argued, have restored the economic role of previously degenerated inner city neighbourhoods.

There can be no doubt of the need for capital reinvestment in economically stressed inner city neighbourhoods. A significant number of local authorities are, therefore, engaged in drafting and implementing urban policies that actively seek the economic regeneration of their city centres. However, for a number of planning scholars, contemporary regeneration practices and policies tend to focus on making cities more economically competitive while bypassing issues of social and spatial justice in neighbourhoods earmarked for rejuvenation (Beauregard, 2004; Díaz Orueta, 2007; Fainstein, 2004; Marcuse, 2002; Porter and Shaw, 2009; Roy, 2006). These practices and policies entail pursuing New Urban Policy (Boyle and Rogerson, 2001) and New Conventional Wisdom (Gordon and Buck, 2005) centred on 'economic competitiveness', 'responsive governance', 'social cohesion', and 'social mix' strategies, and the use of such strategies in urban planning frameworks suggests that unemployment, shrinking opportunities, social exclusion, and inner city hardships are a thing of the past (Beauregard, 2004; Catterall, 2004; Marcuse, 2002; Slater, 2006). Rather, street-level spectacles, trendy bars and cafés, social diversity, and funky clothing outlets are deemed necessary regeneration ingredients. Municipalities across the globe are thus rushing to endorse Richard Florida's (2005) celebration of a new 'creative class' in urban centres. In the process, they hope to attract investors, higher income households, the 'creative class', and tourists to occupy the cafés, galleries, sidewalks, and rehabilitated residential stock of formerly disinvested neighbourhoods once lacking in 'creativity' (Slater, 2006; Storper and Manville, 2006). Additionally, while private sector involvement is prioritized in New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom, contemporary regeneration projects are, essentially, facilitated by the state (De Magalhães, 2004). Contemporary regeneration practices and policies are then 'not a sideshow in the city, but a major component of the urban imaginary' (Ley, 2003: 2527), and the City of Johannesburg's policy intent to re-brand Johannesburg as a 'cultural capital' may be added to this globalizing frenzy.

> The City of Johannesburg (CoJ) will work to ensure a successful branding of the Inner City as the Cultural Capital of the country. The title of 'cultural capital' of the country is available and has great potential. In a world where the cultural sector is increasingly prominent in the profiling or branding of cities, this potential strength should be given greater prominence in achieving a world class African city.
> (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 22, 23)

Accordingly, New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom are not restricted to command centre cities of the global North, but are being imported by municipalities of the global South as 'best practice', world class enabling precedents to secure a global age of regeneration (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001; Smith, 2002). Downtown Johannesburg is thus on the brink of another re-emergence informed by lessons from 'the best run cities in the world' (Mayor Masondo, cited in Davie, 2006). Twenty-five years of capital and white flight from the inner city of Johannesburg recently prompted the City Council to implement a plethora of investor friendly policies to re-attract private capital and middle-class households. However, and contrary to global North experiences, decades of capital and white flight resulted neither in a depopulation of the inner city nor in a vacant, boarded-up landscape. Rather, informal socioeconomic activities coupled with a significant inward migration of jobseekers have transformed Johannesburg's downtown. Today, the greater majority of existing inner city residents are poor. Many rely on the informal sector to survive, and many reside in physically dilapidated apartment blocks, or 'bad buildings' as classified by the City Council, while being exploited by slumlords. Informal socioeconomic activities and a doubling of the inner city resident population, in particular, are perceived by municipal officials, policy-makers and politicians as undesirable and unmanageable obstacles in achieving their 'cultural capital' and 'world class African city' vision. As a consequence, local planning policies are seemingly designed to shift undesirable and unmanageable 'obstacles', via exclusionary displacement mechanisms, to 'peripheral locations where they are less of an eyesore and [less of] a threat to the City's renewal process' (Silimela, 2003: 152). This suggests that inner city regeneration in Johannesburg is nothing more than a euphemism for underlying gentrification.

By means of case study research methods and a critical discourse analysis, this article aims to investigate the apparent assumptions underpinning the City of Johannesburg's planning policies to generate a fuller understanding of who stands to benefit, and who does not, economically and spatially, from public sector led regeneration programmes. For the purpose of this study, an in-depth case study of the inner city of Johannesburg will inform research findings, while a discourse analysis will entail a critical examination of the written (in policy documents or in the media) and spoken (during open-ended interviews or at public meetings) language used by municipal officials and politicians. Their standpoint will become apparent, and their argument for private sector re-investment and intensive urban management, to stimulate the local economy and to curb degeneration trends, will be presented. An understanding of residents' needs and the impact of regeneration policies, in turn, is base on a three-year study with community leaders, local civil society organizations, residents, and informal traders.

