

## EXPLORING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS THROUGH THE LENS OF HUMAN MOBILITY

Employing human movements as an analytical device for informing approaches of intervention in contexts of inequalities

A case study of the City of Johannesburg, South Africa



Ph.D. candidate: Marika Miano

Tutor: Prof. Michelangelo Russo

Co-Tutor: Prof. Maria Federica Palestino

Mentor at the Witwatersrand University of Johannesburg: Dr. Gerald Chungu

UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES "Federico II" - DIARC, DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE  
PHD IN ARCHITECTURE, CURRICULUM IN URBANISM, CYCLE XXX | Coordinator: Prof. M. Russo

## Abstract

Global South informal settlements have caught the attention of several scholars from various disciplines who have contributed to enhance the theoretical debate around them. Furthermore, over the years, there has been an improvement in the international policies, promoting a more sustainable *in-situ* upgrading approach, over slum clearance initiatives; while some informal settlements' communities have received recognition and achieved some rights.

Nevertheless, beyond still sporadic successes, the persistence of precarious living conditions in many informal settlements in the poorest corners of the world constantly solicits to deepen the knowledge of this urban phenomenon and question the role of urban policies and planning strategies in challenging inequalities.

In line with this intent, the dissertation aims to contribute to an in-depth knowledge of Global South informal settlements, by exploring them through the lens of human mobility. More particularly, it investigates informal settlements in relation to people's migratory trajectories.

The need to use human mobility as a privileged point of view starts from the observation of the actual reality of informal settlements, focused within the South African context, that utterly shows how they are deeply marked by histories of people on the move. Informal settlements appear like complex realities embedded in a vast network of human movements, and inscribed with multiple migratory trajectories driven by a plethora of ambitions, necessities or constraints.

Informal settlements are like points of convergence in these sequences of movements, and nodes into the wider net of intra-places relations: some informal settlements are involved in turbulent flows, while others experience slower passages; sometimes they represent the ultimate destination of a life-journey, sometimes they only form provisional sites from which people then leave again. This view doesn't imply that it is not possible to trace sedentary people inside informal settlements but rather that, in contexts of informality, stability remains closely interwoven with mobility.

The point here is that these discrete human movements, belonging to people's ordinary lives, appear like decisive vehicles of production, transformation and organization of informal settlements, and in turn they can become privileged observation points to better understand these places.

Basing on a prismatic potential of the human mobility lens, the dissertation has the main purpose of contributing to a broader understanding of informal settlements, overcoming homologating visions, challenging preconceived images, as well as catching the vast spectrum of heterogeneity and complexity across and within these places. More particularly, it is orientated to build a fine-grained knowledge of informal settlements – concerning their functioning in the system of urban relations, their role within the migratory trajectories' dynamics, and their multiform human composition – in order to overcome a reductionist treatment of these places and to continue to calibrate upgrading approaches that move towards the improvement in the quality of life in these places. In doing so, the dissertation seeks to enrich the discussion around *in-situ* upgrading interventions, and puts some points of reflection on formal planning processes.

The vast field of study introduced above is explored using case studies from the City of Johannesburg.

## Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to the professors Michelangelo Russo, Maria Federica Palestino and Enrico Formato for all the research orientations that they gave me; for always trusting me; for supporting (even psychologically) and enduring with me in the long doctoral triennium; for involving me in their research activities and for their deep interests in my themes.

I am very grateful to the scholars of the Wits University in Johannesburg, for all the inputs they gave me; for having shared with me their passionate knowledge about Johannesburg in so useful conversations; for their enriching lessons; and for getting me involved in their inspiring academic activities. Among others I am deeply grateful to Marie Huchzermeyer, Loren Landau, Ali Karam, Sara Charlton, and Neil Klug.

I thank Gerald Chungu, who was my point of reference during the period of visiting at Wits; for his enlightening intuitions on informality that he does not hesitate to share with me; for our long conversations; and for his way of being and transmitting calm.

I thank a lot Prof. Kristen Kornienko who, even if I did not get to know her in person yet, shared with me her research experience in Johannesburg, as well as her knowledge and passion for the subject of informal settlements. Her doctoral thesis has been for me the main trace to refer to for the development of my research; it constituted a continuous source of understanding and inspiration.

I also thank Dylan Weakley; his master's thesis and the meeting with him also formed a useful and interesting basis for the development of my case-studies.

I am profoundly grateful to Denver and Tinasonke communities, for their generosity for having shared with me their life stories, even though I was just an unknown student from far away.

Among these, I deeply thank the community leaders (Nathi, Welcome, Becky, Pahello, and Chyntia) who shared with me their profound knowledge concerning the case-study settlements; and who took care of me and guided me in every step during the intense fieldwork phase. Without them the thesis would not have existed.

I thank Corc, FedUP and Aformal terrain members, who have been the indispensable "hinge" between me and the "real life" in Johannesburg's informal settlements. Without hesitation they welcomed me and gave me a place among them. I thank this network of actors for our dialogues, for the interviews released, and for having shared with me their broad knowledge about informality's issues and long term experiences of struggles. I hope I can get back to working with these people soon.

I also thank Thabo Karabo Molaba and Denver Hendricks for the clarifying interviews released to me. Moreover, I am very grateful to Stevy Bennet for the important support given to me for the development of the dissertation.

I thank the PhD students of the DIARC for the long shared journey. I thank over all Marica Castigliano with whom I have lived each moment of the last three years.

Finally, I thank Giampaolo for have been always understand me.

I dedicate this work to Andrea and Bianca Maria.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract  
Acknowledgments  
List of figures, tables and boxes  
List of acronyms  
Prologue

### 1. EXPLORING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS THROUGH THE LENS OF HUMAN MOBILITY: AN INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Object of study and main logic structure guiding the research

- 1.1.1 Background: unequal urban growth in the Global South and the continuous reproduction of informal settlements
- 1.1.2 'Problematizing' informal settlements. Criticality of discourses and approaches of intervention: an overview
- 1.1.3 Rationale for framing informal settlements through the lens of human mobility and construction of the main hypothesis

#### 1.2 Research questions and main objectives

#### 1.3 Methodology

#### 1.4 Why Johannesburg as an area of study?

#### 1.5 Considerations on the complexity of conducting research in fragile contexts

#### 1.6 Some limits of the research project

#### 1.7 Structure of the dissertation

### 2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: BUILDING ON THREE RESEARCH FIELDS, ESTABLISHING THE LOGICAL LINKS AMONG THE RELEVANT POSITIONS, AND PROPOSING A SYNTHESIS

#### 2.1 Theoretical debate around urban informal settlements: the dominant positions over time

#### 2.2 Theoretical contributions to the discourse on informality drawing on the postcolonial studies

#### 2.3 Studies on everyday practices from the bottom-up in contexts of poverty

#### 2.4 Studies on human mobility: human movements as an ordinary livelihood strategy

#### 2.5 Positioning the research into the existing body of knowledge: interrogating people's movements for a better understanding of informal settlements

- 2.5.1 Linking the relevant theoretical positions and proposing a conceptual synthesis

- 2.5.2 Shift from the extraordinary global flows to people's ordinary flows

- 2.5.3 Conclusive discussion. Theoretical and practical opportunities for framing informal settlements through the lens of human mobility



### 3. AN OVERALL PORTRAIT OF THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

3.1 From the discovery of gold to the apartheid era: notes on Johannesburg's historical spatial transformations

3.2 Johannesburg's post-apartheid spatial dynamics

3.3 Typologies of informal dwellings in the City of Johannesburg

3.4 Informal settlements in the City of Johannesburg

3.4.1 Definitions of informal settlements

3.4.2 Overall statistical data and limits of surveys

3.4.3 Informal settlements' spatial trends

3.4.4 People moving across the urban grid of informal settlements

3.5 Critical reading of urban policies, plans and approaches of intervention to Johannesburg's informal settlements

3.5.1 Informal settlements in the national urban policies and programs

3.5.2 Informal settlements in the City's Spatial Development Framework

3.5.3 Approaches of intervention in Johannesburg's informal settlements

3.6 Conclusion

### 4. GROUNDING ISSUES. "DENVER INFORMAL SETTLEMENT" CASE-STUDY: BUILDING AN ANALYTIC GRID UNPACKING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND HUMAN MOBILITY DYNAMICS

4.1 Introduction to the settlement

4.1.1 The urban context

4.1.2 Dimensional characteristics and main demographic data

4.1.3 The origins of the settlement

4.2 Characteristics of the built environment of the settlement

4.2.1 The spatial edge's configuration

4.2.2 Composition of the spatial layout

4.2.3 The space of the house

4.2.4 Basic services

4.2.5 Environmental dangers

#### PART I \_ MOVEMENTS

4.3 The settlement within the dynamics of people's inflows

4.4 Socio-spatial characteristics of the settlement influencing the dynamics of attraction and concentration of inflows

4.4.1 Localization factors

4.4.2 Social networks

4.4.3 Affordability and flexibility of dwellings

4.5 The settlement within the dynamics of people's outflows

4.6 The dwellers' economic progression

4.7 Discussion. The role of the settlement within the dynamics of migratory flows

## PART II \_ TEMPORALITIES

4.8 People looking at the future: profiling dwellers' multiple temporalities

4.9 Experiencing time: people waiting and hoping for a better future

## PART III \_ SOCIO-SPATIAL PRACTICES FROM THE GROUND UP

4.10 Emerging socio-spatial practices from the ground up under people's multiple temporal profiles

4.10.1 Individual practices

4.10.2 Individual practices with collective effects

4.10.3 Collective practices

4.11 Discussion: positive effects and negative by-products arising from the relationship between human mobility dynamics and people's socio-spatial practices

4.12 Conclusion

## 5. "TINASONKE SETTLEMENT" CASE-STUDY: RE-CROSSING THE ANALYTIC GRID AND ENLARGING THE DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction to the settlement

5.2 Re-crossing the analytic grid

5.2.1 Movements

5.2.2 Temporalities

5.2.3 Socio-Spatial practices from the ground up

5.3 Conclusive discussion: which are the theoretical opportunities from the two case-study investigations?

Tracing the analytical space of informal settlements on the basis of the human mobility dynamics.

## 6. CLOSING THE CIRCLES: EMPLOYING THE ANALYTIC POTENTIAL OF HUMAN MOBILITY FOR INFORMING INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING INTERVENTIONS

6.1 Framing criteria for informal settlement upgrading interventions

6.1.1 *Figure one* \_ informal settlements inscribed with multiple settlers' profiles

6.1.2 *Figure two* \_ Informal settlements embedded in the city-wide migratory trajectories

6.1.3 *Figure three* \_ Informal settlements interlinked in a system of extra urban relations

6.2 Challenges of the participatory planning processes arising within the human mobility analytical domain

6.3 Some successes from a good practice

6.4 Conclusion

Epilogue

References

Annexes

## List of figures, tables and boxes

### Figures

- Fig. 1.1 \_ Increase of population living in slums in the global South
- Fig. 1.2 \_ An informal settlement in the City of Johannesburg
- Fig. 1.3 \_ An example of standardized housing in the City of Johannesburg
- Fig.1.4 \_ Johannesburg in South Africa and Gauteng province
- Fig.1.5 \_ Map of the case-studies
- Fig.1.6 \_ The research methodology
- Fig.1.7 \_ A chain of actors
- Fig.1.8 \_ Structure of the dissertation
- Fig.2.1 \_ Relevant theoretical fields informing the dissertation
- Fig.2.2 \_ Conceptual vision
- Fig.2.3 \_ Selection and re-composition of three theoretical fields
- Fig.2.4 \_ Conceptual shift from global extraordinary flows to people's ordinary flows
- Fig.2.5 \_ Fields of opportunities of the dissertation
- Fig.3.1 \_ View of Johannesburg from the "Ponte City" tower
- Fig.3.2 \_ A memorial sign in Orlando East, Johannesburg
- Fig.3.3 \_ The spatial asset of a segregated city
- Fig.3.4 \_ Industrial and commercial growth
- Fig.3.5 \_ Gated communities
- Fig.3.6 \_ "Anxious Urbanism": Enclosures in Johannesburg
- Fig.3.7 \_ An example of low to middle income housing in Johannesburg
- Fig.3.8 \_ Formal Residential Growth
- Fig.3.9 \_ Localization of the belt
- Fig.3.10 \_ A portion of the old mine belt in Johannesburg
- Fig.3.11 \_ Double face of the Johannesburg inner city
- Fig.3.12 \_ Some typologies of informal dwellings in Johannesburg
- Fig.3.13 \_ An abandoned building with traces of life in the Johannesburg inner city
- Fig.3.14 \_ An abandoned building with traces of life in the Johannesburg inner city
- Fig.3.15 \_ Examples of shacks in backyard
- Fig.3.16 \_ Micro-episodes of informalization of low-income standardize houses
- Fig.3.17 \_ Informal settlements in Johannesburg
- Fig.3.18 \_ The Spatial Development Framework
- Fig.4.1 \_ The three components of the analytic grid of the informal settlements' rhythm
- Fig.4.2 \_ A view of Denver settlement
- Fig.4.3 \_ Localization of Denver informal settlement along the railway line
- Fig.4.4 \_ Localization of the Denver Industrial Node in relation to the CBD
- Fig.4.5 \_ Localization of Denver informal settlement: focusing on the surroundings of the DIN
- Fig.4.6 \_ Access to Denver from the Main Reef Road
- Fig.4.7 \_ Aerial photo of Denver
- Fig.4.8 \_ Denver Men's Hostel
- Fig.4.9 \_ Denver's spatial growth
- Fig.4.10 \_ Denver's multifaceted edge
- Fig.4.11 \_ Example of the Denver's multifaceted edge
- Fig.4.12 \_ Denver's differently porous edge
- Fig.4.13 \_ A pedestrian access to Denver
- Fig.4.14 \_ Denver's spatial layout
- Fig.4.15 \_ Dwellings' typologies
- Fig.4.16 \_ Latrines and water taps
- Fig.4.17 \_ Water points

Fig.4.18\_Latrine  
 Fig.4.19\_Dumpsites  
 Fig.4.20\_The channel  
 Fig.4.21\_Dumpsites  
 Fig.4.22\_Diagram of the years of arrivals of Denver's dwellers to settlement  
 Fig.4.23\_Main inflows' directions  
 Fig.4.24\_Localizational aspects influencing the inflows  
 Fig.4.25\_Aspects constituting the rationale behind the in-movers  
 Fig.4.26\_Flows dynamics involving Denver settlement  
 Fig.4.27a/b\_The rears toward the canal  
 Fig.4.28\_An example of dwelling consolidation by replacing wood with bricks  
 Fig.4.29\_Main uses in common open-air spaces  
 Fig.4.30\_Spaza shops along Denver's main access  
 Fig.4.31\_An example of a cleaning event  
 Fig.4.32\_A community Workshop in Denver  
 Fig.4.33\_Mains steps of the analytical grid  
 Fig.5.1\_A view of Tinasonke  
 Fig.5.2\_Localization of Tinasonke  
 Fig.5.3\_Latrine and water points  
 Fig.5.4\_Street lights  
 Fig.5.5\_Spatial layout organization  
 Fig.5.6\_Private gardens  
 Fig.5.7\_Foundations of the future houses of the Fedup scheme  
 Fig.5.8\_The analytic space of informal settlements built on the basis of the human mobility dynamics  
 Fig.6.1\_Three interpretative figures  
 Fig.6.2\_Main steps of the *in-situ* upgrading  
 Fig.6.3\_Rationalization of the space between the shacks  
 Fig.6.4\_An example of implemented structures

#### Tables

Tab.1\_Definitions of informal settlements  
 Tab.2\_Table of socio-spatial practices  
 Tab.3\_Socio-spatial practices in Denver  
 Tab.4\_A guide for planning actions in informal settlements

#### Boxes

Box 1. Theoretical broadening of Postcolonial studies  
 Box 2. Theoretical broadening of the mobility turn  
 Box 3. Theoretical broadening of the concept of waiting/hoping  
 Box 4. Theoretical broadening of the practices of people while waiting/hoping

All photos, when not specified, are by the author.

## **List of acronyms**

ANC - African National Congress  
CBD - Central Business District  
CBO - Community based organization  
BNG - Breaking New Ground  
BRT - Bus Rapid Transit  
CoJ - City of Johannesburg  
CORC - Community Organization Resource Center  
DIN - Denver Industrial Node  
FEDUP - Federation of the Urban and rural Poor  
GCRO - Gauteng City-Region Observatory  
ISN - Informal Settlement Network  
NGO - Non-governmental Organization  
NUSP - National Upgrading Support Programme  
SDF - Spatial Development Framework  
SDI - Shack/Slum Dwellers International  
SA - South Africa  
UISP - Upgrading Informal Settlements Programme

## Prologue

*Remember when I told them my dream,  
They just laughed and said it's far from my reach.  
Kwesta ft. TLT, "Mmino"*

Contemporary cities are marked by worsening deep social and spatial inequalities, exacerbated by economic crisis, migrations at planetary scale, and further impacted by new racial impulses. As Bernardo Secchi underlines in his final text (2013), most countries, including the wealthy ones, are faced with the emergence of a "new urban question", where cities are increasingly becoming places of confluence and concentration of growing social disparities frequently manifested in multiple forms of spatial polarization.

In doing this, Secchi emphasizes the link that exists between space and poverty, and argues that discrimination and exclusion have always represented inseparable aspects in the construction of the urban spaces. In particular, Secchi, citing Soja, underlines the difference between wealth and poverty in relation to the access of people to a suitable spatial capital. According to this, the author argues that the rich person is one who benefits from an adequate spatial capital, living in urban areas whose spatial structure facilitates the inclusion into social, cultural, professional and political life. Conversely, the poor person, often living in the "bad lands", is one who unlikely has the opportunity to access to elementary goods and services and whose spatial capital can hamper the achievement of the most basic rights of citizenship (Secchi, 2013; Soja, 2010).

On these arguments, David Harvey proposes a radical vision arguing that injustices are incorporated in societal construction processes, and are perpetually reproduced in the space (Harvey, 2008; see also Smith, 2013). In a recent interview (2014), the original assumption is further extended to include the concept that poverty is perpetuated *through* certain spatial conditions: "If you look carefully, segregated neighborhoods have often problems of access to schools, health services are terrible, garbage collection systems do not work well and people live in a disastrous urban environment; there is a lot of unemployment and one of the few ways to make money is by entering into drug business. So, in this case, the model of poverty is replicated by the segregation of this community in urban areas where the opportunities to emerge are very restricted, because there are no adequate services"<sup>1</sup>.

These arguments solicit to evoke Soja's thesis on critical spatial thinking which emphasizes the spatial and geographical aspects of the justice which "involve(s) the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them" (Soja, 2009:2; Soja, 2010). Therefore, as Soja underlines (2009:2), there is a relevant spatial

---

<sup>1</sup> Translation from Spanish by the author

dimension of justice, and space organization is a particularly powerful tool in creating durable structures of privilege and advantage.

The echo of Lefebvre's works resonates in the above mentioned texts. By asserting a "right to the city" for the urban excluded, and claiming that the democratic character of a society is distinguished by its attitude towards the city, the urban freedom, urban reality and as a result the segregation (Lefebvre, 2014:95), the author continues to inspire all who examine the space from the perspective of the segregation that it incorporates or generates.

Precisely the link between urban spaces with poverty and inequalities represents a call to urban planners for a continuous calibration of approaches for both "understanding and influencing processes of uneven spatial development" (Brenner and Schmid, 2015:152) by exploring possibilities and responsibilities in urban interventions, framing alternatives for the current urban failures, seeking new and more effective coalitions among a variety of actors, and reasoning on future urban visions. Precisely this tension inspired the current dissertation.

This dissertation is an exploration of the urban phenomenon of informal settlements – also called slums – read through the lens of human mobility.

Informal settlements have caught the attention of several scholars from various disciplines who have contributed to create a vast amount of literature of case studies from several regions of the Global South and, in doing so, have enhanced the theoretical debate. Furthermore, over the years, there has been a shift in the international debate from the slum clearance approach to a less-disruptive *in-situ* upgrading approach (Deboulet, 2016), while some informal settlements' communities have received recognition and achieved some rights.

Nevertheless, beyond (still sporadic) successes, sometimes celebrated at the media level, the persistence of unequal access to decent urban living conditions in many informal settlements in the poorest corners of the world remains a concern, and unceasingly pushes us to deepen our knowledge of this urban phenomenon and question the role of urban policies and planning strategies in challenging inequalities.

This dissertation aims to contribute to an in-depth understanding of informal settlements – catching heterogeneities across and within them, recognizing their function in the urban relations' system as well as their role for the livelihood of the poorer groups, and identifying the processes of production of spaces by their multiform communities – in order to inform approaches of intervention.

In particular, the lens of human mobility is used here as the main analytical device for sighting this urban phenomenon. More precisely, the migratory trajectories of ordinary people into-and-out of informal settlements, with their socio-spatial effects, are analyzed and used as the entry point to better understand these places in order to further calibrate strategies of intervention, and move towards the improvement of the quality of life in these settlements. In doing so, the dissertation seeks to enrich the discussion around upgrading interventions, and puts some points of reflection on formal planning processes.

Therefore, the way we see the informal, how we treat it, how we construct the approaches to it, is the main domain in which this thesis moves.

This dissertation originates from my research experience in Johannesburg which is precisely the city where all these issues are grounded.



EXPLORING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS THROUGH THE LENS OF HUMAN MOBILITY:  
AN INTRODUCTION

## **1.1 Object of study and main logic structure guiding the research**

### **1.1.1 Background: unequal urban growth in the global South and the continuous reproduction of informal settlements**

"Society has been completely urbanized (...). This urbanization is virtual today, but will become real in the future", Henri Lefebvre stated in 1970 (Lefebvre, 2003:1; also cited in Boyer, 2012). Since then, the world has been witnessing a huge increase in urban population growth, variously spreading across multiple countries; notably, however, the main nodes of the ongoing urban population growth appear to be the cities of the global South, most particularly the African and Asian ones (Un-Habitat, 2016).

According to this, while in 1950 less than 20 per cent of the population of the global South lived in cities and towns, by 2030 it is prospected to rise to nearly 60%, or nearly 3.9 billion people (National Research Council, 2003:12; also cited in Watson 2009), while by 2050 this figure is set to increase to 5.3 billion (UN-Habitat, 2008:15).

This massive rate of urbanization in the global South is occurring together with the growing disparity in urban living conditions (Gadanho, 2014) and, remarkably, it is associated with the persistent reproduction of informal settlements (cf. UN Habitat, 2008).

Also termed as slums, they constitute a significant and widespread urban phenomenon of African, Asian and South American cities – already dating back to the previous century – expressing, on one side, a regime of urban division and exclusion (Pieterse, 2008:17) and, on the other side, the efforts of the majority of the urban poor to improve living circumstances while actively facing huge everyday challenges – for example: precarious housing conditions, inadequate access to basic services, environmental degradation, shortage of job opportunities and multiple forms of segregation from social and political spheres of cities.

**-The main contributing factors to the production of informal settlements-** A number of complex factors lay behind informal settlements' proliferation in the global South cities: they "sit

at the intersection of various dimensions of globalization and local decisions and processes" (Huchzermeyer, 2011: 23).

As Davis (2006) explains, the growth of informal settlements is linked to the restructuring of the global agricultural policies which has made farming work unsustainable for thousands of people who have been forced to leave rural areas and move to cities seeking new job opportunities. However, as Davis argues, this urbanization has been taking place without industrialization, namely without an urban economic growth and thus without the guarantee of employment for rural-urban migrants (see also Boyer, 2012).

At the same time, local governments throughout the global South – while trapped in the grips of the global market rules and the scarcity of economic resources – have often given weak or insufficient responses in terms of provision of decent housing for that growing urban population (cf. Huchzermeyer, 2011).

It is precisely in the gap among the urbanization rate, unemployment, and inadequacy of local public responses, where informality fits; namely, an answer that the poorer groups give on their own to the entanglements posed by worldwide systemic assets and local circumstances (see Watson, 2009; Huchzermeyer, 2011; Boyer, 2012).

However, some scholars identify also more specific spatial causes in slums' proliferation. According to this, Huchzermeyer (2014) underlines how modern masterplanning – exported to the global South as far back as the era of colonialism –, conceived through the juxtaposition of large highways, superblocks and socio-functional homogeneous zones, produces a myriad of leftover spaces, unplanned residual areas and unusable vacant lands that become available for the proliferation of informal settlements. Fabricius (2008:12 cited in Huchzermeyer 2014:91) describes this urban process in Brasil as "spread[ing] everywhere, taking over the interstitial spaces".

Given the unaffordable formal housing market for the expanding urban population, rural-urban job seekers do not have any other alternatives of seizing and reinterpreting the waste lands left over by formal planning (Huchzermeyer, 2014).

According to this, Watson (2009) argues that some planning approaches do not fit in contexts marked by rapid urban population and growing poverty, and therefore have contributed – and still contribute – to the formation of informal settlements. Sounding out even more the arguments of Watson (2009), it concerns with the failures of master plans influenced by theories and practices from the global North but implemented in very different contexts from those in which they were originally conceived.

**-Estimations on informal settlements-** UN-Habitat (2016) estimates that 29.7%<sup>2</sup> of the urban population of the global South lives in slums, of which in particular about 64% in Asia, 24% in Africa and 12% in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-Habitat, 2016:58). Recent UN-Habitat estimates suggest that while the percentage of urban dwellers living in slums in the global South decreased from 46.2% in 1990 to 39.4% in 2000 and to 29.7% in 2014 (UN-Habitat, 2016:14); the absolute numbers are continuing to increase given that approximately 880 million urban people lived in slums in 2014, compared to 791 million in 2000, and 689 million in 1990 (ibid.; see also UNEP, 2011).



**Fig. 1.1** | Increase of population living in slums in the global South  
Scheme reproduced by the author from Un-Habitat (2016)

In Africa, the urbanization level will probably experience one of the most rapid growth globally in the future (UN-Habitat, 2008; 2014), because it is projected to reach 50% around 2035 and may rise further to almost 58% by 2050 (UN-Habitat, 2014:23). The urban transition is proceeding and the continent already hosts over a quarter of the 100 fastest-growing cities in the world (UN-Habitat, 2014:23). Under these urbanization's trajectories, in African cities, between 1990 and 2000, slum areas grew at a rate of 4.53%, while overall urban growth rates were 4.58% in the same period (UN-Habitat, 2008:19). Nowadays, in sub-Saharan Africa the majority of urbanized people – about 61.7%, an equivalent of 199.5 million people – live in informal settlements or slums sprawled within and on the edges of medium and large cities (UN-Habitat, 2010:18-23).

According to this, Myers (2011:73), in writing about Africa, argues that "it seems to be generally agreed that there is a strong trend toward informalization (...) notably in the growth of informal settlements and the informalization of formal settlements". Similarly, Crush et al. (2015:10), referring more widely to informality, underline how it has become "the permanent condition for many new urbanites and the defining feature of the landscape, politics and economy of the contemporary African city".

<sup>2</sup> Data referred to 2014.

Looking more specifically to South Africa – the main context on which this dissertation focuses –, the "State of South African Cities Report" (SACN, 2016) underlines that almost 78% of South Africa's population (51.7 million people) live in cities and towns, with only 14% of the population living further than 20 kilometers away from a town or a city (SACN, 2016).

In the face of this urban population's growth, the number of informal settlements in South Africa is approximately 2.700 (NUSP, 2015)<sup>3</sup> – while they were about 300 in 1994 – which are estimated to grow between 5 and 7% across different regions (SDI, 2013).

Given this macro data, it appears manifestly clear that cities in the global South are facing huge challenges. "Cities, mainly in the so called 3rd world or global South, are the major crisis points of the 21st century" (Boyer, 2012:245). Recalling Parnell (2015:16-17), this data about urbanization and informality trends suggests unequivocally that we certainly live in an "urban world" and that, furthermore, precisely the cities of the global South are becoming crucial in addressing the "perennial issues of poverty". Namely, they constitute the terrain for attempting to develop strategies contributing to reduce the incidence of poverty.



**Fig. 1.2** | An informal settlement in the City of Johannesburg

---

<sup>3</sup> On the basis of the Census 2011

### 1.1.2 'Problematizing' informal settlements. Criticality of discourses and approaches of intervention: an overview

Urban informal settlements represent controversial areas within cities since that: they are placed in zones of tension between the formal planning framework and an "organizing logic" coming from the bottom-up (AlSayyad and Roy, 2004; Myers, 2011); they are physically embedded in the urban landscape, and simultaneously cut off from many of its services; they are ambiguously intersected with urban economic spheres, since informal dwellers experience several forms of incorporation in the formal labor market but, at the same time, they remain often excluded from its economic benefits; finally, informal settlements comprise vast parts of the cities but they remain often not recognized in the official urban maps, like sorts of "shadow cities" (Neuwirth, 2006).

**-Diverging perspectives on informal settlements-** Urban informal settlements also occupy contested spaces in public discourses (Huchzermeyer, 2006), giving rise to contrasting and diverging perspectives (Turok and Borel-Saladin, 2016; Turok et al., 2017; see also Pieterse, 2008).

On the one hand, informal settlements have been described using the figures coming from the "*Planet of Slum* nightmare scenario" (Myers, 2011:71). According to this, informal settlements have been recognized as urban problems or pathologies, and depicted as undifferentiated places where experiencing harsh living conditions, isolation and crime: these conceptualizations, in different ways, have led to compose the image of the *slums of despair*, basing on their aberrations, hazardous and malfunctioning (cf. Turok and Borel-Saladin, 2016; Turok et al., 2017; cf. also Pieterse, 2008; Huchzermeyer, 2011).

Conversely, urban informal settlements have been conceptualized as the "home of people" (Myers, 2011:71), expression of survival strategies, self-organized efforts, and entrepreneurial creativity that emerge from below through the daily practices and non-formal activities of the urban poor, responding to human needs and aspirations of having access to urban goods, services and opportunities. Thus, they have been conceptualized as potential low-cost gateway for people's improvement of life (Turner, 1976; Cross, 2010a; Turok and Borel-Saladin, 2016; Turok et al., 2017; see also Huchzermeyer, 2006; Landau e Freemantle, 2009). On this line of argument, Jenkis (2006:85) underlines how informal settlements are "a socially legitimate response to real needs" of people. Similarly, Huchzermeyer (2006:1) notes that informal settlements constitute benign expressions of what the human beings need: they show "the uncommodified, human face of our cities". In this regard, Murray (2008:33) argues that "informal settlements, with deprived spaces defined by their need for just about everything and

their improvised income-generating activities, have become incubators for inventive survival strategies".

These discourses, without denying the existence of major problems in informal settlements, have helped to illuminate some potentialities and human qualities contained in these places and hidden behind resource scarcity; giving attention to all the everyday activities of the more disadvantaged urban groups who constantly transform urban spaces, interweave networks of solidarity and open up routes toward forms of belonging to urban societies, in the attempt to self-generate livelihood alternatives and vanish the boundaries between exclusion and inclusion (see Simone, 2004; Holston, 2008).

The conceptualizations matter since they constitute the terrain in which urban policies and approaches of intervention – arising to address the challenges posed by informal settlements – take roots (see Huchzermeyer, 2011; Maina, 2013).

According to this, scholars (see Huchzermeyer, 2011; Lombard, 2013; Turok and Borel-Saladin, 2016; Deboulet, 2016) have noticed how stigmatizing visions of informal settlements, relying exclusively on their problematic externalities and dysfunctions, may play a role in influencing or justifying ambiguous or too simplistic approaches of intervention, bringing to demolitions of informal settlements with eviction and/or relocation of dwellers. Negative visions risk of validating a "reductionist and symptom-oriented approach to poverty and informality" that precisely focus only on the elimination of the symptoms (Huchzermeyer, 2011:23).

Conversely, alternative perspectives, mainly retracing the human vibrancy and enterprises in informal settlements, may constitute the ground for influencing less disruptive *in-situ* upgrading approach. As Huchzermeyer underlines (2011:26), a greater awareness of the human scale may encourage policy makers to move towards improvement interventions of informal settlements, instead of repulsion and eradication.

**-What is happening on the ground-** *In-situ* upgrading has been defined by Cities Alliance as "one of the most viable, affordable ways to provide housing to the urban poor"<sup>4</sup> and it has gradually been receiving support from UN-Habitat agendas and the international academic debate. More particularly, the *in-situ* upgrading approach promotes settlement improvement interventions, incrementally implemented, that are more attentive to the physical and social structures that dwellers have already built in the informal settlements and, in doing so, this approach encourages participatory processes (Nusp, 2015).

---

<sup>4</sup> Definition available at: [https://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/citiesalliance.org/files/CA\\_Images/SUFactsheet\\_English\\_0.pdf](https://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/citiesalliance.org/files/CA_Images/SUFactsheet_English_0.pdf)

City alliance has defined slum upgrading "as a process through which informal areas are gradually improved, formalized and incorporated into the city itself, through extending land, services and citizenship to slum dwellers"<sup>5</sup>.

Although *in-situ* upgrading has been recognized as a good practice at international scale, its implementation still remains infrequent or insufficient (Huchzermeyer 2006 and 2011; Maina 2013); while, moreover, the threat of demolition and displacement of people still exists (Deboulet, 2016). Despite episodes of progress in the quality of life in some informal settlements' communities (witnessed especially in Latin America), many others remain neglected and the living conditions for the growing urban population of informal settlements still remain challenging (UN-HABITAT, 2016).

Making explicit reference to the South African context, in the post-Apartheid period the dominant forms of intervention in informal settlements have often focused on a "direct" approach that intervenes on "the visible tip of the iceberg" of this urban phenomenon, namely "at the manifestation rather than the causes" (Huchzermeyer, 2010:131). This approach has resulted in demolitions of informal settlements with consequent eviction or relocation of households to transit camps or to compounds of public standardized low-income formal housing (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014; Huchzermeyer, 2010). In this regard, one of the main practices led by public bodies has been to provide "Reconstruction and Development Programme housing subsidy", namely the so called RDP housing (Huchzermeyer, 2014:156). In the post-apartheid South Africa, there has been a massive supply of houses, amounting to almost 3.2 million subsidized units. In dealing with informality, South African governments worked "to eliminate shack housing, by gradually replacing under-serviced nonpermanent informal areas with formal, serviced neighborhoods with permanent 'core houses' on regular, surveyed, title plots" (Meyer, 2011:96).

However, the public housing program appears insufficient if compared to the housing demand (Meyer, 2011). Moreover, low-cost public houses have often been criticized for locating the urban poor in socially homogeneous residential cluster, often placed in peripheral areas towards the edges of the cities, where the price of the land is cheaper; and for offering one-for-all housing solutions that not necessarily fit with the variegated circumstances of disadvantaged segments of the urban society (see also Cross, 2010a). According to this, public housing has been recurrently looked with skepticism for generating a poorly located and standardized residential geography, thus risking of replicating the logic of racial and class segregation of the

---

<sup>5</sup> Definition available at: [https://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/citiesalliance.org/files/CA\\_Images/SUFactsheet\\_English\\_0.pdf](https://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/citiesalliance.org/files/CA_Images/SUFactsheet_English_0.pdf)

apartheid era, and eventually not constituting a poverty reduction device (cf. Charlton, 2014; Huchzermeyer, 2010).

In line with the evolution of the international debate on informal settlements, assuming a critical position to indiscriminate demolition and relocations, in South Africa there has been an evolution of policies promoting a more sustainable *in-situ* upgrading. This is an approach that goes hand in hand precisely with: (a) the recognition of some potentialities contained in informal settlements in supporting people livelihood; (b) the awareness that, despite demolition and displacement, informal settlements "are here to stay", namely that they will not be temporary phenomenon within the cities (Hindson and McCarthy, 1994; also cited in Turok and Borel-Saladin, 2016); (c) and the acknowledgment of the failures of certain housing policies that on the one hand risk to exacerbate inequalities, and on the other hand are forced to run behind the gap between the scale and unsustainable costs for the supply of public houses, and the growing rate of urbanization.

However, as already emphasized in the literature, *in-situ* upgrading still find scarce application, and living conditions do not appear to have improved enough in many informal settlements in South Africa: although *in-situ* upgrading approach has been recognized as one of the most appropriate type of intervention for informal settlements, the attempts to actualize it are still rare; *in-situ* upgrading interventions still remain exiguous, limited to isolated cases, or slow (Maina, 2013; Kornienko, 2013; Huchzermeyer et al., 2014).



Fig. 1.3 | An example of standardized housing in the City of Johannesburg



### 1.1.3 Rationale for framing informal settlements through the lens of human mobility and construction of the main hypothesis

**-The problem-** Despite the progress in the international debate around informal settlements promoting adequate solutions oriented to participatory and minimal-disruption upgrading approach (Deboulet, 2016), the ways of intervention still appear insufficient or inadequate if compared with the persistence of poor conditions of life for growing populations in informal settlements, in South Africa and in many other countries throughout the global South; while some tendencies of ignoring them or keeping them under the risk of demolition, eviction and/or relocation still remain (see Kornienko, 2013 and Deboulet, 2016).

**-The call-** The persistence of "raw" living conditions (Ross, 2010), the permanent concerns for the access to decent housing and urban life in informal settlements, solicits to constantly deepen our knowledge of this urban phenomenon, while questioning the rationale that resides behind the approaches of intervention (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014:155) in order to find ways to improve them.

If there exists a relationship between conceptualizations of urban reality and the approaches of intervention, it would therefore represent a solicitation for the production of a more nuanced understanding of informal settlements, one that overcomes homogeneous visions, challenges preconceived images, and grasps the vast spectrum of heterogeneities and complexities across them, all while gaining insights about *who* lives in these settlements: namely the different contingencies and needs of people, their consequent settling logic, and ways of producing informal spaces from the ground up.

It means to illuminate both people and places and move beyond a reductionist treatment of informal settlements<sup>6</sup>.

According to this, the present dissertation aims to contribute to an in-depth and diversified knowledge of informal settlements – focusing on the processes of self-production of urban spaces and on the relationship between people and their places – in order to inform upgrading intervention in informal settlements.

Starting from these considerations, which ways of thinking, which conceptualization and analytic lens can therefore help to move towards the construction of better living conditions inside informal settlements?

**-Introducing the human mobility lens-** In order to address this issue, the dissertation introduces the lens of human mobility<sup>7</sup> to frame informal settlements. Precisely it looks at the

---

<sup>6</sup> Insight from Prof. Kristen Kornienko in a personal conversation

migratory trajectories of people into-and-out of informal settlements including their socio-spatial effects.

Why human mobility? The need to use human mobility as a privileged point of view starts from the observation of the actual reality of informal settlements, focused within the South African context, that utterly shows how issues related to human mobility are constitutive aspects of informal settlements, but which often remain set aside in the analytical and intervention phases. More precisely, when observing the reality, informal settlements appear strictly embedded in a vast network of human movements: they appear like points of convergence of people on the move driven by a plethora of ambitions, necessities or constraints; coming from remote rural areas, secondary cities or from different places within the same urban center; having a trajectory of migration in the background and potentially other stages to reach in their future (see Landau, 2013; Blaser and Landau, 2016). Some informal settlements appear involved in turbulent flows, some others in slower passages; for some people informal settlements may represent the ultimate destination of a life journey, for others they may only form provisional stalls from which then to leave again (see Simone, 2011a; Landau, 2013).

This view does not imply that it is not possible to trace stable phenomena or sedentary people inside informal settlements but rather that, in context of informality, stability seems to remain closely interwoven with mobility: in contexts of informality, the permanence appears always part of a migratory trajectory or a vaster history of movement. As Simone (2011a:3) specifies, talking about the urbanity of movement in Africa: "Within a single domain, there can be those aspects, actors, and dimensions that remain almost sedentary, on the verge of atrophy, while also in the presence of those that are incessantly mutating".

The observation of reality suggests that precisely from a stratification of multi-directional trajectories – different for nature, type, size and speed –, heterogeneous places emerge: informal settlements look shaped by "varying degrees of temporariness, permanence and flow" (Khoolas, 2001 in Kornienko, 2013); inhabited by communities not univocally established (Landau, 2013); and draw upon a coexistence of different populations, each expressing different demands from the city and in turn different potentialities of building the city from the ground up. Precisely the reality suggests how this overlapping of movements gives rise to unique socio-spatial combinations built through the gradual accumulation of people on the go: more than homogeneous derelict places, informal settlements appear highly complex and diverse spatial phenomena shaped by multiple migratory histories driven by myriad needs, wills and future visions.

---

<sup>7</sup> As it will be better specified in the second chapter, the term "Human mobility" is used as an umbrella term to refer to multiple forms of human migration, including their economic, social, cultural and spatial effects.

**-The vision-** Starting from these initial insights, the view here is that these discrete human movements, belonging to ordinary people's life, work like potent vehicles of production, transformation and organization of informal settlements, and therefore they become the privileged observation points to better understand these places.

Despite the human mobility's issues connected to informal settlements have been frequently noted (already started from the remote Turner's works), they have often been taken as an implicit aspect in the discussions about informal settlements and only rarely formed the entry point of the conceptualizations (cf. Lombard, 2013 on similar issues); however, taking human mobility in the foreground, as a main filter through which sighting informal settlements, could help to perceive a "multilayered knowledge" (Kornienko, 2013) of these places and better profile dwellers, in order to inform strategies of intervention.

Under this hypothesis, human mobility is used here to expand our knowledge of the urban phenomenon, and to enrich the debate regarding the upgrading approach. Consequently, human mobility is taken as a lens able to give both theoretical and practical opportunities.

## **1.2 Research questions and main objectives**

Following these intents, the main research question leading the dissertation is: In which way do informal settlements and human mobility dynamics stay in relation; and what relevance can be derived from this relationship in order to assist urban knowledge production and approaches of intervention in informal settlements?

In order to address the main research question, four sub-questions have been found:

1. What is the role of informal settlements in the people's migratory trajectories?
2. How do people experience time in informal settlements?
3. What types of socio-spatial practices arise from the ground up in informal settlements under people's multiple temporal profiles?
4. What theoretical opportunities can be derived from an analysis of informal settlements through the lens of human mobility? How does this analysis can inform upgrading intervention in informal settlements?

Investigating informal settlements from the human mobility lens appears under-researched, in particular from the perspectives of urban planners (while it appears more deepened by anthropologists, geographers, sociologists and political scientists). The current dissertation does not claim to be a study on human mobility but rather to understand which kinds of questions this concept can pose to urban planners. In this regard the broad objectives of this study are the following:

- On an analytical level, the objective is to interrogate our understanding of informal settlements precisely exploring the possible implications, interdependences and correlations between socio-spatial characteristics of urban informal settlements and different profiles of people on the move. Specific contributions are:
    - understanding informal settlements' functionality, namely how they operate and are articulated within the cities in relations to the networks of human movements;
    - understanding how spatial characteristics of informal settlements shape dynamics of attraction and concentration of people's flows;
    - understanding how informal settlements play a role in people's in-and-out migratory trajectories, in relation to the urban possibilities that they can offer;
    - understanding how practices of people on the move shape spatial and social characteristics of informal settlements. It means putting particular emphasis on the *spatialities* of human mobility, namely on the way in which human movements shape variegated urban spaces, and on what takes place in these spaces of confluences of people's flows.
  - On an operational and procedural level, the objective is to understand how taking into account the dimension of human mobility into the discourse of informality enlarges the debate on the *in-situ* upgrading approach, poses questions to the formal planning and, at the same time, suggests ways to inform processes of community participation better interfacing with different mobile profiles in informal settlements.
- Considering these assumptions, this study aims to speak to all actors involved in processes of intervention, namely NGOs, CBOs, public institutions, professionals and communities.

Identifying a single research topic concerning informal settlements is not a simple operation because every aspect is closely linked to another and nothing seems to be negligible. However, in summary, the research project follows two main lines of research:

- codification of the socio-spatial dynamics
- perspectives of intervention.

### 1.3 Methodology

**-The research process-** The inspiration for this research came from the direct observation and experience of the reality of informal settlements in South Africa that *talked me back*, so following a mainly inductive approach. On the basis of a *pocket* of local urban knowledge, I identified some critical points concerning the urban phenomenon under investigation, outlined

the problems, formulated a broad generalization and so built the preliminary hypothesis to be explored<sup>8</sup>. The latter has then been compared with the existing literature on informal settlements in order to identify a gap in the theoretical knowledge in which positioning the dissertation (Zeegers and Barron, 2015), and to adjust the initial hypothesis in a sort of rectification of the direction of the research.