For Fainstein (2005), Roy (2006) and Yiftachel (2006), deeper investigations into existing urban policies neither imply a blindness to external political forces nor an assumption that political structures cannot be changed. But investigations also accept that 'existing structures are not changed easily' and that change 'can only be envisaged through collective activity' (Fainstein, 2005: 127). This article will, therefore, proceed by exploring how economic competitiveness, responsive governance, social cohesion, and social mix strategies, found in policy documents across the globe, inform the City of Johannesburg's regeneration practices and policies. It will be structured in three sections. The first will establish a conceptual framework for urban regeneration through which a Johannesburg case study may be evaluated. Here, a more equitable, just, and resident inclusive approach to urban regeneration will be sought. Such an approach is inspired by Fainstein's (1974, 2004, 2005) Just City conceptualizations of planning theory and practice in which the central purpose of planning is to promote social, economic and spatial justice. A Just City position will, therefore, be used as a critical frame of reference in the expository analysis. The second section will establish the origins of Johannesburg's regeneration policies; and both this and the third section will then evaluate the impact of Johannesburg's regeneration practices by responding to Yiftachel's plea to 're-engage planning scholarship with the material basis of urban planning' (2006: 212). In these sections it will become apparent that patterns of access to economic, spatial and political resources are unequally distributed. If such regeneration practices continue to be implemented, then, arguably, the desired 'cultural capital' and 'world class African city' may lead to a gentrified space of social and economic exclusion, and not to a Just City.

Establishing a conceptual framework for this study

> In 1955, *Time* magazine devoted a cover story to 'The Rebirth of the City'. In 1962, it devoted a similar story to urban rebirth, titled, simply, 'Renaissance'. In 1981, the magazine gave a cover to developer James Rouse, king of the festival marketplace, and titled it 'Cities are Fun!' Six years after that the cover went to 'Bringing the City Back to Life'. The urban comeback has been coming for some time now.
> (Storper and Manville, 2006: 1247)

Urban regeneration is performed in different cities under various guises, including, 'renewal', 'rejuvenation', 'reinvestment', 'revitalization', 'renaissance', and, more recently, 'smart growth'. Nearly half a century ago, Jane Jacobs (1961) convincingly demonstrated how state-driven urban renewal programmes destroyed vibrant inner city neighbourhoods. Instead of creating the desired rejuvenation of urban centres, renewal programmes fuelled capital flight, the decentralization of employment to the suburbs, and, what Peterson (1991) terms as, the 'poverty paradox': growing suburban affluence coupled with greater inner city adversity. By the early 1980s, ongoing inner city degeneration became a threat to the competitive market agenda of economically liberal governments. Cities would not become world class entities if the degeneration and under-utilization of blighted urban nodes were allowed to persist. Contemporary regeneration policies, that include concepts such as economic competitiveness, responsive governance, social cohesion, and social mix, thus began to replace former renewal programmes in order to safeguard capitalist production (Boyle and Rogerson, 2001; Gordon and Buck, 2005; Smith, 1996, 2002).

While New Urban Policy (Boyle and Rogerson, 2001) and New Conventional Wisdom (Gordon and Buck, 2005) encompass concepts of social cohesion and responsive governance, the central political and economic imperative for local governments influenced by New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom is to build competitiveness through a search for new opportunities and distinctive sources of advantage. Major regeneration projects are, therefore, justified by local governments as a means towards facilitating the so-called new economy and the differentiated consumption demands of the middle classes (Díaz Orueta, 2007). As a result, since the mid- to late 1980s, a plethora of ambitious inner city regeneration strategies has emerged in various centres across the globe at a scale that far outstrips 1960s urban renewal. The difference between contemporary practices and renewal predecessors is that private sector involvement is now favoured as a platform to establish large-scale, multifaceted regeneration. Such partnerships between private capital and the local state have intensified over the past decade resulting in larger, more expensive, more expansive, and more symbolic development projects, from Barcelona's waterfront to Berlin's Potsdamer Platz, from London's Canary Wharf to New York's Battery Park City (Smith, 2002). All have become 'best-practice' precedents, where economic competitiveness, responsive governance, social cohesion, and social mix strategies are in vogue, and where urban regeneration is not perceived as a means of reducing inner city poverty, but as creating economic growth, inflated property values, and higher tax revenues (Beauregard, 2004; Catterall, 2004; Ley, 2003). Many municipalities are thus 'caught within the web of global exchange, and display similarities [in their regeneration policies and outcomes] that are widely shared' (Fainstein, 2004: 4). Many invest in catalytic, or flagship, projects, and many have become consummate agents of the market through the institutionalization of free-market doctrines (Brenner and Theodore, 2005; Smith, 2002). Free-market economic strategies rather than social policies act as catalysts for change, to help create jobs and wealth via a trickle-down philosophy. For this reason, Smith contends that 'urban policy no longer aspires to guide or regulate the direction of economic growth so much as to fit itself to the grooves already established by the market in search of the highest return' (2002: 441).

Public-private partnerships are also forged to establish Business/City Improvement Districts (BIDs/CIDs) and Town Centre Management (TCM) programmes, while zero-tolerance law enforcement, or intensive urban management, is deployed to safeguard capital investments. However, contemporary regeneration practices and policies marginalize and exclude residents in poor inner city neighbourhoods from public decision-making processes regardless of the fact that 'the material legacy of these decisions remain for generations' (Yiftachel, 2006: 213). Concepts such as economic competitiveness, responsive governance, social cohesion, and social mix, embroiled in New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom, serve as excellent examples of how the reality of gentrification is being replaced by a discursive policy language to deflect criticism (Slater, 2006). This will be evidenced in subsequent sections on Johannesburg.

By contrast, resident resistance to New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom is prompting more progressive municipalities in Britain to devise resident inclusive regeneration approaches through the implementation of Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs). The aim of SIPs is to target public sector support for specific community development projects in poor neighbourhoods. Similarly, Regional Development Agencies in Britain are in the process of establishing Centres of Excellence for Urban Regeneration to facilitate citizen participation in public decision-making processes (De Magalhães, 2004). Such state-led practices also promote aspects of communicative planning theory. Nonetheless, for some scholars, SIPs and Centres of Excellence evade the multi-dimensionality implicit in the process of urban decline, and they are in conflict with the state's ultimate competitive and urban commodification goals (Amin and Thrift, 1994; Madanipour, 2003). Resident-led approaches to regeneration and planning, such as those facilitated by Community Development Corporations (CDCs) in American cities, may present an alternative to state-led initiatives. These Corporations initiate a broad array of community development project aimed not only at regenerating neighbourhoods but also at strengthening residents' access to political processes (Vidal, 1996). 'CDCs are doing the difficult job of providing services and leadership in communities that need help and that other agencies cannot or will not serve' (Vidal, 1996: 153). Resident-led approaches further support planning for social transformation theories and practices. Still, CDCs rely on state and other grants for their survival, and they are often burdened by internal management problems (Winkler, 2006).

While SIPs, Centres of Excellence, and CDCs have weaknesses and limitations, the purpose of introducing these models is to present actual examples of resident involved as opposed to resident excluded approaches to urban regeneration and planning. A more inclusive approach will, however, require the local state to recognize that there is no, empirically justified, link between economic growth and social equity. Said differently, 'social exclusion and economic exclusion are intertwined' (Fainstein, 2004: 15). Fainstein's conceptualization of the Just City is, therefore, based on an equitable, redistributive, and resident involved approach for planning and regeneration to remedy social and economic exclusion. Such an approach is not blind to the power of the state and of capital in determining who gets what, where and when, but it, nonetheless, subscribes to Friedmann's (1987) theories of social/mutual learning, and to Nussbaum's (2004) argument concerning the development of residents' capacities, in particular their political capacities, for involved and effective public decision-making. Capacitating residents will further require the local state to shift its focus from merely governing the city, and fitting itself into the grooves of the free market, to embracing participatory governance (Campbell and Marshall, 2000). With its roots in social and post-Marxist political economy theory, the Just City model for planning and regeneration is suggestive of aspects of participatory governance. After all, the Just City is a social construct that can only be conceptualized through collective engagement (Fainstein, 2005). Practical solutions to social and economic exclusion are then not the monopoly of municipal officials, politicians, and professional planners, but are collectively formulated through respectful processes of social/mutual learning and residents' active political engagement in public decision-making processes. Additionally, both the substantive (material) content of urban policies and the process of generating urban policies need to be equally judged for their impact on equity (Fainstein, 2005; Yiftachel, 2006). The core task of the Just City is then to understand and critique the substantive and procedural impacts of urban policies to facilitate a platform for transformative intervention (Yiftachel, 2006). It is against this resident involved, equitable, just, and material basis of planning and regeneration that the Johannesburg case study will now be evaluated.

Establishing the origins of Johannesburg's regeneration policies

After the second democratic municipal elections held in December 2000, 'inner city regeneration' was declared a priority by the newly appointed executive mayor of Johannesburg, Amos Masondo. At the same time, local policy-makers formulated a long-term economic development framework known as the 'Jo'burg 2030 Vision'. By 2030, it was proposed, Johannesburg will be a world class city in compliance with New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom. 'Its economy and labour force will specialize in the service sector so that the economy will operate on a competitive global scale [to] drive up tax revenues, private sector profits, and disposable incomes' (CoJ, 2030 Vision, 2002: 3). The 2030 Vision thus laid the foundation for the first Inner City Regeneration Strategy with an overarching goal 'to raise and sustain private investment leading to a steady rise in property values' (CoJ, ICRS, 2003a: 2). However, the local state failed to recognize that there is no (empirically justified) link between economic growth and social equity. The formulation of these policies also excluded inner city residents, which is contrary to a Just City approach for regeneration. Such findings corroborate Yiftachel's (2006) concern that decision-making in the global South is generally less transparent, and that state actors, and not residents, shape planning practices and policies.