The research path has then been developed through a continuous cycle between the theoretical and empirical learning of the urban phenomenon: this has created a view of the theories on the basis of a knowledge *coming from the field*, and at the same time has allowed encoding the actual reality through the filter of the theories.

**-Research approach-** In conducting the research, a mixed approach has been used combining both qualitative and quantitative data, with a predilection for the former ones. Choosing to favor a mixed approach is suggested by the changing nature of informal settlements, where the quantitative data – when available – has the limit of having to be often updated in order to be truthful. Moreover, a mixed research approach allowed for a better penetration into the multiple layers of the urban phenomenon under investigation, and in those aspects that often remain hidden in exclusively quantitative analysis (see also Chungu, 2016). Qualitative and quantitative data have been combined in sequence – and not simultaneously –: firstly, the qualitative data were collected and subsequently were supported with the available quantitative data.

**-Research strategy-** To answer the research questions, to pursue the main objectives of the study, and to ground issues, this research project uses a case-study method. The latter has been defined as a "pre-eminent methodological approach for the purpose of understanding and intervening in complex environment and processes" (Duminy et al., 2014: 21); and therefore, it has been chosen since it allows for a better understanding of the complex socio-spatial urban dynamics occurring in informal settlements, while joining theories to the real world.

The area of study of this dissertation is Johannesburg, a vibrant city placed in the core of South Africa. The research project composes an overall picture of Johannesburg's contemporary informal settlements; and then explores more in depth two case-study settlements to further deepen the issues under analysis.

---

<sup>8</sup> Insights from:

- Professors Natalie Jean Baptiste and Marie Huchzermeyer, lesson on research qualitative methodology, Wits University, Johannesburg, 30/03/2017;

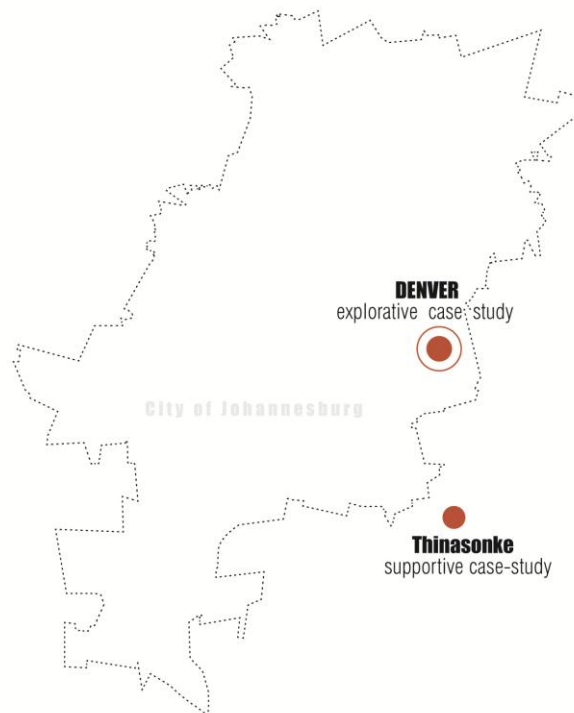
- Teaching material: Research Methods lectures 2017, Day 1, Session 1, "Intro to the research process and types of research", Professors: Marie Huchzermeyer & Brian Boshoff, School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg)



**Fig.1.4** | Johannesburg in South Africa and Gauteng province

"Denver informal settlement" is the main case-study. It is an exploratory case-study (Yin, 1994) through which an analytical grid, regarding the relationship between informal settlements and human mobility, has been built.

Subsequently the research introduces a second case-study, "Thinasonke", which is a sort of case of support, thanks to which the analytic grid, previously built, is re-crossed in order to test it, strengthen it and broaden the results.



**Fig.1.5** | Map of the case-studies

Denver has been chosen as a main case-study for a number of reasons. First of all, for its history strictly linked to issues related to people's freedom of movement. It was indeed born as a sort of "side effect" of the policies of control on human mobility and urbanization applied by colonial and apartheid governments. More precisely, it arose as a spontaneous appendix of the Denver Men Hostel, a complex built in the '40s to temporarily locate migrant workers who were allowed to stay in the city for short periods of time – while their families were not allowed to reach the city. Denver settlement originated during the decay of apartheid's influx control, and one of the reasons why it emerged was precisely to give shelter to the families of the men of the hostel which, while arriving to the city, were not allowed to stay in the hostel and therefore they created their own informal place nearby.

Secondly, Denver has been chosen as main case-study because, for the past few years, a participatory planning process has started to take place inside the settlement – with local Ngo, Cbo and a group of architects and planners connected to the University of Johannesburg. I recognized this process as a fertile and interesting setting in which to be involved.

Finally, Denver is a medium sized settlement of Johannesburg and contains such a high level of complexity that it therefore offers a vastness of issues and useful elements *to talk to* other settlements.

Tinasonke has been chosen since it is extremely different from the first case-study by nature, location and stage of the participatory processes in which it is involved; so it offers important insights to broaden the first findings coming out from Denver. Tinasonke is placed just outside Johannesburg's administrative border, falling already in Ekurhuleni's metropolitan municipality. According to this, even if the dissertation focuses on the City of Johannesburg, it does not remain necessarily bounded to the administrative city's edges; it rather considers the historical continuity Johannesburg-Ekurhuleni established along the old mining belt, and included in the Gauteng province.

**-Data collection techniques-** The study used several ways to collect data: qualitative data have been obtained from interviews, open dialogues, and participant observation; they were combined with quantitative data mainly based on statistical reports.

- Semi-structured interviews.

Interviews to the residents of the case-study settlements. Two kinds of interviews have been conducted in the case-studies: a) individual and collective interviews to key witnesses (the leaders of the settlements) in which, starting from a set of open questions, respondents were given the opportunity to provide information about the settlements, their history and current dynamics. These interviews were conducted in a free and flexible way, avoiding to strictly follow

the questionnaires and focusing on those issues that the respondents believed should be deepened; b) individual interviews to the dwellers of the case-study settlements, based on a set of questions defined *a priori* mainly focusing on people's personal life (from the emigration from their place of origin, to the successive experience in the urban informal settlements, and their future ambitions). The interviews to the residents constitute a way to develop a comprehension of the place through people's perceptions, life experiences and values (Zeegers and Barron, 2015).

The respondents in Denver have been selected by the leaders, hence not following prearranged criteria; however, they covered a huge heterogeneity of profiles: women and men; young, middle-age and elderly people; employed and unemployed people; early and new settlers; people living alone or with families.

- Interviews to members of NGO and to architects/planners working in informal settlements.

These interviews have been useful to better understand the ways in which NGO's and professionals act in urban informal settlements, the steps of the participatory process they develop along with communities, and the ways they include issues related to human mobility in improvement interventions inside informal settlements.

- Interviews to members of the government. Interviews were conducted to members of the Department of Human Settlement and the Department of Spatial Planning in the city of Johannesburg. These interviews were useful to better understand the urban policies' approach to informal settlements.

In summary, the interviews conducted are 27: 21 interviews in the case-study settlements (18 in Denver and 3 in Tinasonke), 2 interviews to the members of the NGO Corc, 2 interviews to professionals (architects/planners), and 2 interviews to members of the government.

Interviews have not been recorded in order to maintain a more neutral and relaxed environment.

- Participant observation and dialogues

The direct involvement at first-hand in community workshops, multi-actors meetings and interactive walks within Johannesburg's informal settlements, represented an important tool for an understanding of the way of living in the places under analysis. Moreover, it gave me the opportunity to learn, from the inside, the practices of NGOs, CBOs and professionals with informal communities.



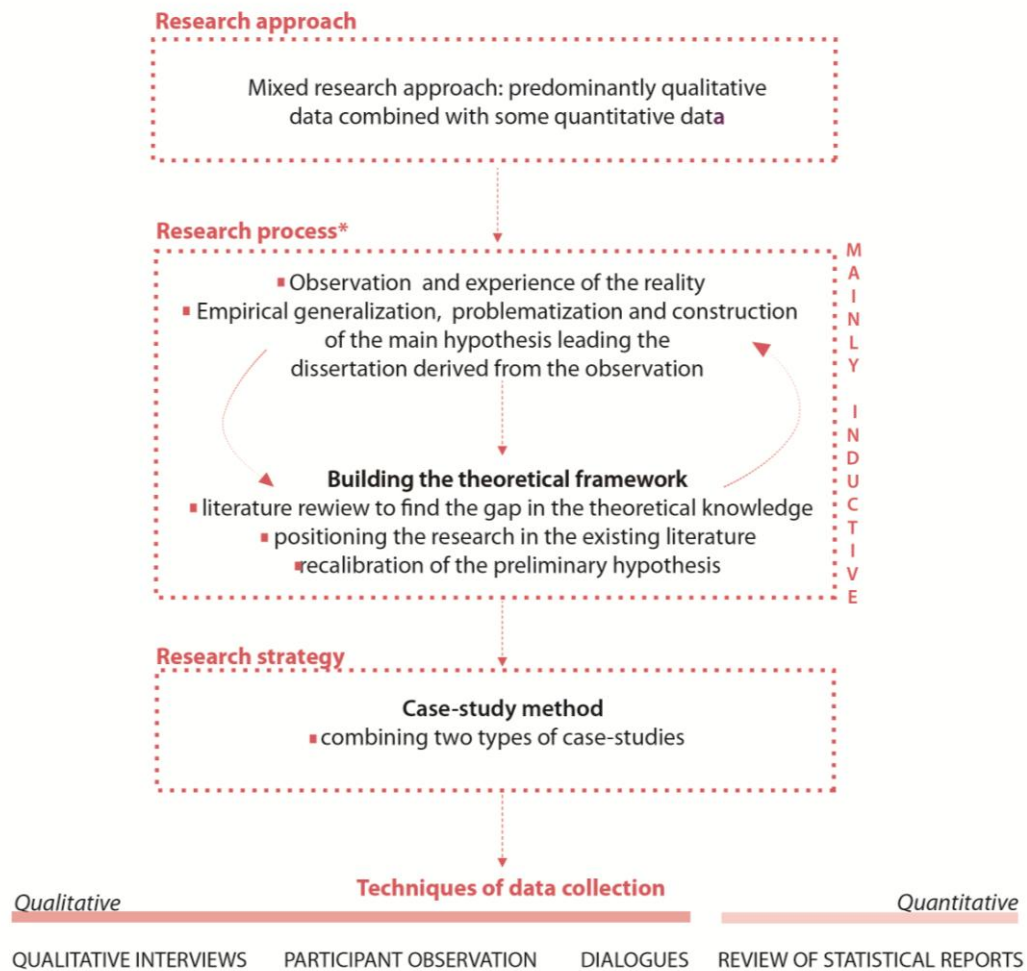
Moreover, the opportunity of having spontaneous dialogues – during the above mentioned activities – with informal settlements' dwellers, grassroots organizations, architects and planners; constituted an important way to improve a fine-grained understanding of the urban phenomenon under investigation, while exchanging ideas and reflections with all different actors variously involved in those places.

- Statistical reports review

The study used dossiers and statistical reports elaborated by official agencies, containing essentially numerical and demographic information concerning informal settlements. The general statistical data about informal settlements in Johannesburg has been acquired from dossiers and census reports (developed, at local level, by Eeight 20, Housing Development Agency, StasSA).

An important quantitative source data related to Denver informal settlement is the "Enumeration 2016", a self-survey conducted by the community members themselves and initiated by the CBO "FedUP" and the NGO "Corc".

**-Data communication techniques-** The research uses maps, diagrams, pictures and narratives to report data. As far as the choice of the language for this dissertation goes, I decided to use the English for a number of reasons: firstly, because it appears highly difficult to correctly translate in the Italian language some concepts strictly belonging to the South African context, without the risk of altering the meaning or sounding incorrect (for example: "shack in backyards"); secondly, because all interviews were conducted in English; thirdly, to facilitate the engagement with the scholars of the Wits University.



\* Elaborated from the teaching material: "Research Methods lectures 2017, Day 1, Session 1, *Intro to the research process and types of research*", Professors: Marie Huchzermeyer & Brian Boshoff, School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg)

**Fig.1.6** | The research methodology

#### 1.4 Why Johannesburg as an area of study?

The City of Johannesburg is placed in the Gauteng province, and more precisely on the old gold deposit of the Witwatersraad. With a population of 4,434,827<sup>9</sup>, it is the largest city of South Africa.

Johannesburg incorporates the characteristics as well as the contradictions of many cities of the global South, like: legacy of the colonial past, proliferation of the informal sector, deep gap between wealth and poverty, and urban population growth. At the same time it is characterized by specific local features, such as: the origin related to the mining sector, based on the cheap labor of immigrant workers (cf. Beall et al., 2002); and its history of the apartheid regime, organized on race and class categorizations, of which the city still bears the marks in its deep spatial divisions (Murray, 2008; Todes, 2014). Johannesburg has been chosen as a study area for the wide range of challenges that it contains, hereafter summarized:

- *Johannesburg informal city*. According to the official census data, in the city of Johannesburg there are 187 informal settlements. Although the number of informal settlements remains not very high if compared to that of other global South's cities – therefore, contradicting some public propaganda talking about "mushrooming" of informal settlements in Johannesburg (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014) – the real problem is that they still continue to see a "little if any improvement" (Ibid.:155).

- *Johannesburg "unequal city"*. Defined as "unequal city" (Beall et al., 2002) or "city of extremes" (Murray, 2011), Johannesburg represents a paradigmatic case of a fragmented city at social and spatial level, where the extreme poverty and insecurity of some areas, contrast with the wealth of financial centers, residential nodes and recreational-commercial islands for upper-medium classes. Johannesburg of the post-apartheid era still seems to be "at war with itself. The accumulation of wealth for the few is matched by the accumulation of misery for the many" (Murray, 2006:95). Despite the governments' ambitions to create new democratic urban forms in the post-apartheid period, the city is still crossed by deep divisions based on income and ethnicity, and reflected in the sprawling of socially homogeneous divided areas, showing unequal levels of access to basic services and urban opportunities.

- *Johannesburg "a city of migrants"*. Called "city of migrants", cosmopolitan multi-lingual and multi-cultural city, Johannesburg has always attracted national and international migrants from different regions of Africa, Asia and Europe. Still today, it represents a magnet for large groups

---

<sup>9</sup> Census 2011

of sub-Saharan populations and internal migrants who move in search of jobs and better life opportunities or, in more extreme cases, who escape from wars and local conflicts.

Immigration has certainly had a huge impact in the massive population increase which has occurred in the last decades (Harrison et al., 2014). In 1996, just after the end of the Apartheid, the population was of 2,638,471, in 2001 it was of 3,226,055, and with the last census in 2011 the population was estimated at 4,434,827 (StatsSA, 2011; see also Harrison et al., 2014).

However, despite its history of immigration, Johannesburg still today seems uncertain in handling this urbanizing people growth, and in encouraging a stronger encounter between different ethnic groups.

- *Johannesburg an economically "growing city"*? Johannesburg represents the economic engine of Southern Africa. "(B)oth Johannesburg and the province of Gauteng (which forms the core but not the entirety of the city-region) account for a significant proportion of the national economy, and are expanding in their importance." (Harrison et al., 2014: 3). The economy grew fast from 1996 to 2011 and has been accompanied by deep structural changes from the 90s to the present day, a period when there has been a shift from an economy linked to mining and manufacturing, to the expansion of the service economy (Harrison et al., 2014:5).

Despite the rise of new employment opportunities, unemployment paradoxically has not decreased rapidly over time, both due to an increase of the number of people in working age (Harrison et al., 2014) and, as Beall et al. (2002) pointed out, due to the difficulty for the manual working class – who were previously employed in the manufacturing –, to be re-employed in the service sector. As a result, large pockets of poverty continue to be perpetuated.

- *Johannesburg a "reinventing city"*. In the post-Apartheid period, Johannesburg has witnessed the birth of urban policies in order to address problems related to phenomena of socio-spatial segregation, related in particular to informal settlements. Furthermore, several NGO, CBO and grassroots movements have started to support participatory planning processes for the access to decent housing and basic services, in cooperation with universities, professionals, and along with communities. According to this, recalling Beall et al. (2002), the post-apartheid Johannesburg is having the opportunity to reinvent itself, to reformulate urban policies, planning practices and institutional frameworks.

- *Johannesburg an "inspiring city"*. Given the broad picture of challenges and issues that it shows, Johannesburg represents a useful case to look at from different cities around the world: its process of urbanization represents an element of comparison as well as a spectrum for many

other cities across the globe (Harrison et al., 2014). Given its history of colonialisms and migration, it appears as a city straddled between multiple worlds and containing "multiple elsewhere" (Mbembe and Nuttal, 2004) that can inspire all those who are involved with urban issues in contexts of poverty and inequality across the world.

### **1.5 Considerations on the complexity of conducting research in fragile contexts**

Conducting research in informal settlements is a very complex process that requires deep carefulness and respect of the place and people involved; it concerns to deal with fragile socio-spatial settings in which people face huge everyday difficulties. In this regard, a series of principles have been followed for the collection and analysis of data:

- *Anonymity*. The research retains the anonymity of the people interviewed in the settlements during the fieldwork. Each interview has been anticipated by a brief consent form in which the respondents stated that they were freely participating in the present academic work. Anonymity has made it possible to protect the participants as well as to establish a more serene atmosphere during the interviews. The latter were also introduced by a brief presentation of the academic intent of the present work in order to make all participants aware of its aim.
- *Cautious tone*<sup>10</sup>. Building the knowledge of places like informal settlements – for which often no publication exists – by interpreting the life-stories and perceptions of people met during the fieldworks, remains subject to the risk of researcher's misinterpretations. Given that, the tone of the dissertation remains always cautious and never absolute (see also Zeegers and Barron, 2015).
- *Objectivity*. Crossing contexts of poverty is always painful, crude and tormenting. Given these feelings, describing informal settlements without falling into pietism and redundancy is extremely challenging. "It is enormously difficult to write about ugliness in social life, and there are great risks in doing so – of pathologising, of generating fixed positions, of blaming victims" (Ross, 2010:5). To overcome this condition, the dissertation tries to maintain a good level of objectivity in interpreting and representing the collected data (see also Chungu, 2016).
- *Involving linguistic mediators*. The language has constituted a critical dimension in the phase of collecting data in the case-studies. As a result, since many of the interviewees were Zulu speaking, in order to facilitate dialogues, while respecting all languages, some interviews were conducted in Zulu and translated in English by the informal settlements' community leaders who accompanied me during fieldwork.

---

<sup>10</sup> Insight by Prof. Kristen Kornienko in a personal conversation

In order to develop the analysis of the case-studies, links with a network of actors deeply involved in several activities inside Johannesburg's informal settlements have been established:

- *Community Organization Resource Center (CORC)*<sup>11</sup>

- *Federation of Urban and rural Poor (Fedup)*<sup>12</sup>

- *A-formal Terrain*<sup>13</sup>

Having chosen to establish links with this specific network of actors reflects two main reasons.

Firstly, it is closely associated to a choice for being engaged in first person in ongoing activities in informal settlements and, therefore, learning by participating while, at the same time, trying to contribute to those activities. This fits with the very nature of the qualitative research that is suitable for forms of collaboration among the researchers and non-academic actors<sup>14</sup>.

Secondly, the filter of those groups resulted indispensable as it gave me the opportunity to access to urban informal areas otherwise impenetrable. The network of actors worked as an *entry point* for legitimate my presence in the field, and mediating the perception of myself by the communities. Thanks to these actors, it was possible to establish a direct contact with the community leaders who then introduced me to the places. The direct relationship with the leaders was crucial as they were the main guides in codifying the dynamics occurring in the case-study settlements, possessing an in-depth knowledge of the real life in those places.

The importance of building a chain of actors through which work reflects the difficulty of doing research in fragile contexts, where an external person might be perceived by communities with tension, given the potential risk of eviction under which the communities lie (see Kornienko, 2013); with the embarrassment of being judged (or even 'analyzed') on the basis of the poverty and harsh living conditions people may show; or with a sort of disappointment of those who received unfulfilled promises by several people outside the community.

---

<sup>11</sup> It is an NGO supporting social processes of community-based organizations by facilitating engagements with formal actors like the State. It also supports the development of the "rituals" of saving, enumeration and community-led development strategies (SDI, 2013:1).

<sup>12</sup> It is a nationwide women-led community based federation of slum dwellers aiming to build united and organized communities to address homelessness, landlessness and creating sustainable and self-reliant communities (SDI, 2013:1).

<sup>13</sup> It is a collaborative and collective architecture/urbanism/landscape laboratory working with informal settlements' dwellers, and focusing on integrating resources and skills in order to promote awareness and generate responses to contexts of rapidly changing and often unstable contemporary urban phenomena (source: <http://studioatdenver.blogspot.it/p/about.html>)

<sup>14</sup> Prof. Sarah Charlton, seminar "Case studies and space/boundaries", Wits University, Johannesburg, 21/06/2017.

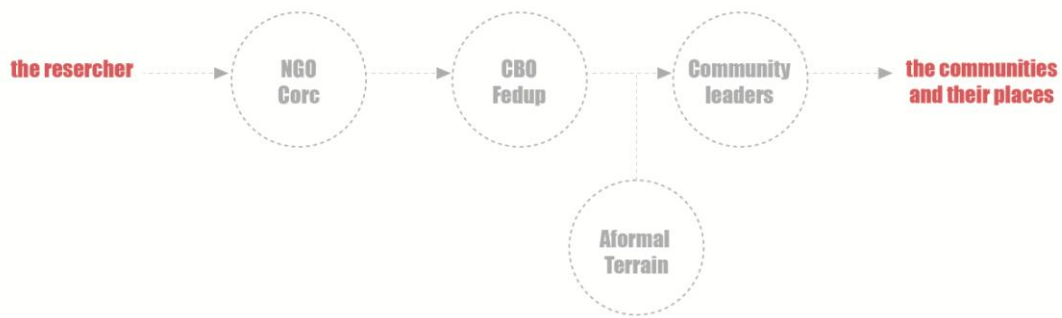


Fig.1.7 | A chain of actors

### 1.6 Some limits of the research project

Two main research limits, of a conceptual relevance, have been recognized.

First of all, the use of the term "global South" represents a concern of this dissertation. It does not have a literally geographical connotation (with a north hemisphere opposite to a south one) but rather a geopolitical meaning (Dirlik, 2015), alluding to a difference between richer and poorer countries (Wolvers et al., 2015). By and large, it roots in the history of colonialism and neo-imperialism that have lead to socio-economic and political asymmetries throughout the world generating large pockets of poverty and inequality in Africa, South America and Asia (Dados and Connell, 2012). In doing so, the term replaces the oldest and more derogatory categories of "third world" and "developing countries" (Rigg, 2015) that proposed a sort of subordination of a third world compared to a first one, or of an under-developed country compared to a developed one.

However, this term poses a series of still open issues and contains some levels of criticality. The global South category, indeed, appears too generic to describe very different contexts throughout the world; moreover, it does not include that *South* existing within the Northern contexts (and vice versa), of which the degree of precariousness and scale of poverty risks to remain often hidden. According to this, Brenner and Schmid (2015:152) write that "this new mosaic of spatial unevenness cannot be captured adequately through (...) First/Second/Third World, North/South, East/West and so forth. Today, divergent conditions of wealth and poverty, growth and decline, inclusion and exclusion, centrality and marginality, mutually produce one another at all spatial scales, from the neighborhood to the planetary".

A second limit of the research project resides in the use of the term *informal*. In the literature there seems to be a common tendency in considering the term informal as reductive and insufficient for describing the complexity of the realities that reside under this umbrella term (see Chance, 2015; Chungu, 2016) and for this reason there are many discussions to try to

overcome it. However, despite this tendency, the use of the term *informal* still remains useful for the narrations, and it is challenging to replace it. Consequently, the research recognizes this limit but is unable to overcome it.

### 1.7 Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first one has just exposed the rational, aims, research questions and methodology. The second traces the theoretical and conceptual framework at the basis of this research. The third presents a comprehensive introduction to the city of Johannesburg. It traces a general picture of its urban spatial dynamics, the state of the urban informal settlements as well as the policies and intervention programs adopted to deal with their related issues. The fourth and fifth chapters constitute the analysis of the two case-studies. The sixth chapter is dedicated to the exposition of the conclusive results and it is followed by an epilogue concerning some possible future challenges.

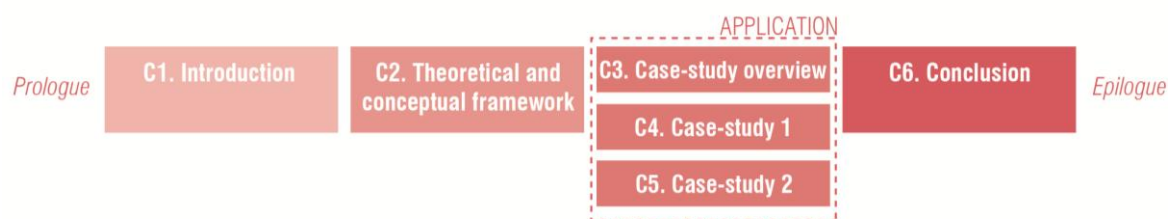


Fig.1.8 | Structure of the dissertation



**THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:  
BUILDING ON THREE RESEARCH FIELDS, ESTABLISHING THE LOGICAL LINKS AMONG THE RELEVANT  
POSITIONS, AND PROPOSING A SYNTHESIS**

The chapter constitutes the theoretical and conceptual base of this dissertation. Initially, it traces an overview of the main theoretical positions arisen around informal settlements' issues over time; then it goes through a review of a set of contributions considered relevant for this dissertation and coming from three research fields. In particular: first, the chapter focuses on the works of a group of scholars linked to the postcolonial urban studies; secondly, the chapter introduces a sorting of contributions concerning people's practices emerging from the bottom up in contexts of poverty; and finally, it opens to the human mobility studies. From these three vast bodies of research, only a selection of those conceptualizations and definitions that mainly informed this dissertation is here proposed.

Successively, the chapter identifies the logical links existing among the key arguments extrapolated from the abovementioned literatures, and then elaborates a synthesizing conceptual vision, namely the most significant set of ideas of this dissertation. The last section explains the theoretical and practical opportunities that the conceptual vision here proposed can provide.



**Fig.2.1** | Relevant theoretical fields informing the dissertation

## **2.1 Theoretical debate around urban informal settlements: the dominant positions over time**

Urban informality is a "fluid concept" (AlSayyad and Roy, 2004:4) since it is arduous to completely define; it often remains ambiguous, generic or insufficiently specified given the vast variety of informal sectors existing in contemporary cities (see Chance, 2015). Precisely for this elusive characterization, urban informality has been often described by what it is not, by its opposite, namely urban formality (Huchzermeyer, 2011:70). According to this, the concept of urban informality has often been associated to a wide range of human activities – like trade, transport, housing, service provision, small scale enterprise – which arise outside the regulatory framework of the state and which manifest themselves in the urban environment (Al Sayyad and Roy, 2004:1; see also Chungu, 2016). Given that, as Paul Jenkins points out, the concept of urban informality has been frequently defined by the absence/presence of governments' regulations and therefore it is often "rooted in an approach that is state dominated" (Jenkins, 2006:85).

One of the first times in which the concept of informality appeared was precisely with reference to the labor market sector, in the studies elaborated by Keith Hart in Ghana during the '70s, and successively, in those elaborated by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Kenya (see AlSayyad, 2004; Jenkins, 2006; Huchzermeyer, 2011). The concept was introduced to identify all forms of unregulated employment, arisen outside the legal sector, in opposition to the formal one: it thus was based on a dichotomous understanding of the informal as strongly separated from the formal (see also Chungu, 2016).

**-Chicago School-** The origin of the debate more specifically related to urban informal settlements can be traced during the 50s and 60s, when scholars linked to the Chicago School proposed the first studies on the urbanization in the so-called developing countries (Al Sayyad, 2004; Lombard, 2014). Those are mainly studies dominated by visions of urban crisis in which rural-urban immigrants were often described as passive urban actors who suffer conditions of marginality and poverty (AlSayyad, 2004).

Connected to these studies, Lewis – through his works in the poor communities of Puerto Rico – developed the notion of the "culture of poverty" which is described as a condition that "once has come into existence it tends to perpetuate itself" (Lewis, 1966:21). In this regard Lewis writes: "By the time slum children are six or seven, they have usually absorbed the basic attitudes and values of their subculture. Thereafter they are psychologically unready to take full advantage of changing conditions or improving opportunities that may develop in their lifetime" (Lewis, 1966:21).

**-Studies form Latin America-** Later studies, mainly conducted in Latin America during the '60s and '70s, and concerning more specifically informal housing and land market, have challenged the previous conceptualizations which described the urban informals as just passive actors (Al Sayyad, 2004; Lombard, 2014). One of the most incisive work is Perlman's "The myth of marginality". She argues that the stereotypes of marginalized people living in informal settlements are "empirically false and analytically misleading and also disastrous in their policy implication" (Perlman, 1975:131). The author argues that people stigmatized as marginal are actually integrated into society contributing with their work – although asymmetrically and in a detrimental way for their own interests – (ibid.:131). Through her study on Brazilian favelas, unlike the misleading prejudicial images of chaos and deprivation, Perlman argues that the inhabitants of informal settlements are: *socially*, quite well organized and cohesive; *culturally*, highly optimistic; and *economically*, hard workers (Perlman, 1986: 40-41)

**-Self-help approach-** One of the theoretical positions that decisively marked the debate around informal settlements was that of John Turner with, in particular, his works in the *Barriadas* in Perú by the end of the 1960s. He determined a decisive shift from the pessimistic visions of informal settlements to ones that rather considered them as a people's response to a condition of crisis and scarcity. He wrote that squatters and other forms of uncontrolled urban settlements are not "social aberrations but a perfectly and very often a surprisingly adequate response to the situation" (Turner, 1968:108). Turner also underlines that "to most of their habitants, the (squatter) settlements are steps toward the solution of their problems; they are not problems *per se*", as governments use to define them (ibid.:118); squatter settlements are rather described as steps toward a social and economic up-scaling.

This vision constitutes the base for Turner's critic to the standardized houses supplied by governments which, according to the author, do not respond to people's wills. He pointed out that the policies and programs of provision of low-cost houses are the consequence of an understanding of the housing as a "noun" (that means a commodity or product) instead of housing as a "verb" (that means the process or activity of housing) (Turner, 1972). Turner (1972:174) states that "as housing action depends on the actors' will and as the dominant actors in economies of scarcity are the people themselves, they must be free to make the decisions which most concern them". According to this, he emphasized the potential of the "self help" (or the capacity of people of building dwellings by their own) and the importance of people's control and decision making in the housing process. According to this, people should be directly involved in housing processes where the role of governments is to support or technically assist the action of people, providing services, infrastructure and, eventually, titles.

The work of John Turner has then been strongly influential for squatter upgrading policies in many countries of the Global South (Arimah, 2012; see also Lombard, 2014).

**-Structuralist approach-** Opposite to the "self-help" vision, in the literature it is possible to identify the so-called structuralist approach that precisely recognizes informality as a structural manifestation of the capitalist development (AlSayyad, 2004).

In particular, Burgess (1978) criticized Turner of de-politicizing housing issues. He considered both the urban and housing problems as the outcome of the structural forces of capitalist production (Burgess, 1978). "The housing problem in Third World societies can be best understood as the product of the general conditions of capitalist development" (Burgess, 1978:1126). In this regard Burgess argues that as long as the policies don't intervene on these structural conditions they will only contribute to "maintenance the capitalist mode of production" (Burgess, 1978:1126). In this regard, according to Burgess, Turner's self-help hypothesis represents the traditional "attempts of capitalist interests to palliate the housing shortage in ways that do not interfere with the effective operation of these interests" (Burgess, 1978:1126). Moreover, Turner's approach has been criticized for letting the governments off the hook, for taking their responsibilities and duties away, and for assigning the solution to the scarcity of houses only to the people (see also Boyer, 2012).

**-Legalist approach-** A more recent theoretical approach that has influenced the debate around urban informal settlements is the so called *legalist* approach, based in particular on Hernando De Soto's works, which emphasizes the value of all extra-legal microenterprises and income-generating efforts (AlSayyad, 2004). In his "The mystery of Capital", the starting point is that "the major stumbling block that keeps the rest of the world from benefiting from capitalism is its inability to produce capital" (De Soto, 2000:5). According to this, the author states that the solution to overcome the problems connected to informality and to alleviate poverty, resides in the *legalization* of informal activities. In De Soto's view, informality is therefore seen as separated from formality, and only the inclusion of the first one into the second one is considered relevant to allow the poorer groups to go out from poverty. He pointed out that, the provision of legal titles – also of land titles – is the first step to turn the poor's informal resources and activities into capital. De Soto's so called "heroic entrepreneurship" has found wide interests by international agencies and NGOs on which they have based many developmental programs (Kornienko, 2017).

At the same time, De Soto's vision has received some critics: firstly, for being excessively simplistic compared to the complexities of issues concerning informality; and secondly, for finding the solution to the informality in its incorporation into the neoliberal market through the

formalization. In particular, Huchzermeyer defines De Soto's assumption as a naive and reductionist, placed behind a dominant neoliberal approach that overstates the entrepreneurial opportunities in informal settlements and the potential for alleviating poverty through the regularization (Huchzermeyer, 2011:27).

Since informal settlements entered in the urban theoretical debate, they have assumed different meanings; still today, as Pieterse underlines (2008:1), the literature on contemporary cities of the global South can be divided into optimistic and pessimistic views. The first one is mainly based on an understanding of informal settlements as zones of people's efforts and possibilities, and not just marginalization; among others, one of the main influential scholars is AbdouMalig Simone (Pieterse, 2008).

On the other side, it is possible to identify theoretical voices that conversely return to show a set of pessimistic visions of informal settlements involved in the high rate of global South urbanization. One of the references in this crisis scenarios' literature is Davis's "The Planet of Slums" (2006). Here the author illustrates the extreme living conditions of wide spreading slums, arising under the vice of global policies of economic deregulation that contribute to impoverish the southern economies. Davis's vision therefore returns to highlight the structural factors, linked to the global capitalist market, in the discourses around informal settlements.

While not denying the worldwide power's asymmetries intertwined with the formation of slums, Davis's work has been criticized by a part of the literature for constructing nightmare images of the global South's slums, and for indifferently enclosing all the informal urbanization under the most extreme images of desperation, just relying on macro data (see for example Roy, 2011b). They are visions that seem to suggest that by "only addressing the framing condition of the global economy, it is now possible to solve urban poverty" (Pieterse, 2008: 2).

In some way, those are two conceptualizations that moves between the two opposite views of "slums of despair" and conversely of "slums of hope" (Stokes, 1962 cited in Perlman 1986:41).

## **2.2 Theoretical contributions to the discourse on informality drawing on the postcolonial studies**

Important contributions to the previous debate have been given by scholars linked to the postcolonial studies, which have introduced new perspectives about informality.

One of the main inputs coming from this field is the critique of a dichotomous understanding of formality/informality conceived as fundamentally separated sectors (Roy, 2005). Postcolonial literature challenges the incompleteness of formal-informal binary conceptualizations; it encourages disassembling the concept of informality, by identifying what actually constitutes it,

the diversities and complexities that lie beneath that generalizing category which is often applied homogeneously to very different contexts (Chungu, 2016).

**Box 1. Theoretical broadening of Postcolonial studies.** In very broad terms, a set of arguments can be traced from scholars drawing on postcolonial scholarship:

- *Informality linked to the State's regulatory apparatus.* The issue of the state regulation is considered to be central in meaning informality. Contributions from the postcolonial literature sustain that informality should not be considered just as something opposite or outside the State's legal framework, but rather as something -paradoxically-generated by the State itself. Roy argues that the power of the state decides what is regulated and what is not, what is formal and what is not, concluding that informality represents a product of the state's decisions and, in many instances, the state itself operates in an informalized way (Roy, 2009 citing Portes et al., 1989). According to this, Roy (2005) underlines that informality must not be understood as the object of the state regulation but rather as a product of the state itself.

On this point, Roy specifically argues that informality is an expression of the sovereign power to establish the state of exception: state power is reproduced through the capacity to construct categories of legitimacy and illegitimacy (Roy, 2005 cited in AlSayyad and Roy, 2006). According to this, Roy (2005), citing Agamben, argues that informality cannot be considered as a state of chaos that precedes the order: rather it arises from the suspension of the order which is determined by the power and planning apparatus of the state. She underlines that "State power is reproduced through the capacity to construct and reconstruct categories of legitimacy and illegitimacy" (Roy, 2005:149). So, the central role of the state and its power to establish a state of exception arises from a precise logic of deregulation (Roy, 2009 quoted in Watson, 2012; AlSayyad and Roy, 2006).

Oren Yiftachel is part of this debate and, through his work in Israel/Palestine, introduces the concept of "grey space" (Yiftachel, 2009:240): gray space constitutes a tool to analyze both urban spaces and the process of their reproduction. With this notion the author refers to those enclaves and populations "positioned between the 'lightness' of legality/approval/safety and the 'darkness' of eviction/destruction/death" (Yiftachel, 2009:243). The author asserts that the grey spaces are hybrid areas that simultaneously exist outside the State's framework of rules and, at the same time, are not recognized or eliminated; the process of "gray spacing" traps populations, constantly oscillating between the possibility of a legal recognition and the blackmail of forced expulsion: the continuous

fluctuation between these extreme conditions, which pass through a variety of power relations, produces the gray spaces (Yiftachel, 2009).

Yiftachel stresses the importance of the role that the State plays in producing, promoting, containing, ignoring or eliminating the gray spaces, while leaving people in a state that the author defines as "permanent temporariness".

The persistence of harsh living conditions in the slums of the southern cities of the world has sometimes been conceptualized as a direct expression of gray spacing processes produced by governments' power in ignoring them or facing up to them (see arguments of Watson (2012) on Yiftachel).

- *Informality not just as the "otherness"*. Contributions linked to postcolonial studies sustain that informality should not be seen as an exception to the norm, or the *otherness* from the formal city but rather an ordinary urban phenomenon (see the contribution of Robinson, 2006). Rather, Al Sayyad and Roy (2006) consider urban informality as an organizing urban logic, a different form of regulation that, through its tactics, establishes forms of governability (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006). Moreover, Roy (2005) sustains that informality, more than an exceptional sector separated from the formal, should be considered as a proper mode of urbanization, a process of urban transformation, emerging from a wide set of practices that it is impossible to generally classify as informal.

- *Diversified Informality*. Contributions linked to the postcolonial studies challenge the simplistic and reductive link between informality and poverty and in this regard, Roy (2011b) criticizes both De Soto and Davis's works in which informality remains synonymous with poverty and marginality, a territory and habitus of the so called subaltern urbanism. In line with these considerations, Roy (2011b) also underlines that it is definitively incorrect to enclose the heterogeneity of urbanization of the global South under the classic definition of "slum"; rather, she argues, informality must be understood as "a logic through which differential spatial value is produced and managed" (ibid.:233).

Contributions linked to the postcolonial literature solicit to change the way of seeing urban informality – and, more specifically here, informal settlements – by overcoming dualistic visions, capturing the heterogeneities beyond oversimplified top-down theoretical categories.

However, the solicitation for a deeper and finer understanding of informality, that is independent from abstract constructions, calls for framing "new geographies of theory" drawn upon the urban experiences of the Global South cities (Roy, 2009; 2014).

According to this, Roy (2014:13) writes that for many decades, urban theories have rooted in Euro-American urbanism, "in a handful of global cities", and have pinpointed the cities that

currently house the world's urban majority simplistically as "mega-cities", sites of underdevelopment, on the margins of the map of global capitalism"; moreover, as she specifies, despite all the studies produced in the Global South, they have never constituted a proper urban *Theory*.

The challenge of a *Southern Theory* does not imply to simply study the cities of the global South "as interesting, anomalous, different, and esoteric empirical cases", but rather to recalibrate urban theory itself" (Roy, 2014:13), in order to overcome what Robinson (2003; also in Roy, 2014) calls "asymmetrical ignorance", namely a paucity of knowledge of the southern cities. These scholars therefore solicit to "see from the South" (Watson, 2009); namely to reorient the exclusively Euro-American centric perspective of production of urban theories, as discussed by Roy:

"Doing so requires 'dislocating' the Euro-American centre of theoretical production; for it is not enough simply to study the cities of the global South as interesting, anomalous, different, and esoteric empirical cases. Such forms of benign difference-making keep alive the neo-orientalist tendencies that interpret Third World cities as the heart of darkness, the Other. [Instead,] It is argued that the centre of theory-making move to the global South; that there has to be a recalibration of the geographies of authoritative knowledge. As the parochial experience of Euro-American cities has been found to be a useful theoretical model for *all* cities, so perhaps the distinctive experiences of the cities of the global South can generate productive and provocative theoretical frameworks for *all* cities" (Roy, 2009: 820; also cited in Pieterse, 2012).

Lawhon et al. (2014:504), recalling Connell (2007), underline that talking about a Southern Theory does not mean that "Northern theory has no relevance, or that theory developed in the South is only relevant here"; it does not mean "to establish a dichotomy between Northern and Southern theory"; it means rather to build new theoretical frameworks arising from diverse urban conditions and experiences – not only placed in the North –; it means *situating* our reading lens, *diversifying* the way we understand and conceptualize the city.

As Brenner and Schmid (2015:161) write about this debate "its concern to 'provincialize' the universalizing, (over)generalizing thrust of 'northern' theory, much of postcolonial urban studies have emphasized the specificity, distinctiveness or even uniqueness of cities beyond the West".

Specifically, scholars rotating around postcolonial studies talk to this dissertation suggesting to develop new situated and diversified ways to look, understand and describe informal settlements, in order to bring out their differentiations and uniqueness, overcoming top-down



theoretical categories or generalizing dualistic formal/informal views that too often lose sight of the places and reduce the complexity of the actual reality.

### **2.3 Studies on everyday practices from the bottom-up in contexts of poverty**

The second field of research on which this dissertation is based refers to a body of studies regarding the everyday practices of the poorer groups of urban societies that arise from the ground up; namely the efforts of the urban poor to achieve their necessities.

The link between the fields of research concerning people's practices and the postcolonial urban studies has already been made explicit in the literature and is based on the idea that, building theoretical framework "from the South", able to grasp different urban living conditions, means to look at the agency of people emerging from the ground up, that directly intervene in the construction of the city (Lawhon et al., 2014). It means that a more *placed* and minute view of cities is achieved through an attentive study of the actions and efforts that poor people put together on a daily basis to build and support their urban life, and which in turn are directly involved in the reproduction and characterization of the cities. Looking *through* people practices become a powerful device to produce a more peculiar knowledge of the places since they actually represent the multiple ways by which people construct the city from below.

Investigations on people's practices often come from anthropological and ethnographic fields of research and look at the ways in which the majority of the urban poor "flows from the unjust structures of opportunity in cities" (Pieterse, 2008:2-3). In doing so, studies on people's everyday practices bypass the deterministic top-down views – which risk to conceptualize urban space through remote lens – and are based on Pieterse's idea of "conceptual inversion" which looks at the city from inside, starting from the bottom-up initiatives of people who daily transform and shape urban spaces (Pieterse, 2008; Lawhon et al., 2014:507).

One of the most influential authors who conceptualizes the importance of human practices through which to look at the city, is Abdou Maliq Simone. In 2004, Simone introduced the notorious notion of *people as infrastructure*, emphasizing the many forms of economic cooperation between people seemingly marginalized and impoverished from urban life. He extends the notion of infrastructure to the daily activities carried out by the urban poor and, in particular, he argues that African cities are "characterized by incessantly flexible, mobile, and provisional intersections of residents that operate without clearly delineated notions of how the city is to be inhabited and used" (Simone, 2004:407). According to Simone, these interactions are like an infrastructure, a platform that reproduces life in the city. "*People as infrastructure* indicates residents' needs to generate concrete acts and contexts of social collaboration

inscribed with multiple identities rather than in overseeing and enforcing modulated transactions among discrete population groups" (Simone, 2004:419). Similarly, in a previous study Simone (2001) notices how

"accelerated urbanization in Africa has produced cities whose formal physical, political and social infrastructures are largely unable to absorb, apprehend or utilize the needs, aspirations and resourcefulness of those who live within them. As a result, the efforts to secure livelihoods depend largely on informalized processes and a wide range of provisional and ephemeral institutions which cultivate specific orientations toward, knowledge of, and practices for, dealing with urban life." (Simone, 2001 cited in Crush et al. 2015).