Achieving the Regeneration Strategy's overarching goal required an overt demonstration by the municipality to accommodate investor needs. In addition, the City of Johannesburg began to embrace responsive governance strategies by shifting its role from 'acting merely as an administrator, to becoming an active agent of economic development and growth' (CoJ, 2030 Vision, 2002: 3). Accommodating investor needs and responsive governance strategies, via the adoption of New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom, included establishing public-private partnerships; declaring an 18 km^2 district in the inner city as an Urban Development Zone (UDZ) so that budding investors could become eligible for substantial tax breaks; stimulating buoyant economic development by supporting 'big business' through the design and implementation of carefully crafted physical interventions; investing in catalytic projects that presuppose a multiplier effect of increased property values through complementary private sector investments; floating municipal bonds to increase investor confidence in the inner city; and facilitating the Better Buildings

Programme (BBP) by writing off arrears on identified 'bad buildings' and transferring the ownership of these buildings to private sector developers for rehabilitation.

Investor friendly regeneration policies are, ostensibly, eliciting a financial turnabout in the fortunes of the municipality (Harrison, 2006). '$750 million worth of investment has poured into Johannesburg's inner city over the past four years' (*The Star*, 2008: 6); and an additional $2 billion of public sector money will be allocated to ongoing catalytic, or flagship, projects (*Financial Mail*, 2005) so that 'Johannesburg can be marketed as an exciting Afropolitan city' (Gevisser, 2004: 517) and as the 'cultural capital' of South Africa. City Improvement Districts (CIDs) are also being set-up to facilitate the management of regenerated urban nodes, while 'inner city apartments are being refurbished by private sector developers for up to $800,000 per unit' (*Financial Mail*, 2005: 6). Accordingly, Councillor Tau, a member of the mayoral committee responsible for economic development, is of the opinion that:

> Ten years ago there was severe deterioration in the Inner City. Today it has transformed into a desirable business and residential hub with commercial and residential property prices reflecting this turnaround. Our urban regeneration policies and increased capital investments are critical to competitive economic growth and a property market turnaround despite a global property market slowdown. (Councillor Tau, cited in *The Star*, 2008: 6)

However, 'this productive engagement between city authorities and private capital [is] also associated with an apparent insensitivity towards poor citizens within the city' (Harrison, 2006: 330). Insensitivities entail implementing intensive urban management policies that comprise, amongst other strategies, tenant evictions from buildings earmarked for the Better Buildings Programme (BBP) and disconnecting the supply of water and electricity to buildings with unpaid municipal bills (*Financial Mail*, 2003; Inner City Community Forum, 2003). If the core task of a Just City conceptualization of planning is to understand and critique the substantive and procedural impacts of urban policy so that transformative interventions may be sought, it then becomes important to ask, what is the City of Johannesburg's regeneration vision?

> Through our regeneration [initiatives], we are going to make millionaires out of a lot of people! What is happening is that a higher calibre of people is now moving in. They are taking up the penthouses, and they are creating the world class city that we are talking about. (Interview, CoJ Director of Inner City Regeneration, 2004)

Explicitly seeking a 'higher calibre of people' to transform the inner city into a world class context presupposes a gentrified vision. While Marcuse (1985) correctly argues that how gentrification is evaluated depends a great deal on how it is defined, this article will not deliberate on a definition for gentrification given the extraordinary depth and progress made by scholars since Glass's (1964) coinage of the term in the mid-1960s. Rather, for the purpose of this study, Hackworth's (2002) succinct definition of gentrification will be used. Accordingly, gentrification is 'the production of space for progressively more affluent users' (Hackworth, 2002: 815). Here, the critical emphasis is on class transformation which has social, economic, and spatial repercussions. Moreover, Slater proposes that 'gentrification is a process directly linked to the injustice of community upheaval and working-class displacement' (2006: 739) which, in turn, undermines the principles of a Just City, as this theoretical model is concerned with the redistributive benefits of urban policies and actions. It is, however, difficult to quantify the extent of community upheaval and resident displacement from Johannesburg's inner city neighbourhoods, because, as sustained by Newman and Wyly:

> It is difficult to find people who have been displaced, particularly if those people are poor . . . By definition, displaced residents have disappeared from the very places where researchers and census-takers go to look for them. (Newman and Wyly, 2006: 27)

In an economically liberal context where public policy is constructed on a quantitative evidence base, a lack of quantitative evidence regarding the number of displaced residents from the inner city results in a lack of policy to address displacement. It is, therefore, difficult to quantify the exact number of residents displaced from the Drill Hall, Turbine Hall, or the Bus Factory refurbished for the purpose of creating an art gallery, AngloGold Ashanti's new headquarters, and a tourist attraction respectively. Ironically, the City of Johannesburg refers to these resident displaced rehabilitation initiatives as its 'iconic public place projects' (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 19). Furthermore, as already stated, residents are also being displaced from inner city buildings earmarked for the Better Buildings Programme (BBP).

> The nuts and bolts of the BBP is that we identify bad buildings [that] are physically in a shocking state. Those buildings are also in arrears [and] the value of the arrears is much more than the value of the building. This has led to classic market failure. The City then writes-off the debt. [However,] new developers want empty occupation because they can't fix a bad building unless we get rid of the people. For [the City] the big issue is to decant existing tenants to other buildings, because judges often only grant eviction notices [based on] alternative [tenant accommodation]. And that's a tough one because the City doesn't always have alternatives. I'm a great believer in market forces, and the market is profit-driven. I say to those developers wanting to make a profit: come in, we want you on board; we're trying to create a world class city. So, we need to attract the right people to live here. (Interview, BBP manager, 2004)

'Bad buildings' are abandoned by their owners, but they are occupied, informally, by residents who are unable to find affordable accommodation through the private housing market. While living conditions in these buildings are abysmal, Wilson and du Plessis argue that 'bad buildings house the poorest and most vulnerable residents of the inner city' (2005: 3). At least 250 'bad buildings' have been identified by the City for its BBP, and 'getting rid' of current occupies means evicting them. 'In doing so, the City exercises its power in terms of the National Building Regulations Act, which empowers a local authority to order the evacuation of a property that poses a threat to the health and safety of those occupying it' (p. 4). However, these buildings are currently occupied by approximately 25,000 residents, and capital investments required to rehabilitate 'bad buildings' exclude many evictees from being able to afford rehabilitated building rentals. Since 2002, 125 inner city buildings have been expropriated, resulting in the eviction of many residents without the City providing suitable alternative accommodation for evictees. 'This is unjust, because it further victimizes poor residents; and it is impractical, because [residents], once evicted, invariably occupy other slum properties in the inner city' (p. 6). It could, therefore, be argued that as many as 25,000 tenants may be displaced from the inner city through the implementation of the BBP. Nonetheless, officials hold on to a belief that:

> For the inner city we want physical [planning] interventions that favour the private sector market. [As such,] we don't need social studies of the inner city. We already know what the community wants. And if we are writing-off $14 million worth of arrears through the BBP, this means $14 million worth of investment is going in. That's economic development! (Interview, CoJ senior official, 2004)

In accordance then with New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom, economic development entails melding regeneration policies with capital. While the nullification of debts may, theoretically, be viewed as a public investment in the property market, and, as argued by Bénit-Gbaffou (2006), as a type of public subsidy for the private sector, this debt relief policy neither creates secure employment nor shared economic benefits for poor residents as envisaged in a Just City approach for regeneration. Furthermore, informed social studies that embrace principles of social/mutual learning, and that facilitate the development of residents' political capacities for involved and effective public decision-making, are seemingly rejected by municipal officials as they already 'know what residents want'. Spaces for meaningful engagement are thus curbed, thereby diminishing opportunities for participatory governance. Rather, as argued by Smith (2002), Johannesburg's regeneration policies are designed to fit into the grooves of the established market. Of equal concern, the transfer of derelict buildings to private sector developers, without stipulated development controls or an effective land and housing strategy, is simply fuelling the speculative market which may have dire economic, and other, consequences if the 'creative' and middle classes decide not to relocate to and invest in the inner city. Regeneration policies fail to consider these potentially devastating consequences. Instead, local politicians celebrate the fact that 'we are using international models to [facilitate] regeneration: [for now, thanks to a positive property market] occupancy rates are up and investments are increasing' (Councillor Cowan, 2005: 22). The 2030 Vision and the subsequent 2003 Inner City Regeneration Strategy undoubtedly demonstrate a preference for capital accumulation with negligible attention paid to the formulation of social policies.

Legal actions against the City of Johannesburg's eviction policies by a public interest law group, and subsequent court rulings, forced the City to implement more socially responsive policies. A Growth and Development Strategy (GDS), inclusive of a Human Development Strategy (HDS), and a 'new' Regeneration Charter were, therefore, promulgated in 2006 and 2007 respectively.

Both the GDS and the HDS policy documents now make a 'commitment to Johannesburg's poor [by] prioritizing [resident] access to the City's social package' (CoJ, HDS, 2006b: 2, 4). This social package entails a monthly quota of free basic services for some inner city households. Nonetheless, socially responsive policies exclude residents' voices, and, as a consequence, these policies seem simply to be tacked onto the already established economic growth agenda: 'the broad economic growth logic of the 2030 Vision remains intact for the GDS, [so that] Johannesburg may position itself as a world class African city vis-à-vis other cities, nationally and internationally' (CoJ, GDS, 2006a: 2). Socially responsive policies are also perceived as a means of establishing some form of social cohesion in a chaotic and transitional inner city context; and social cohesion as a New Urban Policy is favoured because past governance structures, with clear divisions between public/private and economic/social roles, seem no longer able to secure the necessary conditions for competitive success (Gordon and Buck, 2005).