According to this, Aysef Bayat (2004; 2010) talks about practices of quiet encroachment of the ordinary to describe the "activism of marginalized groups in the cities of post-colonial societies" (Bayat, 2004:81). By this notion, Bayat aims to avoid naive idealization of popular practices and refers to all a-political, non-collective and unorganized actions to acquire the basic needs, driven by necessity to survive and to improve their living conditions. These actions are conducted without clamor and individually, and are centered around family ties (ibid.:58). However, it is possible that the individual and silent effort can be cumulative and thus become a social force (ibid.:58). The main aims of these people, according to Bayat, are two-fold: they attempt to redistribute goods and opportunities (land for shelter, running water, electricity, roads, public space, business opportunities, work) and a cultural and political autonomy from imposed regulation (ibid.).

Already in a text of 1997, Bayat describes people's practices as "the natural and logical ways in which the disenfranchised survive hardship and improve their lives" (ibid.: 55); interestingly he also underlines how actually they appear ordinary and having a daily nature.

The study of bottom up everyday practices emphasizes the adaptive attitude and creative effort of the poorest segments of the urban populations and their strategic role in the activation of territories marked by scarcity and insufficiency of resources. These studies show how self-organized actions, putted together by disadvantaged groups, daily challenge fragmentations and socio-spatial disparities, in the effort to gain a better lifestyle: a multitude of micro transformations – albeit spontaneous, minute, slow and fragmented – provide answers where the formal intervention is absent or failing. Moreover, these studies on people practices result in overcoming the tendency to victimize or stigmatize the poorer groups, often seen as passive actors who suffer a condition of marginality and subordination; they are rather seen as active participants of the society, able to provide infrastructures, assemble resources to support a daily

livelihoods, influence or challenge the socio-spatial divisions and build new places' identities (Simone, 2011b).

Trying to understand the city through the practices of people leads to take a closer look on what really happens *on the ground*, to deepen perspectives exploring how the urban poor create alternative ways of living in the city. Pieterse (2008), with explicit references to the spatial phenomenon of slums, solicits to draw attention to the qualitative aspects of the everyday life of their inhabitants in facing material deprivation; he thus considers people's practices as the unique lens through which slums can be understood and engaged across Global South cities (Pieterse, 2008:32). Given that the slums are becoming the dominant form of cities in the South and that, at the same time, they are in no way homogeneous across different territories, it is necessary to engage local specificities of each place and look at the real life of inhabitants (Pieterse, 2008:32). He writes: "practices of the 'everyday' or 'the ordinary' must be the touchstone of radical imagining and interventions" (Pieterse, 2008:9). They are representative of the way of life within cities which in turn are directly transformed by them.

In doing so, the literature on people's practices from the ground up emphasizes the potential of popular agency in get hold and shape urban spaces: so, in light of this, in each informal settlement it is possible to see the contribution of the urban poor in remaking and reinterpreting spaces (Simone, 2011b; Ballard 2015).

In summary, people's practices constitute the multiple ways in which people build their own place in the city from the ground up day by day. What it emerges are two relevant characteristic of these practices: being *ordinary* conducted and being *instrumental* for accessing to new urban livelihood possibilities.

Precisely basing on the double dimension of ordinariness and instrumentality of the people's practices in contexts of poverty, the dissertation opens up to the third field of research, concerning the human mobility studies.

#### **2.4 Studies on human mobility: human movements as an ordinary livelihood strategy**

The third field of research on which the dissertation builds concerns the studies on human mobility.

Box 2. Theoretical broadening of the mobility turn. During the past decade the scientific debate has been deeply marked by the so called *mobility turn* which claims that, as mobility is so widespread, it should not be viewed as a break in the society but as a normal way of life, and immobility as an anomaly (Sheller and Urry, 2006a; Esson et al.,

2016). A number of relevant texts on mobility represent points of reference of this research branch, concerning the movements of people, objects and information, with their relational dynamics and impact on the way of living in contemporary societies (Sheller, 2011):

- Sheller and Urry (2006b), are among the first one in underlying that "(a)ll the world seems to be on the move" – looking at airports, buses, ships, and trains – and, introducing the *New mobility paradigm* they emphasizes the relation between mobilities and immobilities or moorings, namely between moving people and places, where the latter, considered like *ships*, are also moving and not anymore fixed in a location
- Hannam et al. (2006), in the introduction of *Mobility*, argue that this concept has become an evocative keyword for understanding the way of living in twenty-first century society, and it refers to "both the large-scale movements of people, objects, capital and information across the world, as well as the more local processes of daily transportation, movement through public space and the travel of material things within everyday life" (Ibid.:1).
- On the same line of argument, using examples from airports' terminals, Adley (2006) suggests that the relations between mobilities and immobilities, as exposed in the *new mobility paradigm*, "is not just an academic observation but is a relationship that is directly involved in social life and the production of space" (ibid.:77).
- Finally Cresswell, in *On the move* (2006), argues that the modern world seems to evoke images of technological mobility – the car, the plane, the spaceship – as well as of increased movement of people on a global scale. According to this, Cresswell suggests for "a metaphysics of mobility", a way of thinking in terms of mobility.

Several works have arisen around the idea of mobility; issues connected to mobility have been investigated from many points of view. The theoretical panorama around mobility is related to studies about: globalization; communications and circulation of information; migration; tourism; cultural geography; transport geography; anthropology of circulation; social mobility up or down the scale of socio-economic classes; spatial mobility of humans, non-humans and objects; circulation of information, images and capital; infrastructures and software system (Sheller, 2011).

Within a nebula of studies dealing with mobility, *human mobility* is used as a sort of umbrella term to describe the various forms of migration of people (such as: cyclical, periodical, occasional, seasonal, daily and temporary human movements; internal, cross-border, rural-

urban, urban-urban, inter-urban human movements; voluntary or forced relocation) with their social, economic and cultural effects<sup>15</sup>.

In this regards Van Dijk et al. (2001) underline that the use of the term mobility, more than migration, covers a vaster breadth of geographical movements of human, and also of all immaterial and non-human things associated to them – such as ideas and values –: "Migration", as a term, does not cover the whole phenomenon of geographical mobility" (ibid.:14). According to this, they argue that the term migration is often used with the meaning of "a change of residence"; however this meaning poses some problems of definitions like: "How long does a person have to stay in a certain place to be classified as a migrant, a sojourner or a non-migrant?"; and also, how to consider the people who undertake a mobile way of life, moving "regularly between two or more places (and that) may not even have a clearly identifiable 'place of residence'" ? (ibid.:10).

Similarly, de Bruijn et al. (2001) argue that human mobility appears in a myriad of forms of movements and refer to many different kinds of people's migratory trajectories – as well as non human movements – like urban/rural, rural/rural, labour migration, nomadism and refugeeism.

On the topic of human mobility, various research lines have been developed including, among other, studies on trans-nationalism and studies on the global migratory flows determined, for example, by climate change, wars or religious conflicts.

However, for the investigative purpose of this dissertation, the next section focuses on those positions that conceptualize the being on the move as a proper way of life and livelihood strategy put in place by the poorer groups of the society to try to improve their conditions of life and reach new opportunities; namely the dissertation identifies those voices that describe human mobility as an *ordinary* practice that people *use* to achieve their goals, support their lives and create alternatives under conditions of poverty and scarcity of resources. The next part of this section is a selection of some theoretical positions rooted in the global South who particularly informed this dissertation. They are contributions that pass through different epochs, revolve around similar concepts being gradually updated and enriched with considerations and case studies.

**-Human movements as a livelihood strategy-** In the past decades a huge literature has underlined the importance and vastness of human mobility, occurring in multiple ways and under different reasons. Those have contributed to show that, in contexts marked by poverty and scarcity, staying on the move represents an attempt to improve living conditions and create

---

<sup>15</sup> See the report: *Human mobility in the context of climate change*, Elements for the UNFCCC Paris Agreement (March 2015), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/5550ab359.pdf>

access to socio-economic opportunities; human movements have been conceptualized as an integral part of livelihood and income-generating activities (Esson et al., 2016).

One of the reference figures in this field of research is de Haan (1999:1) who underlines that movements of people cannot be seen as just a result of a condition of environmental, economic or demographic crises; rather they represent an essential element in household's livelihoods in developing countries. He describes the movements of people like a normal and an integral element of societies – rather than a sign of rupture – that contributes greatly and positively to people's livelihoods (ibid.:31).

Similarly, Waddington and Sabates-Wheeler (2003) argue that staying on the move, even if not necessary connected to a condition of crisis, represent a "central livelihood strategy", to afford circumstances of "physical, economic, social and political adversity" and that it is "a complex phenomenon occurring over a wide variety of spatial and temporal contexts and for many material and non-material reasons" (ibid.:10).

In particular, the authors underline that "(h)ouseholds in developing countries often undertake multiple livelihood strategies in order to diversify livelihood sources in the context of social, economic, political, environmental and historical circumstances" and, more explicitly, the authors include among these strategies also the migration, considered as a "key livelihood diversification and survival strategy" (ibid.:10-11).

Deshingkar and Grimm (2005:8), in speaking more broadly about poverty, arrive to similar conclusions writing that "Poverty and physical mobility have always been interrelated (...)" and that the second one "has become an important livelihood strategy for many groups across the world that can play an important role in poverty reduction".

Talking about African societies, Van Dijk et al. (2001) argue that the movement is one of their particularly tangible characteristic and that a considerable part of the African population leads a mobile way of life (ibid.). In their view, human mobility appears historically engrained in African societies where the being on the move represents a way of living itself. In this regard de Bruijn et al. (2001), in talking about *mobile Africa*, underline that in some societies *not* being mobile may be the anomaly and that "(m)obility appears to refer to an array of forms of human behaviour, each inspired by different motives, desires, aspirations and obligations" (ibid.:1). It is part of the history, it belongs to the experience of everyday life, and it constitutes a "part of life and of making a livelihood" (ibid.:2).

The contribution of Rigg (2007) is perhaps the most radical; he underlines that mobility is a widespread characteristic of the lives of people in the global South, and uses the powerful

expression "living on the move" to refer to the movements of individuals – for work, play or out of necessities – as well as of commodities, products, capital, diseases, organizations, knowledge and ideas (ibid.:118). The most interesting point is that he proposes an alternative to the Sheller and Urry's *new mobility paradigm*, with a specific focus on the global South. According to Rigg, the paradigm of mobility "driven by advances in technology and new ways of living interacting", has been constructed with deeply roots in the global North and not completely fitting with global South contexts (ibid.:118). In proposing a *Southern new mobility paradigm* the author emphasizes the important link that exists between mobility and livelihood (cf. Gough et al., 2015), rather than between mobility and large infrastructures.

In this alternative mobility paradigm, the household become the center of analysis, underlining that actually migrating is an important part of families' strategy since it has a strong economic and social impacts on the "left behind" people that remain in the place of origin. According to this, for example, the author cites the McKay's *remittance landscape* in Philippines and how entire villages have been refashioned by remittance coming from migration.

More recently, Crush and Frayne (2010) underline the vastness of migration as a global phenomenon writing that "there is hardly a village, town or city, much less a country, that is untouched by international migration, either as a sender or receipt of migrants or, in many cases, both" (ibid.:3). They speak specifically about South-South international migration and, in a definitive way, they write that people's movements are motivated by everyday struggles for survival. Using the incisive expression "(t)hey survive by being on the move", they argue that migration represents for many poor groups a survival strategy and that through these activities they contribute to poverty reduction and development (Crush e Frayne, 2010:19). Instead of defining migrants' activities as parasitic or non-developmental the authors underline how actually they contribute to both the countries of origin and countries of destination: "Their role is under-valued and denigrated and their lives are often blighted by exploitation, abuse and ill-treatment by employers and state officials. Yet they remain highly energetic and enterprising people whose activities and contributions need to be highlighted as positive contribution to poverty reduction and genuine development".

Michelle Peraldi, in investigating groups of Algerians in Europe, argues that the movement is "at the base of way of life of the population groups that carve out their own space outside the legal and territorial frameworks by which Member States are trying to control the processes of transformation of local companies" (Peraldi, n.d.). He also insists that movement is a strategy for a socio-economic emancipation of people. Talking more specifically about traders, he argue that human mobility is "one of the practical, tactical means by which some groups of the society

try to perpetuate their social promotion cycle, mobilizing their social and relational resources, outside the legitimate sectors.

Blaser and Landau (2016), speaking in particular about African societies argue that human mobility represents one of its main characteristics and that the phenomenon of migration involves most of its communities. The authors contribute to still enrich the debate defining multi-locality and mobility like potential empowerment strategies for individuals and families grappling with socio-economic marginalization (ibid.).

The contribution of Flamm and Kaufmann (2006) it is here worth to underline. They introduce the concept of *motility* and argue that it constitutes a form of capital – similar to other forms of capital like the economic, social, or cultural ones – and that it is a factor that influences social differentiation, social position and integration. They make a parallel with biology and medicine (in which motility denotes the capacity of movement of animals), and they give their definition of motility as the way "an individual or group takes possession of the realm of possibilities for mobility and builds on it to develop personal projects" (ibid.:168). So motility becomes a key element of social distinction. In a previous text (Kaufmann et al., 2004), analyzing the links between spatial and social mobility, the authors consider being on the move as a capital, representing a new form of inequality. They argue that motility describes the potential and actual capacity of goods, information or people to be mobile both geographically and socially.

Finally it is worth to underline the contribution of UNDP-Human development Report (2010) describing mobility as "a fundamental element of human freedom. Mobility entails the freedom to seek opportunities to improve living standards, and health and education outcomes, and/or to live in safer, more responsive communities".

The above mentioned positions point out the *ordinary and instrumental* dimension of *being on the move*: on the one hand, the importance of the being on the move in supporting life, in both societies of arrival and departure; and at the same time, the being on the move as a characteristic deeply embedded in global Southern societies and belonging to the ordinary life of people, of those who remain in the place of origins and do not migrate as well as of those who choose to leave. Precisely these dimensions of ordinariness and instrumentality link the field of research of human mobility to that of the bottom-up people's practices previously exposed; and it is precisely on this link that the dissertation works.

In the literature, the link among these latter two bodies of research remains often opaque. The dissertation tries to make this connection more explicit by putting them in tension through the



common dimension of ordinariness and instrumentality of bottom-up people' practices and human movements.

In the previous sections, the three main research fields on which the dissertation built have been exposed; the next section will retrace the links that bind them generating a new synthesis.

## **2.5 Positioning the research into the existing body of knowledge: interrogating people's movements for a better understanding of informal settlements**

### **2.45.1 Linking the relevant theoretical positions and proposing a conceptual synthesis**

The dissertation takes insights from three fields of research: post-colonial urban studies, studies on people's practices from the ground up, and human mobility studies. Below is an attempt to put them together, retrieving and expounding the logical links that contribute to form the conceptual support of this dissertation.

*Step 0* \_ The postcolonial literature talks to this dissertation soliciting to develop more nuanced knowledge of informal settlements, moving beyond opposing views, stigma and rhetoric discourses. It implies to explore the varieties across informal settlements placed under the homogenizing top-down theoretical categories. In line with this aim, the solicitation coming from scholars linked to the postcolonial studies is therefore to move towards the building of analytic lenses able to describe the real life on the ground and to unveil the actual uniqueness of each place.

*Step 1* \_ To answer the call coming from postcolonial scholars, in line with recent studies (see Lawhon et al., 2014), the dissertation assumes the need to investigate the people's practices from the bottom-up. The latter are considered as useful devices to inform and enlarge theoretical constructions for coherently representing cities: doing this means building a contextual knowledge of places through situated reading lens (see Lawhon et al., 2014). In response to generalizing theoretical categories, examining people's practices can help to understand urban reality in a more appropriate way: bottom-up practices are recognized as a privileged point of view through which looking at the city.

More specifically connected to the aim of this dissertation, a study of informal settlements, from the prism of the practices of the urban poor, leads to build a less reductionist knowledge of this urban phenomenon. In this regard, the filter of human practices is a useful tool to fill the gap between over-simplistic visions of informal settlements, and an urban knowledge emerging from "the very soil of the city itself" (Holston, 2008:204 cited in Ballard 2015). Getting closer to the

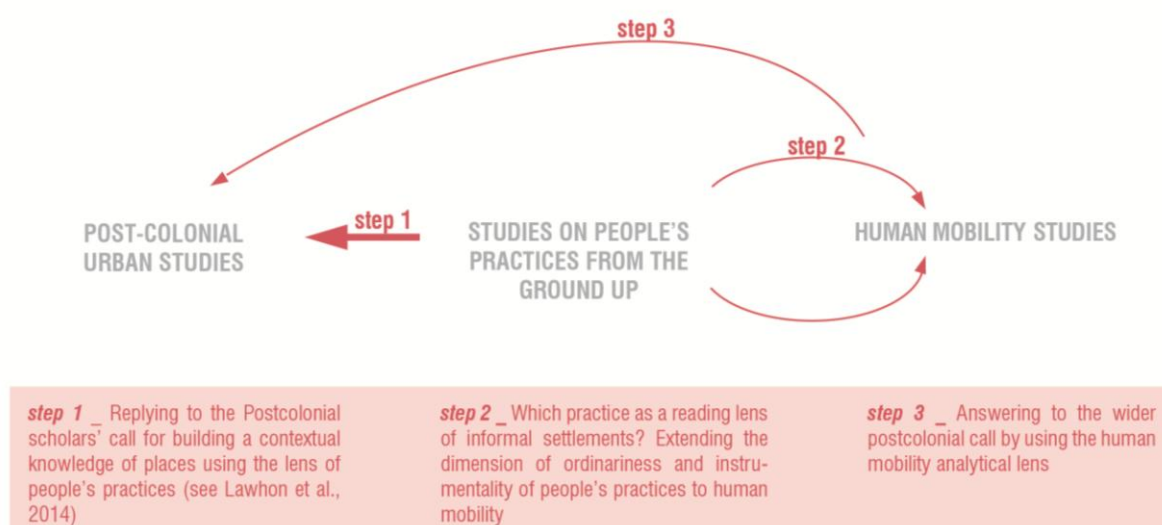
reality is done by focusing on people and all their practices that contribute to build urban spaces. In doing so, the dissertation re-takes a link between two theoretical fields of research – postcolonial urban studies and studies on people's practices – that has already been established in the literature. However, the dissertation helps to connect this theoretical passage more explicitly to informal settlements.

*Step 2* \_ Which practice as a reading lens of informal settlements? The dissertation employs human mobility as an entry point to look at informal settlements. People's *movements* are here the principal devices to look at them.

More specifically, the dissertation conceives the movement as an ordinary and instrumental human practice emerging from below, that people use to attempt to improve life conditions and increment life opportunities.

The links between people's bottom-up practices and human mobility is not explicit in the literature; therefore the dissertation contributes to explicate this connection through the common dimension of the ordinariness and instrumentality of the people's everyday practices from below and people's movements.

*Step 3* \_ Finally, the dissertation uses human mobility to answer to the wider postcolonial call soliciting to move towards a more specific and peculiar knowledge of informality. So the present study interrogates people's movements for better understanding informal settlements. It means to understand more precisely how informal settlements are constructed, organized and articulated within the city, by employing the lens of these ordinary and instrumental practices of movements.



**Fig.2.2**\_Conceptual vision

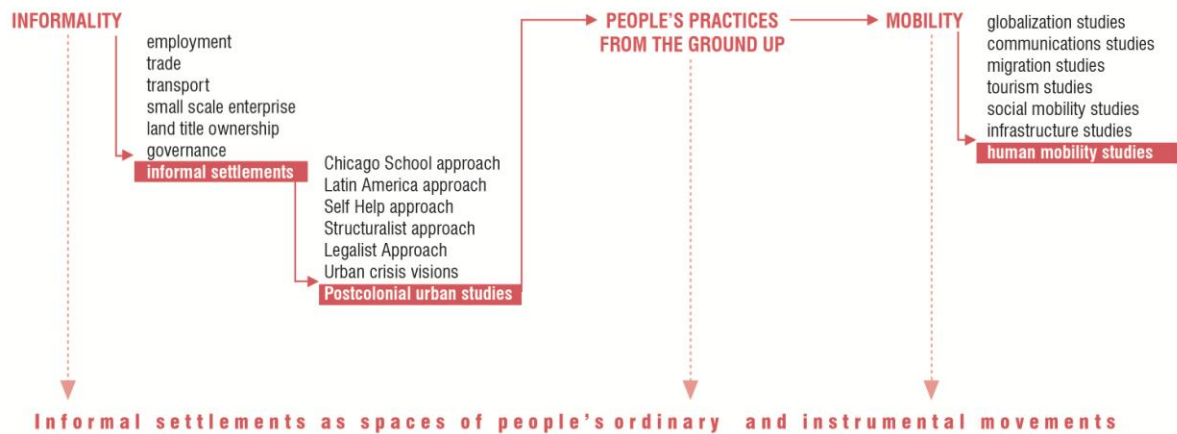


Fig.2.3 | Selection and re-composition of three theoretical fields

### 2.5.2 Shift from the extraordinary global flows to people's ordinary flows

The images of urban spaces placed at the center of networks of flows are not new. In recent decades, many studies have shown the cities like nodes within global interconnected flows, arriving to propose the notions of global cities (see Sassen) and space of flows (see Castells): those are metaphors that dominated a large part of the academic research from the late '90s (Harrison and Zack, 2014).

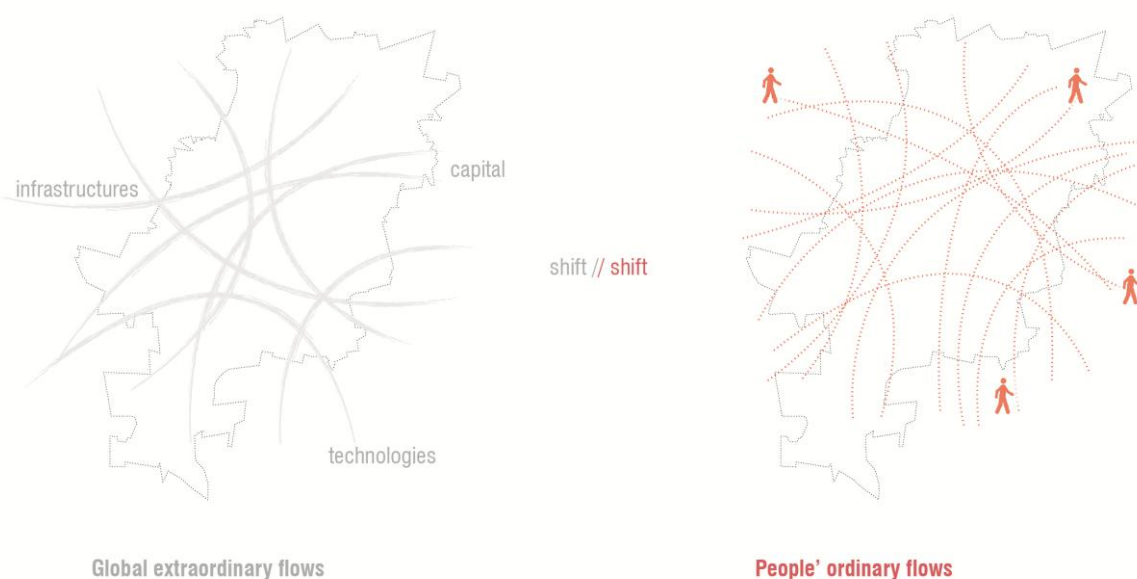
More recently, Brenner and Schmid (2015), with their theses on planetary urbanization, have rekindled this debate focusing on the interconnection between cities and remote territories through networks of global flows of capital, resources and infrastructures. They argue that cities cannot be interpreted as bounded defined units; and they rather insist on the interconnection existing between cities and broader territories.

From another field of research, scholars linked to the Urban Political Ecology, have focused on the study of the global flows and their implication in the reproduction of the cities, arriving to formulate the powerful metaphor of *urban metabolism*. According to the UPE scholars, the interconnection, dynamism and transformative nature of metabolic global flows are directly involved in determining the urbanization (Heyen et al., 2006). They have theorized the cities as:

"constituted through dense networks of interwoven socio-ecological processes that are simultaneously human, physical, discursive, cultural, material, and organic. Circulatory conduits of water, foodstuffs, cars, fumes, money, labor, etc., move in and out of the city, transform the city, and produce the urban as a continuously changing socio-ecological landscape." (Swyngedouw, 2006:20).

Arguments about the global flows have found a counterpart by some scholars who, overcoming the satellite views, have argued that "each city is a unique assemblage of political, economic and socio-cultural relationships" (Harrison and Zack, 2014:1). In this regard, Jennifer Robinson (2002) argues that "globalization has transformed urban studies" to the extent to which cities have started to be firstly viewed as "sites for much wider social and economic processes". As a result, according to the author, the focus has shifted from an understanding of urban processes to an emphasis on flows and networks (Robinson, 2002:93). In response to this, Robinson challenges the global views and rather proposes the idea of "a world of ordinary cities, which are all dynamic and diverse, if conflicted, arenas for social and economic life" (ibid.:1).

The visions of the city at the center of global flows of resources, infrastructures, capital, technology and information, are not easily transferable to context of scarcity like informal settlements, where those kind of flows result often absent (cf. Simone, 2004; cf. also Lawhon et al., 2014). However, the image of the city of flows remains certainly highly evocative for this dissertation. So, *how this image can be declined in the informal settlements of the global South?* Precisely in the aim of this dissertation, the image of the city of flows is here re-taken. However – inspired by Robinson's arguments, as well as tacking insight from Harrison and Zack, 2014) – the focus shifts from the extraordinary global flows to the people's ordinary flows, where each life-story of movement matters since each one shapes informal settlements over time, in a sort of cumulative process: the ordinariness of the personal trajectories of these people actually give birth to extraordinary places.



**Fig.2.4**\_Conceptual shift from global extraordinary flows to people's ordinary flows

### 2.5.3 Conclusive discussion. Theoretical and practical opportunities for framing informal settlements through the lens of human mobility

The conceptual vision of informal settlements as spaces of people's flows may give a series of theoretical and practical opportunities.

Firstly, on a theoretical point of view, exploring human mobility dynamics may help to recognize the different mobile place makers (cf. Jiron, 2009) that shape informal settlements in singular and peculiar ways. Doing this permits to get people out of the shadows, revealing a finer segmentation of the different mobile identities – their rhythms, speeds, directions and aims – and the ways they produce the urban space. It thus could help to atomize the black-box of informal communities, and so to catch their *multiform dimension*.

Secondly, looking through people's movements may help to reveal the *dynamic dimension* of informal settlements as sites in constant transformation, continuously shaped and articulated by the overlapping of people's trajectories. More than finite object, informal settlements may be viewed as the product of processes in evolution (Kornienko, 2013; see also Lombard, 2013). As Echaverry in an interview in Mooshammer et al. (2015:250) clearly says:

"The informal deals with the idea of reality as a progressive notion. You cannot point to a beginning or end. Informal space is really a living process to which different elements are constantly being added or subtracted. You could build a city or an urban system through repetition and viral actions. There is this concept of addition, a process formed by the aggregation of a number of small actions, which contrasts heavily with conventional formal infrastructural thinking. And it is this reality inherent in process that makes the mediating ground much easier to achieve".

Thirdly, strictly linked to the previous point, a study of informal settlements from the perspective of human mobility may guide in inserting the *temporal dimension* in the analysis of the space. Looking through the movement inevitably implies involving the time factor in the analysis of informal settlements: the way it is experienced by informal settlements' dwellers and it intervenes in the construction of informal spaces (cf. Lombard, 2013; Kornienko 2013; 2017)

Fourthly, putting emphasis on human mobility may help to understand the role that informal settlements play inside the migratory trajectories as a sort of "interchange zone" toward urban opportunities (Cross, 2010 in Huchzermeyer 2011). It thus may help to highlight the *functional dimension* of informal settlements for migrating people.

Finally, taking human mobility as a lens of observation may allow placing informal settlements in a larger *relational dimension*, established at the macro-scale, among different locations. It may permit to illuminate the relationships that link each settlement to numerous elsewhere precisely through network of human movements. This means going beyond an analysis closely linked to a specific context, in order to include an understanding of the links that take place behind informal settlements' boundaries (see Beall et al., 2002).

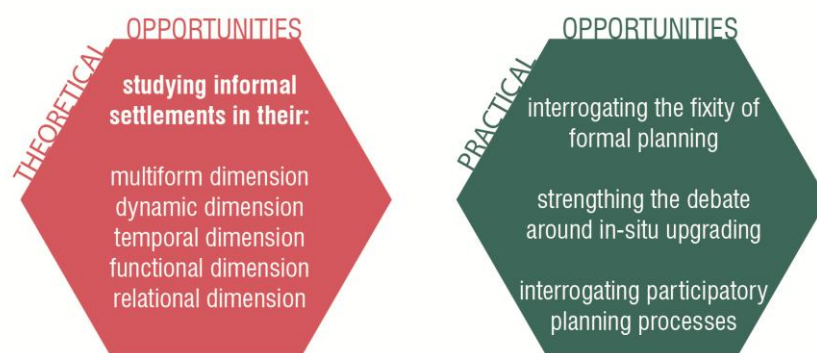
On a practical point of view, engaging informal settlements at the level of people's movements may help to trace some points of reflection about the approaches of planning interventions.

Firstly, this lens offer a fertile terrain for interrogating the fixity of some formal planning responses, compared to the flexibility and freedom of movement which informality provides, in order to move toward new scenarios of intervention, over demolitions or homogeneous top-down approaches. Government interventions often intervene in informal settlements with the classic formal/informal dualism in mind. Moreover, they seem to be only oriented to the "slow mobility" and "largely stable population" (Landau 2009:1), and they do not look sufficiently to the fact that informal settlements are places where profiles with varying degree of permanence coexist.

Secondly, looking at informal settlements from the lens of human mobility can help to strength the debate around *in-situ* upgrading. More precisely, it may encourage people-centered planning interventions able to contain all diversities among dwellers – the needs, contingencies and ambitions driving their migratory trajectories – (see Nusp, 2015).

Finally, this lens can solicit to interrogate participatory planning processes and the way they deal with a multitude of mobile profiles showing a different engagement with the places (see Landau, 2009).

This field of opportunities is crossed in the next chapters through the case studies.



**Fig.2.5** | Fields of opportunities of the dissertation

## AN OVERALL PORTRAIT OF THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

This chapter constitutes a broad introduction to the City of Johannesburg. It initially traces a summary of the main spatial dynamics which have taken place in the city from the colonial to the apartheid period, with a successive focus on the post-apartheid spatial transformations. It then runs through the different informal housing processes occurring in the city, and finally introduces a detailed study on the urban informal settlements, showing in particular: definitions, overall statistical data, main spatial trends, principal urban policies, programs, and types of intervention.

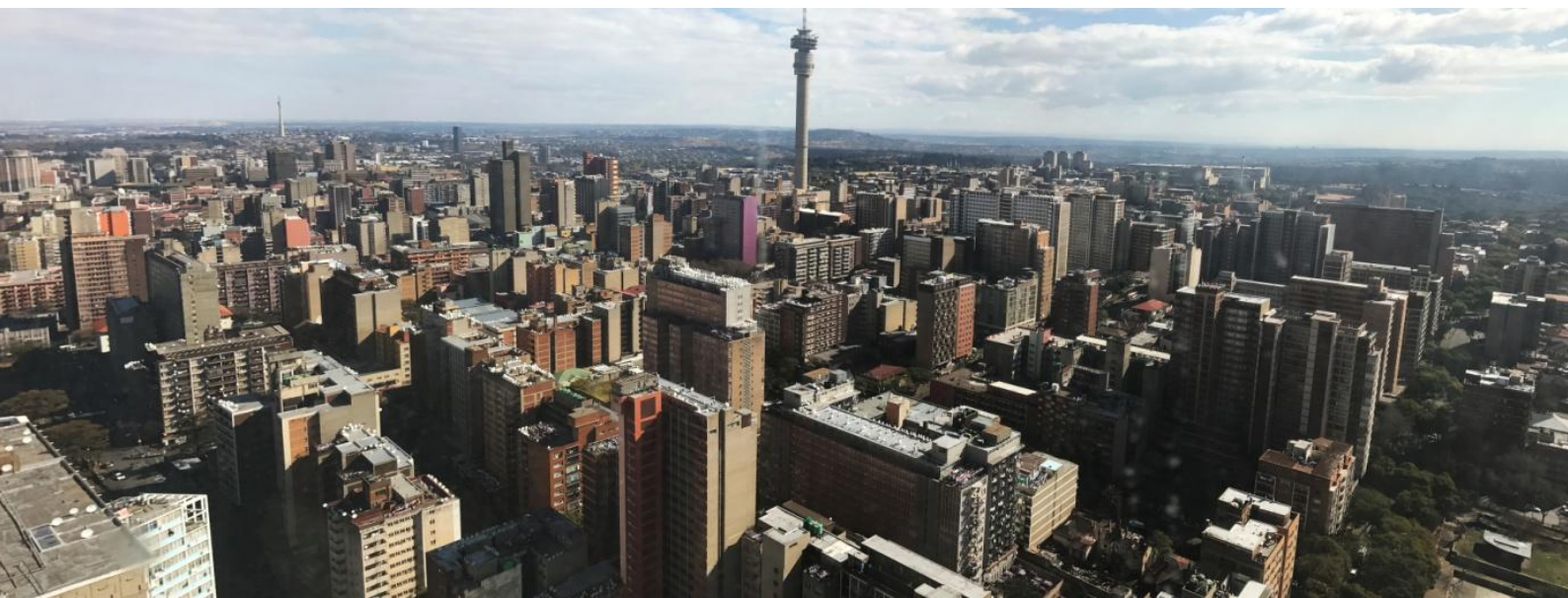


Fig.3.1 | View of Johannesburg from the "Ponte City" tower



### 3.1 From the discovery of gold to the apartheid era: notes on Johannesburg's historical spatial transformations

"Johannesburg is an accidental city. No gold, no city" (Murray, 2006:95). "Unlike other cities that originated as ports, entrepôts, and gateways straddling major transport routes, Johannesburg owes its unlikely existence to a fortuitous geological accident of nature" (Murray, 2008:1).

The story of this city started in 1886, with the discovery of a huge deposit of gold, along the Witwatersrand – the richest goldfields ever discovered (Murray, 2008:2). The impressive gold rush promptly attracted migrants from all over the world.

By its birth as a mining colonial city, Johannesburg was inscribed with social and spatial separations, with unskilled black African mine workers placed under the regime of a white minority.

During the colonialism, segregationist policies arose to control the rural-urban influx and urbanization of black people in the city. According to those policies, black migrant workers were allowed to reside in the city only for a limited period of time, under temporary labor contracts, after which they had to go back to their places of origin in remote rural areas. These workers often migrated alone since their families were not allowed to stay in the city and so used to remain in their home-places.

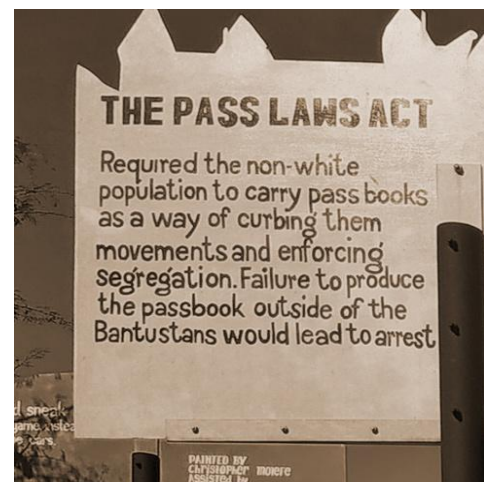


Fig.3.2 | A memorial sign in Orlando East, Johannesburg

In 1923 the Native Urban Areas Act was emanated to restrict black Africans' movements; it instituted a residential segregation within the city which provided controlled areas for black Africans separated from the white clusters.

By 1948, with the official establishment of the apartheid government, further racial laws were introduced, on the basis of the previous segregationist directives: policies of influx control were implemented to restrict urbanization of black Africans to the city, controlling them in the rural labor reserves (see Harrison and Todes, 2012).

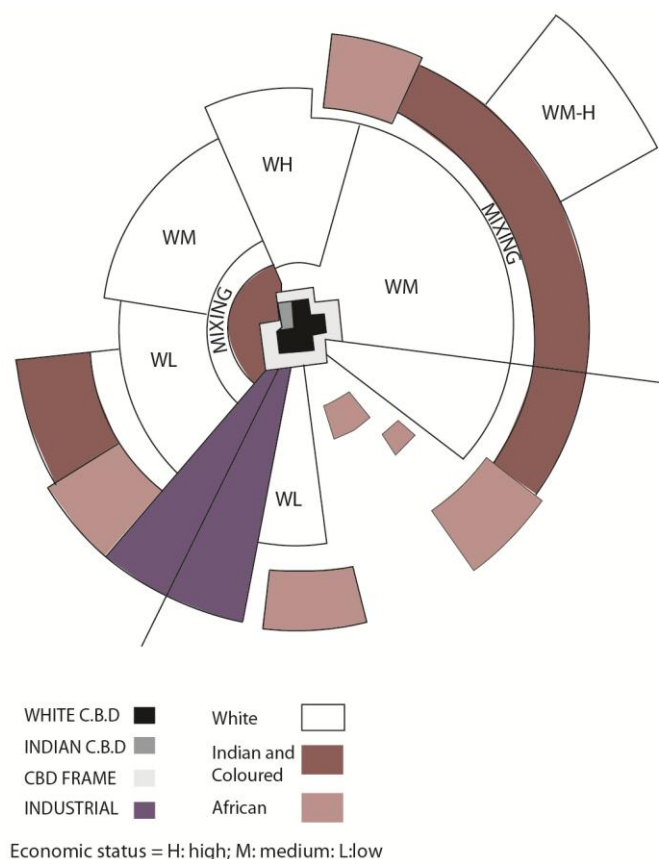
In the 1950s the Group Areas Act was emanated; it established different residential areas within the city according to an institutionalized racial classification that subdivided people in Black, Coloured, Indian and White groups. More specifically, the Group Areas Act relocated non-white people to more peripheral townships, bounding them far *apart* from the urban core and white areas. Achille Mbembe harshly describes these forms of segregation as:



A racially exclusive ideological discourse in the heyday of conquest and occupation, "humanism" was predicated on the belief that a difference of colour was a difference of species. Race in particular did not simply become a crucial, pervasive dimension of colonial domination and capitalist exploitation. Turned into law, it was also used as a privileged mechanism for turning black life into waste - a race doomed to wretchedness, degradation, abjection and servitude (Mbembe, 2015).

Oppositely to these processes of segregation, a high-modernist city center was being developed – taking off mainly in the '60s/'70s –; it was characterized by a concentration of high-rise skyscrapers distributed on a chessboard of orthogonal streets, and wrapped by the system of the principal connecting roads (Murray, 2008). The central city was attached to the system of the *Main Reef*, a huge mining belt running on the east-west direction, together with the train transport system, along which manufacturing nodes anchored.

Under the apartheid, the inner city of Johannesburg was inhabited by white groups, and was recognized as the expression of the economic prosperity of the city, hosting the main business activities, offices and retails in its core. The face of the city center was emblematic of the "voracious speed of real estate development" (Murray, 2008:3).



**Fig.3.3** | The spatial asset of a segregated city  
Scheme reproduced by the author from Lemon, 1991

What it appears is that the racial principles of the apartheid state were operationalized *through* the urban planning system: the image of Johannesburg during the apartheid was that one of a city growing upon racial divisions regulated through spatially segregated areas.

This double face of the city, constituted by an archipelago of segregated non-white parts rotating around the white and economically vibrant city center, has given rise to schizophrenic visions of Johannesburg: a city of dream world, for those who migrated aiming for a better life; and a city of nightmare, for the oppressed and segregated groups (Murray, 2008).

In the late apartheid era, when the influx control and segregationist policies began to break down, some of these spatial trends commenced to change (Harrison and Todes, 2012): retail, offices and white residences initiated to decentralize, moving towards high-middle income suburban areas; conversely, the inner city began to witness the shift in the population inhabiting it, with the inflows of black residents and the growing of informal activities (Harrison and Todes, 2012).

With the end of the Apartheid in 1994, the spatial legacy of the city was constituted by an urban configuration of racially segregated areas sprawled around a modernist vertical central city that was changing its soul.

### **3.2 Johannesburg's post-apartheid spatial dynamics**

Still today Johannesburg shows the marks of its colonial and apartheid history, which has produced deep social and spatial fragmentations on the basis of race and class categorizations (Todes, 2014). Despite the ambitions of post-apartheid South Africa to challenge an urban spatial organization built upon the principle of taking people apart, spatial inequalities and socially segregated areas, inherited from the past periods, still persist.

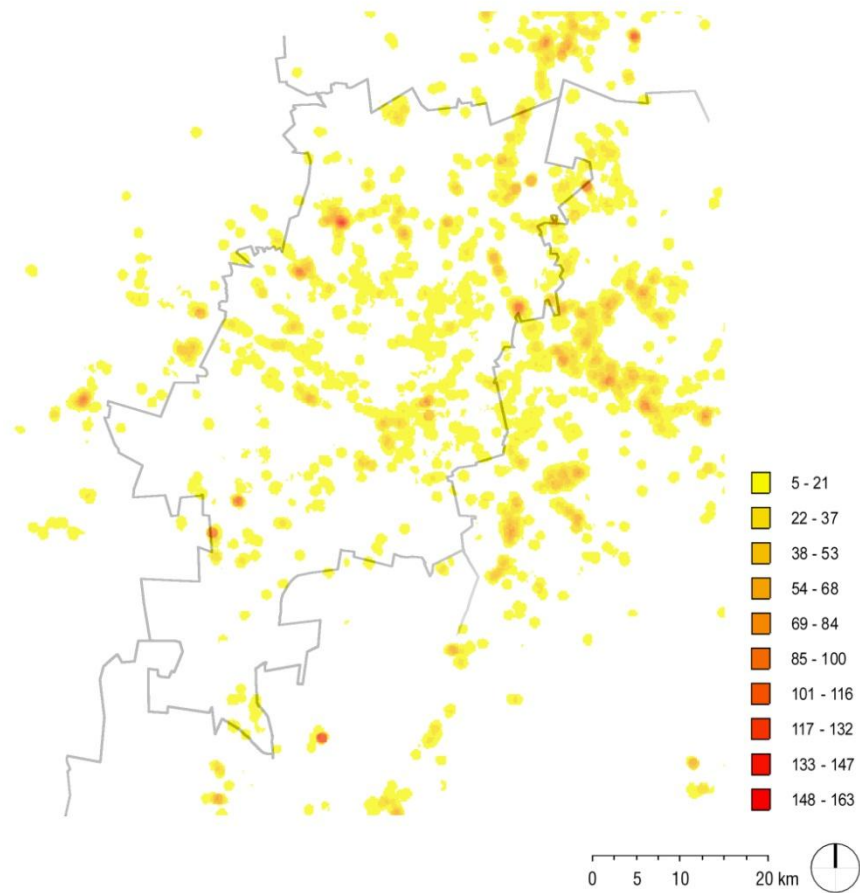
The section below traces the main spatial trends defining post-apartheid Johannesburg:

- **Sprawling of economic nodes in the North of the city.** With the ending of the apartheid, Johannesburg was characterized by a process of decentralization of economic activities – business districts, offices and commercial hubs –, moving from the center of the city to the peripheral suburbs, following an inclination whose origin can already be traced during the 70s, with the first malls built outside the city center (Todes, 2014). By the 90s, this process was further amplified (Todes, 2014; Beavon, 2004) and Johannesburg witnessed the sprawling of economic nodes in suburban areas (Harrison et al., 2014). This spatial trend still continues today, and it presents back the image of a city growing with widespread disjoined polarities.

This spatial decentralization is strictly connected to the changes in the economic system of the city occurred over the years, characterized by a shift from an economy linked to mining to one based on manufacturing and then to the expansion of the service economy that has lead precisely to the development of "spatially flexible" tertiary districts outside the city center (Harrison et al., 2014:8). The main reasons for this peri-urbanization resides, on the one hand, in the perceived "crime and grime", the traffic congestion and limited parking areas of the city-center (Harrison and Todes, 2012); on the other hand, it resides in the easy accessibility of suburban areas due to the diffusion of the main highways, and the possibility of having offices and factories together in one unique complex (Beall et al., 2002; see also Gotz and Todes, 2014).

The spread of economic nodes has been taking place mainly in the northern areas of the city: along the main route leading from the city center to the North, and along the North-West directions (Gotz and Todes, 2014:120). The same spread of economic nodes has not occurred in the South of the city, where one of the first exceptions is the Soweto shopping mall (Beall et al., 2002).

According to this, Harrison and Todes (2012) highlight the fact that the system of highways and major arterials has played a role in structuring this spatial composition by attracting economic activities. More specifically, it reveals how Johannesburg's spatial patterning has been strongly developing in response to a car-oriented society.



**Fig.3.4 | Industrial and commercial growth<sup>16</sup>**

Scheme reproduced by the author on data retrieved from GCRO Interactive GIS viewer, web map

Copyright: Municipal Demarcation Board, GCRO, GeoTerralimage 2001 & 2010

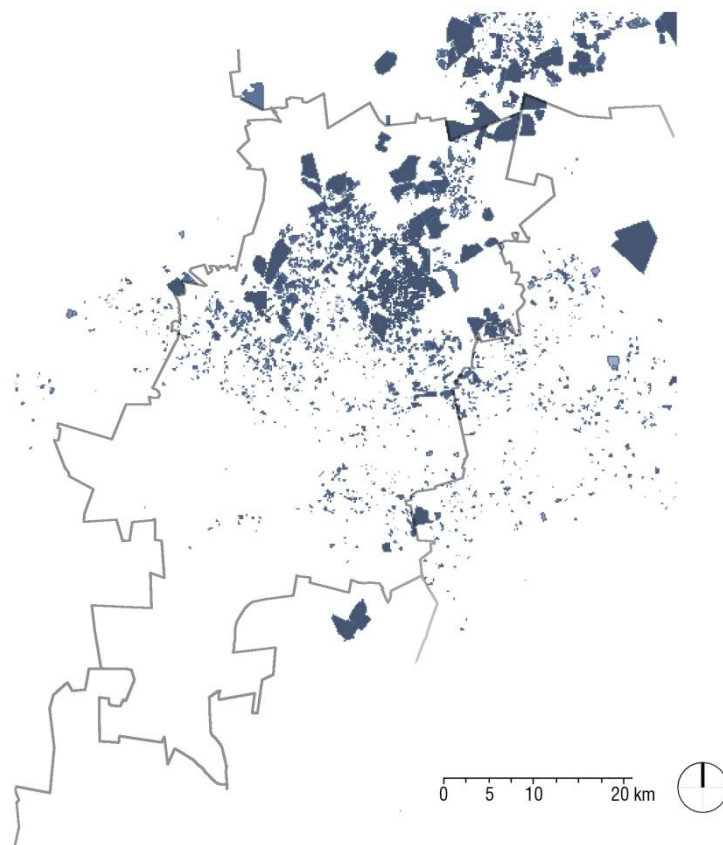
Data available at: <https://gcro1.wits.ac.za/gcrojsgis/>

- **Dual residential expansion in suburban areas.** From 1996 to 2011 (the year of the last official census), the city had to accommodate over 68 per cent more of population (Harrison et al., 2014: 8). This resulted in a horizontal residential expansion that mainly followed a dual process.

Firstly, the city has been witnessing the burgeoning of residential neighborhoods for high/middle income groups, distributed in suburban areas, and built by the private sector. This suburban residential growth has initially proceeded together with the decentralization of tertiary nodes, so that people no longer employed in the city center, and no longer dependent on it, moved away to the suburbia (Beall et al., 2002:55).

<sup>16</sup> Data Description: "Industrial and commercial growth shows buildings from 2010 that were not present in 2001 in Gauteng. Growth was mapped as a point density map of new buildings per square kilometre using GeoTerralimage (GTI) data (2001 and 2010 release 2013 set 1), with red representing high density of buildings"; description available at <https://gcro1.wits.ac.za/gcrojsgis/>

This high/middle income housing growth consists of low-medium density zones of detached individual houses, with private gardens and wall top electric fences. They are often connected to the main roads but disjoined from the public transport system – and so resulting to be highly dependent on the use of private cars. This suburban residential expansion also includes townhouses complexes and more exclusive gated communities, with shared gardens and facilities, and constantly placed under surveillance. As Beall et al. note (2002:54) one important reason for the sprawling of these enclave-houses is linked to the security against the crime that they can offer. This observation brings to light how the fear and perception of crime has played a role in shaping Johannesburg spatial growth, following a sort of logic of self-exclusion by certain groups of the urban society. Precisely for this reason, the development of fenced residential cluster has introduced the concept of "anxious urbanism" (Murray, 2011).



**Fig.3.5 | Gated communities**

Scheme reproduced by the author on data retrieved from: GCRO Interactive GIS viewer, web map

Data released on Feb. 2012

Copyright: Afrigis, GCRO, Municipal Demarcation Board

Data available at: <https://gcro1.wits.ac.za/gcrojsgis/>



**Fig.3.6** | "Anxious Urbanism": Enclosures in Johannesburg

Secondly, from '94 onwards, low-income houses have spread out by the initiative of post-apartheid government programs to house the poor and disadvantaged segments of the urban population. These types of residential areas expanded mainly toward the borders of the city. As Sarah Charlton (2014) underlines, the distribution of public low-income housing follows a path running around the city: from the North-East, to the North-West, and then down towards the South-West where they remain mainly concentrated.

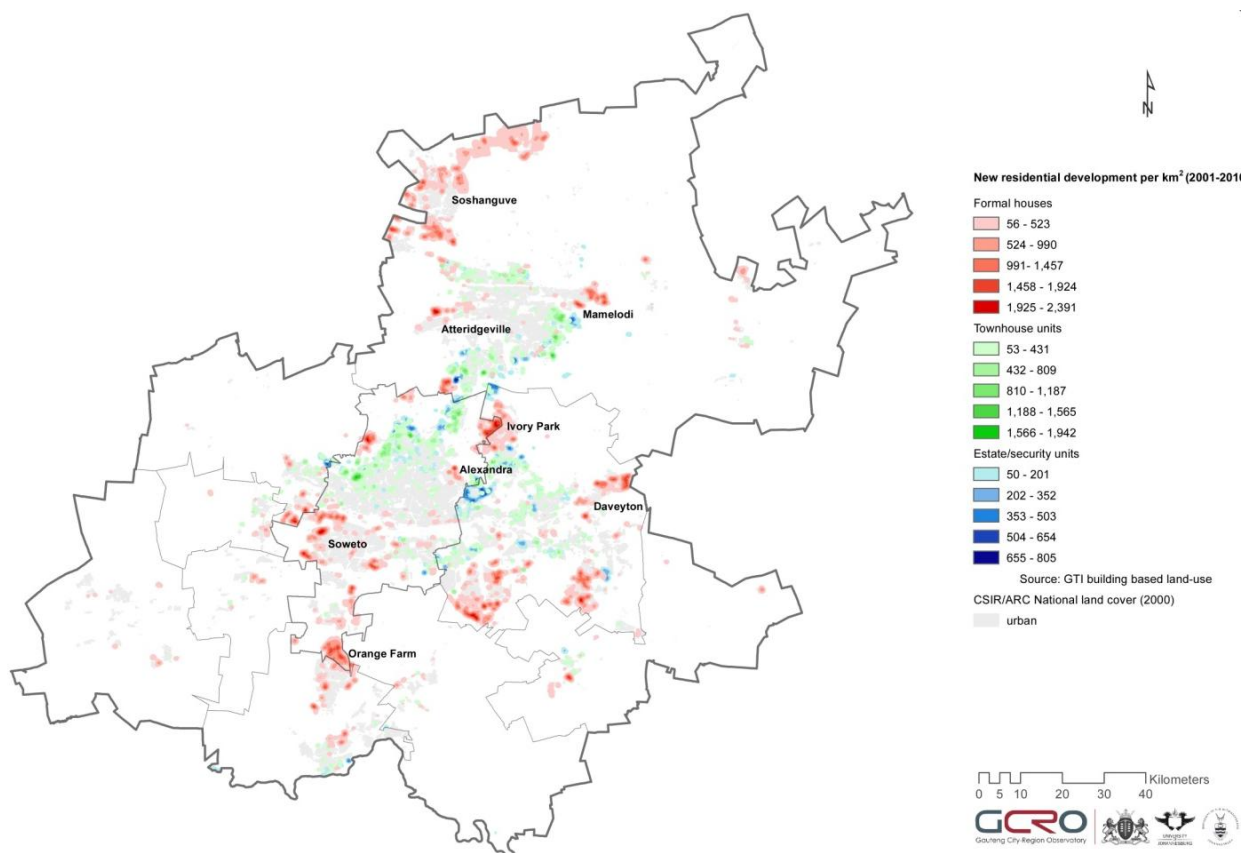
The public housing interventions have often been criticized for being distributed following the criterion of the availability of cheap lands – which are mainly placed in peripheral areas –, and so for moving the poorer people far away from the opportunities offered by the inner city, thereby increasing the costs and time of transports, thus risking to exacerbate spatial segregations and deepen social disparities (see CoJ, 2016). According to this, part of the literature notes that, despite the aims of urban policies, at national level, for a more integrated South African cities, low-income housing interventions have tended to agglomerate the poorer groups around existing black townships or further towards the edge of the city (Todes, 2014:23; Tomlison et al., 2003) thus not favoring integration between social groups.





**Fig.3.7** | An example of low to middle income housing in Johannesburg

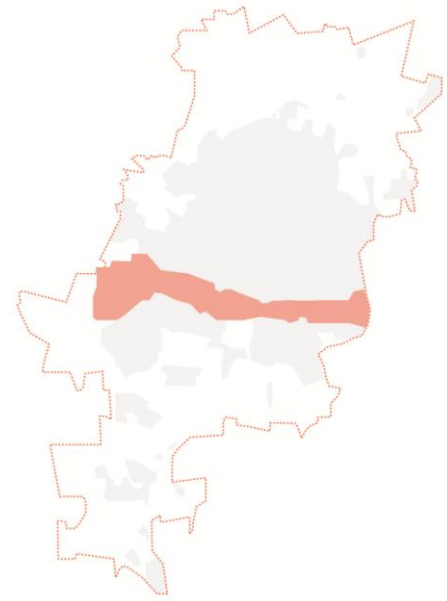
The image below gives insights about this dual residential expansion occurring in Johannesburg: the layer of townhouses and estate/security units mainly placed in the North of the city; and the layer of formal houses principally concentrated in the South with more sporadic northern edge concentrations.



**Fig.3.8** | Formal Residential Growth

Author: GCRO; Date of publication: November 2013; Map available at: <http://www.gcro.ac.za>

- **Decline of the central belt.** Today, the historical East-West mine belt lies in a phase of decay. It is characterized by a patchwork of polluted mine waste lands and small mining residues scattering irregularly along this huge corridor. Furthermore, the manufacturing nodes attached to it appear to be in a phase of partial decline or stagnation (Harrison et al., 2014). This trend goes hand in hand with the main economic dynamics involving the city, with the collapse of mining and the decay of manufacture industry. The central belt, with its unused areas and mine dumps, establishes a discontinuity in the urban landscape, strongly splitting the city in two parts and thus becoming "a symbol of north-south segregation" (CoJ, 2016), with the north historically richer than the south.



**Fig.3.9** | Localization of the belt



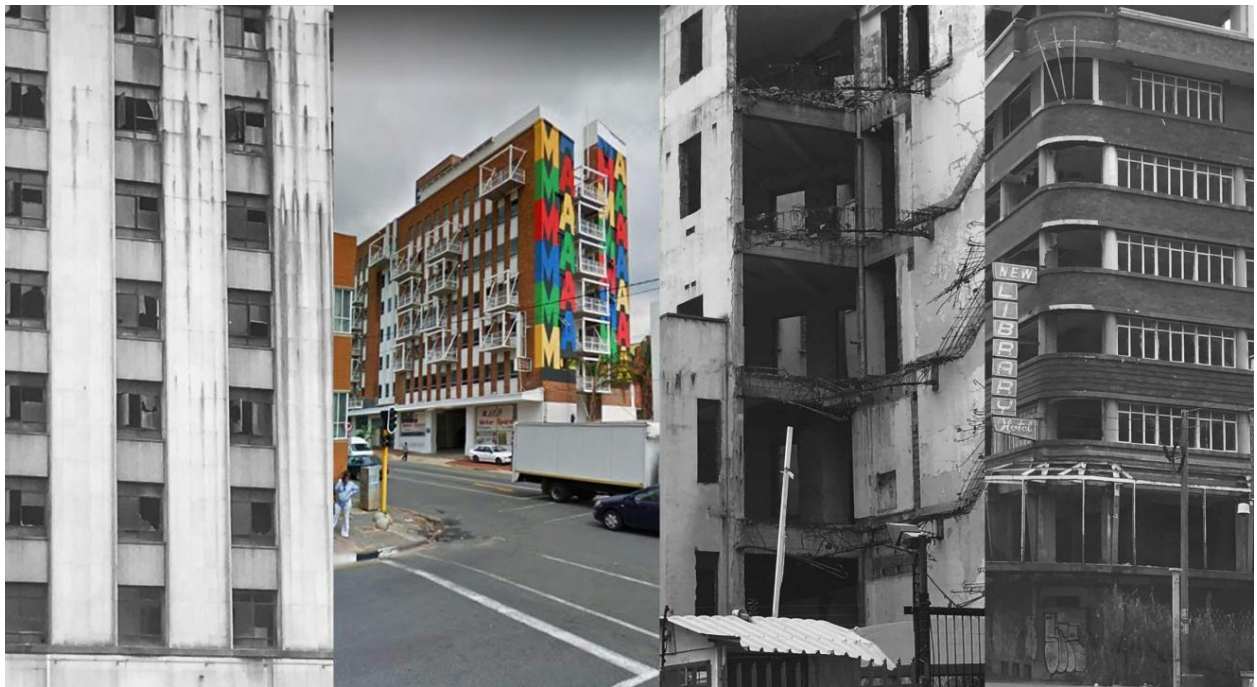
**Fig.3.10** | A portion of the old mine belt in Johannesburg

- **Dual facing of inner city areas.** With the ending of the apartheid and the decline of influx control, white residents moved from the inner city to peri-urban areas, while lower income black groups began to inhabit the center, bringing new small business activities and informal trades (Beall et al., 2002; Harrison and Todes, 2012). In the post apartheid era, the inner city experienced a definitive mutation in its class and ethnic composition, entering in a phase of decaying of big investments and thus of its economic relevance. Moreover, due to the presence of episodes of criminality, and areas of degradation and abandon, the inner city has began to be stigmatized as dangerous and inaccessible: "from a fashionable residential enclave catering



to affluent, white, middle-class urbanities into decaying, crime-ridden wasteland disconnected from the mainstream of city life" (Murray, 2011:137).

A very recent spatial dynamic occurring in the inner city involves the interventions of renovation of old office buildings, carried on by the private sector. Private companies have bought a few abandoned or underutilized buildings and have begun to convert them in trendy spaces, with apartments and flats for upscale professionals, with studios, restaurants, spaces for cultural events and fashion shops (Murray, 2008:190). However these interventions have met some criticisms for generating phenomena of gentrification, turning away the more vulnerable and poorer groups to accommodate the middle-income ones and, in doing so, for determining happy precincts surrounded by areas of degradation (Murray 2008). In this scenario, the private sector appears a key player in driving the urban development (Harrison et al., 2014). Quoting Beall et al. (2002) "Johannesburg is a city in which the public and private sectors are renegotiating their relationship and that is seeing a drift towards privatization, not just of infrastructure and services, but also affecting land development, regulations, building codes and social services".



**Fig.3.11** | Double face of the Johannesburg inner city

- **Plodding public transport network.** The post-apartheid spatial trends give back the image of a city constituted by a sum of fragmented elements. Precisely this sort of "centrifugal" fragmentation (Murray, 2011) determines the perennial demand for an effective public transport system. The latter still appears to have a poor-coverage and lack of integration between means of transport (Todes, 2014:26<sup>17</sup>). As a result, middle-high classes continue to use private cars, while a system of semi-formal mini taxis, being cheap, frequent and covering all corners of the city, still represents the most used transport for low-income groups.

In recent years a network of buses transportation, the "Bus Rapid Transport" has been realized on the occasion of the World Cup. Although it is a type of public transport recognized to be safer than others (see Harrison et al., 2014), it still remains not very well widespread and integrated with other types of transports.

In synthesis, the city appears involved in five main trends: the sprawling of economic nodes, mainly in the north; the double facing of the inner city with more recent retrofitting interventions on one side, and the decay of some areas on the other; the decline of the central belt; the dual residential suburbanization with middle and fortified medium/high income clusters, and low income housing; and the transport system still struggling to put the pieces together (see Todes, 2014; Harrison et al., 2014; see also Murray, 2011).

### **3.3 Typologies of informal dwellings in the City of Johannesburg**

A strong residential growth has occurred in the post-Apartheid Johannesburg, and still continues today. However, it has followed both formal and informal processes (Harrison et al., 2014:10). The lack of adequate accommodations for the urban poor in Johannesburg has indeed also triggered mechanisms of informal dwelling. If in the previous section the formal residential expansion has been showed, here the focus is on the informal one. In particular, the typologies of informal accommodations across the city can be summarized into the following macro-categories:

---

<sup>17</sup> In talking more generally about SA cities

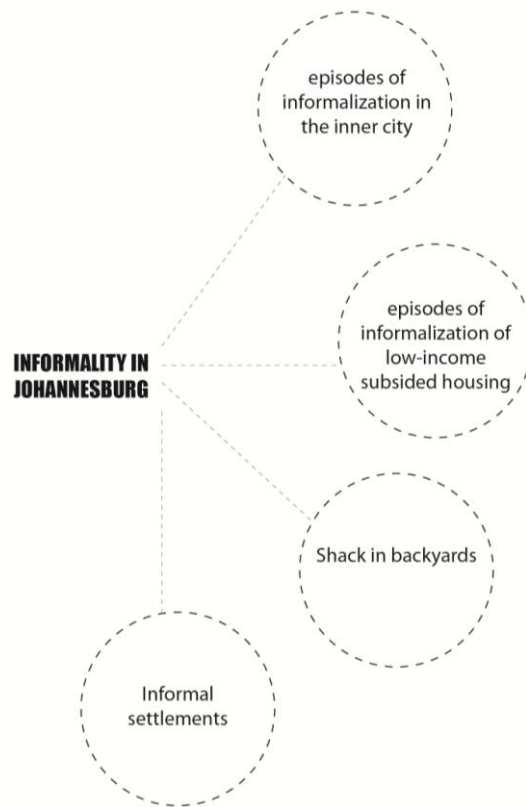


Fig.3.12 | Some typologies of informal dwellings in Johannesburg

- **Informalization of the formal inner city.** This refers to episodes of squatted abandoned buildings, scattered irregularly within the inner city. This is the case of some buildings which were previously used for offices, business activities or also for housing white groups; and today are inhabited by poorer black Africans coming from different provinces of South Africa as well as other African countries.



Fig.3.13 | An abandoned building with traces of life in the Johannesburg inner city



**Fig.3.14** | An abandoned building with traces of life in the Johannesburg inner city

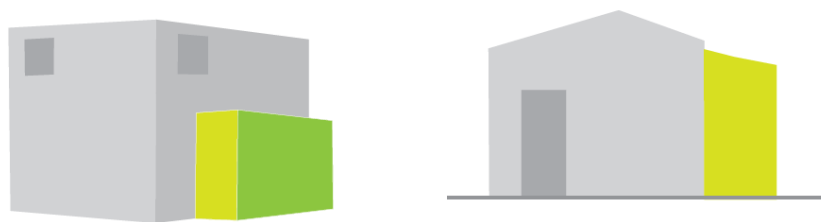
- **Shacks in backyards.** This phenomenon consists in the realization of informal shacks in the backyards of the formal houses placed in low-income townships. Services (like electricity, water, sanitation and refuse collection) are generally shared between backyard dwellings and formal houses, and in return tenants pay a rent to the homeowners (Lemansky, 2009:473). This is currently the faster growing typology of informality in Johannesburg<sup>18</sup> for two main reasons: on one hand, this mechanisms of hosting backyarders generates an income for the homeowners that receive a rent, on the other hand, it provides serviced sites for poor tenants (ibid.: 473). Being already formally equipped, the backyard sites result to be immediately usable by "added" dwellers.

<sup>18</sup> The official statistics show an increase in the number of households living in backyard shacks, from 192,568 in 2001 compared to 305,683 (HDA-Eighty20, 2013:12).



**Fig.3.15** | Examples of shacks in backyard

- **Episodes of informalization of low-income public houses.** They are small scale operations consisting of minute enlargements of low-income public houses, carried on by the residents themselves. They comprise the additions of modest volumes to the exiguous size of standardized houses supplied by the government. These operations follow a sort of incremental process, taking place over time from the ground up, to gain a little extra space. In doing so, people superimpose the layer of informality to the formal one.



**Fig.3.16** | Micro-episodes of informalization of low-income public houses

Informal settlements represent just one form of the informal residential processes taking place in the city. They are treated more extensively in the next section.

### 3.4 Informal settlements in the City of Johannesburg

#### 3.4.1 Definitions of informal settlements

It appears hard to provide an unambiguous and all-embracing definition of the notion of informal settlements. There are multiple interpretations and connotations of this term and the meaning can vary considerably depending on the different parts of the world, or even different areas within the same city where it is applied (Un-Habitat, 2010).

The term *informal settlement* is often used alternatively to the term *slum* in the international literature. The World City Report 2016, published by UN-Habitat, defines the slum "as a contiguous settlement that lacks one or more of the following five conditions: access to clean water, access to improved sanitation, sufficient living area that is not overcrowded, durable housing and secure tenure<sup>19</sup>" (UN-Habitat, 2016.)

Similarly, the State of the World's Cities 2008/2009 published by Un-Habitat, defines the "slum household" as "a group of individuals living under the same roof lacking one or more of the following conditions: access to improved water; access to improved sanitation facilities; sufficient living area (not more than three people sharing the same room); structural quality and durability of dwellings; and security of tenure".

Looking more specifically to the South African context, where the term informal settlement instead of slum is more commonly used, there are several documents and government programs reporting multiple definitions of it. In this regard, the document titled "Informal settlement in Gauteng" (Eight20, 2012; 2013)<sup>20</sup>, shows the different definitions and interpretations of the notion of informal settlement as provided by different sources:

| Data source                              | Definition of an informal settlement   |
|--|--|
| Statistics South Africa                  | "An unplanned settlement on land which has not been surveyed or proclaimed as residential, consisting mainly of informal dwellings (shacks)."<br>Definition of an informal dwelling : "A makeshift structure not approved by a local authority and not intended as a permanent dwelling"   |
| National Department of Human Settlements | The 2009 National Housing Code's Informal Settlement Upgrading Programme identifies informal settlements on the basis of the following characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Illegality and informality;</li><li>• Inappropriate locations;</li><li>• Restricted public and private sector investment;</li><li>• Poverty and vulnerability; and</li><li>• Social stress</li></ul> |

<sup>19</sup> UN-Habitat's operational definition for a slum household was agreed through an Expert Group Meeting convened in 2002 by UN-Habitat, the United Nations Statistic Division and the Cities Alliance.

<sup>20</sup> Report elaborated by the Housing Development Agency (HDA) with the support of Eighty20

|   |   |
|---|---|
| City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality* | No formal definition, however the following working definition is used: An informal settlement comprises "An impoverished group of households who have illegally or without authority taken occupation of a parcel of land (with the land owned by the Council in the majority of cases) and who have created a shanty town of impoverished illegal residential structures built mostly from scrap material without provision made for essential services and which may or may not have a layout that is more or less formal in nature."    |
| City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality**     | "Informal settlement means one shack or more constructed on land, with or without the consent of the owner of the land or the person in charge of the land."<br>"Shack means any temporary shelter, building, hut, tent, dwelling or similar structure which does not comply with the provisions of the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act, 1977 (Act 103 of 1977), the regulations promulgated under that Act and the Municipality's Building Control By-laws and which is primarily used for residential purposes." |
| Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality***         | "As a basic characteristic, the occupation of the land is unauthorized. In addition, the use of the land may be unauthorized, and in most cases the construction standards do not comply with building regulations."  |

**Tab.1** | Definitions of informal settlements

Source of the table: Report "Informal settlement in Gauteng" (Eight20, 2012; 2013)

All these definitions place emphasis on three main factors: a) the temporariness of the makeshift dwellings described as precarious structures built with waste or rudimentary materials; b) the unlawful regime in which these settlements arise, namely the absence of authorizations and the insecurity of land titles for informal settlements' dwellers.

To the above definitions it is useful to add the one provided by NUSP (National Upgrading Support Programme-SA) which recognizes some further elements. It reports that "an 'Informal Settlement' exists where housing has been created in an urban or peri-urban location without official approval. Informal settlements may contain a few dwellings or thousands of them, and are generally characterized by inadequate infrastructure, poor access to basic services, unsuitable environments, uncontrolled and unhealthy population densities, inadequate dwellings, poor access to health and education facilities and lack of effective administration by the municipality<sup>21</sup>" (also cited in Huchzermeyer et al., 2014). Differently from other descriptions, Nusp's definition firstly, emphasizes both the urban and peri-urban location of informal settlements and in doing so it suggests the different types of relation between informal settlements and the so called formal city. Secondly, while it underlines the inadequateness of services and infrastructures, it recognizes also the lack of health and educational facilities; this point is interesting since, on one hand it unequivocally includes health and education among

<sup>21</sup> Definition available at <http://www.upgradingsupport.org/content/page/part-1-understanding-your-informal-settlements>

people's basic-needs; and moreover, in doing so, it opens to an analysis to be conducted on a settlement level, and not just based on the scale of the dwelling.

However, all the above mentioned definitions seem to lose sight of more qualitative parameters regarding the social aspects and the human dimension of informal settlements (Kornienko, 2013) or even the advantageous aspects of informality in the life of the urban poor.

### **3.4.2 Overall statistical data and limits of surveys**

Referring to the Gauteng Province, according to the report "Gauteng: Informal settlements status" (Eighty20, 2013), in absolute terms the total number of households who live in an informal settlement or in a shack not in a backyard increased from 577.782 in 2001 to 590.447 in 2011; while in percentage terms, it decreased from 21% to 15% of all Gauteng households (Eighty20, 2013:12). This discrepancy is linked to the population growth over time. Referring more particularly to the City of Johannesburg, official census<sup>22</sup> counts 187 informal settlements (Eighty20, 2012), where the number of households is 75.255, while the number of households living in the so called shacks not in backyards is 133.366, for a total of over 200 thousand households (Eighty20, 2012).

However, it is worth to underline a number of limits in surveying informal settlements that can pose questions to the above mentioned numbers:

1) The absence of a standard or unambiguous definition of informal settlement may make running the risk of not counting all formal settlements undergoing processes of informalization (as in the case of temporary camps set up by the government and gradually subject to informalization) (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014).

2) The fact that the physical boundaries of informal settlements are sometimes not uniquely identified can generate misconceptions when counting them. This is particularly true in the cases of large informal settlements or in areas characterized by more than one informal settlement close to each other. Specifically in these cases, censuses tend to break them down into sections but oftentimes both the limits and the criteria with which those limits are determined are not clear (Eighty20, 2013:7). Furthermore, there could be no direct correspondence between the border of the settlements as identified in official census and those identified by the communities or municipalities (Eighty20, 2013:7).

3) The ambiguities in the use of household as one of the main indicators to set the status of informal settlements may generate misunderstandings in counting the number of dwellers. In a

---

<sup>22</sup> Both LaPsis and Atlas furnish these data.



general way, the term household refers to a group of people sharing the same dwelling. According to Statistics SA "A household consists of a single person or a group of people who live together for at least four nights a week, who eat from the same pot and who share resources" (Eight20, 2012:8). It is possible to recognize some limits with using household as an indicator for describing informal settlements status: firstly, the number of people in each household can be extremely variegated and so this indicator does not give an exhaustive picture of how many people actually live in informal settlements; secondly, a household may occupy more than one dwelling, so the number of households do not necessarily correspond to the number of dwellings (Eight 20, 2012:8); thirdly, given the fluidity of some groups of people, involved also in a sort of cyclical migration between different places, it can happen that one dweller could belong to more than one household. Moreover, people that share the same dwelling for a lack of housing options fitting with their contingencies may potentially constitute more than one household if more housing alternatives were given (Eight 20, 2012:8). Therefore, these considerations may put into question the completeness of certain quantitative data provided by the censuses.

### **3.4.3 Informal settlements' spatial trends**

Informal settlements constitute a significant feature of Johannesburg's urban landscape. Even if, according to the statistics, it is incorrect to talk about a fast burgeoning or restless growth of informal settlements in the city, they remain a considerable component within it.

Instead of an isotropic spreading, Huchzermeyer et al. (2014: 155) emphasize the fact that informal settlements' growth is mostly restricted to specific areas. Comparing with other African cities, where informal settlements appear to be as uninterrupted sequences relentlessly expanding in all directions, Johannesburg is inscribed with a process characterized by a growth of informal settlements around circumscribed elements of the urban system.

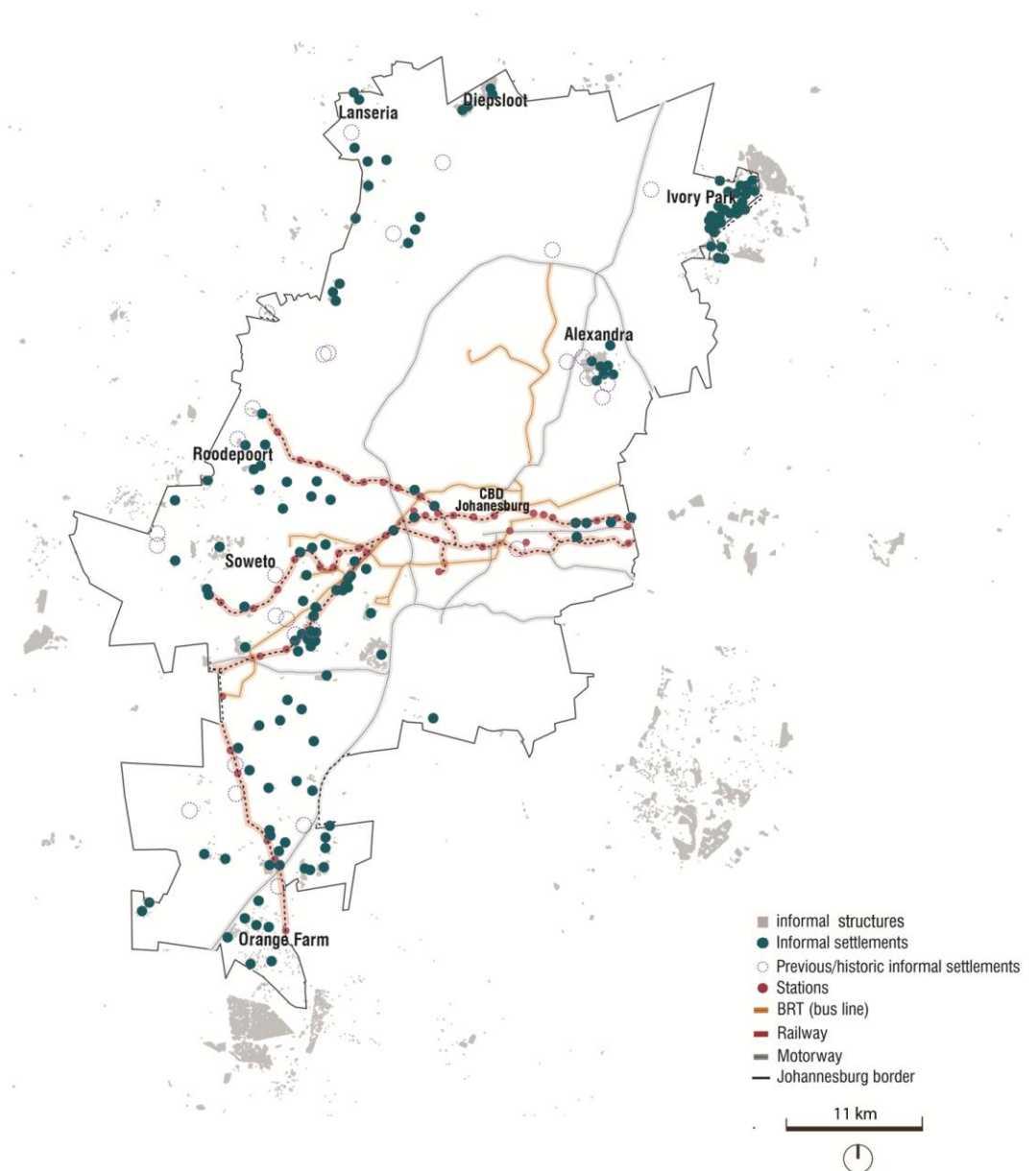


Fig.3.17 | Informal settlements in Johannesburg

Scheme reproduced by the author from data contained in: Huchzermeyer et al. (2014); Ahmad P. (2014), "Plate24-Current and historic/previous informal settlement", in Harrison P., Gotz G., Todes A. and Wray C. (eds), *Changing Form, Changing City: Johannesburg after Apartheid*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg.

The layer "informal structures" is retrieved from the GCRO Interactive GIS viewer; Copyright: Municipal Demarcation Board, GCRO, GeoTerraImage (GTI)

Starting from Huchzermeyer et al. (2014:155), it is possible to distinguish a precise distribution of informal settlements within the city:

- Informal settlements in periurban areas. Informal settlements are mainly concentrated in an arc that spans from the north-east, follows the west city boundary and ends in a major concentration in the south (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014:160). In particular, this arc distribution includes three large formal low-income housing nodes containing pockets of informal settlements: Ivory Park in the North-East, Diepsloot in the North and Orange Farm in the South<sup>23</sup> (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014:160).
- Informal settlements in the north-west fringe. A group of informal settlements arose after 2000 in the north-west quadrant of the city, bordering areas of market developments (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014). This is an area that by and large can be considered extended from Roodepoort to the border of Lanseria airport. Under the Apartheid it was a rural area of white farms and, from the 1990, it started to transform itself into a peri-urban area comprehending farms, smallholdings, small scale mining operation, and some informal settlements (Klug et al., 2014:420). By the early 2000s, the residential concentration of Cosmo City (a mixed income housing with commercial center) emerged in this area, and in more recent years, the north-west edge has witnessed further transformations with the growth of high income residential compounds (arisen also by conversion of the smallholdings), light industries and commerce (ibid.:421). Further developments include the establishment of bed and breakfast, wedding venues, conference centers, arts and crafts markets and golf areas (ibid.:421). These trends have been accompanied by the diffusion of informal settlements in this area.
- Informal settlement along the railway line. Some informal settlements are located along the railway line, particularly in correspondence of the stations, and they arose before 2000 (Huchzermeyer, 2014:169). These are settlements generally placed on small unoccupied land plots, within the meshes of the formal built environment, and therefore they tend to remain dense and showing a more irregular layout (cf. Huchzermeyer et al., 2014).

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ivory Park*, is a formal low-income residential area, established after 1994 and placed in the north-east edge of the city. Today it is the largest concentration of informal settlements in Johannesburg (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014:160).

*Orange Farm* is a formal township established at the end of the 80s, initially to house people displaced from backyard shacks mainly placed in the nearby township of Soweto. This is a highly decentralized area located in the southern edge of the city, placed about 40 km from the city center and extended also beyond the administrative borders of the city.

*Diepsloot* is placed in the northern edge of the city; it arose before 1994 mainly as a formal transit camp to temporarily house people displaced from some formal and informal areas of the city (like from Zevenfontein and Alexandra). It actually has become a permanent settlement with groups of informal settlements propped up within it.

- Informal settlements linked to historical formal townships. Pockets of informal settlements have arisen around and within the historical low income townships established during the regime of colonialism and apartheid, like Soweto and Alexandra.  
Pocket of informal settlements are also growth nearby single sex hostels built during the colonialism and apartheid era to host migrant workers, like George Goch, Denver and Alexandra Hostels (Ahmad and Pienaar, 2014:110).
- Informal settlements sprawled in peri-urban areas. Finally, an unspecified numbers of informal settlements have unevenly arisen in peri-urban areas, mainly anchored to the old rural system of farms (Ahmad and Pienaar, 2014) and currently mainly absorbed in the formal urban plot.

#### **3.4.4 People moving across the urban grid of informal settlements**

Is there an urbanizing logic behind this informal spatial distribution? The insight here is that the rise, growth and transformation of informal settlements is extremely tied to the spatial asset and ongoing transformation of the formal city. Informal settlements are spaces that are born and transformed *upon* the spatial hierarchies of the formal city, subverting or following its forms; they are actually embedded into them. Elements of the formal city (such as infrastructures, historical structures of colonial and apartheid era, formal housing, economic hubs and market development) play a role in attracting or distance the urban poor who in turn seek to position themselves in the city according to their multiple needs, urgencies and ambitions.

This dynamic calls to mind the concept of *settlements functionality* of Robson et al. (2008): it was introduced with reference to formal settlements dynamics and, by and large, it indicates the different set of opportunities that settlements offer in relation to their localization inside the city, that in turn attract people who try to find an urban place fitting with their necessities.

In a similar way, it is possible to note a relationship between formal spatial dynamics and the localization of Johannesburg's informal settlements: it is not casual but rather it is functional to people's necessities. According to this, Cross (2010a) says: "The key to housing process normally is location, and all the poverty settlements have specific location-determined functionality". In this regard, she affirms that informal settlements make up a sort of broad grid of different opportunities inside the city and that "people migrate across this grid searching to locate themselves best" (Cross, 2010b).

Some understandings about the strategic organizing logic, according to which informal settlers move and place themselves within Johannesburg, can be traced from the observations above:

- The group of informal settlements arisen in the north-west fringe of Johannesburg represents a first and most interesting example of this localization logic. They are precisely located where the major market investments are concentrated (with industrial, commercial and residential initiatives): the latter work like a magnet for many urban poor who have strategically moved to these areas in search of employment opportunities, and in doing so they have consolidated existing informal settlements or created new ones (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014).

This indicates how market developments are decisive in guiding the expansion of informal settlements, precisely attracting workforce; and in turn how informal processes seem to challenge excluding geographies – which are market driven – arising close to them (see Todes, 2014).

- Conversely, looking at the eastern areas of the city, it is possible to hypothesize that, one of the explanations for the fact that there are no large concentrations of informal settlements may be connected to the lack of large market investments and urban interventions, according to the logic that the poorer people move towards more economically vibrant areas.
- The settlements arisen in the inner city have been consolidated over time for being well located according to the urban opportunities offered by the city center, as well as the vicinity to the railroad line that enlarges the urban capital they can have access to.
- The formal low-income residential areas – the historical and more recent one – even if they often result to be detached from commercial and productive nodes or from the inner city's job opportunities, have acted as attractors for informal settlements. This may be due both to the ethnic circles rooted in these areas, that represent a social support among the poorer groups; and due to the fact that they are spaces already equipped with basic infrastructures and services (like electricity, water and sanitation) to which informal dwellings can easily connect.

These examples contradict some descriptions featuring informal settlements as always located in marginal and isolated areas of the city. On the contrary, there is a whole grid of informal settlements that people have strategically been building over time to support their primary necessities. In doing so, if a part of informal settlements result concentrated in correspondence of the low-income formal areas – also dating from the apartheid period –, some others appear to challenge the legacy of spatial segregation by getting closer to rich areas, and in doing so reaching what the formal planning still struggles to do.

The history of the Johannesburg's formal urban development, based on the addition of functionally and socially homogeneous clusters, has resulted in the formation of a multitude of waste lands that have been re-signified by the urban poor who have adapted them according to their needs. As Huchzermeyer (2011) asserts, the modern town planning, imported to

Anglophone Africa from Europe, with homogeneous areas and highways, has produced leftover spaces. All those who are without alternatives, unable to access the formal house market, take up those spaces informally, recognizing in them "unplanned opportunities for inhabiting the city" (ibid.:28).

As a result, to some extent informal settlements shape the city's growth (Huchzermeyer et. al, 2014: 154) as well as the city's growth shapes them (Kornienko, 2013).

### **3.5 Critical reading of urban policies, plans and approaches of intervention to Johannesburg's informal settlements**

#### **3.5.1 Informal settlements in the national urban policies and programs<sup>24</sup>**

This section provides a brief review of the major state's policies and programs concerning informal settlements.

The right to the house is enshrined in the South African Constitution, a very dense paper arisen with the collapse of the apartheid, in response to its racial segregation policies. The Constitution provides that everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing. Moreover, it clearly prohibits evictions of any persons from their homes, and the demolition of dwellings without a court order. A court of law, before ordering any eviction or demolition, must take into account all relevant factors. Legislation cannot permit arbitrary evictions.

This principle means that even informal houses cannot be demolished, and dwellers can't be evicted, without a court order that considers all relevant circumstances (Nusp, 2015:8mod.3).

The Housing Act (1997) accomplishes the principles of the Constitution and states that: housing, as adequate shelter, fulfils a basic human need; housing is both a product and a process; housing is a product of human endeavor and enterprise; housing is a vital part of integrated developmental planning; housing is a key sector of the national economy; housing is vital to the socio-economic well-being of the nation.

Principles, contained in Section 2 (1) state that the national, provincial and local spheres of the government must: (a) give priority to the needs of the poor in respect of housing development; (b) consult individuals and communities affected by housing development; (d) encourage and support individuals and communities, including community-based organizations, in the efforts to fulfill their own housing needs, in a way that leads to the transfer of skills and empowerment of the community; (e) (iii) promote the establishment, development and maintenance of socially and economically viable communities (see also Ziblim, 2013 and Nusp, 2015).

---

<sup>24</sup> In this section the descriptions are mainly retrieved from the original policy documents

These principles mean that also in the case of informal settlements, interventions have to be target-oriented toward poorer groups, to rely on recognized poor people's needs, to encourage participatory processes generating forms of capacitation, to promote socially and economically integrated community, to be based on human endeavor and enterprise that people have already created in the informal settlements (Nusp, 2015).

**Breaking New Ground (2004) -BNG-** is a crucial national policy document that promotes a shift from the housing policies based on the supply of formal low-income houses, to the *in-situ* upgrading approach – in line with international best practices. Thus, it supports the eradication of informal settlements through *in-situ* upgrading, with the relocation of households only when on site development is not possible or desirable by dwellers. It moved from the awareness that the existing housing program was not properly reducing informal settlements or addressing their issues (see also Nusp, 2015). As written in the document, it proposes a shift from an approach to informal settlement "of conflict or neglect, to one of integration and cooperation, leading to the stabilization and integration of these areas into the broader urban fabric".

The National Housing Code (revised in 2009), in line with Breaking New Ground, upholds the informal settlement *in-situ* upgrading, with relocation or resettlement when the terrain is not suitable for establishing dwellings. Main objectives are: promoting a participatory approach in informal settlements interventions, which aims at avoiding to compromise the social ties among dwellers as well as to encourage forms of empowerment of the community; securing tenure; providing basic services and infrastructure that are upgradable, sustainable and affordable to informal settlements (see also Nusp, 2015).

Precisely to implement the objectives contained in the previous policies documents, the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) has been launched. It is a policy and grant instrument to promote a *phased* *in situ* upgrading. It had already been introduced in the BNG document as a funding mechanism in order to support: area-wide upgrading; maintenance of fragile community networks; minimization of disruption; enhancement of community participation in all phases of the solutions' development (see also Nusp, 2015). *In-situ* upgrading is proposed to be incrementally implemented through different phases that include: recognition of housing and infrastructural needs of the community; securing tenure; provision of basic services, social amenities, with the re-organization of the spatial layout; fulfillment of the upgrading of the settlement with eventually dwellings (Nusp, 2015).

The main result emerging out from this excursus is that South African policies have evolved in line with international trends and today they widely acknowledge that *in-situ* upgrading is the privileged way of intervention in informal settlements. A particularly interesting aspect derives

from recognizing the need to implement improvements to housing conditions through different phases. This underlines the value given to the procedural nature of housing interventions in informal contexts, rather than a one-go supply of "goods", therefore also recognized at a regulatory level.

### 3.5.2 Informal settlements in the City's "Spatial Development Framework"

The Spatial Development Framework (SDF) for Johannesburg 2040 is a spatial policy document, setting the spatial vision for the future city. In the matter of informal settlements, the SDF reiterates the position supported by the national policies that *in-situ* upgrading should be the first option of interventions, with relocation only applied where upgrades are not possible or desirable for the communities (CoJ, 2016:20-21). Relocation is possible when, for example, settlements are not well located regarding: public transport, pedestrian access to economic opportunities and social amenities (in particular, schools and health facilities),<sup>25</sup> and bulk services (CoJ, 2016:140). Moreover, the plan states that the distances for the relocation should be kept within 5 km. According to the SDF, all decisions should always be made in close consultation with the communities affected (CoJ, 2016:20-21).