> Cities in pursuit of world class status need to strike a fine balance between economic growth and social responsibilities. To this end, social cohesion [becomes] an important resource in areas with high levels of mobility [like the inner city]. Creating the means for building social cohesion is crucial to the City's goal of being a world class African city. (CoJ, HDS, 2006b: 10; 101; 106)

In May 2007 the City Council launched its most recent regeneration framework, namely the Inner City Regeneration Charter. Through this latest framework, the City hopes to incorporate social policies derived from the Growth and Development and the Human Development Strategies. However, and notwithstanding the inclusion of social policies in the 2007 Charter, the very same regeneration challenges as those identified in the 2030 Vision and in the 2003 Regeneration Strategy continue to emerge, resulting in interventions that hardly differ from those previously formulated. In fact, the Charter is specifically geared towards 'scaling up regeneration operations to ensure rapid results, [as former] City efforts have sometimes been seen as [too] localized, fragmented, and episodic' (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 4). Still, the Charter does go on to stipulate that earlier initiatives 'have been critiqued [for] not [being] sensitive enough to the circumstances of poorer residents and informal businesses' (p. 4). How economically stressed households are accommodated through this new regeneration policy, and how a more sensitive regeneration approach may be facilitated by the state become particularly relevant when we consider the dire circumstances of many inner city residents: 39 percent are formally unemployed (Leggett, 2003); 62 percent earn less than $500 per month (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2006; Winkler, 2006); and at least 10 percent (approximately 11,200 residents) rely exclusively on the informal sector to survive (Leggett, 2003).

Assessing the impact of the Regeneration Charter

Social policies identified in the 2007 Charter include the municipality's social package, a suggestion to promote poverty alleviation and community development initiatives, and the implementation of transitional and inclusionary housing projects. An assessment of each of these social policies will, shortly, demonstrate the local government's attempt to address the social responsibility deficiencies of the 2030 Vision and the 2003 Strategy. However, findings will show that these attempts continue to fail existing residents because New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom remain unaltered and are favoured in preference to a Just City.

Accessing the City's social package requires households 'to register themselves with the Council as indigent' (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 55). While this language is in itself problematic, as many residents resent being labelled indigent (participant interviews, 2008), once registered, inner city households are then entitled to receive a quota of free water and electricity. The City's social responsibility here, however, has less to do with supporting economically stressed households and more to do with ensuring that 'if residents are able to access the social package this would significantly add to their ability to pay market rentals' (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 55). Substituting municipal service payments for market rentals is perceived by the City Council as a rent subsidy. But this subsidy is devoid of regulations to curb escalating rentals. Moreover, many inner city households do not hold the rates and utilities accounts for their properties as these are held by landlords. The City Council then places the responsibility on landlords to register individual households as 'indigent', but this rarely happens as absentee landlordism is a common phenomenon in the inner city.

The Charter furthermore abstains from identifying specific poverty alleviation and community development programmes with dedicated budgets. Rather, intensive urban management policies continue to be enforced with the aim of eradicating unmanaged informal trading activities, regardless of the fact that at least 11,200 residents rely exclusively on the informal sector to survive.

> The current disorganized arrangement of many traders presents a key challenge to urban management. The City will [therefore] ensure that there is no more unmanaged trading on the streets of the Inner City beyond June 2009. Disorganized trading refers to trading without necessary permits, in an area that is not designated as a formalized trading space. A limit will be set on the number of micro-retailers that may trade in the Inner City from approved spaces. This limit will be strictly enforced [and] traders are expected to pay for the right to trade in the Inner City. (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 28)

Limiting micro-retailing will severely hamper employed livelihood strategies, and informal trading activities typically generate negligible profits rendering the City's expectation to pay for 'the right to trade' in the inner city impossible for most. Traders at designated trading spaces are also bitterly unhappy with municipal permit charges resulting in higher priced goods and fewer shoppers (participant interview, 2002). The municipality's formalization policy remains unrealistic in a context where the formal economy is actually informalizing, and where the informal economy absorbs those who have lost their jobs in the formal sector (Odendaal, 2005). Such findings spotlight the claim made by Fainstein (2004) that social and economic exclusion are intertwined. To make matters worse, the municipality has also officially abdicated its social and welfare service responsibilities, as stipulated in the Regional Spatial Development Framework (CoJ, RSDF, 2003b), thereby giving the local government increased leeway to abandon poor households despite the Charter's 'poverty alleviation' and 'community development' promise. Rather, and in line with New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom, civil society organizations are named in the Charter 'to absorb the poor through their social and welfare programmes' (2007: 36).

The Charter does, however, make provision for '*decant* facilities to enable the relocation of residents from buildings allocated to the BBP' (2007: 52). Nonetheless, only 10 of the 250 buildings identified for the BBP will be redeveloped as 'transitional housing projects in which tenants may reside for a maximum of two years' (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 53). Temporary accommodation curbs security of tenure, and the Charter remains mute on what will happen to tenants after the stipulated two-year period.