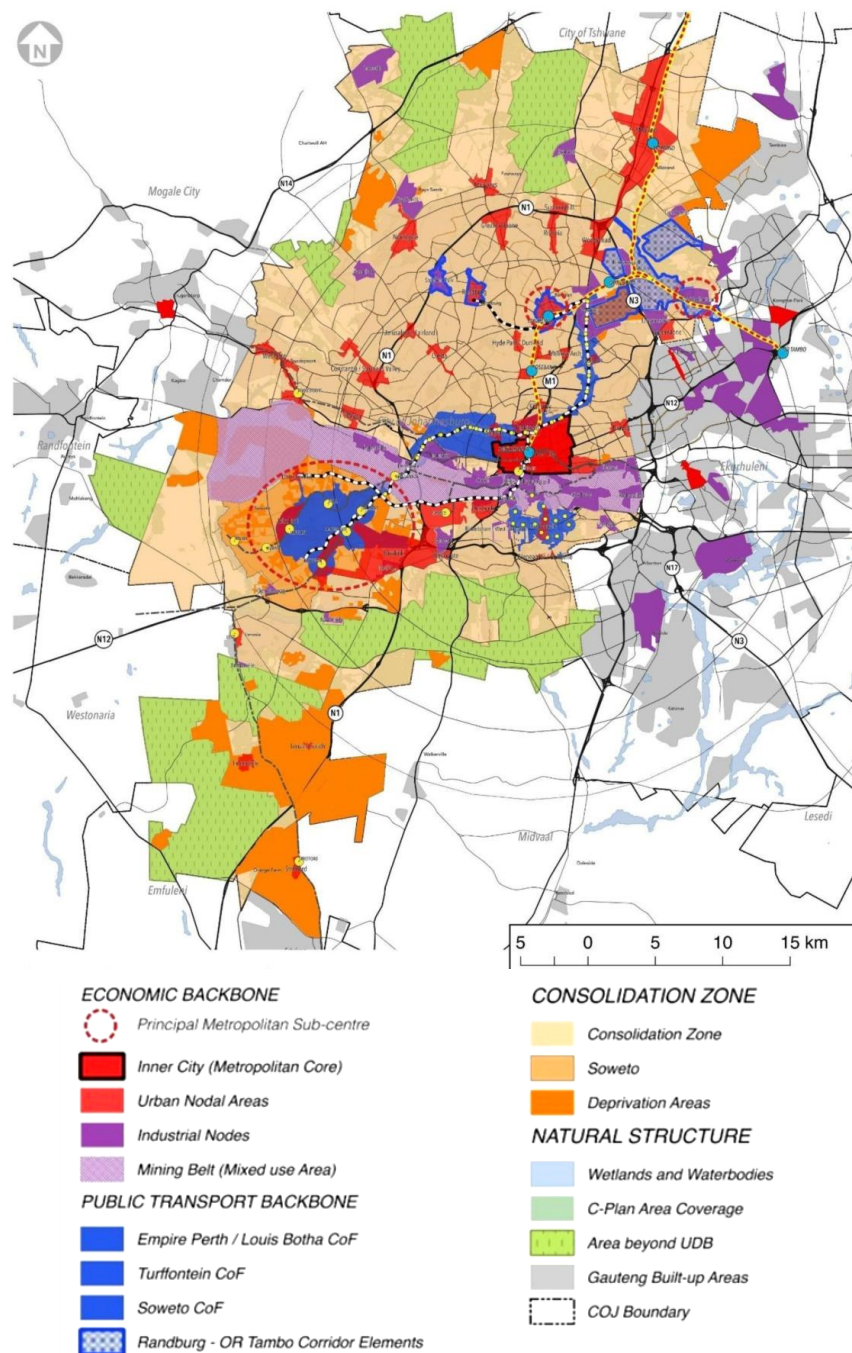
A further point of the SDF in which informal settlements are included, is the section concerning the "Spatial Framework and Implementation Strategy". In particular, the plan identifies two main strategic zones (*Transformation Zone* and *Consolidation Zone*) and precisely the second one is about informal settlements. More specifically:

- o the "Transformation Zone", includes "areas where investment is prioritized for future urban intensification and growth, as they have the capacity to trigger positive effects on a metropolitan scale" (CoJ, 2016:17). These are the areas for the large urban interventions that include: strengthening of the metropolitan core, intervention along the transport route of *The Corridors of Freedom*, development of Soweto, development of Randburg-OR Tambo Corridor, development of the mining belt.
- o the "Consolidation zone" includes precisely the area for urban consolidation, infrastructure maintenance, controlled growth, urban management, addressing backlogs (in social and hard infrastructure) and structural positioning for medium to longer term growth (CoJ, 2016:19).

---

<sup>25</sup> Definitions retrieved from the National Upgrading Support Programme:  
<http://www.upgradingsupport.org/content/page/definitions>





**Fig.3.18 | The Spatial Development Framework**

Source of the plan: City of Johannesburg Metropolitan municipality: Department of Development planning, 2016  
*Spatial Development framework 2040, 2016/2017*

In particular, within the consolidation area, there is a layer called "deprived area" where, at least a portion of informal settlements fall into. These are described as areas that "do not contain the qualities of sustainable and livable neighborhoods" (CoJ, 2016).

In overall terms, for these areas the plan promotes the improvement of sustainability and quality of life to be achieved through a set of broad strategies:

- "in the short term, an efficient and affordable public transport must be introduced to allow the connections to the economic centers";
- "in the medium to long term, a mixed land uses must be included, to drive economic development and job creation";
- finally, "infrastructure backlogs (hard and soft) also need to be solved" (CoJ, 2016:19).

Though it is important that informal settlements have been recognized and included in the SDF; as Huchzermeyer already pointed out in 2011, in the overall strategy to turn Johannesburg into a *World Class City* that absorbs poverty, it is not clear the role that informal settlements will assume (Huchzermeyer, 2011:52). In addition, following Douglass's words, Huchzermeyer (2011) argues that development plans for the city of Johannesburg seem to focus on mega projects, large infrastructure interventions (airports and trains) and complexes that are attractive for international investors as well as symbolic of the face of the city in the world (like the Fifa's interventions), but however they risk reducing the attention on the more minute spatial interventions and social welfare, including projects in informal settlements.

### **3.5.3 Approaches of intervention in Johannesburg's informal settlements**

In the previous sections the main policies, programs and spatial strategies for informal settlements have been set up; this section changes the point of view and looks at the concrete interventions currently applied in Johannesburg's informal settlements. According to this, a number of types of intervention are summarized below:

- Provision of services. This type of intervention provides the integration of temporary basic services by governments inside informal settlements, such as water points, toilet blocks and, sometimes, electricity generators, collection of waste and cleaning sanitation. Since they represent emergency services, it is as if they were contained "a view to future orderley relocation" of the settlement (Huchzermeyer and Karam, 2006:22) namely, being temporary services they do not presuppose a future-oriented development strategy of the settlement.

- Removal of informal settlements and relocation. This presupposes the clearance of informal settlements with relocation of dwellers. The relocation can include the movement of people to greenfield areas where public low-income housing is provided.

These kinds of low-income housing interventions have been criticized for a number of reasons: they risk to break social ties already formed in the informal settlements, moving people far away from each other; they presuppose the payment for services and infrastructures that may result

unaffordable for the houses beneficiaries on the long term; they create purely residential areas lacking of all opportunities derived from a sustainable mix of uses in urban areas; they assume standardized dimensions of houses that may not fit with different contingencies of people; they are low-density developments, so they may result lacking of a sense of urbanity and not easily walkable; at the same time the cost for realizing the houses and services result unaffordable for the governments and, moreover, the housing backlog still remains high due to the immigration rate of poor people to the city (Nusp, 2015: 29-30(XX)).

Despite the evolution of post-apartheid urban policies, clearance and/or relocation has been one of the most diffused practices to deal with informal settlements (Huchzermeyer, 2010). It is still considered one of the easiest methods to deal with informal settlements<sup>26</sup>, precisely because it is based on standardized and apolitical mechanisms of supply of houses.

- Rollover. This intervention consists in the overall re-development of informal settlement sites; it is a sort of on-site greenfield intervention<sup>27</sup>. It includes the realization of a formal layout provided with basic services (like water and electricity), and the replacement of the shacks with formal standardized houses. It includes also the acquisition of the land title by the government. It can be implemented when the overall environment is suitable for housing. While recognizing the positive aspect of this approach concerning that dwellers can go back to their settlement<sup>28</sup>, a negative aspect is that people are usually placed in temporary transit areas during the realization of the intervention and, since it is not always clear how long the process will take, people can remain in transit area for an indefinite period, in a state of imbalance also affecting social relationships.

- In-situ upgrading. It consists in a *phased* on-site upgrading of informal settlements. It precisely follows a programmatic approach whose main steps are: incremental upgrading of services and social facilities, incremental achievement of land title; incremental realization of formal dwellings (Nusp, 2015:27). The main advantageous aspects are that: a) this approach promotes the minimal disruption of the built environment in realizing the formal top-structures, namely it tries to maintain the settlement layout in order to not alter the existing physical and social relations; b) this type of intervention promotes the involvement of the communities in each one of the process's steps and so it leads to a strengthening of the social relations among dwellers as well as the accomplishments of forms of community empowerment; c) this approach tries to move towards types of place-based planning interventions to be developed case-by-

---

<sup>26</sup> See the Urban Development Framework for KwaZulu Natal, Ch.6 - "*Informal settlements*".

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

case; d) presupposing a phases intervention, this approach may assure a certain flexibility and reorientation of the project during the realization, in accordance with any changing socio-economic contingencies of people; e) finally, a phased intervention ensures a deferred implementation of costs over time, therefore becoming suitable for application in multiple settlements at the same moment, and thus better distributing the economic resources at macro scale, avoiding comprehensive answers for some settlements and scarce or no answers for others (Nusp, 2015)<sup>29</sup>.

Despite the evolution of policies over the years, encouraging *in-situ* upgrading wherever it is possible, it still finds scarce application, showing a discrepancy between *policies* and *politics* (Huchzermeyer, 2010). Furthermore, according to the importance of community participation underlined by the policies, there are still few examples of application of community planning approaches, and they are generally supported by Ngo and Cbo. The recognized point is so that the policies have evolved in their content over time adopting an international orientations but their implementation remains poor and sporadic (Huchzermeyer, 2011; Maina, 2013).

### 3.6 Conclusion

The above described tools seem to contain a number of issues which need to be considered. They are summarized in the following points.

National policies and programs have shifted from an approach of relocation to incremental *in-situ* upgrading approach, recognizing the latter's social and economic benefits. However several scholars agree in notice that *in-situ* upgrading implementation still remain slow, continuing to privilege clearance and/or relocation, often implemented without any kind of community participation. Attempts to gradually impulse *in-situ* upgrading come mainly from intervention led by cbo, ngo, along with community members (see also Harrison and Todes, 2012).

The spatial plan of the city of Johannesburg, despite including issues related to informal settlements, still remains opaque in defining their urban relevance and in recognizing them as central engines for the development of the wide city (Huchzermeyer, 2011). The plan still remains anchored in prioritizing urban developments that rely on big scale-high investment projects. On the contrary, informal settlements emerge among the folds of the city as central elements for overall urban development building up a social infrastructure innervating the city.

---

<sup>29</sup> See also the Urban Development Framework for KwaZulu Natal, Ch.6 - "*Informal settlements*".

Interventions still seem not sufficiently include a more nuanced analysis of informal settlements as well as of informal settlers, with their social contingencies and diversities. Those are key starting points for a formulation of people-centered and settlements' specific plans.

Moreover, both the policies and the types of interventions do not sufficiently include long-term and wide-scale visions in dealing with informal settlement's plans. Firstly, this means that there is still a tendency of treating informal settlements like static boxes instead of dynamic processes that change over time; as a result, there is a lack of adaptive planning scenarios able to include the future spatial growth/de-growth of informal settlements. Secondly, it means that informal settlements are still seen as isolated spatiality rather than embedded in a larger system of urban relations.

This chapter outlined the main spatial dynamics concerning the city of Johannesburg, focusing in particular on informal settlements' issues. The next chapter enters into the explorative case-study settlement.

### GROUNDING ISSUES.

#### "DENVER INFORMAL SETTLEMENT" CASE-STUDY: BUILDING AN ANALYTIC GRID UNPACKING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND HUMAN MOBILITY DYNAMICS

This chapter sets up the theoretical issues previously discussed and builds an analytical grid that unpacks the relationship between informal settlements and human mobility dynamics. In particular, the analytical grid has been built through "Denver", the explorative case-study settlement. The grid is articulated on three main interlinked components, corresponding to three different perspectives through which it is possible to look at the informal settlement from the human mobility prism: *movements*, *temporalities* and *socio-spatial practices from the ground up*. The first perspective employs a look *from the top* to investigate the main trends of people's flows involving the settlement, namely people's in-and-out migratory movements, their spatial directions, speed, rational, and social effects. The second one enters into these flows, gets closer to the people and adopts a look *from the inside* to explore dwellers' temporalities, namely the way they experience time by planning their future. The third one changes again the point of observation and employs a look *from the ground* to explore all people's socio-spatial practices that arise in the settlement under different conditions of temporality.

This grid has been built by taking cues from Henri Lefebvre's "Rhythmanalysis"<sup>30</sup>, a lesser-known collection of essays, but still crucial for the urban studies, in which – in very general terms – the author analyzes the rhythm of urban spaces.

In particular, the author argues that "everywhere there is an interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is a rhythm" (Lefebvre, 2004:15). Moreover he adds that a rhythm always presupposes a temporal element and an overall movement (ibid.:78-79).

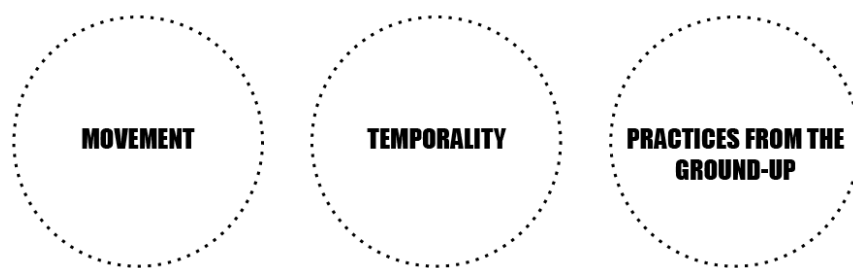
Applying these visions to the current dissertation, three elements of the Lefebvre's rhythm – *movement*, *time*, and *expenditure of energies* – have been considered useful for building an analytical grid that aims to tie together informal settlements and human mobility dynamics. These three components have been elaborated as follows:

---

<sup>30</sup> First published in 1992.

- The first component, the *movement*, is directly taken up from Lefebvre, and here is used to refer more precisely to people's migratory flows;
- The second component recalls Lefebvre's *time* which here refers more specifically to people's *temporality*, that is precisely used to talk about people's personal future envisioning;
- Finally, the third component, people's *socio-spatial practices*, is an interpretation of Lefebvre's *energy*, and is referred to all efforts that dwellers put into the settlements from the ground up.

Echoing Lefebvre, thus these analytical components capture the *rhythm* of informal settlements. The Rhythmanalysis is a very complex text and it is not taken in all its aspects by this dissertation. However, this text helped to *find a way to tell a story*. It was a useful trace to give an order to the complexity of the actual reality of informal settlements, to separate the overwhelming information derived from these dense microcosms, and to distinguish and recognize the elements contained inside them.



**Fig.4.1** | The three components of the analytic grid of the informal settlements' rhythm



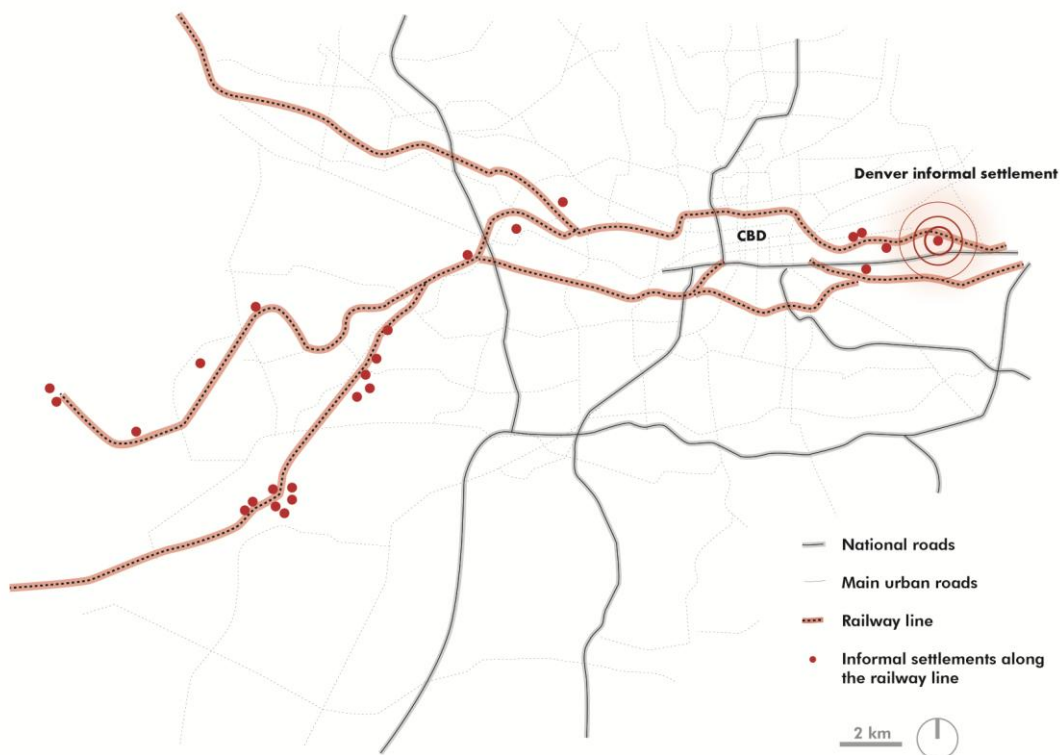
**Fig.4.2** | A view of the settlement  
Picture by Motebang Matsela



## 4.1 Introduction to the settlement

### 4.1 .1 The urban context

Denver belongs to a group of informal settlements that arose along the railway line before 2000 (cf. Huchzermeyer et al., 2014:162). It is located in the east area of the City of Johannesburg, within the administrative region F.



**Fig.4.3 |** Localization of Denver informal settlement along the railway line  
Scheme reproduced by the author from Huchzermeyer et al. 2014

The informal settlement is situated about 6 km away from the center of city (CBD) and is embedded into the meshes of the formal built environment.

It is placed on an unused area straddling Denver Industrial Node (DIN), a complex of warehouses placed within the broader east/west industrial belt of the city of Johannesburg. In the South, this area touches the historical east/west axis of gold mines. In the North, it is bordered by the railroad line that links the center of Johannesburg to the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. Being an industrial node, the area remains well accessible: it is served by the M2 motorway, the Main Reef Road and the railway line, with one of the stations located inside the industrial node.

The nearest neighborhoods are: Cleveland in the East, Malvern in the North, Benrose and Jeppestown respectively in the West and North-West.





**Fig.4.4** | Localization of the Denver Industrial Node in relation to the CBD

The DIN has arisen since the early 20s. The railroad track has played a key role in the process of urbanization of this area over time: it was originally used to serve the mining sector and at the same time it triggered the blossoming of industrial nucleus which have hooked up to the rail line along its spatial development (cf. also Kornienko, 2013).

Presently, the productive system of the DIN is predominantly constituted by light industries and wholesales that include: kitchen and machine parts suppliers, apparel manufacturing, automotive parts suppliers, vehicle repair services and also furniture of building materials (DPUM, 2007). However, the economy of the area appears to be currently in a phase of stagnation or decline, with some sheds in disuse or abandon (see also DPUM, 2007).

Beyond the south branch of the M2 motorway, a portion of the historical mine belt lies, characterized by mine dumps and some traces of mining, waiting to be reactivated by new uses. Within and in the proximity of the DIN, there are three huge male hostels that were built by the colonialist and apartheid governments to house migrant workers coming from non-urban areas of all provinces of the country: Denver, George Goch and Jeppe Men's Hostels.

During the years, pockets of informal settlements have sprung up in the vacant land strips, placed between the hostels and the warehouses. Moreover, abandoned and informally squatted buildings have started to appear in this territory, scattering irregularly here and there.



**Fig.4.5** | Localization of Denver informal settlement: focusing on the surroundings of the DIN

Denver informal settlement is precisely squeezed among the built meshes of this section of the Main Reef Road. Even if it is located just a few kilometers away from the CBD, it appears isolated from the rest of the city by a crown-area composed by the productive buffer and the mining strip. Denver is not very well known, although it is placed on one of the main connecting roads of Johannesburg; it remains hidden behind a group of buildings, partially abandoned, bordering the Main Reef Road; crossing that built curtain, a vibrant world, crowded with activities and a bustle of people with a "life of its own" is unfolded (Tormey 2013:134 reporting the words of Wilson Johwa).

The current overall picture of the context shows a neglected landscape, stigmatized as unsafe, lacking of the main characteristics of urbanity, missing of equipment and services, and featured by a crumble quality of public spaces and buildings (cf. DPUM, 2007).



**Fig.4.6** | Access to Denver from the Main Reef Road  
Picture by Nathi Templeton Makhanya





**Fig.4.7** | Aerial photo of Denver  
Source: Google map (retrieved in 2016)

#### **4.1.2 Dimensional characteristics and main demographic data**

The number of structures and dwellers currently present in Denver is not easy to determine. The Census of the City of Johannesburg, conducted in 2007, estimated 510 shacks. The enumeration conducted in 2014 by Denver community members, along with the CBOs Isn and Fedup, and the NGO Corc, found there to be 1093 shacks and 1968 people. The enumeration initiated at the end of 2016 by the same network of actors has censused about 2470 people.

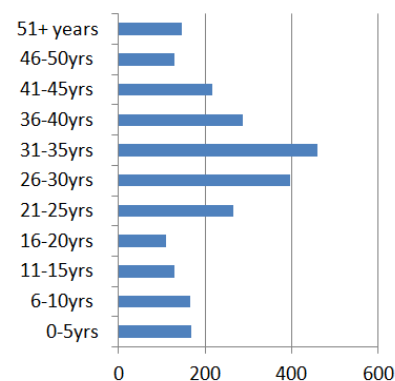
Estimating the number of people and structures in an informal settlement is a critical operation that always contains limits and a wide margin of error: given the very changing nature of informal settlements (Huchzermeyer, 2011; see also Weakley, 2013) it is difficult to find

univocal and all embracing data valid once for all. According to this, it is clarifying the expression of a Denver resident who claimed: *'here the reality is ever changing'* (Int. 23).

Regarding to the gender composition, men represent the majority of censored people (with about 56%, while women represent about 44%<sup>31</sup>).

Referring to the age composition, the largest group is constituted by people between 31 and 35 years old, followed by a group of people aged between 26 and 30<sup>32</sup>. It results that the average age of people in the settlement is predominantly young and middle aged. The settlement is also characterized by a certain quote of children – even if their presence is not so dominant.

Finally, as described in Tormey (2013) reporting the words of Wilson Johwa, HIV infection amongst women had been estimated at around 56% (more than twice the national average).



#### 4.1.3 The origin of the settlement

Since the 40s, with the end of the II World War, Johannesburg experienced a severe crisis related to the shortage of housing due to the large influx of internal and international migrants arriving to the city to look for work in the mining and in the manufacturing industries (Crankshaw and Parnell, 2004; Beall et al., 2002). This led to the spreading of informal settlements. In the following years, the colonial governments responded by providing standardized houses in segregated townships for urbanized African populations, resulting in the demolition of informally established settlements (Crankshaw and Parnell, 2004). The provision of this type of housing was closely linked to the national segregation policies of that time which aimed at controlling the urbanization of African populations in South African cities through the establishment of separated residential areas on the basis of the ethnicity (Beall et al., 2002; Crankshaw and Parnell, 2004).

An aggravating aspect of these policies was that rural Africans, who were not born within Johannesburg's boundaries, could not be qualified for permanent urban residence and were granted only temporary urban rights (Crankshaw and Parnell, 2004:362). They were not allowed to access to permanent housing or labor contracts and, after the working period, they were "forced to return to their rural homes in distant labor reserves" (Beall et al., 2002:50).

<sup>31</sup> Data retrieved from the Enumeration 2016 and based on a group of 2471 respondents.

<sup>32</sup> Data retrieved from the Enumeration 2016 and based on a group of 2471 respondents.

For these rural migrants, the access for renting family accommodations was very limited and so they were compelled to live in single-sex hostels' dormitories, while their families were not allowed to reach Johannesburg and so continued to live in their home places (Crankshaw e Parnell, 2004:362).

The first forms of accommodation for migrant workers were the *mining compounds*, built in close proximity of the work-places (Maylam, 1995:29). The single-sex hostels were a variation of the compounds and they both constituted a form of "differential accommodation that separated single migrant workers from other urban residents" (Maylam, 1995:29). Compounds and hostels were built by the government as well as private companies.

Those housing policies constituted a base for a differentiation between people with or without urban rights (Crankshaw and Parnell, 2004 quoting Hindson, 1987); they were emblematic of the application of logic of control on the geographical movements of people by *using* the city planning. This control on migration – and urbanization –, through the application of housing policies, is at the origin of the strong inequalities and socio-economic segmentation between different urban groups in the city of Johannesburg, having asymmetrical rights to access to urban opportunities.

From the end of '40s until the '60s, the Job Council built about 53 thousand houses and enough hostels for migrant workers, to house an additional 20 thousand residents in Johannesburg (Lewis, 1966 quoted in Beall et al., 2002). Denver hostel was precisely built in 1944 by the government, a few years after the nearby Jeppe hostel that was built in 1938<sup>33</sup>.

Denver hostel is a massive building constituted by a succession of standardized collective rooms. It still today continues to house male migrant workers, mostly coming from the Kwa-ZuluNatal province, some of whom have permanent jobs and others only temporary occupations.

Nobody seems exactly to know how many people live in the hostel today; the figure seems impossible to be thoroughly estimated: *"There are a few hundred, but they still come and go"* a leader of the settlement commented in a personal dialogue.

---

<sup>33</sup> Data retrieved from a dialogue with a Denver settlement leader



**Fig.4.8** | Denver Men's Hostel

Denver settlement was born next to the men's hostel. The census of the City of Johannesburg reports that the settlement was established in 1990. However, it is possible to trace the realization of the first shacks already in the late '80s. It is confirmed by one of the interviewees who declared to have arrived in Denver in 1987 (Int. 22).

Two narrations exist about the origin of the settlement, both connected to groups of women (Int. 20). One tells that the informal settlement arose initially to house some women, who used to come from rural areas to visit their husbands residing in the hostel, and since they were not allowed to stay inside the dormitories they established the nearby shacks. The second story tells about groups of women that begun to position themselves near the hostel, selling beer and preparing traditional food of rural areas, for the male migrant workers.

Since the end of 80s, with the gradual decline of government's control over migratory influx to Johannesburg, many people arrived to Denver building their dwellings.

This story underscores how this informal settlement is indissolubly linked to the attempt of people to subvert the segregationist urban policies applied by apartheid governments oriented to exercise control over the freedom of movement of people within and between cities. It arose as a side-effect of the immigration control policies and their willingness to *fix* people in a place and keep them *apart*. Denver emerged in response to the policies of a temporary and unequal urban rights distribution, which introduced a differentiation not only between black and white

but also between non-migrants and migrants – the former constantly marginalized and the latter with greater freedom and urban rights. It arose precisely from people escaping away from these constructs of segregationist policies, in order to "develop their own specific forms of urbanism, infuse the city with their own praxis, values' moralities and temporal dynamics" (De Boeck and Plissarte, 2006: 34; also in Myer 2011).

Denver tells the fragility of such systems that stubbornly try to control people's movements setting boundaries and dedicated areas within which to move, especially when, for most poor people, *moving* constitutes a device to try to reach a better life.

## 4.2 Characteristics of the built environment of the settlement

Below is a description of the Denver built environment following five spatial variables, spanning from the scale of the dwelling to the one of the settlement.

### 4.2.1 The spatial edge's configuration

Denver's spatial edge is very complex in its morphological-typological composition.

First of all, it appears *dynamic* given its changing over time: initially, it included the so called *beer hall*, a small area placed in the proximity of the hostel, where the first shacks were built; then it grew by densification of the entire vacant land surrounding it, branched along the adjacent sidewalks and incorporated some unused terrains and abandoned buildings around it. It grew by assembling available spaces, following a process of adaptation to the existing urban forms, making space between waste lands, and expanding with small steps by progressively incorporating unoccupied areas.

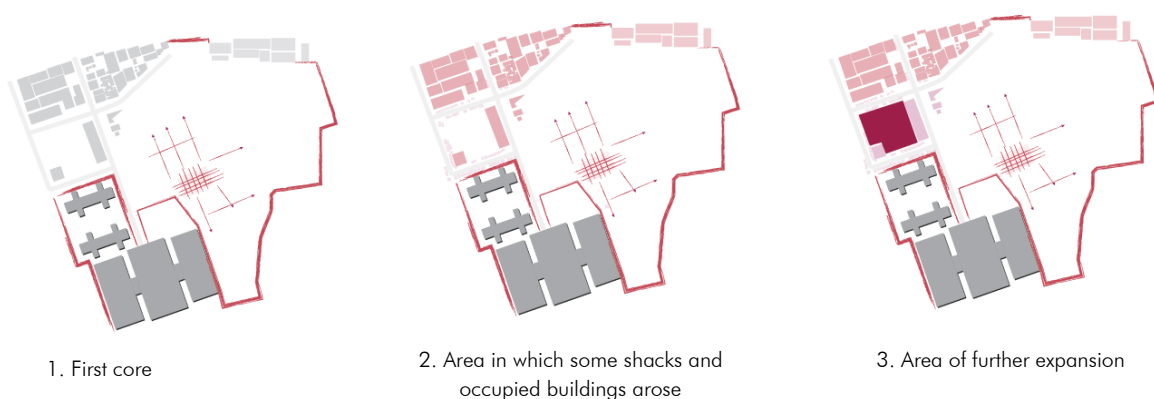


Fig.4.9 | Denver's spatial growth

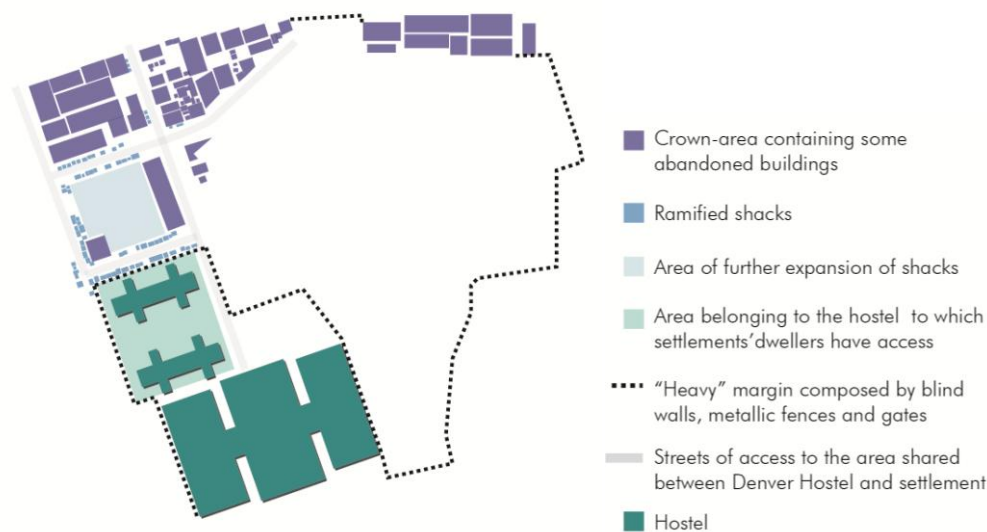


Precisely for this kind of scattered spatial growth, Denver's spatial edge results to be also *multifaceted*, given the myriad of spatial conditions along its development:

- a thick edge composed by: some abandoned buildings; a skeleton of an old factory that houses groups of shacks, which are attached to it; and ramified shacks along the sidewalks.
- a thin edge, composed by: an aggregation of metal fences; concrete walls with a barbed wire, separating the settlement from the road on one side and from the hostel on the other; and a gate under surveillance, at the point where the settlement shares the access with the hostel.

These board-structures define a sort of intermediate area where formal and informal appear overlapped and negotiate their coexistence.

Given this heterogeneous composition, Denver's margin remains *blurred*, unlikely marking uniquely an in-and-out of the settlement. Where does Denver settlement begin? Where does it end? What it seems from the observation on the ground is that there are no defined spatial limits of the settlement, no clear physical boundaries to refer to.



**Fig.4.10** | Denver's multifaceted edge





**Fig.4.11** | Examples of the Denver's multifaceted edge

Finally, Denver's spatial margin appears differently porous. It is marked by a nebula of accesses, that are different for nature, frequency of use, degree of accessibility and recognizability: a) a straight carriageable boulevards, leading from the Main Reef Road to the settlement, which constitute the main access to the settlements shared with the hostel; b) unpaved pedestrian accesses, consolidated over time according to a progressive accumulation of passages; c) occasional and invisible accesses, opened through curtains and fences.



**Fig.4.12** | Denver's differently porous edge



**Fig.4.13** | A pedestrian access to Denver

#### 4.2.2 Composition of the spatial layout

The built tissue of the settlement tends to be non-uniform, following a complex spatial hierarchy of main and secondary routes not immediately traceable. It is characterized by a heterogeneous distribution of dwellings' density, where rather clusters or crowded areas emerge. The dwellings establish a variable relationship of proximities among them, and appear articulated around a ramification of open spaces and a combination of paths of different dimensions, which are narrow like crevices and then wide enough to allow the access of cars.

The densest areas tend to remain particularly isolated since they are more difficult to walk through, and for this feature they can be the most dangerous areas of the layout –or at least they may give the sense of danger– being more exposed to crime episodes.

At the same time, the densest areas remain particularly susceptible to the fire risk, since the flames can rapidly spread across the structures.



**Fig.4.14** | Denver's spatial layout

Scheme elaborated with the support of data furnished by Aformal Terrain members



#### 4.2.3 The space of the house

In the Denver settlement, the types of dwellings, with reference to the building materials, are mainly three:

a) Dwellings built with makeshift materials made by an assemblage of corrugated iron zinc, plastic, and wood. The roofs are lined with plastic mantle, and fixed with weights of various natures (such as stones); b) dwellings entirely made by corrugated iron zinc, with standardized metallic sheets, for the roofs and the walls; c) dwellings built with bricks and mortar, or cement blocks and concrete for the walls, and metal sheets for the roofs.



**Fig.4.15** | Dwellings' typologies

According to the dimensional characteristics, there are mainly single or double room one-story-high structures. Some dwellings have no windows, while others have small ones, and generally in a maximum of two, *'because the windows are expensive'* – a resident suggests. This certainly results in a poor ventilation system within the dwellings.

A larger portion of dwellings accommodates 1/ 2 people; a smaller portion accommodates also three or more people. As a result, the crowding index of the dwellings remains not excessively high.

Due to the small size of the dwellings, the internal functions are assembled in a very little variety: in one-room dwellings the cooking and sleeping functions are shared; in the two-room dwellings the main functions of kitchen and bedroom are generally divided through tissues hanging from the roof.

Unlike other informal settlements in the city, the plots of the dwellings are very often not defined by enclosures, leaving the in-between public/private spaces as indefinite intermediate areas resultant from subsequent additions of structures.

#### **4.2.4 Basic services**

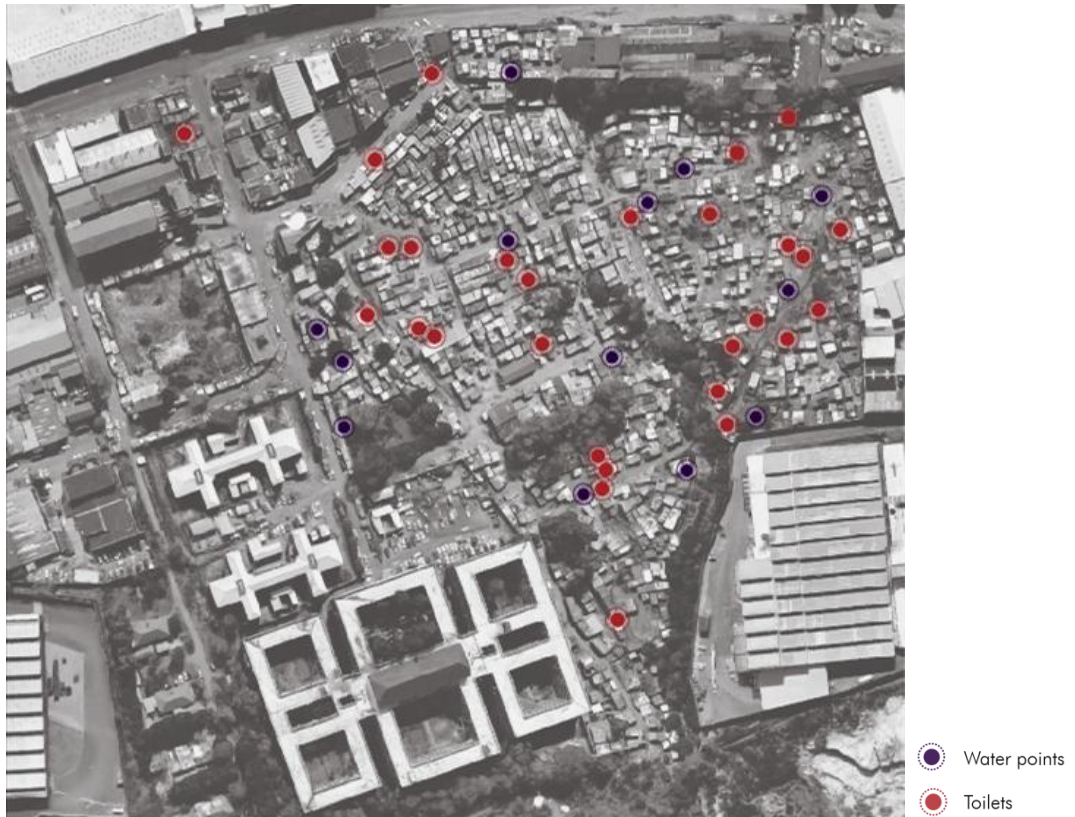
The settlement is provided with temporary services introduced by the government to ensure minimum standards for living conditions:

*a)* Blocks of collective toilets, with no division between male, female or children, and not equipped with any bathroom fixtures (such as sinks or showers). There is a cleaning service for the toilets kept by the government; however, due to the occurrence of the clogging, the service does not appear sufficient. In spite of their poor quality, the latrines remain easily accessible since people do not have to walk long enough to reach them;

*b)* About 18 water points sprawled within the settlements – each one constituted by multiple taps – put in place by the government.

The rainwater collection and drainage system is heavily deficient; currently it consists of a principal open-air channel crossing the center of the settlement, and secondary rudimental conduits. The system results to be fragmented, not well interconnected, and insufficiently distributed in the settlement. This lack of an efficient drainage system generates mild areas during the rain period in different parts of the settlement.

Finally, the community is not supplied with electricity, so the main fuels for lighting and cooking are paraffin, woods and candles. This is often the cause for the breaking out of fires within the settlement.



**Fig.4.16** | Latrines and water points  
Scheme elaborated with the support of data furnished by Aformal Terrain members



**Fig.4.17** | A water point





**Fig.4.18a** | Latrins



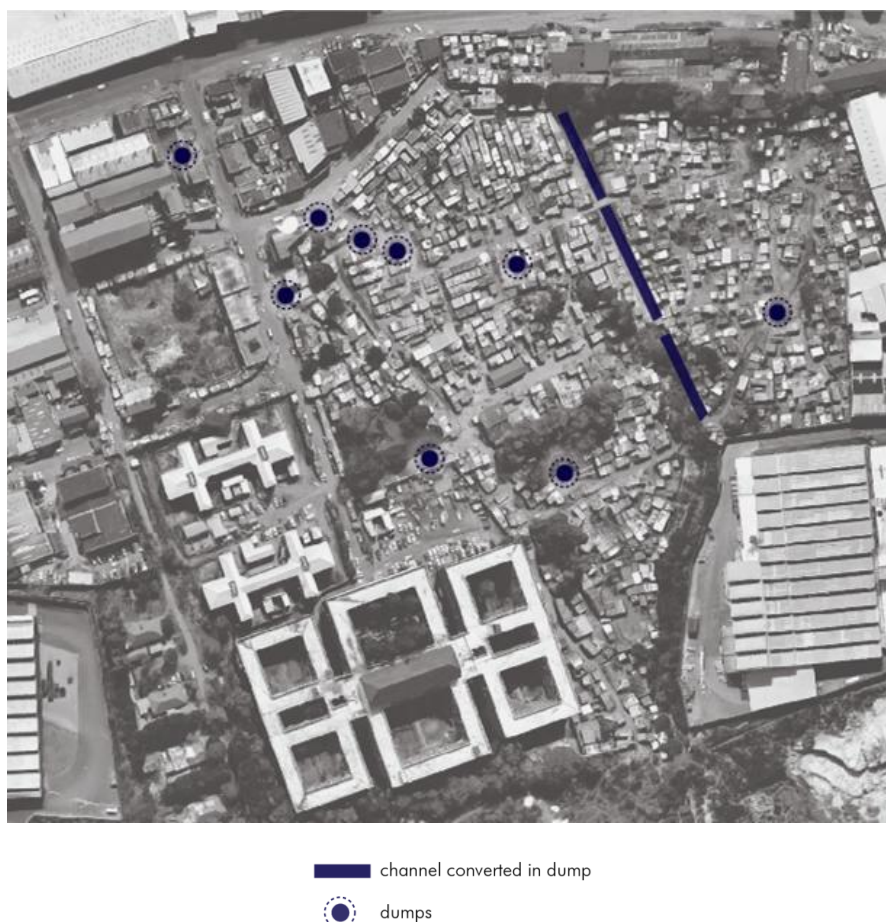
**Fig.4.18b** | Latrins  
Source: Google map

#### 4.2.5 Environmental dangers

Denver is placed under a main environmental risk linked to the waste cycle management. First of all, the drainage channel, which traverses the entire settlement, is strongly polluted since it is cyclically converted into a waste landfill. It represents also a source of flood danger as well as bad smell.

Moreover, small dumpsites are sprawled within the settlement in open air sites – near the widening and the toilets – that have been consolidated over time as points for collecting rubbish. These open air dumps represent sources of soil and water contamination and bad smells. Moreover, the huge number of waste accumulation points determines the spread of rats which represent dangerous disease vehicles for the dwellers. In the settlement, there is a waste management service carried by the government, which operates one or two times a week (from the interviews the frequency of the service is not clear); however, given the number of dumps, the service appears still insufficient.

Finally, another environmental danger is connected to the closeness to the mining dumps. The settlement indeed remains under the potential risk of pollution coming from the mining dust being carried by ventilation and atmospheric agents.



**Fig.4.19 | Dumpsites**

Scheme elaborated with the support of data furnished by Aformal Terrain members





**Fig.4.20** | The channel



**Fig.4.21** | Dumpsites

## PART I - MOVEMENTS

This part represents the first step of the analytic grid of the rhythm aiming to unpack the relationship between informal settlements and human mobility. It consists in "placing" the settlement within the main migratory flows' dynamics and precisely in looking at the inflows-outflows trends involving it.

In particular, this part is oriented to answer to the first sub-question:

### *1. What is the role of informal settlements in people's migratory paths?*

This question could be decomposed in additional ones:

- 1a. how are informal settlements "collocated" within people's spatial progressions among different locations?
- 1b. what are the socio-spatial characteristics of informal settlements involved in the dynamic of attraction and concentration of migratory flows?
- 1c. what is the relevance of informal settlements in people's socio-economic progression?

To answer to these questions an exploration of Denver informal settlement is conducted using qualitative data collected during the fieldwork, and quantitative data elaborated from the Enumeration 2016. This part is structured in five closely related sections: the first looks at the main people's in-flows trends toward the settlement; the second at the logic of these inflows; the third at the people's out-flows trends from the settlement; the fourth gives some points of reflection about whether the spatial movements of people across the informal settlement result also in movements out of poverty; the final section tries to draw some conclusions about the role of the informal settlement within people's migratory paths.

Doing this means looking from the outside at the main courses of human movements across the informal settlement.