At this juncture it is worthwhile turning to Marcuse's (1985) 'exclusionary displacement' argument under gentrification. Exclusionary displacement refers to households that are unable to access affordable housing because neighbourhoods are undergoing gentrification. At a public meeting held in April 2003, the executive mayor of Johannesburg stated that citizens earning less than $500 per month will not be able to afford to live in the inner city (Inner City Community Forum, 2003). As a consequence, the City Council will provide affordable housing for lower income earners on the urban edge. At least 62 percent of the inner city's current residents will, therefore, need to move as a result of exclusionary displacement. This policy of displacement to the urban fringe is corroborated by an inner city ward councillor who is of the opinion that 'location does not matter for the unemployed, so they can be [displaced to] Orange Farm [on the urban fringe]' (participant interview, cited in Bénit-Gbaffou, 2006). Certain strategic city areas are thus gradually taken over and transformed through exclusionary displacement by moving their populaces to other spaces (Díaz Orueta, 2007). Such findings support Marcuse's concerns:

> Displacement from home and neighbourhood can be a shattering experience. At worst it leads to homelessness, at best it impairs a sense of community. Public policy should, by general agreement, minimize displacement. Yet a variety of public policies seem to foster it. (Marcuse, 1985: 931)

Empirical evidence from a study conducted by the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) demonstrates that the greater majority of residents interviewed would rather tolerate terrible living conditions than move to the urban edge, as the inner city is perceived to be an easier place to survive without formal employment (COHRE, 2004). This is not to imply that existing and hazardous living conditions do not need to be addressed by the City Council, but rather to highlight residents' identified desire to be centrally located. Regardless of COHRE's research findings, the Charter goes on to state that:

> The City does not wish to move forward on the assumption that the private sector will cater for the middle to upper income market, whereas the public and social sectors will pick up all the responsibilities for housing poorer residents, however logical this may appear at first glance. (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 53)

This 'logic' revolves around protecting the City Council from 'ending up as a long-term owner and/or manager of social housing when realistic cost recovery cannot be achieved' (p. 53). Policies aimed at cost recovery simply 'ignite market-led growth while glossing over the socially regressive outcomes that are frequent by-products of such initiatives' (Brenner and Theodore, 2005: 103). The City of Johannesburg is thus squandering both an opportunity and its power to ensure the implementation of social policies that are more sensitive to the circumstances of poorer residents because 'private sector providers of medium to high income housing fear that buildings housing the poor in the immediate vicinity of their developments will depress property values and prevent them from securing the right kind of tenants' (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 53).

In the current era of New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom, securing the 'right kind of tenants', together with a drive towards homeownership, privatization, and the break-up of concentrated poverty, further incurs implementing 'social mix' strategies to facilitate the desired 'social cohesion' language found in the Human Development Strategy (CoJ, HDS, 2006b). Based on research findings from an in-depth study of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Blomley comments on how 'morally persuasive' social mix policies can be in the face of long-term disinvestment.

> Programs of renewal often seek to encourage home ownership, given its supposed effects on economic self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and community pride. Gentrification, on this account, is to be encouraged, because it will mean the replacement of a marginal anti-community (non-property owning and transitory) by an active and responsible population of homeowners. (Blomley, 2004: 89)

This 'morally persuasive' argument is also evident in the Johannesburg case:

> Johannesburg will never see the problem of bad buildings addressed unless there is a huge investment in accommodation that provides a judicious mix of options for medium- to high-income earners as well as residents who are at the point in their lives where they cannot afford very much. 75,000 new residential units will be developed by 2015. 20,000 of these units must be affordable if the collective problem of a stressed Inner City residential environment is to be solved. This does not mean that the Inner City is to become a dormitory for the poor. The City envisages the creation of the largest mixed income community in the country, built on the basis of inclusionary housing, and the continued delivery of both medium and high-income ownership options in non-inclusionary buildings. (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 50)

Working on the assumption that a socially mixed community will be a socially balanced one, characterized by positive interaction between the classes, less than a third of the City's envisaged units will be earmarked for affordable rental accommodation so that medium and high income homeownership may prevent downtown Johannesburg from becoming a 'dormitory for the poor'. In other words, 'we don't want a whole bunch of indigent people living in the inner city; we want a nice healthy mix' (participant interview, BBP manager, 2004). However, social mix policies invariably involve the movement of the middle class into working-class areas. Advocates of social mix policies seldom, if ever, advocate that middle and upper-middle-class neighbourhoods be balanced by poor or working-class households. Rather, the appeal to bring people back into the inner city is a self-interested appeal that middle and upper-middle classes retake control of the political and cultural economies of inner city neighbourhoods (Smith, 2002). 'Probing the symptomatic silences of who is to be invited back into the city then begins to reveal the class politics involved in urban regeneration' (p. 445). Moreover, such policy optimism rarely translates into an urban context that is spatially, socially, economically and politically just, as envisaged for a Just City. Instead, it leads to Nimbyism, rent increases, exclusionary displacement, socioeconomic segregation, and political isolation (Beauregard, 2004; Blomley, 2004; Slater, 2006).