### **4.3 The settlement within the dynamics of people's inflows**

To understand the role of Denver within people's migratory paths, it is useful to start to locate it within people's spatial progressions among different locations (see Turok et al., 2017). In particular this section looks at the in-mover trends involving Denver, and more specifically at: the places of origin of people, their periods of arrival to the settlement, and the spatial articulations of the trajectories in reaching Denver.

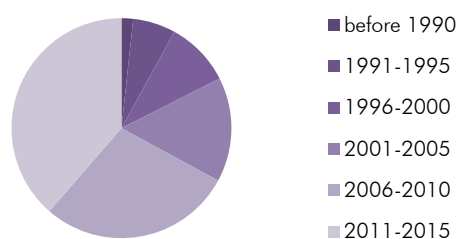
Denver appears inscribed with multiple inflows of people moving on a number of directions and coming from different places. Qualitative and quantitative data show that in Denver, the majority of the residents are from South African provinces, belonging to different ethnic groups,

with a clear predominance of people from the Kwa-Zulu Natal province. The majority of Zulu people is not surprising since their presence has gradually been settling in Denver in close relation to the male hostel – which has always been home for mostly Zulu speaking workers. In Denver there is also an unspecified number of people coming from abroad, particularly from the countries of Southern Africa, such as Malawai, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and The Democratic Republic of Congo. In the settlement there is also a group of people coming from Pakistan, who manage of some *spaza* shops next to the settlement's access (Int. 22).

From these data, it comes out the image of Denver as a little microcosm enriched by multiple ethnicities and composed by a heterogeneous society. According to this, two main initial considerations can be traced: firstly, the presence of Pakistani people is an interesting aspect regarding the changing of ethnicity within Johannesburg's informal settlements and starts to reveal their global – and not only continental – connections; secondly, the prevalence of South African groups in Denver, contradict some misconceptions that consider Johannesburg's informal settlements as largely inhabited by foreign migrants.

About the segmentation of the inflows according to the period of arrival of people, currently in the settlement there are, on one hand, *long term residents* – even arrived at the time in which Denver arose – and, on the other hand, there are frequent inflows of *new arrivals*. The comments of residents collected during the interviews are precisely clarifying of this situation: '*Each day you can see a new face*' (Int. 22); '*There are too many new arrivals*' (Int. 8).

These observations are supported by an estimation made from the enumeration questionnaire (2016)<sup>34</sup>, regarding the years in which the dwellers started to live in Denver: a small percentage of people have lived in Denver since or even before 1990; about one-third, arrived to the settlement between 1991 and 2005; about two-thirds of Denver's dwellers have arrived between 2006 and 2015. Data from the enumeration reveal that there have been new arrivals also throughout 2016.



**Fig.4.22** | Diagram of the years of arrival of Denver's dwellers to settlement  
Diagram reproduced by the author on data from the Enumeration 2016

<sup>34</sup> Basing on a group of 1401 respondents.

These data are interesting since they show that de facto Denver is a very consolidated settlement given both, on one hand, the presence of people that has rooted inside the settlement constituting its hard-core; and, on the other hand, given also the presence of groups of new people still arriving. This consideration challenges some public propaganda and misconceptions about Johannesburg's informal settlements often depicted as temporary places. They rather solicit to accept that the involvement of an informal settlement within flows of moving people does not correspond to the temporariness of the place *per se*. It is rather just a sort of *apparent* temporariness of the place (see Lombard, 2013), confused with the fluidity of people; this consideration matters since precisely such kind of distorted perception of fugacity may constitute justifications for informal settlements' demolition.

Finally, the spatial progressions of the in-movers to Denver are articulated on two main levels: 1) *extra-urban*, or direct transition from outside Johannesburg to the settlement; 2) *intra-urban*, or arrivals from within Johannesburg to the settlement – which in this case it is possible to define as relocation. One involves Denver in the people's first migratory steps inside the city; the other involves Denver in the secondary migratory steps of already urbanized people from different areas of the city.

However, the analysis of the dwellers' answers to the question "In which province was your previous town/settlement?" – contained in the Enumeration questionnaire (2016)<sup>35</sup> –, shows that a larger group of in-movers arrived directly to Denver from outside Johannesburg<sup>36</sup>. It means that, for a considerable segment of the dwellers, Denver has been the first area they reached in Johannesburg, and so that it has represented a sort of *first landing area*, an arrival and entry point to the city.

Conversely, for a smaller group of people, Denver has been a secondary mooring within the city. It is the case, for example, of a group of people evicted from different areas of Johannesburg, both formal and informal. Evictions in Johannesburg can be operated by private owners or by the government in cases of renovation or removal of squatted buildings<sup>37</sup> as well as demolition of informal settlements. It is emblematic the testimony of an elderly resident of Denver who declared: "*I arrived here when I was evicted from the near Malvern neighborhood since a private bought the building I lived in*" (Int.12).

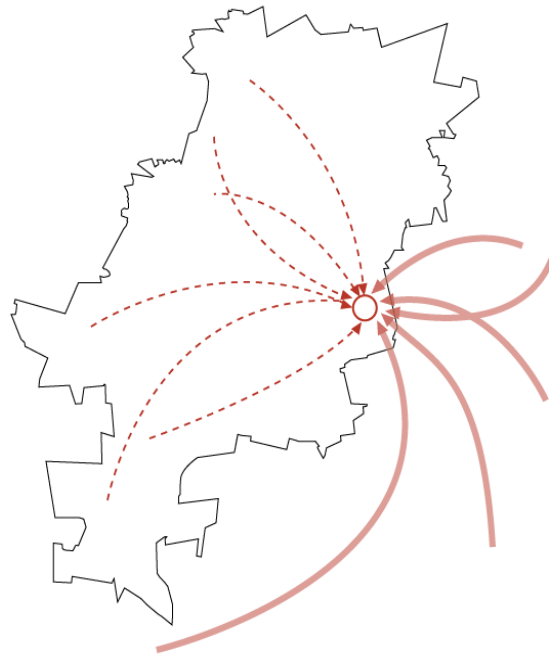
---

<sup>35</sup> Basing on a group of 1420 respondents

<sup>36</sup> In this regard, for example, one needs only think that a large number of respondents declared to have lived in villages or towns in kwa-Zulu Natal before arriving in Denver - namely in their areas of origin.

<sup>37</sup> Insights from Neil Klug's conference "What is a progressive planning policy instrument? Reflection from South African cities", Wits University, 15 May 2017.

In summary, what emerges from these data is that Denver is a site of confluence of two macro inflows with opposite directions: greater inflows of new urbanized people; and smaller and more sporadic inflows of already urbanized people.



**Fig.4.23** | Main inflows' directions

The study of the arrival times and articulations of the people's migratory trajectories results interesting since the latter play a role in influencing the differentiation of the social and economic composition of the community residing in the settlement. Some causes for reflection concerning this issue are presented below:

- The large configuration of Denver as an arrival point makes it a sort of receptacle of people at the beginning of their migratory trajectories, that are generally the poorest of people and mostly young: the economic scarcity and the young age are indeed two characteristics that go hand in hand with the fact that these are people just initiating their migratory path attempting an improvement of their individual circumstances. In addition, these groups are predominantly constituted by people (mainly male) that move alone without their families (cf. also Cross, 2010a).

In this regard the comment of a leader from Denver is particularly descriptive of this condition: *'You can see young people that arrive here just with their bag'* (Int. 23). This expression is indicative of the social status (as single and young) and the scarce financial condition of these groups. So, the configuration of Denver as landing areas thus reflects a certain sprawled level of poverty as well as the large presence of young people.

- Moreover, the presence of longer term residents is more likely associated to the presence of larger family nuclei living in the settlement with children. The fact that only a part of the community is constituted by long-term residents may reflect the non-excessive presence of children.
- Finally, the presence of people that reached Denver in the second step of the migratory trajectory may correspond more likely to profiles with greater economic availability, being farther in their migratory path.

These considerations then suggest that the *economic availability, the composition by age and the family typology* can represent social features of the community directly branched with the dynamics of inflows. In turn they could constitute a sort of social parameters informing about inflows dynamics involving the settlement and vice versa.

The next paragraph tries to reflect more specifically on the rationale behind these inflows.

#### **4.4 Socio-spatial characteristics of the settlement influencing the dynamics of attraction and concentration of inflows**

This section investigates the socio-spatial characteristics of Denver settlement that participate in the dynamics of attraction and concentration of migratory inflows. This study allows to understand the rationale of people's inflows to Denver, and so to recognize, from the bottom-up, the organizing logic behind the in-movers. Namely, the section reflects on the reason why Denver has been consolidated over time as a magnet area for moving people. Exploring this dimension helps to illuminate Denver's socio-spatial functionality that encourages people to move to it, in their attempt of reaching better conditions of life.

In this regard, it is interesting to start from the question contained in the Enumeration 2016: *'What is the main reason why you moved to this settlement?'* The predominant answers of the censured people<sup>38</sup> are synthesizable in three categories: the first response, which prevails over the others, making up about 60%, is *"for employment opportunities"*; the second most frequent answer is *"for affordable rent"*, making up about 30% of responses; the third frequent answer, only making about 6%, is *"to be close to family"*.

These data evidence that most people – both young and old – have moved to Denver primarily for economic reasons and precisely for accessing/looking for job opportunities; furthermore, the data show that migration to Denver occurs also to find a cheap places to stay in the city; finally,

---

<sup>38</sup> Basing on a group of 1411 respondents

an interesting data about in-movers to Denver, even if not so frequent among the responses, is connected to social reasons, namely to join family members already living in the settlement<sup>39</sup>.

Starting from these results, elements from qualitative interviews and dialogues are here included; the latter permit to defragment and further expand the above quantitative data, to capture a whole range of deeper socio-spatial dimensions that play a role in attracting and supporting the life of Denver's dwellers.

In the following sub-sections some peculiar features of the settlement shaping and influencing the dynamic of the inflows are explored. They can be classified in three groups: localizational factors, social networks, and affordability-flexibility of housing.

#### **4.4.1 Localization factors**

Localization is the key factor in the process of informal housing (Cross, 2010a). Opportunities offered by location are the essential elements for people in choosing to move to an informal settlement or another as a strategy to improve living conditions. Following their needs, people decide to move within the city and distribute themselves in specific *functional* locations (Cross, 2010a): there is a localization logic behind the informal urbanization process, a strategic spatial distribution of self-built settlements within the city. It is something that could be connected with the so called "area effect" or the influence that the broader urban context of a neighborhoods plays on human mobility dynamics, that can be a determinant of the probability of people for moving in (Robson et al., 2008:2705).

Specifically for Denver, the location criteria attracting people can be determined by three main features that are closely interrelated (cf. also Bailey and Livingston, 2007): *area economic potentialities*, namely the economic vibrancy of the context, which goes hand in hand with the potential working opportunities that the area offers; *area infrastructural interconnectivity*, related to the presence of a public transport network and link to the road system; *area services accessibility*, connected to the proximity to the main basic urban services.

According to the economic possibilities, the node of light industries and commercial activities surrounding the settlement constitutes a potential tank of job opportunities. At the same time, Denver is immediately adjacent to the mining dump that can still offer mineral processing residues (even informal). Furthermore, Denver is located at walking distance to residential neighborhoods, which can offer domestic or generic jobs opportunities.

---

<sup>39</sup> There are other less frequent responses not taken in consideration here.

According to the area services accessibility, the nearby residential neighborhoods, in particular Malvern, represent a sort of point of reference which many people use to access to different urban services and, particularly, to respond to the basic needs of education and health (cf. also results of Kornienko in other settlements, 2013). Malvern is in fact a residential area to which people turn for the presence of a clinic and schools.

In this sense Denver owns strong potentialities in bringing people closer to a whole range of formal urban services (see Turok et al., 2017).

According to the infrastructural interconnectivity, Denver is located in a walking proximity to the railroad station making the train one of the most used public transports by dwellers. According to this, one of the residents synthesizes: *'the train takes long but with little money'* (int.10).

Moreover, the Main Reef Road – which runs along the settlement, crosses the whole industrial node and reaches the CBD – is served by the semi-formal mini taxis, which are the most frequent and economic urban vehicles. Another interesting aspect that is worth to emphasize is that the government provided a free school buses service for the students of the area, that precisely cross the Main Reef Road<sup>40</sup>.

Additionally, the proximity of the settlement to the CBD results in reducing travel times, and therefore lowering transport costs, if confronted with more peripheral solutions. The latter is a factor that becomes crucial in extreme poverty contexts because it enables people to economize (cf. Weakley, 2013).

Even though the importance of accessibility and infrastructural interconnection do not directly emerge from the enumeration and interviews as explicit reasons why people moved to Denver, they represent factors that residents certainly take into consideration in their localization choice. In this regard, it is important to recognize that, since only a part of Denver's dwellers are employed in the surrounding industrial areas (and this is not surprising since it is partially declining), and that conversely many people work – or are still looking for jobs – elsewhere in the city, the rationale for choosing Denver can be precisely linked to the presence of the transport network which widens the territory of urban labor possibilities.

Public transport network is the key element that permits people to easy penetrate into the urban labor market: transport networks therefore become important players in shaping the informal

---

<sup>40</sup> These considerations are supported by some data elaborated from the enumeration questionnaire: making an estimation on a pool of 699 responses regarding the main type of transport people use to reach the work-place (not considering people working inside the settlement), the train is the first type of transport used (352 r.), followed by people reaching the workplaces by walking (208r.) or using taxi (110 r.); a minority uses bus, bicycles or private cars.



urbanization process in accordance to people's socio-economic necessities, and it enrichs the urban capital available to informally housed people (cf. Kornienko, 2013).

These localization factors highlight two fundamental aspects of the urbanizing logic taking place in Denver: on one hand, it is a process which is gradually adapting to the grid of socio-economic opportunities offered by the city; on the other end, it is strongly integrated within the city on a spatial level, clinging to the morphological and infrastructural features of formal urbanization. Unlike some descriptions which argue that informal settlements are isolated fragments, Denver is emblematic of a settlement strictly embedded in the city on the base of the (functional) relevance it assumes in the face of resident's socio-economic needs (see Cross, 2010a).



**Fig.4.24** | Localizational aspects influencing the inflows

The location logic of informal settlements poses questions to governmental low cost formal housing, often criticized for keeping poorer people far away from urban livelihood opportunities. The house-workplace spatial relationship is at the center of many negative criticisms to low-income housing programs since they are often placed in peripheral areas: the heavy shortage of public transport – not sufficiently spread in all areas of the city –, as well as the need for urban poor to save on transport costs by shortening the distance between home and work, are the main factors that can neutralize formal housing interventions, not sufficiently fitting with the necessities of target populations. The well-known risk in these cases is that people who receive a formal low-cost house from the government in marginalized peripheral areas, can eventually leave it to return to better located informal settlements. These arguments pose important questions about the effective role of housing in tackling inequalities – or paradoxically in endangering poverty – and, in turn, they call into question the potentiality of

informal settlements to meet the needs of the urban poorest precisely relying on their localization.

#### 4.4.2 Social networks

Parental or friendship ties, stretched between the places of origin and urban informal settlements, represent often the channel through which migrants move. According to this, it is worth to emphasize that in the city of Johannesburg an important discriminating factor in choosing the areas of access to the city is certainly the connection with friends and relatives already living in the city. On this basis, for instance, a sort of macro geography of *first landing sites*, built on the distribution of ethnicity, emerges: according to this, for example, many Central African migrants are deployed in formal central areas, migrants from Southern African regions are more connected to the informal settlements.

Talking specifically about Denver, social networks – often rooted in the places of origin of people – have gradually arisen in the settlement: the human ties represent one of the reasons for which the first generation of people began to settle in Denver – in relation with the hostel – and, still today, they are crucial factor in attracting new arrivals. This is particularly evident with Zulu people that represent the largest ethnic group in the settlement.

This networking goes hand in hand with the need for migrants to find some material support from already urbanized relatives and friends, relying on a human organization that acts as a tool to figure out personal difficulties (cf. also results of Kornienko, 2013). This discourse calls to mind the comments of a leader in talking about community relations among people: *'They use to solve problems. The problem is always here and they use to sit down and resolve the problem. It means there is a good relationship between people'* (Int. 21).

The importance of networking is also strictly connected with the immaterial cultural needs for people to identify themselves in a group, reproducing customs, sharing lifestyles, behaviors and values (see Garcia et al., 2015). The comments of some leaders in talking about social relations are particularly representative of this feeling: *'We feel at home in both places, there (places of origin) and here. We share the same traditions, we brought here our traditions, we do the same dance all weeks here... We still continue with our tradition and culture'* (Int. 20); *'The relationship here is the culture'* (int. 19).

The above aspects are indicative of the extent to which many people coming to Denver still maintain strong ties with their communities of origin (cf. also Gough et al., 2015).

Another aspect regarding the social ties lies also in the way the settlement is managed from the bottom-up. Inside the settlement there is a structure composed by the *leaders*, the *committee members* and then, upon all of them, the *chiefs*. Those are key figures in the settlement who usually recognize any kind of problem within the community, to act as point of reference for residents, to calm disputes in the settlement, and to intermediate with external actors, like the State.

Moreover, some leaders maintain strong connection with their places of origin of which in turn they are the representatives in Denver. From dialogues with the leaders it appears also that some of them are even proposed by the traditional chiefs from the places of origin. As a leader clearly synthesizes: *'The leaders claim to represent people. They represent different issues. Some are political leaders, some are social leaders, some are religious people, some are traditional leaders representing the place of origin'* (int. 20).

So the leadership is a sort of bridge structure established on three levels: among residents, between them and the external actors, and between the settlement and remote areas of origin. These forms of micro-politics arranged on the community leadership, meet the socio-economic needs of people and act as a filter through which people manage to enter and stay in the settlement.

All these dynamics thus talk about a dense structure of human relations – extended also to the places of origin of people – that represent an important dimension in the formation and consolidation of informal settlements in the city. The social structure constitutes a sort of support net for people arriving in Johannesburg and it is the element through which they move and then establish themselves in the city.

#### **4.4.3 Affordability and flexibility of dwellings**

Shelters built with low cost or makeshift materials make the living in the city economically accessible in relation to the scarcity of economic resources of the poor urbanized people. "The substandard character of these reception areas helps to contain the cost of living for workers with low-paid, entry-level jobs" (Turok, 2015:3).

Denver represents an affordable urban place for people coming from remote areas in conditions of poverty; it can offer the opportunity of having a low or no-cost accommodation while looking for jobs or creating the conditions to jump into better quality of life. According to this, it is clarifying the comment of a leader saying: *'One of the main reason people want to live here is that life is affordable'* (int. 20).

An informal renting market exists in Denver (and this is not surprising being a common practice in Johannesburg informal settlements). The organization of the informal dwellings' tenure goes through people who rent out a part of their shacks or that have moved away renting the shacks left in the settlement. From individual qualitative interviews, an average renting payment is estimable approximately around 100R. Conversely, a part of the dwellers own the dwellings: those are likely the original settlers or the longer term residents that informally bought the title.

This figure highlights the importance of this settlement for people in entering in Johannesburg, considering that there are hardly other places that allow living in this city, and so close to the center, at these renting prices. Avoiding value judgments concerning informal renting mechanisms, it is worth to emphasize the fact that rents remain very moderate if compared with the formal housing market and, therefore, in Denver people find rents they can afford despite their financial scarcity and job instability.

Moreover, rising outside of the formal planning framework, shacks are subject to an alternative type of housing market that is more flexible and not subject to time constraints, more easily negotiable in accordance with people's economic possibilities and irregular earnings (Turok, 2015) and for which no identity documents are required (a condition that may become decisive for irregular foreign migrants).

Affordability and flexibility of housing offered by informal settlements are features that subsidized low-cost formal housing does not always offer. Even governmental houses can include the payment for some services, taxes and maintenance, that not all migratory profiles are able to afford, especially young unemployed people, with no family and at the beginning of their migratory path. Formality increases housing costs, so it risks excluding the poorest people of the society (see Cross, 2010a). This is explained in Huchzermeyer and Karam (2006:54) "solutions that are not affordable to beneficiaries in the long term will lead to their displacement to housing areas that impose fewer costs, usually newer or remaining informal settlements".

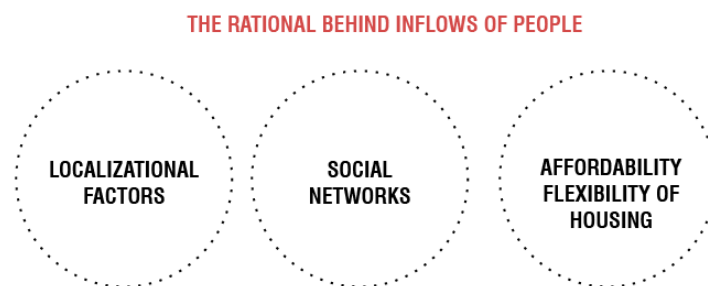
At the same time formal housing may offer too rigid solutions for mobile people (see Cross, 2010a).

Informality, on the contrary, can sustain people responding to their need to find immediate economic shelters while, at the same time, leaving people the flexibility to move if they need.

This entire section has attempted to track the socio-spatial characteristics that attract people to Denver. In doing so, by avoiding romanticizing, and with the awareness of the enormous problems that exist in this settlement, this section has illuminated the functionality of Denver in responding to people's needs. Those are features which remain often ignored by some descriptions and conceptualizations univocally focused on adverse or reprehensible aspects.

In this section, the three key features that make Denver an attractive informal settlement have been traced. Localization, in relation to the proximity of job opportunities, appears to be an important magnetic factor. However, after a more thorough analysis of the data, it emerges that it is still a combination of all factors that intervenes in the dynamics of attraction and concentration of flows (cf. Weakley 2013:190). More deeply, they are a set of features representative of the importance that informality covers for the poorest segments of society attempting to access alternative urban lives; they are characteristics that the formal solutions are not always able to provide; they constitute important support/protection for those who live in poverty and arrive to Johannesburg for the first time with *just a bag*.

The next section focuses more specifically on the outflows trends.



**Fig.4.25** | Aspects constituting the rationale behind the in-movers

#### **4.5 The settlement within the dynamics of people's outflows**

This section continues the analysis of human mobility dynamics involving the Denver settlement, and gives some insights about people's outflows. However, the impossibility of having dynamic data, related to people's trajectories once they have left the case-study settlement, represents a limitation of this dissertation. While recognizing that this is an area that needs further studies, the section tries to identify at least some main trends.

Based on dialogues and interviews with leaders, it is possible to track down some voices on the ground suggesting that the settlement is also involved in some outflows, namely dwellers that after living in Denver for a varying period of time, change location and move away, to other formal and informal areas of the city.

This leaks from a nebula of comments of leaders encountered in the settlement during the fieldwork:

*'When somebody find other opportunities somewhere else they move away, they can also move to other informal settlements...somebody can even establish a new informal settlement'*  
(personal dialogue);

*'They can move all over, especially where they find a job or it is easy to go to job'* (int. 19);

*'Someone waits for the government house and then move'* (personal dialogue);

*'They go away because they want their own place. If they stay here more, they have to rent'*  
(int. 20);

*'They can go back to the home place when they retire'* (int. 21).

These testimonies permit to tentatively trace a classification regarding specifically the conditions under which people leave the settlement: 1) if they find a job – or a better job – in other areas of the city, therefore for the emergence of new necessities to stay close to the work place; 2) if they find their *own* place – formal or informal –, therefore in order to avoid paying for renting and so for a sort of adjustment of the individual residential conditions; 3) if they receive an RDP from the government, and so following the up-scaling into the formal housing market; 4) if they decide to go back to stay in the places of origin when they get older, and so for social reason to reunite with the families "left behind". These movements presuppose both a transition to other informal settlements or to formal houses.

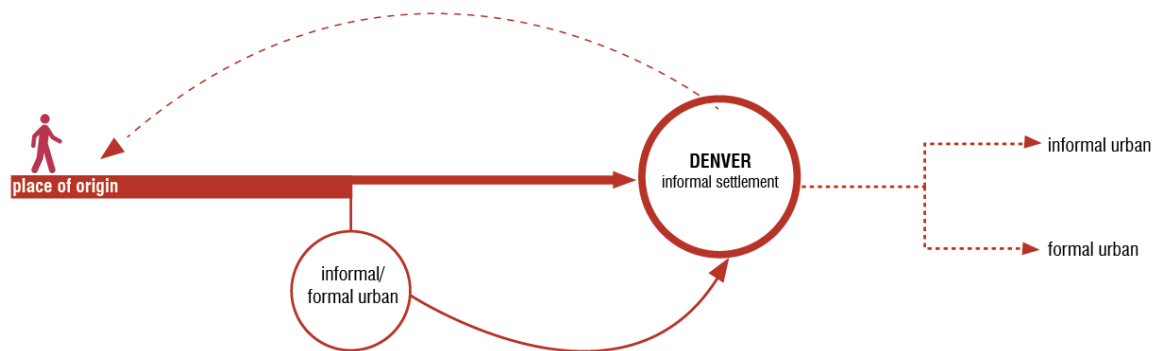
From this evidence, it is possible to recognize that the shack tenure – and so the condition of paying a rent –, the job instability, the social links with the place of origin, and the condition of being an RDP beneficiary, can represent objective contingencies determining people's outflows. Those are factors that detach people from the place, and establish a tension to moving outside the settlement determining the next migratory steps. However, among those factors, the lack of shack tenure titles and the labor uncertainty could be recognized as variables more specifically connected to a condition of vulnerability.

In addition, it is important to underline that some Denver's residents seem to be involved in sorts of cyclical or scattered migration between the places of origin and the settlement: this is especially true for people who work in business or agriculture in their home-places to where they regularly travel. According to this, it is interesting to note that the rural-urban connection is

actually developed on both directions, going and coming, albeit in different intensities (cf. Turok et al., 2017).

Which trends prevail, inflows or outflows? Due to the elusive nature of the subject, it appears not possible to figure out which trend prevails, if the inflows or outflows, and perhaps it is not particularly useful for this research purpose which does not aim to establish quantity but rather to bring out some distinctiveness about informal settlements. However, stories from members of the community can guide the research. In this regard, it is interesting the reflection of one of the leader who said: *'From my experience there are more people coming than going away'* (Int. 22), *'There are more people arriving than going away'* (Int. 8).

Below is a diagram collecting the partial finding about inflows-outflows dynamics involving Denver.



**Fig.4.26** | Flows dynamics involving Denver settlement

This overlapping of trajectories reveals the highly "estuarial" nature of this settlement (Landau, 2013) characterized by a strong mix of in-movers and out-movers. This intersection of streams, with different intensity and directions, calls to mind the powerful image of urban estuaries theorized by Landau to describe places embedded in the broader network of social and economic exchange through the movements of people: "where the interaction between tides and rivers create unique and dynamic ecosystems, these urban gateways generate distinct sociopolitical forms through the multiple movements and dynamics taking place within them" (Landau, 2013:111).

The next paragraph tries to consider whether these spatial movements lead to an up-scaling of people in the urban labor market, and hence on the potential role that migration and informality take in the economic emancipation of individuals.

#### 4.6 The dwellers' economic progression

This section tries to better understand if the immigration to Denver corresponds to an economic progression of people. In this attempt the section looks specifically at people's access into the labor market. In this regard, as argued by Turok et al. (2017), the access to job opportunities is taken as the main indicator related to the transitions of people out of poverty (ibid.:12). The main aim here is to try to trace some points to reflect on the relevance of the informal settlement inside people's economical progression. In doing this, quantitative and qualitative data regarding Denver's dwellers status of employment is analyzed.

Starting from the quantitative evidence, elaborating the responses of the Enumeration questionnaire (2016) about people's current working conditions, doing an estimation based on a group of 1890 – not including retired people, full time students and dependent children in the community –, about a half of the respondents declared to be unemployed, and the other half declared to be employed under different labor conditions (full-time employed, self-employed or part-time employed).

However, observation on the ground shows that people that declare to be officially unemployed can still have some forms of occasional occupation and receive some forms of unsystematic earning.

From qualitative interviews it emerges that women are mostly employed in cleaning services; men are employed in the construction field, security, mini taxi driver, commercial activities; some men work in the nearby companies. An interesting aspect to underline is that a part of dwellers is employed in activities inside the settlement such as: repairing cars, commerce in *spaza* shops, little forms of restorations, waste recycling activities, and small scale artisanal-mining.

Based on this evidence, the screen shot of the current occupational situation in Denver gives some important suggestions about the role of the settlement in people's economic progression.

- Firstly, looking at the glass half full, the fact that about half of the surveyed population declares to have a kind of occupation, considering that they arrived to the city as job seekers, is a significant indicator of the importance of Denver as a base for access to work.
- Secondly, the amplitude of the unemployed segment is certainly considerable but at list not surprising due to the fact that: *a)* Denver constitutes a confluence area for many unemployed people (namely, who have arrived precisely to look for work); *b)* as seen in the previous section, there is at least a portion of people that have found a job in other areas of the city and so have



moved away, closer to the work place. So, in this little turnover of arrivals of job seekers and departures of new employed people in further areas, the segment of unemployed remains vast.

- Thirdly, having an income, for the vast majority of the residents, means being able to send money to the home-places. Observation on the field suggests that part of the savings of the urban workers of Denver is always sent to support the lives of dwellers' families in the rural area and small towns around the country and abroad. The possibility of having an earning and saving has positive effects not only on the individual economic trajectories but also on the families' ones, "because having more people in work implies higher household incomes and less poverty" (Turok et al., 2017: 12). This fact speaks about Denver as tool for the broad economic development of remote territories; it recognizes the informal settlement as an important node not only in individual but also in households' economic trajectories.

The intent is to avoid falling into the celebration of informality and therefore naively risking to not considering the economic difficulty in which many dwellers live given the employment insecurity and low salaries. However, it is worth to emphasize that, in a scenario of desperate stories, informality represents for these people a ground for attempting to create the conditions for access to work (or at least to avoid spending money while looking for it). These assumptions help to trace the functionality that informality can assume in the economic trajectory of people.

What these arguments suggest is the potentiality for the informal settlements to establish themselves as a space for trying an economic progression. For job-seekers moving from deprived non-urban areas, informal settlements represent a tentative terrain towards an alternative future and where, on the basis of their characteristics of social network, flexibility and cost-effectiveness, the level of the risk that people run is generally reduced (Weakley, 2013).

As Turok et al. (2017), part of the literature tends to move on two opposed visions regarding the role of informal settlements in influencing people's economic improvement. A part tends to see informal settlements as a poverty trap, and a part as a basis to escape from a condition of poverty (Turok and Borel-Saladin, 2016; Turok et al., 2017). A vision claims that informal settlements offer "pathways-out-of-poverty", a "low-cost gateways to urban economic possibilities for people determined to improve their circumstances by migrating from distressed rural areas (...)"(Turok et al., 2017:2). The alternative vision instead conceptualizes urban informal settlements as "cul-de-sacs" or places with no hope, places of constraint more than filters to new urban economic chances, that "holds people back from accessing the meagre opportunities available" (Turok et al., 2017:2).

Avoiding to strictly move between dualistic visions, informal settlements could rather be seen as areas for *attempting* new possibilities. They are often extremely difficult contexts but they nevertheless may give a chance for an alternative future. People within informal settlements then

move in a field of probabilities: someone may succeed in their out-of-poverty emancipation trajectory and others may remain trapped in it.

#### **4.7 Discussion. The role of the settlement within the dynamics of migratory flows**

Denver appears to be an instrumental territory that groups of people, coming from different regions of South Africa or from abroad, use within their migratory trajectories to attempt their own socio-economic promotion. This section, synthesizing the above findings, tries to identify the role that Denver can assume in people's migratory paths and therefore how it is used by people in their attempt to reach a better condition of life.

This is built starting from Robson et al. (2008) who, in a very different context, define some categories of neighborhoods, based on the role that they play according to people's mobility (Robson et al., 2008).

Although Robson et al. (2008) don't refer to informal settlements, their study can give some cues that apply to Denver. However here, differently from the above mentioned study, rather than defining a unique role-category for the Denver settlement, starting from the empirical evidence, the point of view changes to define the multiple roles it can assume among the multitude of migratory trajectories, namely the multiple way it can be used by moving people:

- *Escalator area* (Robson et al., 2008) – An area of support that people can use for saving money and mobilize resources, while working or looking for job, to then continue the migratory route elsewhere (Cross, 2010a:11); a place in which people live for a while to subsidize the life they will live elsewhere (Landau, 2013).

In this case the spatial movement to Denver can determine an economic mobility and a subsequent spatial movement. The settlement "becomes part of a continuous onward-and-upward progression through the housing and labor markets" (Robson et al., 2008:2698). This description corresponds almost entirely to Robson et al. (2008)'s escalator area.

- *Improver area* (cf. Robson et al., 2008) – An area that people can use to try to reach a socio-economic improvement while rooting their life inside the settlement. In this case, the attempt of a socio-economic upward movement is not linked to a further spatial shift elsewhere. It is a largely modified interpretation of Robson et al. (2008)'s improver area.

This is a theoretical classification that attempts to sum up the actual complexity of informal settlements; in the reality these categories are interlaced and their contours are blurred.

Differently from the official classification introduced in the previous chapter, the one proposed here helps to frame informal settlements as dynamic social processes rather than static physical

objects. Moreover it suggests focusing on some human qualities, as well as on the constructive attempts and wills of people in building their own life path (see Lombard, 2013).

The above described dynamics of movement that engage the settlement in multiple ways contain different times of crossing and permanence – that may span from a number of months to some years to an entire life. However, these are objective times which lose sight of the other face of the time factor, concerning more specifically its subjective component, the *being* temporal, namely the temporality. The next part looks precisely at this dimension.

## PART II \_ TEMPORALITIES

Denver is positioned within multiple migratory flows by assuming the role of escalator and improver area. These categories can correspond to different crossing times. However, those are times of transit with an objective duration, and that do not include another aspect of time: the "being temporary" namely the dimension of time as "human experience" (Robertson, 2014).

This section precisely investigates in greater detail a second component of the analytic grid of the rhythm of the settlement which is precisely the time. In particular, it looks at *people's temporalities*, or the way the time is perceived by dwellers within the informal settlement. In particular it is investigated the way people experience time by looking at the future and planning their life course. Doing this implies entering inside the flows, getting closer to people and trying to reach a more nuanced observation of their life stories.

The question that this part of the dissertation tries to answer is: *how do settlers experience time in informal settlements?*

In an attempt to build an analytical grid that unwraps the relationship between human mobility dynamics and informal settlements, while the previous chapter introduced the analysis of movements, looking from the top at the main people's flows trends, this part aims to reduce the gap between the observation lens and the place by analyzing its finest grain. Precisely, in try to ground macro trend mobility dynamics, the different interrelation of settlers with the temporal dimension is analyzed.

This part is entirely built on a micro-analysis of qualitative data coming from personal narratives of Denver's residents.

### **4.8 People looking at the future: profiling dwellers' multiple temporalities**

Temporality is different from the measurable time; it is something linked more precisely with the settlers' perception or experience of time (Lombard, 2013; Skovly Aakvik, 2016). Robertson (2014 cited in Skovly Aakvik, 2016:6) makes a distinction between time as "senses of objective, or quantitative time" and temporality as "lived time" intended like a qualitative experience.

The point investigated here is that precisely people's prospectives and visions of tomorrow participate in shaping their temporalities. In this regard, personal stories of a group of Denver's dwellers have been explored by focusing on narration about their future programs. Positioning the observation lens *inside* the migratory flows occurring in Denver, various people's temporal profiles come out, in relation to their different future intentions, ambitions and programs: refining the look with a microscope analysis within Denver, it is possible to note how the

settlements is actually crossed by multiple temporalities, which are strictly related to people's prospective.

From a collection of 15 portraits, based on the question *'What are your future plans? Do you want to stay here? Do you want to go away?'*, except of the singularity of each life, it is possible to segment Denver's residents into four main different profiles:



- ***'I want to stay here'.*** It is the answer of a group of people that, in looking at the future, plan to remain to live in Denver.

*'If you ask me what I want to do in the future...I say that I remain here'*

An elderly man stated (Int. 22)

*'I want to live here forever'* (Int. 6)

A middle aged woman fiercely declares

*'I say I stay here...if only I could have a proper house...'*

One of the oldest people living in Denver stated (Int. 21)

In these answers, the imagined future appears univocally established (cf. Skovly Aakvik, 2016 in other contexts of study); though people know that there may be always unforeseen events – such as being evicted because of the land ownership title – their future vision is unambiguous: remaining in Denver. By staying in Denver they imagine to achieve their life objectives; by cultivating a permanent project in Denver they try to improve their life conditions. For these people, showing a *permanent temporality*, Denver represents (or at least is perceived as) the possible final destination of their migratory path, the settlement where they have found their *own place*.

Even though drawing conclusions on the basis of such a small group of interviews is to be avoided, it is interesting to note that this category is made up of elderly/middle aged people

(over 35 years), mainly owning the dwellings. Among these profiles, it is worth to emphasize the presence of women who live in Denver with their children.

- ***'I want to stay here until the retirement'***. It is the answer of an elderly person who declares to aim to go back to the place of origin once retired, and so to rejoin his family left in rural areas. Also here the future vision is univocal and presupposes a conscious choice. It is programmed and developed on two steps: working in the city, saving money and then returning to the place of origin to enjoy the urban efforts with family members in the home place. It is not a permanent profile but rather it shows an *extended temporality*.

*'I'd like to go back to my home-place because of the old age'* (Int. 14)

- ***'I'd like to go away'***. It is the answer of a group of people who admit to want to leave Denver, centering on the difficulties of living in the settlement given the shortage of services or the precarious conditions of the built environment.

*'I want to go to other places because there is a dump near my place that smells. I don't want to go far because of the cost of the transport....just staying around here'* (int. 12).

*'I want to go to other places. I am tired to live here'* (Int. 16).

*'I want to go in other places in Johannesburg. No positive aspects here. Only suffering. No improvement. My life has never changed'* (Int. 15)

In these stories the future seems to be imagined in reaction to painful conditions experienced inside the settlement, and from which to escape; they are people who look at the future conditioned by their negative story in Denver. They do not have a specific plan, and they seem to imagine their future in opposition to what they experienced in the settlement. While constructing alternative visions, they seem to live a *protracted temporality*.

From the interviews it emerges that this is a heterogeneous group composed by both elderly and young people, arrived to Denver in different years. This group of respondents is predominantly composed by men living in Denver without families.

- ***'I want to stay here... for now'***. These are people who declare they want to stay in Denver until they find a job, a better accommodation or a favorable life opportunity elsewhere.

*'I don't know for the future. It is depend. I stay here...for now...then I will move if I find a job somewhere else' (Int. 9).*

*'I want to live here ... now ...for job opportunities' (Int. 17)*

These answers come from a group composed by mainly younger people (who are less than 30 years old), and who live in Denver without immediate family members.

For these people the vision of the future is blurred: an unspecified or non programmed future through which a vast field of options remains open; they are people who rather live the now (cf. Skovly Aakvik, 2016 in another context of study). *'For now'* can be a very variable time so they live the most mobile and *fleeting temporalities*.

The conditions of temporalities are embedded in different ways in these four profiles, dealing with different future visions (with both a positive or pessimistic roots). Whether they are ephemeral, elusive, uncertain, programmed and to some extent unpredictable, the different way to look at the future generates multiple temporalities interlaced in Denver.

#### **4.9 Experiencing time: people waiting and hoping for a better future**

"(A)ll visions require hope" (Appadurai, 2007).

Mindful, ambiguous, or sometimes painful, among people encountered in Denver the future visions seem always shape feelings of waiting-hoping for a better life: their experience of time, looking at the future, seems to always be translated into an overwhelming feeling of waiting and hoping for an improved condition of life. Waiting and hoping appear being an intrinsic condition in Denver resident's visions: in a context of poverty and harshness, where the desired future cannot be achieved immediately, waiting and hoping are the embedded essence in everybody's future perspectives. The narratives coming from the four temporal profiles of Denver's residents seem precisely characterized by this common dimension.

Box 3 \_ Theoretical broadening on the concept of waiting/hoping. The concept of waiting/hoping is not entirely new in dissertations regarding the understanding of the cities. Yiftachel (2009) speaks about "permanent temporariness" as a sort of condition of standby, imbalance – that, for extension, can be considered as evocative of a state of waiting –, experienced in what he defined the gray spaces.

Jeffery (2008:955; also quoted in Oldfield and Greyling, 2015) talks about "chronic waiting" to refer to "the growing number of situations in which people wait for years or whole lifetimes". In this regards Jeffery cites Bayart (2007) who considers that the waiting has become central to subaltern experience (Jeffery, 2008:954).

Moreover, the concept of waiting-hoping came back strongly in the recent international debate about urban issues and has been used to describe a widespread condition of contemporary society involving, in particular, the multitudes of migrants and refugees, escaping from war and poverty, forced to live in the identification and expulsion centers or in refugee camps at European borders, waiting to go back home or enter in Schengen.

Speaking more specifically about slum dwellers, Auyero (2012), in his studies in Argentina, talks about people who are constantly waiting for the State intervention to receive services and houses, lying in a condition that fuels a process of subordination and "patience of the state" (Auyero, 2012; also quoted in Oldfield and Greyling, 2015).

Appadurai (2002; also quoted in Lombard, 2013) refers to slum dwellers' condition of waiting for better living conditions and, in talking about three civic organizations aiming to address poverty in Mumbai, he also uses the concept of patience. More specifically, for Appadurai the patience is mainly connected to a set of actions to transform the conditions of poverty by the poor themselves in the long run (ibid.).

From a different perspective, Ross (2010) talks about the aspiration to ordinary urban life that arises in conditions of reduced material circumstances and opportunities in a shack settlement in the city of Cape Town, in the post-apartheid South Africa. According to Ross "people must make extraordinary efforts to achieve stability and routine in daily lives marked by ugliness and the slow erasure of hope that is poverty's grinding legacy" (ibid:5).

The issues dealing with feeling of waiting-hoping are deeply rooted in the South African literature about informal settlements. In particular, two recent works from South African Universities conducted by Kornienko (2013; 2017) and Oldfield and Greyling (2015), in general terms, investigate the ways in which people in informal settlements wait and hope for the State, and analyze informal settlers' agency *in the meanwhile*.

Conditions of waiting-hoping for decent housing have historical roots in South African communities, and they still remain connected to the people's attachment to Nelson Mandela and all the promises and expectations emerged with the official collapse of the Apartheid and the building of the new democracy.



The right to a dignified house was proclaimed with the end of the Apartheid by the South African government. Housing had become a symbol of the post apartheid era and was professed as a tool to overcome the disparities so strongly present in South Africa (Kornienko, 2013). Based on the Bill of Rights of 1996 and Housing Act of 1997, according to which all South Africans are entitled to have access to adequate housing (Oldfield and Greyling, 2015), the so-called *waiting lists* were created. These are sort of database of all people qualified to receive a subsidized house from the governments. These are lists of beneficiaries – created after the end of apartheid, and still existing – of people entitled to receive a house from the state on the basis of specific requirements. In particular, to be qualified for a government subsidized house the criteria are the following: being a SA citizen with a valid SA ID document; being over 21 years of age; having a total household income not exceed R3500 per month; being married or living with the partner or having dependents; not having owned property previously or currently anywhere in South Africa (being a first time home owner).

The registration in the lists of beneficiaries has caused many people to find themselves in a condition of waiting for the state that lasts for years. This condition of expectation is now lived as the norm; a perennial condition entrenched in the daily life of people, a sort of constant background in their lives. Today's legacy of the ANC's intentions of 1994 to house the homeless are the waiting lists (Kornienko, 2017:36).

"Across South African cities, waiting for state-provided homes is normal, a taken-for-granted, every day, and intergenerational condition. Although it can take decades, people continue to wait, to hope for, and to expect a formal house. Registering and then waiting to become a beneficiary of a house funded and built by the state persists as common sense, a logical strategy. (...) Across the poorer and working-class majorities of South African cities, individuals and families wait in informal settlements, backyards, and hostels, in overcrowded public and private housing" (Oldfield and Greyling, 2015).

Despite the renewed promises, a large part of the poorest South African groups is still waiting and hoping for the state interventions.

Among Denver residents the feelings of waiting-hoping for a better future seems to be developed on the *tension* between: a waiting-hoping for a life improvement resulting from the State intervention, and a self-improvement. The first dimension is rooted around the Government's initiative, the second is self-reliant, and pushes a whole range of micro-practices and initiatives from the ground up that the informal settlement's community, independently from the government, puts in place towards the self-building of better conditions of life.