Concluding remarks

To accommodate economic competitiveness, responsive governance, social cohesion, and social mix strategies, local governments across the globe are shifting their roles from acting as mere regulators of the urban context to becoming active agents of the free market (Brenner and Theodore, 2005; Díaz Orueta, 2007; Gordon and Buck, 2005; Smith, 2002). Case study research methods and a critical discourse analysis of policy documents, media accounts, and interview transcripts demonstrate that this shift is equally evident in the Johannesburg case. Here, policy-makers and politicians are inspired by international, 'best practice' regeneration precedents where market-led redevelopments, tax incentives, public-private partnerships, flagship projects, intensive urban management, middle and high income homeownership, and the disintegration of concentrated poverty are deemed essential for the successful revitalization of urban centres. In Johannesburg, however, an explicit policy link between inner city regeneration and economic growth is, possibly, more blatantly executed than in contexts from where these policies are imported (see Porter and Shaw, 2009). The City of Johannesburg's blind faith in New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom also prevents the local state from recognizing that there is no, empirically justified, link between economic growth and social equity. Instead, New Urban Policy and New Conventional Wisdom usher in emblematic redevelopment undertakings while bypassing unemployment and everyday hardships regardless of the social package, poverty alleviation, community development, transitional accommodation, and inclusionary housing rhetoric found in the 2007 Charter. As such, and in preference to resident inclusive regeneration approaches and redistributive planning actions, local policymakers and politicians remain steadfast in their belief that:

> Regeneration achievements have been realized because private sector players took the lead and established the conditions for further private investment. [This] demonstrates physically what can be done when non-government stakeholders are energized and are enabled to enter into collaboration with government. This has begun to have a dramatic effect, as property owners redevelop their properties and new investors start new developments. The upswing in building refurbishments for middle and upper income accommodation reflects this. (CoJ, ICR Charter, 2007: 4)

Collaborating with the private sector alone negates possibilities for social/mutual learning between state officials and residents, it forecloses residents' active political engagement in public decision-making, and it diminishes an opportunity to embrace participatory governance. Both the process of generating urban policies and the substantive outcomes of these policies, therefore, fail to meet the needs of Johannesburg's poor inner city residents and the criteria for a Just City. Conversely, an inclusive, redistributive, and equitable approach to urban regeneration may generate practical solutions to resident identified problems, for example: residents want to be centrally located; they resent being labelled indigent; the formalization of informal trading activities is crippling employed livelihood strategies; and temporary accommodation curbs security of tenure. Instead, the City Council's overt attempt to repopulate inner city neighbourhoods with the 'right kind' of households will have a devastating impact on existing, but financially strapped, residents. Research findings also demonstrate how a 'cultural capital' and a 'world class African city' vision fails to meet socially progressive objectives, as social policies identified in the 2007 Charter are, essentially, ineffectual, and undermined by the local state. In short, the City of Johannesburg's current regeneration practices and policies stand to benefit only the new urban elite, while prolonging the global age of gentrification.

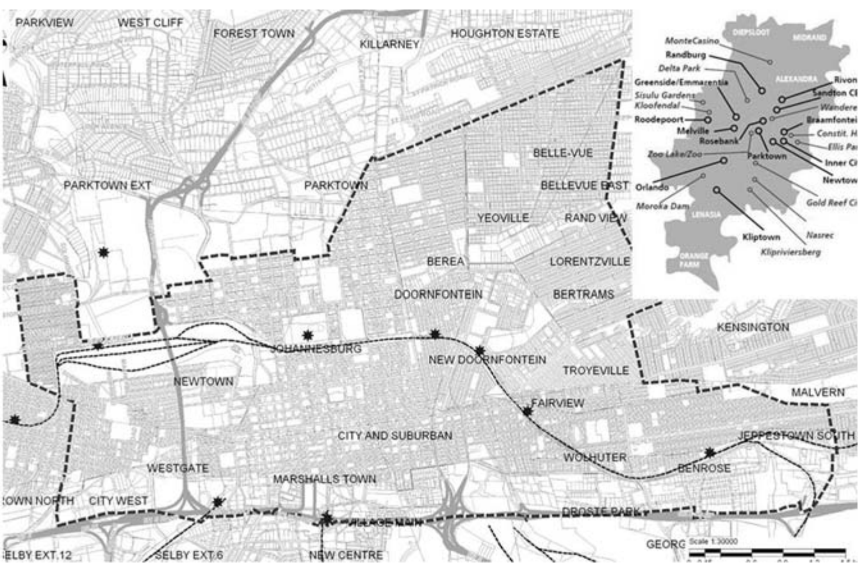

FIGURE 1

The inner city region of Johannesburg

Source: CoJ, 2008: Map 1. The insert illustrates the City of Johannesburg's entire jurisdiction

FIGURE 2

A view of downtown Johannesburg (Photo: author)

FIGURE 3

Informal trading in the inner city (Photo: author)

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