Looking at the first dimension, in Denver, the waiting-hoping for the State's intervention to provide decent houses, infrastructures and services is ambiguous. Based on dialogues with the leaders about the expectations of people for the State, it seems that, on one side, people are still waiting for the state's interventions but, at the same time, their expectations appear recondite, just an opaque background. In this regard, the comments of the leaders are significant:

*'(The Government is doing) nothing. They (the residents) do have hope but very little. They (the residents) apply for help, interventions, particularly houses ... but it not yet happened'*

*'We are not sure of what the Government is doing. These people are waiting since 1994. But we do hope. We live by hope'*

*'There is still expectation for the government. People didn't lose the hope'*

What appears from the field is that people still wait/hope for some forms of State's intervention but without completely trusting that it can happen. The widespread sentiment that emerges from Denver community in relation to the government is elusive: they wait/hope but their beliefs about government's intervention are recondite. They still wait/hope for public interventions but paradoxically they do not seem to fully know to what extent they should have trust in them (cf. result of Kornienko, 2013). The waiting/hoping for the State remain stealthily in people's life. The expectation of the government intervention still exists but doesn't emerge or dominate their everyday life.

Just in the light of this, the comment of a leader opens up an alternative road and introduces a related aspect of Denver residents' waiting/hoping: the self-reliance dimension, namely what people do by themselves in order to meet their needs.

*'It is of us, the residents, to call for a change (...). If you stay seated there, government thinks that you are comfortable there. That you are not (...). We do hope. We live by hope. But it is time to change our mind, to do things for our own' (Int. 20)*

**Box 4.** Theoretical broadening of the practices of people while waiting/hoping. In the literature, some authors have found a relation between waiting/hoping and people's initiatives from the ground up.

Kornienko (2013;2017), in talking about two informal settlements in post-Apartheid Johannesburg, correlates the feeling of waiting and hoping with the people actions that arise from below, and reports examples of popular political agencies in two communities in Ekurhuleni.

Similarly, Oldfield and Greyling (2015) in observing *how* people wait/hope for the state in post-apartheid South Africa, talk about "micropolitics of waiting": the authors sustain that waiting for houses from the government shapes on one side "politics of finding a shelter" and, at the same time, "politics of encounter between citizen and state" – namely, forms of interaction and negotiation among people and governments or external actors – mainly aimed to influence policies and governance. The latter can also be manifested in mobilizations and protests that actually come to "substantiate citizenship after apartheid". According to this aspect, Appadurai (2007) talks about the politics of hope that is experienced:

"in the galactic explosion of civil society movements (...). These networks, organizations, alliances, and movements (...)also have brought into being a whole new range of practices that (...) include techniques for self-education; methods for gaining economic dignity through devices such as micro-credit; affordable technological practices (...); community-based organization of health, security, and infrastructure; and ways of pressuring state and party officials to act on basic needs without falling into one or other version of machine patronage and vote-bank politics" (Appadurai, 2007:33).

Feelings of waiting/hoping for a better future do not generate ineptitude among poorer groups of Denver. The waiting/hoping is not paralyzing. People do not just expect passively for the change. At the contrary, the condition of waiting/hoping is faced through all people's micro-actions of transformation of their conditions from the ground up. The way the waiting/hoping is experienced, addressed, managed, and negotiated is translated into the vast field of bottom-up actions within the settlement.

Taking important insights from the three above mentioned contributions (Box. 4), precisely the self-transformation in the face of the individual expectation for a better future is analyzed in the next part. More precisely linked to the aim of this dissertation, the next part will investigate the myriad of bottom-up socio-spatial practices, put in place in the Denver settlement, born under the multiple conditions of temporality-related expectations for a better future. It will look precisely at the efforts of people to build and transform the physical environment of the Denver settlement.

### PART III \_ SOCIO-SPATIAL PRACTICES FROM THE GROUND UP

This final part of the case-study exploration tries to answer the question: *What types of socio-spatial practices arise from the bottom-up in informal settlements under people's multiple temporal profiles?*

If the second part of the case-study introduced the temporalities of people in relation to their future expectations, this part introduces the third component of the analytic grid of the informal settlements' rhythm: the practices, efforts and energies of people arising from the ground up under different temporal profiles.

The following sections firstly show people's socio-spatial practices at the settlement's level and successively launch a discussion regarding the possible links between these practices and the human mobility dynamics.

This part of the case-study exploration is based on qualitative data mainly relying on direct observation.

#### **4.10 Emerging socio-spatial practices from the ground up under people's multiple temporal profiles**

In the Denver settlement socio-spatial practices from the ground up can be divided into three different main groups.

The first one is constituted by spontaneous and unorganized practices of adaptation, individually conducted. These are practices developed on a daily basis, which do not arise for the achievement of specific political/civic aims; they rather lead to the access to the basic material needs in this underequipped settlement. The second group is constituted by individual practices, similar to the previous ones, but producing more collective effects. The third group consists of collective actions, more planned and coordinated than the previous ones; they are practices developed at community level, containing higher aims for political/civic achievements<sup>41</sup>.

The three groups of practices can be distributed on a horizontal line, spanning from adaptive actions, emerged in response to material urgencies – so working *in opposite way* to the status quo –, to more active actions, with higher value-driven ambitions, – so working in a *propositive way* to the status quo –<sup>42</sup>.

---

<sup>41</sup> This classification is done based on Bayat (1997) and Ballard (2015); see also Vicari and Tornaghi, 2010, and Nunez Ferrera, 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Insights from Prof. Sarah Charlton, seminar "Case studies and space/boundaries", Wits University, Johannesburg, 21/06/2017.

Each of the three groups can be divided into: instantaneous practices with shorter-term effects, and longer-term practices that require a greater future projection.

These practices are organized according to the spatial effects related to the 5 descriptive variables introduced at the beginning of this chapter.

|                        | INDIVIDUAL   |             | INDIVIDUAL WITH<br>COLLECTIVE EFFECTS |             | COLLECTIVE   |             |                          |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| <i>material needs</i>  | SHORTER TERM | LONGER TERM | SHORTER TERM                          | LONGER TERM | SHORTER TERM | LONGER TERM | <i>political needs</i> ➔ |
| the space of the house |              |             |                                       |             |              |             |                          |
| infrastructures        |              |             |                                       |             |              |             |                          |
| environmental dangers  |              |             |                                       |             |              |             |                          |
| layout organization    |              |             |                                       |             |              |             |                          |
| spatial edges          |              |             |                                       |             |              |             |                          |

Tab.2 | Table of socio-spatial practices

#### 4.10.1 Individual practices

##### Shorter term:

- **Maintenance of shelters.** They are spontaneous and small scale operations of maintenance of the shelters that can include the fixing of walls and cover coatings – when excessively deteriorated – to ensure a minimum standard of physical/psychological wellbeing and comfort health, while protecting against atmospheric or other external agents. It can be particularly important in the post-heavy rains phase, especially in shacks made with more precarious building materials.
- **Extension of service networks.** This is referred to small forms of electrification introduced by dwellers in some areas of the settlement, in response to the primary need for cooking and lighting, in a context in which the provision of electricity and street lights is absent.
- **Mitigation of environmental dangers.** To mitigate the damaging impact of the central channel periodically converted into a landfill – such as flooding and production of odors –, it is possible to notice that people have intervened with spontaneous strategies of adaptation, orienting the dwellings situated on the banks with the risk source behind them. In this case, residents do not intervene directly on the source of environmental hazard; rather the answer to it is passively given through the organization of this portion of the spatial layout at household level.



Fig.4.27a | The rears toward the canal



Fig.4.27b | The rears toward the canal. Photo by M. Matsela

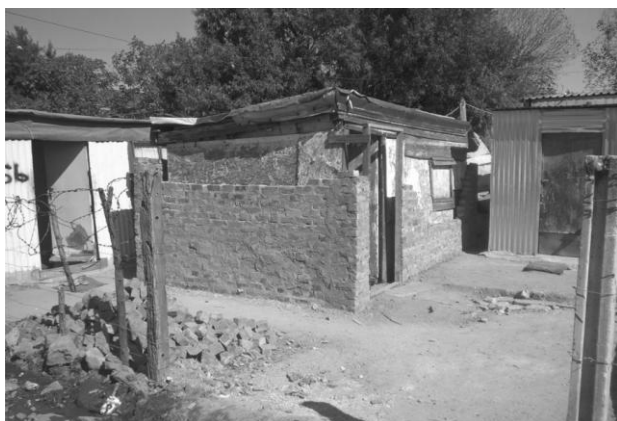
- **Forms of cohabitation.** It is referred to the sharing of the space of the house by two or more people not belonging to the same family, in order to afford renting costs.

##### Longer term

- **Incremental improvement of shelters.** A strategy that people put in place to improve housing conditions consists in triggering processes of consolidation of the shacks, gradually replacing the

makeshift material of the walls and roofs with corrugated iron-zinc sheets, bricks and mortar, or cement blocks.

Improvement of housing conditions can include the enlargement of the shacks with one room more. It is plausible to consider that this practice of the addition of rooms can be put in place in relation to new familiar contingencies, as well as economic possibilities, or for the necessity of inserting new functions in the space of the house (such as commercial or religious uses) (cf. also Kamalipour, 2016 in other contexts of study).



*'Sometimes I see they  
collect bricks and blocks to  
improve residential  
conditions '*

*(Int. 19)*

**Fig.4.28** | An example of dwelling consolidation by replacing wood with bricks

#### 4.10.2 Individual practices with collective effects

##### Shorter term

- **Cleaning and repairing collective infrastructures.** These are spontaneous and individually conducted daily actions that have effects on the wellbeing of the whole community. They include: cleaning routes and water drains – where they are present – and repairing basic infrastructures (like water taps), in order to ensure their functioning.

In this regard, it is helpful to report the question asked during the interviews *'do you do something to improve the condition of the settlement?'*, to which the interviewees responded by describing a whole assortment of small daily actions. From the interviews it emerges that the majority of the residents are involved in small ordinary management, care and maintenance works developed at the scale of the settlement: *'I sweep the street'* (Int. 17); *'I fix the taps when they lose water'* (Int. 18).

- **Guarantee the security inside the settlement.** Some people in the settlement take responsibility to guarantee the security of the community from crime and violence in different areas of the settlement, and consequently reducing the sense of fear within the community,



through a sort of self-organized system put in place on individual basis. '*I contribute to prevent crime in the settlement*' (Int.15).

- **Taking up unused open-air spaces for everyday activities.** Unused in-between spaces placed within clusters of dwellings are taken up by people for arranging multiple everyday temporal activities, like: drying clothes, interacting with neighbors, storing domestic objects and building materials, keeping animals, and parking. These spaces are also used to develop forms of small-scale artisanal mining carried on by both men and women.

An aspect that it is worth to underline is a lack of ornamental vegetation in semi-private spaces surrounding the dwellings. The presence of ornamental and cultivated gardens, is often used as an indicator in the analysis of informal settlements that goes hand in hand with the way people signify their spaces (cf. also Kornienko, 2013).



Fig.4.29 | Main uses in common open-air spaces

#### Longer term

- **Establishing a mixed land use.** In Denver, the main land use is certainly residential. However, in a poorly serviced layout characterized by the scarcity of the most basic equipment, refining the look to a finer grain, it is possible to notice an internal structure of mixed uses established by

the community. Those are distributed following *a front and a back*. The front is represented by the main access road that the settlement share with the hostel, where a number of commercial activities are concentrated: shops for cooking and selling foods, *spaza* shops, small mechanic shops, barber shops, phone services retailers and little taverns. The formal design of the access boulevard, for its position, morphology and functionality, attracts several informal traders. These activities are arranged in a way that is not casual as they strategically adapt themselves to the forms of the formal city, clinging to the main route conducting to the hostel, according to the logic that the main route attracts the most public activities. The access boulevard is the most vibrant collective space, the most communal promenade where human relationships are interlaced, and multitudes of habits are overlapped.

Moving in the *back* of the settlement, the open space becomes more discontinuous and the relational life ends up being concentrated in the areas around the water taps and in some intermediate semi-private spaces emerging as resultants among the structures.

In the internal area of the settlement, the mixture of uses becomes more discontinuous and assumes a sporadic character, where parts of some dwellings are used for *spaza* shops, religious activities, and taverns. In the internal area of the settlement, the first core where the settlement originated constitutes today the place where community meetings take place.

In parallel, a more hidden geography of waste recycling points is scattered here and there inside the settlement.

Attached to the boulevard, already inside the hostel gate, a crèche has been put in place for the children of the settlement and it also functions as driving school for the men of the hostel. Sometimes, during the week-end, the space in front of the crèche becomes an area for music events involving both hostel and settlement's residents.



Fig.4.30 | *Spaza* shops along Denver's main access

#### 4.10.3 Collective practices

##### Shorter term

- **Cleaning events.** These are sporadic events, where Denver residents can be involved, consisting in the cleaning of the canal-bed from drainage congestion due to the periodical accumulation of rubbish.

**Fig.4.31** | An example of a cleaning event

Source of the image:

<http://joburgeastexpress.co.za/72352/denver-informal-settlement-sluike-is-being-cleaned>



##### Longer term

- **Community meetings.** These are open meetings convened regularly in the settlement where all community members can participate. Community meetings are convened to discuss about problems affecting the dwellers, share information, bring up proposals or rising issues concerning the community, and take decisions for the settlement on an inclusive basis. This organization of community meetings reveals an important structure of everyday micro-politic of collective participation and decision-making.

The meetings cover different themes and it is important to emphasize how, depending on them, they are more or less crowded. According to this, one of the leaders, in talking about the level of people's participation in the meetings, commented: *'If it is a political meeting not so much people participate. If it is about job, a lot of people come'.*

- **Opening a savings scheme.** A group of community members, supported by FedUP, are working to open up a *savings scheme*. It is a jointly-named collective account, in which each participant can contribute according to her/ his own economic availability, and whose common funds can be used for developmental interventions inside the settlement. Once the account is opened, if it works, other residents can add to it incrementally.

The need for opening a savings scheme in Denver arose in order to finance the rebuilding of a part of the settlement burned down in a fire in August 2016. As well as providing a concrete

economic support for the settlement project, the aim of the saving scheme is to entrust a leading responsibility to communities in developing projects, while strengthening community ties. At date, in Denver, the opening of the scheme appears to be a quite slow process, starting at the time of the fieldwork (first half of 2017) with only a small group of community members.

- **Community workshop for the re-blocking.** In October 2016, a workshop of community planning was held in Denver, together with the community members, AFormal Terrain collective, ISN, FedUP and CORC members. The workshop was just the latest of several experiences, meetings and architecture/planning projects, which were held in Denver along with the community, starting from July 2014. The focus of the two-day workshop consisted in launching a proposal for the re-blocking of a sector of the settlement devastated by a fire which broke out in August 2016 in which 44 dwellings were destroyed. Even though the fire was a destructive event, it became an opportunity to trigger a community planning process for the formulation of a proposal for the re-blocking of that area. The re-blocking design proposal consisted in the reorganization of the spatial layout of the settlement starting from the existing configuration, and so without breaking social relations of proximity. It included the structuring of a paths' hierarchy and open spaces system, and a more regular distribution of shelters<sup>43</sup>. However, the proposals have not yet been implemented.



Fig.4.32 | A community Workshop in Denver

- **Community trip.** It is a community practice launched by Slum Dweller International and based on the importance of sharing knowledge evenly among informal settlements' dwellers, and learning directly by experiences from different communities<sup>44</sup>. On this basis, Denver residents, with the support of FedUP and Corc, went to visit a re-blocking intervention in Ruimseg, an informal settlement of the city of Johannesburg. It was a very important experience since it inspired Denver residents about what could be done in their settlement. *"Look here! We could*

<sup>43</sup> See more at: <http://studioatdenver.blogspot.it>

<sup>44</sup> See more at: [www.sdinet.org](http://www.sdinet.org)



*do these kinds of gardens in Denver"* a women said walking through the streets of Ruimsig;  
*"Denver need water storm drainage...like there...where we went together...in Ruimsig "* (Int. 12) a  
 man similarly stated during an interview.

Below is a complete diagram of the practices taking place in the settlement.

| <i>material needs</i>  | INDIVIDUAL                   |                         | INDIVIDUAL WITH COLLECTIVE EFFECTS        |                              | COLLECTIVE     |                         | <i>political needs</i> → |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|                        | SHORTER TERM                 | LONGER TERM             | SHORTER TERM                              | LONGER TERM                  | SHORTER TERM   | LONGER TERM             |                          |
| the space of the house | care and maintenance         | incremental improvement | using the surrounding spaces of the house |                              |                |                         |                          |
| infrastructures        | extension of service network |                         | repairing and cleaning                    |                              |                | community meetings      |                          |
| environmental dangers  | orienting shacks             |                         |   |                              | cleaning event | opening a saving scheme |                          |
| layout organization    |                              |                         |   | establishing mixed land uses |                | community workshops     |                          |
| spatial edges          |                              |                         | guaranteeing the security                 |                              |                | community trips         |                          |

**Tab.3** | Socio-spatial practices in Denver

#### 4.11 Discussion: positive effects and negative by-products arising from the relationship between human mobility dynamics and people's socio-spatial practices

Is there a relation between the above described socio-spatial practices and human mobility dynamics? Evidence from Denver can suggest some considerations about the way people's practices and human mobility dynamics mutually influence and co-constitute each other, and more precisely: about the socio-spatial practices that ensure/support human mobility and, on the contrary, about the negative outcomes arising from the human mobility dynamics in slowing down or discouraging the development of people socio-spatial practices inside the settlement:

- *Socio-spatial practices within the informal settlement that ensure/support human mobility*
  - People build **open-futures housing solutions**, which can be adapted incrementally depending on the personal life plans, as well as changing needs and socio-economic contingencies.

Just as one example, imagining a more permanent future in the settlement may encourage investments in the improvement of the dwellings. In this regard, the presence of houses in bricks and mortars, cement blocks, as well as the shacks enlarged with additional rooms, can be considered physical evidences of micro-investments that residents are willing to perform at individual level in spontaneous upgrading of the settlement, in a tension toward a future vision that presupposes to remain in the settlement, at least for a longer time. Those are more permanent housing-solutions that denote a greater expectation of staying. The different people's long-term views are reflected in different levels of effort to improve their space (cf. Lombard, 2013).

- Moreover, people **diversify and rationalize collective spaces** inside the settlement, in temporal and permanent manners, generating a flexible open space network to distribute internal activities.

- Within the settlement, people establish **flexible forms of utilitarian cooperation** which are not subject to temporal constraints (like forms of co-habitation).

- Finally, people organize **flexible community strategies** in which those involved do not suffer from any kind of temporal and economic constraints, like the savings scheme. The latter indeed allows people to contribute according to their personal income and, at the same time, it allows people of leaving the scheme if leaving the settlement and re-entering in the scheme in the case of going back to the settlement.

The latter are practices that assume a high level of negotiation between informality and human mobility.

- *Negative outcomes arising from the human mobility dynamics which slow-down/discourage the development of bottom up socio-spatial practices*

- The level of precariousness of housing solutions, in terms of building materials and dimension, appears a factor connected to the different economic contingencies of people which in turn result strictly related with their step in the migratory path: according to this, everyone is able to invest in the settlement depending on their own economic capacity which in turn is connected to the point of the migratory trajectory they find themselves. However, it follows that, recently arrived people at the beginning of the migratory trajectory are the ones with less economic capacity and therefore the most exposed to having to bear precarious housing conditions.

- Aspirations, future visions and projects play a role in influencing the level of engagement of people with the place: it means that profiles tending to more fleeting temporalities, or that imagine their life elsewhere, may not feel "fully engaged" in the place (Blaser and Landau, 2016; see also Landau, 2009); this in turn may constitute a dissuader for the development of individual practices in investing – in terms of energies, time and economies – in the private spaces of the dwellings, forcing these groups of people to have to tolerate a strong state of housing precariousness.

Very often, the discussion about the attitude of dwellers for not investing in the settlements is tied to the lack of land titles. Even if the relevance of titles is not certainly denied here, what the dissertation wants to emphasize is that it does not seem to be the only aspect to consider. This is confirmed by the fact that, for example, despite the absence of titles in Denver, some of the residents have invested in the settlement and consolidated the shacks. So, in an attempt to expand a discussion focused on titles, the aspect of mobility is introduced. In particular, including human mobility issues means shifting the discussion a little bit more on people's personal choices made in the pursuit of their own life projects. In this sense, deciding whether it would be the case of investing can be interpreted as an active choice made by people in accordance with their future plans and ambitions, and not just as a result of a condition of constraint.

Titles are relevant in influencing spatial practices but they are not the only factors.

- Finally, more fleeting temporalities seem to remain hidden in the folds of some participatory mechanisms (cf. Landau, 2009) and this can constitute a slowing device to more properly collective practices. This may represent a factor stalling the construction of a collective and longer-term vision of the settlement relying on common imagination for the future of the place

(for instance, these issues could affect a lower participation in political community meetings regarding the settlement, limit the participation in the savings scheme, and slow the implementation of the design solutions proposed in the workshops).

People with multiple temporalities, "varying degrees of permanence and flows" (Khoolas, 2001), build, organize and use the space in temporary and permanent ways (Parthasarathy, 2009:10). Looking through human mobility, reveals how this space is strictly linked to residents' temporalities (the future tensions and the level of engagement to the place) and the socio-economic contingencies related to the migratory steps.

These aspects make up a sort of interface between mobility and informal spaces. They represent the elements that connect together mobility dynamics and the physical space of informal settlements: these factors represent a filter through which people structure themselves in the settlement (cf. Lombard, 2013). Precisely in relation to this, each profile represents different "mobile city makers" (cf. Jiron, 2009) assembling small daily transformative actions from the ground up, from the scale of the house to that of the settlement. In the overlapping of unique mobile stories, a unique space is produced.

#### **4.12 Conclusion**

The relationship between human mobility and the informal settlement has been crossed exploring three analytic levels: movement, temporalities and socio-spatial practices from the ground up.

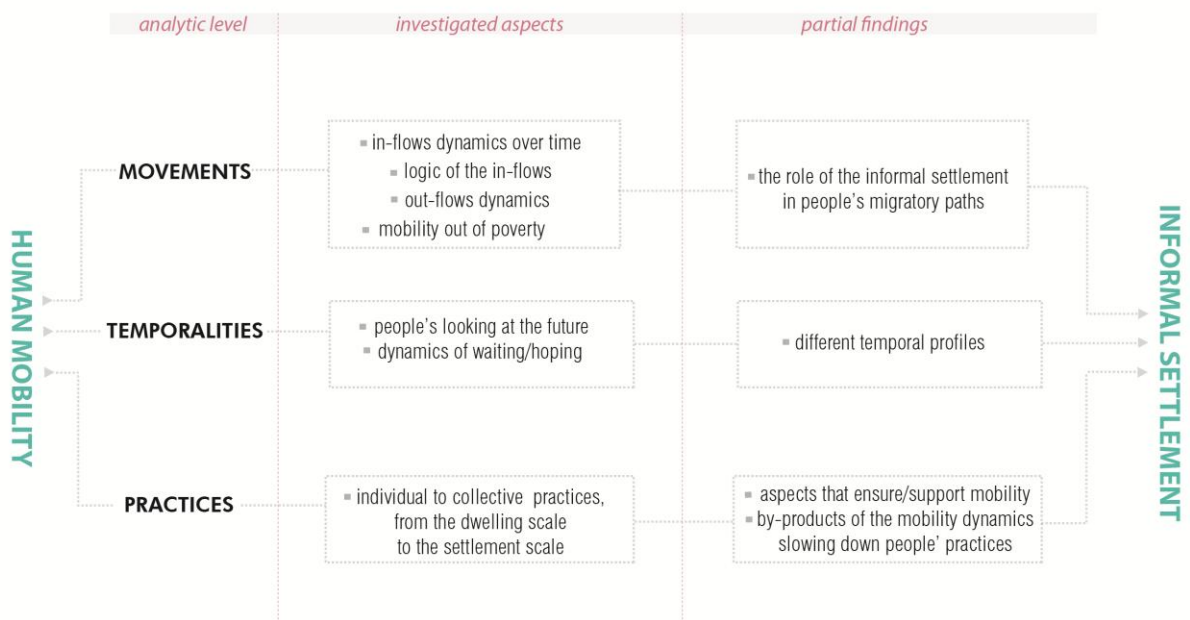
The first level explored the macro-flows dynamics across Denver, with their geographic development, logic and speed. Hence some considerations on Denver residents' socio-economic compositions and path out of poverty arose. This level arrived to establish some points of reflection about the role of the settlement in the migratory trajectories of people.

The second level has focused on *who* currently lives in Denver and how they experience time, waiting and hoping for a better future. Starting from the story of a small group of people, this level arrived to figure out different temporal profiles of Denver' dwellers.

The third level has shown the socio-spatial practices of people, and has arrived to some consideration about the relationship between those and the human mobility dynamics, particularly referred to: the socio-spatial practices that ensure/support human mobility and, at the contrary, the negative products arising from the human mobility dynamics in slowing down or discouraging the development of people socio-spatial practices inside the settlement.



The analytical grid thus investigated the engagement of people with movement, time and successively with space. The composition of these three levels contributes to compose a richer and more nuanced picture of the case-study settlement.



**Fig.4.33** | Mains steps of the analytical grid

In the face of specific descriptions referred to a specific context, the analytic grid with which the field-related issues have been explored may rather constitute a useful basis for investigating informal settlements placed in other contexts of the world.

In the next chapter the analytical grid will be re-traced, in a more concise way, deepening a second case-study settlement. Successively, the chapter 6 will explore how this analysis can became a support for the approaches of intervention in informal settlements.

"TINASONKE" CASE-STUDY SETTLEMENT:  
RE-CROSSING THE ANALYTIC GRID AND ENLARGING THE DISCUSSION

This chapter goes through the second case-study settlement, *Tinasonke*.

Tinasonke differs from Denver settlement in regards to: the human mobility dynamics in which it is involved, the socio-spatial configuration that it shows, as well as the participatory processes in which it is engaged. The intention here is not to strictly compare the two case-study settlements; rather, Tinasonke is introduced as an indispensable complementary case-study for re-crossing the above traced analytical grid in order to extend the previous discussion and arrive at more generalizable results.

The analysis of this case-study has been exclusively based on qualitative data derived from the fieldwork sessions undertaken between the end of 2016 and the first months of 2017; in particular, reference is made to: direct observation from two visits within the settlement, including an interactive walk with a small group of residents; three interviews with key witnesses regarding the history of the settlement, and the current place-building dynamics; and one interview with a member of the NGO Corc about the participatory processes in which the community of Tinasonke is involved.



Fig.5.1 | A view of Tinasonke

### 5.1 Introduction to the settlement

Tinasonke is located in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, in the southern area of the city of Alberton, just outside the administrative border of the City of Johannesburg – almost 20 km as the crow flies from its CBD. It is placed in a peri-urban area, on a land of about two hundred square meters, anchored to a road which connects with Johannesburg, and surrounded by large extensions of uncultivated lands on two sides of the lot.

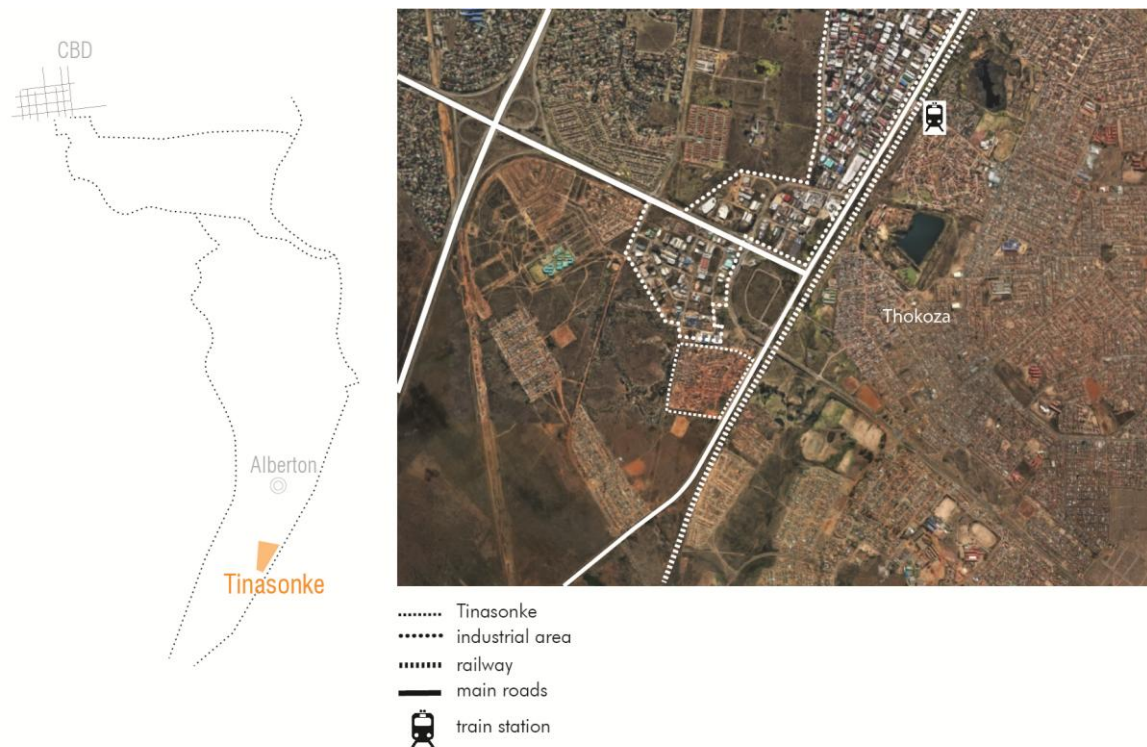


Fig.5.2 | Localization of Tinasonke

Before the establishment of the settlement, the land was a farm belonging to a private owner and was called Caravan Park. At that time, a large number of the current dwellers of Tinasonke used to live in the backyard shacks of formal low-income residential compounds, particularly in Tokoza, a formal township situated close to the actual settlement. Given the condition of backyarders, about 1500 people from Tokoza township formed a Savings Scheme in 1997 – as part of what today is Fedup – with the intention of buying a land where to move and establishing their own dwellings<sup>45</sup>. They identified the land of Caravan Park and, with the support of uTshani Fund<sup>46</sup> and FEDUP, they negotiated with the owner and bought the lot for R1.2 million in 1998; as a savings scheme, people contributed R 260.000 which they used as a

<sup>45</sup> Data retrieved from the narration by Cynthia Ntombekhaya Yalezo and Philda Mmole (on behalf of FEDUP), available at <http://sasdialliance.org.za/tinasonke-community-our-show-houses-help-us-negotiate-with-gauteng-province/>

<sup>46</sup> It is a formal financial institution linked to the Corc NGO, which provides loans for community-led houses construction, land acquisition, and incremental informal settlement upgrading (Cuff, 2015)

deposit for the land<sup>47</sup>. Successively, in 2003, they moved all together in the new land. When the settlement arose it was called "Tinasonke" that means precisely "all together".

When people moved, they planned the spatial layout of the site with the support of a group of professionals called "Urban Dynamics". So, people started to establish their informal shacks following the traces of the planned layout.

The settlement remained without basic services until 2011, the year in which the title of the land was transferred to the municipality, allowing it to provide the stands with latrines and points of water. Electricity was only installed in the settlement in 2016.

Through the negotiation for the transfer of the land title and provision of basic services, the government entered as an additional actor in the formation of Tinasonke.



**Fig.5.3** | Latrins and water points



**Fig.5.4** | Street lights

At the same time, the community applied for the public housing subsidies. The housing development has been very complex; it has taken unpredictable routes and has led to the formation of two parallel processes within the settlement:

- One is constituted by the saving group supported by Fedup, whose members have been involved in a participatory planning process. They have followed the design of the houses and their building, along with Fedup and Corc. Specifically, the government has issued a contract for the construction of 48 houses (at the date of the dissertation). According to this, the government finances the building of the houses by phases; this means that it gradually refunds the project, step-by-step, each time that the main structural parts of the houses are built (like

---

<sup>47</sup> Data retrieved from the narration by Cynthia Ntombekhaya Yalezo and Philda Mmole (on behalf of FEDUP), available at <http://sasdialliance.org.za/tinasonke-community-our-show-houses-help-us-negotiate-with-gauteng-province/>

foundations, walls, roofs). The government does not interact directly with the community, but it intervenes in the process through the cited Ngo and Cbo.

- The other process is carried out exclusively by the government and provides for the implementation of RDP. It involves about 50 people (at the date of the dissertation). In this case there are no processes of consultation or participation involving the community, only the delivery of the public free finished houses. Beneficiaries are selected on the basis of the national criteria for the RDPs. This also implies that people who are not qualified for RDP (in accordance with those criteria) can't receive that type of house and should eventually leave the settlement.

Houses implemented with the participatory process are bigger than the RDPs subsidized by the government (50sm vs 40sm) and they provide for the possibility of choosing between two typologies of houses characterized by some variations in the internal distribution of the functions. As a Fedup member explains, they are most conceived for families.

At the time of this research, in the first quarter of 2017, all the foundations of Fedup savings scheme's houses and some RDP have been built, while a part of people is still living in informal shacks.

## **5.2 Re-crossing the analytic grid**

### **5.2.1 Movements**

Tinasonke's dwellers come from all provinces of South Africa, with some of them even from abroad (int. 2), confirming the rich assemblage of identities within "informal communities". In trying to frame the settlement into the main people's in-and-out migratory dynamics, as it emerges from the testimonies on the field, it is possible to identify a phase of widespread influx of people into the settlement (during which, the most recently arrived people settled also as *backyarders* of the first shacks). Even if it is still possible to track down some new arrivals, as well as some people who leave the settlement in cases of finding a job elsewhere or returning back to their places of origin during the old age, the in-flows and out-flows dynamics appear to be rather stabilized: people's turnover is not turbulent and the community seems to be rather stable. It is clarifying the comment of a resident of Tinasonke who synthesizes: *'A lot of people arrived. The settlement grew. They also became backyarders here. Now it doesn't grow anymore'* (Int. 24).

Moreover, the fact that many Tinasonke's dwellers were previously backyarders in other places suggests that the settlement has not been acting as an entry point to the city but rather mainly as a secondary mooring for people's migratory trajectories.

*Why there?* Thinasonke was born essentially with a residential vocation. The first reason why people moved to Tinasonke was that they wanted their *own place*. Namely people have formed the settlement with the primary purpose of improving their conditions by living on their own land and houses and no longer paying a rent as backyarders. According to this, an informant unequivocally explains that people moved to Tinasonke precisely *'to get their own properties and not rent all life'* (Int. 2). So, this vocation-driven migration suggests that people have mainly moved with the prospect of remaining in Tinasonke, at least for long periods of time.

This migratory intent has influenced the localization choice; the latter indeed resulted in a peri-urban positioning that provides a good amount of space to establish an orderly spatial layout, organized on uniquely defined and sufficiently large plots, for allowing the realization of houses.

Being a peri-urban area, the relationships of proximity with the range of services result to be wider than a more urban location. However, as a resident explains: *'we are not placed in the middle of nowhere'*. The area is indeed located next to an industrial complex that may offer job opportunities; it is about 2 km away from the train station; it is placed along a connecting road served by mini-taxis and buses; and the health and educational facilities of Alberton can be precisely reached by those public transports. Finally, Thokoza constitutes a reference area used to meet the daily needs of Tinasonke's community. *'You can go to Tokoza for the shop...the mall...You have a lot of things there'* (Int. 24)

These localization criteria resemble the same of Denver: Tinasonke dwellers, in choosing their land, certainly took into account the vicinity to the hub of potential employment opportunities, the proximity to the station and to the residential area of support, and the reachability of hospitals and schools. Namely Tinasonke's dwellers considered the infrastructural interconnectivity, services accessibility, and the economic possibilities of the context.

However, Tinasonke seems to show a diverse order of priority amongst localization criteria if compared with Denver; and this in turn reflects a diverse order of priority amongst the main reasons why people chose to move. Indeed, among Tinasonke's dwellers, the aim for better housing conditions is declared as a primary reason for moving (so showing different tendencies than those found in Denver). This represents one of the explanations for choosing a location that provides larger space for developing dwellings; as a result, the settlement certainly rises in the proximity of livelihood opportunities but the urban distances remain a bit more dilated.

This consideration recalls the arguments of Cross (2010a:4), who argues that "all the poverty settlements have specific location-determined functionality". The priorities with which people migrate from a place to another are different and, accordingly to these differences, the localization choices can vary. There is a kind of segmentation of people's flows based on

priorities-driven migration. Not all people move with the same migratory aims, not everyone moves with the same order of priorities. This implies choosing to position themselves in a place rather than another within the city according to a set of personal intentions.

From the above considerations, it follows that it is plausible to interpret that Tinasonke works mostly as an *improver area*, or a place that people use to try an upscale of the living conditions by remaining to live in the settlement. This affects the social composition of Tinasonke where, confronting to Denver, there seems to be many more families and children. As the informants tells: *'(There are) too many children. I think one thousand. And they born, they grew up here. Maybe tomorrow you see a new little one'* (int. 24); *'Yes, there are families...a lot...with children'* (Int. 2).

### 5.2.2 Temporalities

Although this part is based on a small pool of interviews, the stories told by key witnesses suggest a thinning of the spectrum of the temporal profiles if compared with Denver: Tinasonke appears to be composed by mainly permanent-oriented or at least extended temporalities. For these profiles, the future is uniquely established and rotating around an idea of – at least more prolonged – permanence: *'Maybe you can find someone that go back to the home place when old...But...we want to stay here, in Tinasonke'*, one of the informant argued.

While the framework of the temporalities certainly show the predominance of permanent-oriented future visions, it is possible to intercept a new trend stirring in the settlement that is linked to the presence of some fleeting temporalities of those young people or teenagers who grew up in Tinasonke and that are currently approaching the working age; for them the future seems far more clouded, and could push them to move away from the settlement. This comes out specifically from an interview with a young resident of Tinasonke, who lives with the parents and who confirms the will of the family of remaining, and his idea to go away in an unspecified place (Int. 3).

An aspect that clearly emerges from the stories told by the key witnesses is the harsh experience of waiting/hoping of Tinasonke's dwellers. For years the community expected for the implementation of basic services by the government. In that period, the living conditions within the settlement were very hard and the community tolerated to live without water spots nor latrines and so practicing what is called *bucket*: *'Before they went (to defecate) in the field. Then, with the services life is improved a lot'* a testimony explains (int. 24). In this case, the gap between people's needs and the bureaucratic times of top-down implementation of services has



created strong vulnerability and frustration: a slowdown in the path of the life conditions' improvement as well as of the community's formal recognition.

Since people have moved and have traced the spatial layout, to when the first houses have begun to be built, years have passed. The waiting and hoping time for alternative decent accommodations has been extremely long and to date it is still not complete: *'They are 20 years that we wait'* a resident claims. From the suffering of a detestable past to the first improvements of life, social struggles and spatial initiatives from the bottom-up have been developed.

### 5.2.2 Socio-spatial practices from the ground up

What spatial practices have arisen from the bottom-up in this long waiting/hoping time? And what is the spatial outcome?

Tinasonke's residents have established a layout that, though it has seen a progressive densification over time, maintains a good level of organization and internal order; the spatial layout remains quite undisrupted confronting to the initial configuration. It still follows the traces of the collectively planned layout, respecting distances and main directions of the inner road system. The settlement counts 514 stands, and the number of people living in each one of them is very different: *"you can find also 10 people in a stand"*, an informant explained (int. 24).



Fig.5.5 | Spatial layout organization



The spatial edge of the settlement appears net, like just a line, with no fences, and is marked by a main access from the connecting road which, although it is not demarcated with any kind of sign, is uniquely recognizable.

The spatial layout and edges of Tinasonke show a very different development from those in Denver. This is indicative of their types of *gray spacing* (Yiftachel, 2009), or of the two different ways in which people informally negotiate a place in the city. Specifically, in Tinasonke, the order of the internal spatial configuration and linearity of the edges seem to reflect "the people's expectations for the realization of *in-situ* upgrading" (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014:164). They seem expressing their future vision, they seem to be arisen already awaiting the consolidation of the shacks and regularization of the entire settlement. The order of the layout represents the level of formality embedded into the informal settling solutions (see Korniyenko, 2017) and, at the same time, it embodies the residential vocation of the settlement.

Within this orderly layout, the chessboard of spaces for collective activities tends to remain hidden. Few exceptions are: two crashes for the children of the settlements; some containers used as *spaza* shops, scattered here and there; and a hall, placed in a central area of the settlement, where the members of Fedup use to hold the meetings. In a regular layout, it appears to be a shortage of public uses (like for instance commercial activities and taverns) – so showing a different situation to the one seen in Denver. This could be explained by the fact that, in settlements whose communities are more stable and the turnover of people remains low, the exchanges of goods are likely made through direct interpersonal relations, and namely they are likely developed at an interpersonal level. Therefore, commercial or dining activities are mostly based on small initiatives developed at individual level, based mainly on direct relationships among dwellers.

Strictly connected to the previous point, Tinasonke appears instead a settlement mainly centered on the spaces of the houses – in a different tendency from Denver that rather seems to rotate mainly around collective spaces (cf. also the results of Kornienko, 2013 in other settlements). According to this, it is interesting to underline how people, have enriched the semi-private spaces surrounding their dwellings with small ornamental and vegetable gardens, each one demarcated with fences. People's care and beautification of their semi-private spaces can reveal the main residential character of the settlement, ie its main functionality: the presence of gardens may indeed be considered to go hand in hand with the level of investment of people for their house in accordance with the duration of staying as well as their expectation of staying (cf. also the results of Kornienko, 2013 in other settlements).



**Fig.5.6** | Private gardens

As already mentioned, there are several zinc or wood dwellings which, in some cases, people have gradually widening on an individual basis, adding one-by-one rooms. It is interesting to notice that there isn't a large diffusion of self-consolidated dwellings with bricks and mortar or cement blocks; which may mean that people are waiting for the realization of the formal houses and therefore they do not invest in the consolidation of the existing shacks – conversely, in Denver, in a condition of less expectations of receiving a dwelling, some permanent-oriented people have taken to consolidate the shacks by their own.

The shacks have been realized with very different numbers of rooms on one storey (there is a single case of a two storey shack). Each one is placed on a plot and, in some cases, backyard shacks have arisen sharing the basic services with the structure located at first.

To these typologies of dwellings, the houses under construction of the Fedup saving scheme, and the governmental RDP are added, resulting from the two different processes above described.





**Fig.5.7** | Foundations of the future houses of the Fedup scheme

In Tinasonke, the same fact that people express future visions mainly orientated to remain in the settlement, influenced the development of the overall spatial configuration, which has been incrementally improved during time: the community has bought the land, but for years has been living in informal housing solutions, made with lucky materials, without any basic services, and arranged on a planned spatial layout; still today the settlement shows a singular coexistence of formal housing solutions together with the informal shacks. This spatial structure of the settlement is like a sort of mirror of the various socio-political initiatives undertaken by the population – along with the external actors – during the long period of waiting driven by the hopes for better conditions of life. In light of this, taking Kornienko's words (2017), "the physical manifestations of waiting and hope over time" become a sort of "living spaces", a "spatial chronology of a struggling young democracy".

At the same time, those expressed hopes have played an important role in encouraging the democratization of both the planning process and governance forms, that go hand in hand with the gradual acknowledgment of the subjectivity of these people as citizens by the government – and thus no longer as just invisible backyarders.

Moreover, the bottom-up processes have acted as a means of empowerment in this community. According to this, one of the informants explains how, through a participatory process for housing, people have learned to embark on ways to reduce certain extreme poverty conditions, have developed their technical capacity about housing through an exchange of knowledge with the professionals, have co-produced their housing rights, and triggered "bottom-linked" relationships (Garcia et al., 2010) with other communities to interchange experience.

Finally, the participatory process for housing has reinforced the attachment of people to the place; as a testimony clarified: *'if you have fight for your house, you will not leave it...as sometimes it happens with houses from the government'*.

Denver and Tinasonke are just two examples of the varieties across informal settlements: by and large, the one is involved in more animated flows, the other in slower and largely permanent paths.

The empirical exploration of the two case-studies has showed how the dynamics of human mobility reflect the unique compositions of each informal settlements in which the social, spatial, and even aesthetic homogeneity, with which it is generally tended to describe the informality, is vanished. These places are rather an unsteady blend between individual and collective initiatives; blurred dreams and conscious choices; overlap of slow and rapid passages, creative ways of crossing territories and re-orienting life paths in order to improve life conditions, individual desires that may end up to intertwine with one another to achieve common goals. All these aspects contribute to compose the multifaceted peculiar rhythm of the life in informal settlements. Human mobility dynamics – with all upholding aspects – are resulting to be as elements of evolving differentiation between the settlements.

### **5.3 Conclusive discussion: which are the theoretical opportunities from the two case-study investigations? Tracing the analytical space of informal settlements on the basis of the human mobility dynamics.**

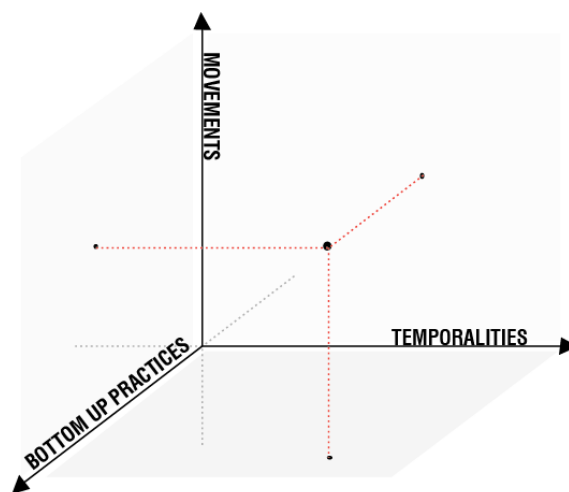
The previous sections have showed the complex ways in which human mobility dynamics are intertwined with the socio-spatial configuration of informal settlements. In doing this, an analytical grid has been framed; it is divided into three main parts in which were investigated: people's movements, or the trends of the migratory trajectories; people's multiple temporalities, linked their future visions; and the bottom-up socio-spatial practices. So, *what theoretical opportunities come out from this exploration?*

Understanding the urbanizing logic that lays behind a settlement, the functionality it covers for people, the profiles living in it, what they hope, and how they organize themselves and produce their own physical space, has constituted a step beyond conventional descriptions and representations of informal settlements and their communities, a way to deconstruct the complexities of the reality and, in doing so, to achieve a place-based knowledge of the settlements. However, in the face of specific descriptions, the analytic grid, with which the field-related issues have been explored, constitutes a transferable basis for investigating informal settlements placed in other contexts of the world.

This exploration has shown that there is a strong correspondence between migratory trajectories, temporal profiles of people, and their socio-spatial initiatives; also it has shown

how this interrelation between the three above mentioned components is influential in shaping the specificity of the reality of each informal settlement, including their embodied socio-economic conditions as well as their built environment.

Starting from these considerations, even if basing on just two case-studies, the above exploration constitutes a useful framework to understand informal settlements as ideally placed within an uninterrupted analytic tridimensional space described by the three axes of movement, temporality and bottom-up practices: informal settlements are here precisely proposed as segmented on an analytic space composed by these axes with in the center a range of unique combinations (cf. results of Chungu, 2016). Each settlement is made up of different intersections of  $x$ ,  $y$  and  $z$ , from where a variety of settlements' conditions arises. Looking from the perspective of human mobility, each settlement appears as a result of an evolving process consisting in the inter-articulation of the three described components, reflected in the "uneven production of space" (Lombard, 2013).



**Fig.5.8 |** The analytic space of informal settlements built on the basis of the human mobility dynamics

Having found a way to unpack and recognize the degree of diversity among and within informal settlements, directly engages with the theoretical and conceptual framework exposed in the second chapter. Precisely it constitutes a way to reply to the postcolonial scholars' suggestion for investigating the heterogeneities across what is generally defined as informality, the realities under the homologizing and reductionist top-down theoretical categories. It has to do with the way in which informal settlements are perceived, read, understood and communicated, beyond the classical binary formal/informal conceptualizations.

The proposed analysis seeks to engage the post-colonial literature by challenging the paradigmatic visions of informal settlements which are applied in undistinguishable ways to very

diverse contexts across the cities in the south of the world. In doing this, it questions the use of an overly deductive approach to understanding the reality of informal settlements, namely the "one dimensionality (...) of many deductive theories of urban transformation" (Murray, 2008:ix), which may run the risk of composing partial images of this urban phenomenon, losing sight of the subjectivity of the humans living in them, and conceptualizing these places as exceptions or otherness rather than integrated parts of the cities.

It does not mean to assume a romanticizing view of informal settlements, given the consciousness of the huge problems that informal settlements' dwellers have to face; but rather to build an understanding of these places – through their specific voices (Chungu, 2016) – that can help to move toward the construction of better living conditions.

The way of understanding an informal settlement, of describing it, and of telling about it, matter since it constitutes the basis on which conceiving approaches interventions. The next chapter reasons precisely on how a diversified knowledge of informal settlements informs upgrading interventions; and in turn how approaches of intervention have to reflect the variety of the reality of informal settlements<sup>48</sup>.

---

<sup>48</sup> Insights by K.Kornienko in a personal conversation

CLOSING THE CIRCLES: EMPLOYING THE ANALYTIC POTENTIAL OF HUMAN MOBILITY  
FOR INFORMING INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING INTERVENTIONS

Human mobility has been previously used as an analytical lens to build an in-depth knowledge of the two case-study settlements. This chapter investigates the opportunities of having been used a human mobility interpretative dispositive for assisting more aware and effective approaches of interventions in informal settlements.

In particular, on the basis of the previous analytical phase in Denver and Tinasonke, this chapter traces a set of criteria that can inform the upgrading interventions of informal settlements, by combining them on an operational and procedural level. These criteria would contribute both to enrich the debate around *in-situ* upgrading and to trace some points of reflection about public formal housing. In doing so, the following criteria do not just rotate around the oppositional dialectic *demolition/relocation/eviction vs. in-situ upgrading*, but try to go deeper regarding the type of *in-situ* upgrading.

With these assumptions, the proposed criteria of intervention therefore speak to planners as well as, more generally, to all those actors involved in intervention processes in informal settlements.

The chapter aims to answer the second part of the last research sub-question: *How does the study of human mobility dynamics inform upgrading interventions in informal settlements?*

For decades, there has been a huge debate around the best methods of intervention in informal settlements in order to improve living conditions and move toward the construction of more desirable living environments<sup>49</sup>. This chapter provides some insights to be added to this choir of voices, by integrating human mobility into the approaches of intervention in informal settlements.

---

<sup>49</sup> Prof. Agnes Deboulet, presentation of the book "Rethinking Precarious Neighborhoods", Wits University, Johannesburg, 18th May 2017

## 6.1 Framing criteria for informal settlement upgrading interventions

Criteria of interventions are framed according to three interpretative figures concerning the relationship between people's migratory trajectories and informal settlements:

- *Figure 1* – informal settlements are inscribed with multiple migratory profiles;
- *Figure 2* – informal settlements are embedded in the city-wide system of migratory trajectories;
- *Figure 3* – informal settlements are interlinked with the "opposite sides" of the migratory trajectories, namely the places of origin of migrants.

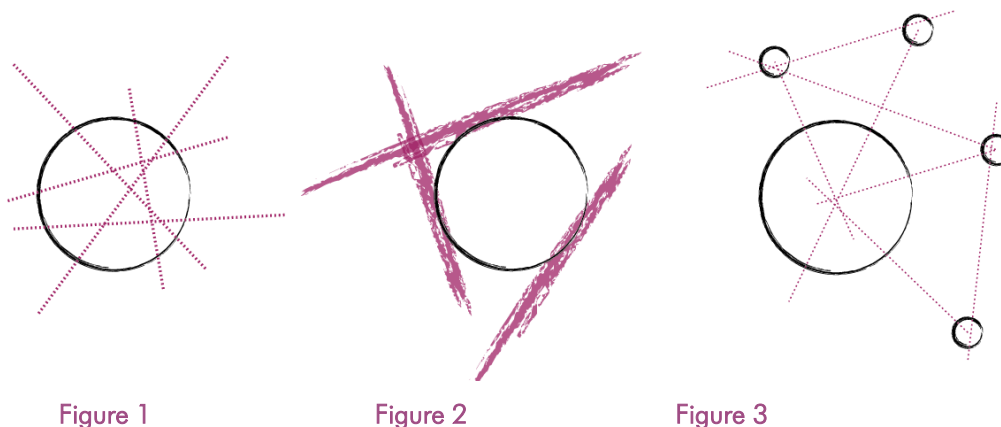


Fig.6.1 | Three interpretative figures

The identification of the three interpretative figures contains an operational potential.

First of all, it permits to decipher **three scales** to be taken into account in upgrading interventions: settlement scale, urban scale, territorial scale.

Secondly, establishing three interpretative figures, unwrapping the ways in which people's migratory trajectories and informal settlements are juxtaposed, helps to better identify **the groups of people engaged in each scale-related intervention**, in particular:

- at settlement scale: interventions are engaged to deal with *multiple settlers' profiles*, each one bringing different life stories and future visions;
- at urban scale: interventions are engaged to deal with the *future in-movers*; namely those who will likely informally place themselves within the city following the main city's spatial trends;
- at territorial scale: interventions are engaged to deal with the *"left behind"*; namely those people who remained in the contexts of origin, at the other ends of the migratory trajectories, and who did not migrate.



Thirdly, in establishing the three interpretative figures, crossing their scales and identifying the groups of people to be included, a **temporal dimension**, specifically defined in a *future envisaging*, is introduced in the approaches of intervention (cf. Landau, 2009). The future is framed in two ways: one concerns the subjective future of dweller's individual life-course, and the other concerns the future urbanizing people<sup>50</sup>.

Urban interventions in informal settlements are often set on short future visions that do not sufficiently address the long term; they should instead be able to think in terms of time, to engage with future likelihoods, and to take a look further in the future (see Gurney et al., 2014; Landau, 2009).

Basing on the previous elements, some key typologies of intervention are tentatively traced.

#### **6.1.1 *Figure one* \_ informal settlements inscribed with multiple settlers' profiles**

Each informal settlement is inhabited by a variety of dwellers' profiles, lying in diverse steps of their life pathways, moving on multiple trajectories and envisioning heterogeneous futures. Thus they bring very different housing needs and, in turn, potentialities of building the settlements from the ground up.

Distinguishing the richness of the dwellers composition; fathoming the spectrum of people's circumstances related to the personal migratory trajectories; and interpreting their heterogeneous bonds with the personal future thinking; are all aspects that should be considered in formulating settlement plans. The latter should be able to resemble the existing and unique social complexity of the urban life on the ground.

With these assumptions, it emerges an urgency to produce settlement-specific plans<sup>51</sup> able to incorporate the variegated and dynamic relationships between settlers' profiles and places: young, unemployed and recently urbanized people who migrate alone and lay at the beginning of the migratory trajectory, with unspecified dreams and ambitions; women with children seeking their place in the city; people waiting to be reached by other family members; elderly people who, at the end of their migratory trajectory, see the last step going back in their home-place; people involved in cyclic or scattered migration, and so on. It actually results in formulating settlement plans able to orchestrate an integrated match between multiple temporalities, all of them conceived as pathway toward new urban opportunities.

---

<sup>50</sup> Insights from Prof. Loren Landau in personal conversation

<sup>51</sup> See the work of Space Syntax at: [http://www.spacesyntax.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Space\\_Syntax\\_Informal-settlements-brochure.pdf](http://www.spacesyntax.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Space_Syntax_Informal-settlements-brochure.pdf)

In this regard, the main view here is that informal settlements upgrading interventions should work by amplifying those positive features contained in self-built spatial solutions that people have already created in the settlements from the bottom-up<sup>52</sup> in accordance precisely with their different conditions of mobility (while vanishing their negative outcomes – see section 4.12 –). Moreover, it means intervening by using and valorizing the existing people's bottom-up capabilities of incrementally transforming and adapting the built environment to the changing individual conditions and future visions.

It means calibrating *people-centered* upgrading interventions in informal settlements.

Basing on some principles of the *in-situ* upgrading elaborated in South Africa (Nusp, 2015), and extending the discourse, settlement plans would be elaborated including the following main steps:

*a)* The first step presupposes the re-organization of the spatial layout of the settlement by regularizing the distribution of shacks-stalls, providing adequate spaces for basic services, and creating a recognizable road structure of principal and secondary paths (SDI, 2013). The new configuration has to guarantee the minimal disruption of the social relations within the settlements. The re-configuration of the spatial layout aims to break down the counter-productive effects of a disordered and dense juxtaposition of shacks (like for example fires and unsafe areas for children and women) (SDI, 2013);

*b)* The second step – more closely linked to the contribution proposed by this dissertation – includes the diversification of dwelling solutions that are fitting with the multiple settlers' profiles living in informal settlements. Dwelling solutions in a settlement plan would include, for instance:

- A quote of low-cost *dwelling solutions to be incrementally improved*. These are dwelling solutions for more permanent-oriented people that can be incrementally enlarged, completed or consolidated depending on the individuals' changing contingencies.
- A quote of *regulated low rental dwellings* for the most volatile groups that imagine their future life elsewhere and are not ready to invest all their efforts in the settlement.
- A quote of "*first landing*" *dwelling solutions* for recently urbanized people – who are generally the youngest and poorest –. They are solutions to respond to the

---

<sup>52</sup> - *ibid*

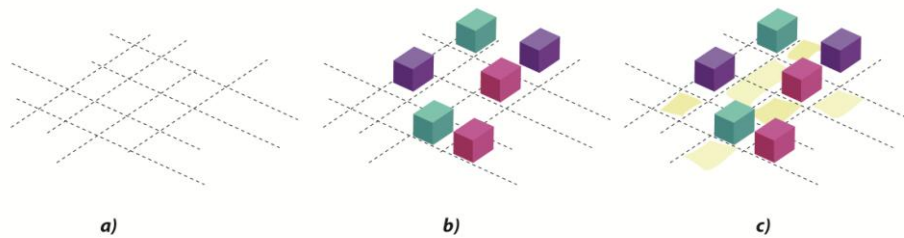
- Insights also from prof. K. Kornienko in a personal conversation

urgency of receiving an inexpensive, quick but dignified first-support accommodation.

This solution represents a sort of base for a housing ladder.

c) The third step is oriented in maximizing the tendency of informal settlers in establishing a flexible structure of collective spaces and sites of production within the settlements to be used both permanently and temporarily. It means identifying a structure of *shimmering* spaces adapting to temporary or permanent usages.

In the proposed steps of intervention, therefore, the spatial layout constitutes the "planned" structure, while the dwellings and the collective/productive spaces retaining higher degrees of flexibility.



**Fig.6.2** | Main steps of the *in-situ* upgrading

In urban planning praxis, we have often faced with social and functional mix; it is also possible to think in terms of *temporal mix*? The latter will guarantee a more efficient conjunction between permanent and transient phenomena: the settlements, therefore, can better function as landing areas as well as transit areas for more fluid temporalities, or stable house to be incrementally improved for more permanent-oriented temporalities (cf. Landau 2009). This is the idea of settlement plans that absorb the changes and involve the future envisaging of people; this is the idea of settlement plans able to conceive a large variety of dwelling solutions: dwellings containing a higher level of permanence and, at the same time, temporal dwelling solutions for more transient-oriented lives.

Moreover, in larger terms, this is the idea of a settlement plan embodying a mixture of formal and informal solutions; a plan that retains a certain degree of informality, or that maintains the positive aspects of informality.

While this vision adds elements for a more effective *in-situ* upgrading; it also questions the static quality and formal-informal dualistic approach of low-income public housing that often intervene by reducing the complexity of the social environments within informal settlements.

Standardized public housing tends to respond exclusively to that part of people – the most visible – oriented to a "slow mobility" (Landau, 2009) and therefore does not fit in those contexts marked also by faster mobilities. They remain too rigid responses for communities in need of higher level of flexibility.

On the contrary, solutions that propose an incremental upgrading and keep together the variety of social groups can support the poor and allow them to stay in places fitting with their necessities and ambitions: addressing the flexibilities requires similar approaches in planning and design (Chungu, 2016)

The tension between the top-down implementation of public housing and the way people autonomously address their needs from below, constitutes the field of reflections about the relationship between State's interventions, urban planning and informal solutions.

According to this, Vanessa Watson talks about *conflicting rationalities*: these arise at the interface between "on the one hand, current techno-managerial and marketised systems of government administration and service provision (in those parts of the world where these apply) and, on the other, marginalized and impoverished urban populations surviving largely under conditions of informality" (Watson, 2009). The interface is a zone of encounter and contestation between conflicting rationalities shaped by the power; at the same time it represents the area of resistance of the poor segments of the population. Planners, Watson argues, are placed in a point of tension between government logic and logic of survival; the planner can work with the informal by supporting the survival effort or by hiding it through regulation and displacement.

In the case of informal settlements, planning can constitute a rigid regulatory instrument or, on the contrary, it can constitute a platform capable of establishing a link between formal and informal, incorporating and supporting socio-spatial practices from below.

#### **6.1.2 *Figure two* \_ Informal settlements embedded in the city-wide migratory trajectories**

The approaches of interventions for informal settlements are often limited to work within the settlements themselves, without taking in sufficient account the engagement of the settlements with the larger urban dimension in which they are placed. Including the human mobility perspective became useful to reverse this tendency. Precisely, the human mobility lens suggests to take into account all the influences that different urban contexts exert in attracting flows of moving people and shaping the way people informally place themselves in the city. Namely the mobility lens solicits to look at the interrelationships between the settlements and the broader urban scale, in relation precisely to the informal settlements' tendency of adapting themselves to the main city-wide spatial features and ongoing transformations.

The point here is that, accepting that there are attractive urban areas – therefore wrapped in intense inflows of people – may give some indications about the probable tendency of informal settlements to spatially grow or de-grow depending on their location. It can even allow hypothesizing which new areas of the city will be informally urbanized (Cross, 2010a). According to this, approaches of intervention should be implemented considering the possible future evolving of urban informal configurations within the city, on the base of the migratory trends that will plausibly involve specific urban areas (cf. Landau, 2009). This consideration gives some interventional directions:

At city scale. Taking into account city-wide informal urbanizing trends may support to recognize urban areas to be prioritized for interventions on the basis of the expected migratory inflows of people. It means identifying areas with greater urgency of intervention on the base of the attractiveness they play on informally urbanizing people.

In this vision, informal settlements become significant nodes in orienting urban development projects and programs at macro-scale; a spindle for setting growth strategies at macro scale (in a different tendency from many current urban policies and plans which are often uncertain in identifying the urban role that informal settlements can assume in the broader city-scale planning strategies – cf. chapter 3 – )<sup>53</sup>.

On the settlements/surroundings interface. Engaging with the informal urbanizing future trends would include the formulation of informal settlements' spatial layout growth-scenarios, adaptively responding to the tendency of each settlement of growing or de-growing in terms of population. It means regularizing the evolving interface between the settlements and the surrounding urban contexts according to people' inflows-outflows.

---

<sup>53</sup> Interventions in prioritized areas would include the establishment of infrastructural connectivity or socio-functional continuity between informal settlements and the broad surrounding urban contexts.

For instance, informal settlements placed in economically growing area, next to industrial and tertiary nodes, may result to be particularly characterized by vast inflows of job seekers. Being positioned in productive places, they are generally well connected to the road infrastructure system. However, those are areas where the least urban character is absent. Consequently, an intervention on the context should aim to create a better social and functional continuity between the settlement and the rest of the city.

On the contrary, informal settlements placed in economically inactive areas and close to peripheral low-income enclaves, may result to be very dense in terms of social interrelations but strongly disconnected at the infrastructural and economical level, so in this case the outbound intervention is mainly on the road interconnections and access to job opportunities in order to break the insulation.

In synthesis, if the previous section profiled the idea of taking into account in planning processes the life course of existing dwellers and their future perspectives; here the point is to consider the future informally urbanizing people, namely the future arrivals<sup>54</sup>. It means working with a long term view and future-oriented planning.

### **6.1.3 *Figure three* \_ Informal settlements interlinked in a system of extra-urban relations**

The previous section has tried to frame informal settlements into the urban macro-scale; here the attempt is to frame them into the territorial scale. This urgency stems from the fact that informal settlements are not bounded entities; rather they are urban phenomenon strongly inter-articulated with remote towns, villages and rural areas, through a dense network of relationships of human movements, extended beyond the administrative cities' boundaries (see Blaser and Landau, 2016). The perspective of human mobility can solicit exactly to illuminate the territorial character of informal settlements and to situate them within a wider plot of trans-local relations, stretched between sending and receiving places, transcending officially settled urban edges.

It is widely recognized that urban communities of informal settlements are means of livelihood support for their families remaining in the places of origin, by sending money and remittances (Landau, 2009): through their urban work, people of informal settlements allow their children left in the contexts of origin to go to school; they build houses for their relatives in the home-place; and support the "left behind" in their activities and business. According to this, it is surprising how urban areas that are officially recognized as illegal, like informal settlements, are fully incorporated into mechanisms of socio-economic development of remote areas, informally coordinated from the bottom-up. These considerations call for a conceptual rescaling of the role of informal settlements considering that they assume an importance within the city as well as in the wider territorial scale: namely informal settlements represent parts of the cities but also offshoots of far-away places located over urban boundaries.

This figure solicits to go beyond approaches of interventions strictly focused on informal settlements as isolated urban units. Those should be rather developed considering that each informal settlement is located in a territorial system of relations of mutual support built from below. More specifically, this entails employing a large-scale approach to informal settlements considering the multiple territories to which they are socially bounded. It also implies absorbing

---

<sup>54</sup> Insight from prof. L. Landau in a personal conversation

these people's micro developmental networks in the approaches of interventions, and identifying the over-urban nature of informal settlements, namely the way in which "sending communities" (Landau, 2009) are tied to a faraway elsewhere.

How this could be addressed? The point here is to support bottom-up developmental corridors securing the affordability of life in informal settlements as a key element that permits people saving and sending money to the places of origin.

The practice of sending remittances and money to the home-places is well known but this aspect concerning the functional tie of a place to another is not sufficiently recognized as an element to be considered during the phase of intervention.

Moreover, talking in general terms about low-cost public housing, these may remain to be not so affordable for many urban poor since the costs for taxes and maintenance may remain unsustainable for those who do not have regular jobs and income. Precisely this rising in housing costs may reduce the possibility for informal settlers to save and thus to support their territories of origin, with the risk of undermining development.

The territorial scale in planning approach has often been addressed in its infrastructural, economic, or even environmental dimensions – these constitute the most obvious and exposed interconnectivity between places, for example that one of ports, stations or also of ecological corridors. However, there is a tendency to ignore a more hidden social territorial interconnectivity, made up of wide interconnections of communities strewn amongst many places, through which micro forms of socio-economic development pass, following an invisible infrastructure built from the ground up. Being able of sending money and remittances is crucial in guarantee the development of many territories placed kilometers away from the cities.

The point here is so to develop upgrading interventions able to protect those initiatives of self-coordinated development from below, precisely guaranteeing a *differentiated affordability* of dwellings and infrastructures in informal settlements, in relation to the people's diversified and discontinuous economic capacities, in line with the already existing tactic of informal settlers.

It is a matter of upgrading with a multi-scale awareness.

| PLANNING ACTIONS: |  |   |   |   |
|-------------------|--|---|---|---|
| SCALE ADDRESSED   | GROUP OF PEOPLE ADDRESSED  | PRINCIPLE OF THE INTERVENTION   | OBJECTIVE OF THE INTERVENTION   | KEY TYPOLOGIES OF INTERVENTION  |
| FIGURE ONE        | SETTLEMENT SCALE<br>Informal settlements are crossed by multiple migratory profiles  | Planning actions engaged to deal with multiple dwellers' profiles   | Recognizing the existing social complexity of settlements' life and producing an integrated mixture between multiple temporalities  | Formulating settlement-specific plans incorporating those positive features contained in self-built spatial solutions that people have already created in the settlements from the bottom up in accordance with their different conditions of mobility  |
|                   |  |   |   | <p>Extending the steps of the in-situ upgrading intervention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- organization of the spatial layout of the settlement by regularizing the distribution of shops-stalls, providing adequate spaces for basic services, and creating a recognizable road structure of principal and secondary paths (SDI, 2013);</li> <li>- proposing differentiated and open-future configurations of dwelling typologies: low-cost dwellings to be incrementally improved, regulated low rental dwellings, "first landing" dwellings;</li> <li>- defining a flexible structure of collective spaces within the settlements, to be used in permanent and temporary ways</li> </ul> |
| FIGURE TWO        | URBAN SCALE<br>Informal settlements are embedded in the city-wide system of migratory trajectories   | Planning actions engaged to deal with the future in-movers; namely those who will likely informally place themselves within the city following the main city's spatial trends | Recognizing the interrelationships between the settlements and the broader urban scale, according to the settlements' tendency of adapting to the main city-wide spatial features and ongoing transformations                       | <p>Identifying urban areas to be prioritized for planning interventions on the base of the expected population's inflows. It means identifying areas with greater urgency of intervention on the basis of the attractiveness they play on informally urbanizing people.</p> <p>Promoting informal settlements' spatial layout-growth-scenarios, adaptively responding to the tendency of each settlement of growing or de-growing in terms of population</p>  |
|                   |  |   |   |   |
| FIGURE THREE      | TERRITORIAL SCALE<br>Informal settlements are interlinked with the "opposite sides" of the migratory trajectories, namely the places of origin of migrants | Planning interventions engaged to deal with the "left behind"; namely those people who remained in the contexts of origin and who did not migrate                             | Recognizing the territorial character of informal settlements and the wider plot of trans-local relations of mutual support built from below through which settlers send money to their places of origin enabling their development | Promoting a differentiated affordability of dwellings and infrastructures in informal settlements   |
|                   |  |   |   |   |

Tab.4 | A guide for planning actions in informal settlements



## **6.2 Challenges of the participatory planning processes arising within the human mobility analytical domain**

The importance of processes of participation is confirmed by many planning experiences in informal settlements. Good practices from different parts of the world point on the need for community involvement in all stages of a planning intervention: phases of analysis and knowledge production of the places, development of the plan, realization of the project and subsequent management. Bypassing community involvement may lead to a failure of the intervention.

However, within the human mobility analytical domain, some questions to participatory planning processes arise. The point here is that participatory planning processes do not seem sufficiently capable of arriving to all different profiles living in a settlement: in particular, they seem to not effectively reach the new arrivals and the most fluid groups that do not imagine their future life in the settlement (Landau, 2009) and which in turn may show a higher level of resistance to an active engagement in participatory process since they feel only temporarily tied to the place. Precisely those groups risk of remaining left out from participatory decisional mechanisms.

In this sense, some participatory processes may become insufficiently inclusive and paradoxically generate new and more obscure forms of exclusion, more difficult to intercept and at the same time very challenging to break.

So, how these issues can change the process of participation? How should participation confront with mobile communities? Is it possible to imbue all profiles fairly? The claim here is for an urgency to revise the way in which participatory processes engage with fluid populations while respecting their aspirations for the future (Landau 2009). There is an urgency of extending participatory channels to more fluid social groups, establishing procedures to solicit or facilitate their participation, i.e. to include life-course perspective of dwellers, the long-term residents and the recent arrived, the permanent oriented and the more fleeting temporalities.

This could lead to two tangible results. On the one hand, extending processes of participation to all profiles living in a settlement is beneficial for the success and stability of the processes themselves. On the other hand, the involvement in participatory processes can encourage fluid groups to take up permanent paths and cultivate stability programs. They could change their plans and decide to remain in a settlement precisely thanks to the right to the participation in urban decision making that they exercised in the settlement. This matters since, in contexts of poverty and in a vacuum of alternatives, it means having an alternative of life more, and so widening the range of life options. Recalling the comments of Tinasonke dwellers, *'if you have*

*fight for your house, you will not leave it'*, this means opening up to a further field of reflections concerning the importance of branching out participatory structures through which to construct alternative temporal profiles and in turn alternative urban futures.

### 9.3 Some successes from a good practice

Ruimsig is an informal settlement placed in the north-west area of the City of Johannesburg, within a middle/high class development.

Since 2011, the settlement has been involved in an intervention of *re-blocking* of a group of 38 shacks in the flood prone area, and successively expanded to another 96 shacks (SDI, 2013). The project was developed through a participatory process that involved: the community, the NGO Corc, the CBOs Isn and Fedup, the University of Johannesburg, and a group of professional named "26'10 South Architect".

The project consisted in the reorganization of the settlement spatial layout to address issues of congestion and density of shacks in order to: create safer areas for children and women; define proper areas for basic infrastructures – like taps and toilets –, domestic activities and cultivates gardens; improve the living conditions of shelters and their immediate surroundings (SDI, 2013).

The project includes the implementation of new dwellings, and precisely they are structures of 17.5 m<sup>2</sup> floor space, built using high quality galvanized steel sheets with high fire resistance rating (SDI, 2013:14).



Fig.6.3 | Rationalization of the space between the shacks



Fig.6.4 | An example of the implemented structures

A series of insights coming from Ruimsig project speak to this dissertation; they can be synthesized in the followings points.

- The project does not provide housing, but rather the implementation of improved top-structures. As a Fedup member clarified, in a personal discussion, one of the reasons why these solutions were preferred to housing is because there are people who live only temporarily inside the settlement. Therefore, it was opted for less definitive solutions. Moreover, these types of structures appear to lend themselves to be gradually improved in bottom-up ways, in accordance with people's economic contingencies and future perspectives. Within the settlement, it is indeed possible to note some cases where these zinc structures have been improved with small operations, including also little gardens in their immediate surroundings. So the new structures represent a sort of first step dwelling that people can incrementally improve.

Furthermore, these are low-cost solutions – which maintain some degree of informality – and that can therefore remain affordable for the most, even for young people lying in an initial phase of the migratory trajectory.

It is often said that many moving people are willing to endure extreme housing conditions just because they feel themselves only temporary in a place. In this regard, a positive aspect of the project is that people can have the possibility to live in a dignified shelter even for limited periods of time.

- Through the reorganization of the spatial layout, the square meters for each shack was fairly distributed among all residents; this is an important aspect because in this way, recently arrived people – who are often penalized because they generally find only small spaces in the settlement to build their shacks –, received the same spatial opportunities of long-term residents (SDI, 2013). In this sense, the more recent arrivals are not considered to have fewer opportunities than others in the settlement.
- Finally, the participatory process itself has brought some dwellers to begin to establish paths of permanence inside Ruimsig settlement. This matters because, for people living in poverty, it means to be able to open up to an alternative urban life more.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

The research has been an exploration of informal settlements by using human movements. The latter have been recognized as constitutive aspects of informal settlements which often remain overlooked in analytic and intervention phases. On the basis of an analysis conducted in

Denver and Tinasonke settlements, some theoretical-conceptual nodes emerged to better understand these places. These have allowed to deconstruct the reality of the informal settlements and to recognize the multiform settlers' profiles; they allowed to reason on: the settlements' role within the multiple migratory trajectories, the people's temporalities, and the ways people act in informal settlements under those temporalities. It was a way to enter into these places and recognize the heterogeneities across and within them. In doing this, the dissertation has recalled the solicitations coming from post-colonial scholars.

On the basis of the analytical phase a set of criteria of interventions has then been framed. The formulation of the criteria, developed engaging a multi-scale view, has enlarged the discussion about *in-situ* upgrading approach and, at the same time, has put some points of reflection about public formal housing. In particular, the criteria have been elaborated basing on those positive features contained in self-built spatial solutions that people create in the settlements from the bottom-up in accordance precisely with their different conditions of mobility.

In the face of specific descriptions – which are not sufficiently generalizable given the uniqueness of each informal settlement –, the analytical structure and the criteria of interventions here proposed represent a research finding suitable to be exported to other contexts of the world. How?

- a) The analytic grid unwrapping the relationship between informal settlements and human mobility can become an exportable *profiling* structure of informal settlements, through which differences, peculiarities and characteristics of each one of them are highlighted;
- b) Moreover, this profiling helps to go beyond the binomial relocation vs. upgrading, for rather recognizing the *types of upgrading* fitting with the very nature of each context, so bringing to a diversification of the upgrading interventions, which are centered on people's looking forward, ambitions, and ability to hope, namely the human component.

Basing on a kaleidoscopic capacity of the human mobility lens, the research has therefore attempted to go beyond a conventional approach in the way we produce urban knowledge as well as in the way we conceive approaches of intervention in informal settlements.

It has meant composing a finer-grained understanding of these settlements, as places built by migrant communities that project on the soil stories of a past journey, cultures belonging to remote contexts and, sometimes, provisional atmospheres of those who have another future course to pursue.

In light of an alternative understanding of informal settlements, the research has attempted to inform approaches of intervention able to mirror the complexities of the urban reality.

The focus of the entire dissertation is concerned with way mobility can orient planning interventions in informal settlements; however, it leaves more in the background how (on the contrary) planning interventions may influence human mobility choices. Reversing the focus is envisaged to be a field of future and interesting research paths.

## Epilogue.

*We were invisible, nobody could see us.  
Now we're in, visible, and everybody can see us.  
It's greener, on this other side of the fence brown.  
Kwesta ft. TLT "Mmino"*

- **Where the first research questions root** - My personal doctoral path started from my place of origin, in southern Italy, where I've been exposed to many abject urban realities and desperate residential enclaves, realizing how precarious living conditions are spread in our country – perhaps more hidden, less obvious and extensive than in Africa but whose harshness cannot be ignored.

Spontaneous self-built shantytowns made of waste materials; Roma camps; abandoned residential tissues occupied by new fragile populations; mono-functional and overcrowded suburbs, marked by a poor standard of living, which assume more extreme contours when subscales and basements of residential towers become homes for entire families; abandoned industrial or agricultural warehouses, which sometimes become provisional shelters; occasional refuges scattered here and there in the city centers, when a bridge, or parks and stations' benches become temporary homes.

My path was born in particular with a strong focus on episodes of residential segregation of groups of sub-Saharan migrants employed in the agricultural sector in Southern Italy. I'm talking about the agricultural workers of the Puglia, Calabria, Sicily, and Volturno area, forced to odious forms of work exploitation that go hand in hand with critical housing conditions; I am referring to those hybrid geographies diffused in rural and urban areas where social and economic asymmetries remain imprinted in the spaces and in their anthropological structure.

These images have given me proof of how the so called "Global South is everywhere" (Sparke, 2007:117 in Roy, 2014:15), also in Italy. The Global South is not exclusively confined to Africa, Asia and Latin America, but also in the core of the northern world which, far from being uniform, is instead progressively socio-economically jagged. Pockets of deep poverty also exist across countries of the northern hemisphere, historically considered the wealthiest. This is particularly true in times of economic crisis, of new forms of discriminations, of planetary migrations, and changes in the geopolitical assets.

However, in its being everywhere, the Global South is also always in specific "somewhere", namely it is always "located at the intersection of entangled political geographies of

dispossession and repossession" (Sparke, 2007:117 in Roy, 2014:15); it is linked to specific localizations and precisely rises in all those realities subjected to imbalances of power; it is precisely located in all those geographies where the economic crisis has hit, where urban policies are weak or absent, where the mafias still play their game preventing a fairer distribution of both economic and spatial capital, where the global capitalism acts to establish forms of exploitation of more vulnerable populations, and even in those places that intercept the international migratory routes of those who run away from wars, hunger, and terrorism.

A mixture of anger, worry and sometimes pietism, emerged from my look – still very immature – on these our places, until it became an urgency to *investigate*. It is from these our places of misery that the first blurred research questions, regarding the role of urban planners in supporting the improvement of rural/urban living conditions for all, originated: can urban planners do anything?

**-Why South Africa?** This question has urged my need to *dirty my shoes further* and leave for South Africa, a perhaps more classic and paradigmatic case in which to explore urban forms of housing deprivation. It is a place where the differences between wealthy and poor are extremely accentuated given the recent history of segregation formalized by the apartheid, where the informal spatialities are extremely evident and diffused in the meshes of the formal city, where the rough conditions of urban dwelling are rampant. At the same time, it is a place where, the debate around urban poverty, segregation and informality is lit and strongly structured; and the today policies dealing with them remain advanced. Therefore, South Africa represents a context in which to make experiences of urban poverty and informality; moreover, it is a privileged observatory on policies, plans, and projects dealing with these issues; finally it is a crossroads for a lively academic debate on them.

### **-Coming back home: re-looking at Southern Italy with South Africa in mind -**

What does South Africa say to Italy?

*A Southern post-colonial theory is able to speak to the north.* The *experience-South Africa* solicits to try to transfer the Southern post-colonial body of ideas I have used in this dissertation, to contexts of poverty and inequalities placed in our reality. The point here is that post-colonialists have succeeded in building a Southern theory that today has the strength to speak to the North as well.

Decolonizing theories in the old colonial world, means building an in-depth knowledge of places, overcoming pre-established categories and deductive theories, recognizing the multiple

and uneven reality of poverty through contextual reading lenses, oriented towards an *approach of differentiation* in the analytic phases as well as in the urban policies and projects.

This means overcoming paternalistic, aberrant, or pietistic looks that may give rise to reductionist negative visions, and counterproductive approaches bringing to indiscriminate eviction. On the contrary, a situated look is necessary to recognize all the efforts and self-organizing skills of the more disadvantaged groups which are found in self-produced housing and settlements, under conditions of scarcity of resources and absence of public responses.

*Bringing informality in urban policies and plans.* The *experience-South Africa* teaches that there is the need, also in Italy, of bringing informality into policies and plans. In Italy, it remains never so explicit, revealing some tendency to still treat it as an "exception". Bringing informality into urban policies and plans (being careful to distinguish it from more local forms of the "unplanned" of a criminal nature) means recognizing that informality is a phenomena of our contemporary cities that can no longer be treated episodically or sporadically.

*Comparing places on the basis of their transformative potential.* Finally, based on the prismatic capacity of the mobility lens explored in South Africa, considering that it is wrong to base comparisons between fragile places while only relying on the poverty that they show (because it would lead to dead ends); whereas it is more appropriate to base the comparisons relying on the potential contained in those places (because it leads instead to trace possible ways out); the lens of human movements – while illuminating the ambitions of the poor, their aspirations and looking to the future – solicits to bring the comparisons between different places on aspects contained rather a transformative potential. Precisely on this basis, comparisons between Italy and South Africa are encouraged.

I often have wondered whether to handle a "case study from the South", filtered through my personal lens of academic training coming from European university, represents a condition of opportunity or disadvantage. The answer is not unique: while, on the one hand, there can be an undeniable embarrassment of feeling out of place; on the other hand, there is the opportunity to strengthen a bridge between worlds which are deeply different but joined by challenges of a similar tension.

It is precisely the above mentioned field of arguments that opens up new further routes to be explored.



## References

- Adley P. (2006), "If Mobility is Everything Then it is Nothing: Towards a Relational Politics of (Im)mobilities", *Mobilities*, vol.1, issue1, pp. 75-94.
- Agamben G. (2005), *State of exception*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Ahmad P. and Pienaar H. (2014), "Tracking changes in the urban built environment: An emerging perspective from the City of Johannesburg", in Harrison P., Gotz G., Todes A. and Wray C. (eds), *Changing Form, Changing City: Johannesburg after Apartheid*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, pp. 101-116.
- AlSayyad N. (2004), "Urban Informality as a "New" Way of Life", in Roy A. & AlSayyad N. (Eds.), *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America and South Asia*, Lexington Books, Oxford, pp. 7-33.
- AlSayyad and Roy (2004), "Prologue/Dialogue. Urban Informality: Crossing borders", in Roy A. & AlSayyad N. (Eds.), *Urban Informality. Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*, Lexington Books, Oxford, pp.1-6.
- AlSayyad N. and Roy A. (2006), "Medieval Modernity: On Citizenship and Urbanism in a Global Era", *Space and Polity*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp.1-20.
- Appadurai A. (2002), "Deep democracy: urban governmentality and the horizon of politics", *Public Culture*, vol.14, no.1, pp.21-47.
- Appadurai A. (2007), "Hope and democracy", *Public Culture*, vol. 19, no.1, pp.29-34.
- Arimah B.C. (2012), "Slums as Expressions of Social Exclusion: Explaining the Prevalence of Slums in African Countries", UN-Habitat, Nairobi.
- Attili G. (2008), *Rappresentare la città dei migranti: l'uso delle storie di vita nell'analisi urbana e come «incubatore» di pratiche territoriali*, Jaca Book, Milano.
- Auyero J. (2012), *Patients of the State: The Politics of Waiting in Argentina*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.
- Awan N. and Langley P. (2013), "Mapping Migrant Territories as Topological Deformations of Space", *Space and Culture*, vol. 16, issue 2.
- Bailey N. and Livingstone M. (2007), *Population turnover and area deprivation*, Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice, Glasgow.
- Balbo M. (ed., 2002), *La città inclusiva. Argomenti per la città dei pvs*, Franco Angeli, Milano.
- Ballard R. (2015), "Geographies of development III: Militancy, insurgency, encroachment and development by the poor", *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 39, no.2, pp. 214-224.
- Bayart J-F (2007), *Global Subjects: A Political Critique of Globalization*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Bayat A. (1997), "Un-civil society: the politics of the 'informal people'", *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 53-72.
- Bayat A. (2004), "Globalization and the Politics of the Informals in the Global South", in Roy A. & AlSayyad N. (Eds.) *Urban Informality. Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*, Lexington Books, Oxford, pp. 79-102.
- Bayat A. (2010), *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.
- Beall J., Crankshaw O., Parnell S. (2002), *Uniting a Divided City: Governance and Social Exclusion in Johannesburg*, Earthscan Publications Ltd, USA and UK.
- Beavon K. (2004), *Johannesburg: The making and Shaping of the City*, University of South Africa Press, Pretoria.
- Bester R. (2005), "A moving city", in Kurgan T. and Ractliffe J. (Eds.), *Johannesburg Circa Now*, pp. 10-15.
- Blaser C. and Landau L. B. (2016), "The Governance of Multiple Elsewheres: Evaluating Municipalities' Response to Mobility", *Dialog* 116/117, vol. 1-2/2014, pp. 33-28.
- Boyer M. C. (2012), "The Informal City and the Crisis of Housing", in Bruyns G. and Graafland A. (Eds.), *African perspectives - [South] Africa : city, society, space, literature and architecture*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam, pp. 244-259.
- Brenner N. (2013), "Urban theory without an outside", in Brenner N. (ed.), *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*, Jovis, Berlin, pp. 14-35.
- Brenner N. (2015), "Man about town: Neil Brenner on reframing our cities and their global impact (interview)", Up Close, University of Melbourne (on: upclose.unimelb.edu.au).
- Brenner N. and Schmid C. (2012), "Planetary urbanization", in Gandy M. (ed.), *Urban Constellations*, Jovis, Berlin, pp. 10-13.

- Brenner N. and C. Schmid (2015), "Towards a new epistemology of the urban?", *CITY*, vol. 19, nos. 2–3, 151–182.
- Burden A. (2016), *How public spaces make cities work* [video], TED, [https://www.ted.com/talks/amanda\\_burden\\_how\\_public\\_spaces\\_make\\_cities\\_work?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/amanda_burden_how_public_spaces_make_cities_work?language=en), last accessed 12 April 2016
- Burgess R. (1978), "Petty Commodity Housing or Dweller Control? A Critique of John Turner's Views on Housing Policy", *World Development*, vol.6, no.9/10, 1105 - 1133.
- Chance K. R. (2015), "Transitory Citizens. Contentious Housing Practices in Contemporary South Africa", *Social Analysis*, vol. 59, issue 3, pp.62–84.
- Charlton S. (2013), *State ambitions and peoples' practices: an exploration of RDP housing in Johannesburg*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Sheffield.
- Charlton S. (2014), "Public housing in Johannesburg", in Harrison P., Gotz G., Todes A. and Wray C. (eds), *Changing Form, Changing City: Johannesburg after Apartheid*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, pp. 176-193.
- Chungu G. (2016), *IN(FORM)AL HYBRID CITY. Exploration of Formal Informal Relationships in the Production of the Built Environment in Sub-Sahara African Cities: A Case Study of Lusaka, Zambia*, PhD dissertation in Urbanism, IUAV University of Venice.
- CoJ (2016), City of Johannesburg Metropolitan municipality - Department of Development planning, *Spatial Development framework 2040*, available at: <http://www.sapra.org.za/docs/Johannesburg%20Spatial%20Development%20Framework%202040.pdf>
- Connell (2007), *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Cook I.R., Swyngedouw E. (2012), "Cities, Social Cohesion and the Environment: Towards a Future Research Agenda", *Urban Study*, vol. 49 no. 9, pp. 1959-1979.
- Crankshaw O. & Parnell S. (2004), "Race, Inequality and Urbanisation", in Gugler J. (Ed.), *World Cities beyond the West: Globalisation, development and inequality*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 348-370.
- Cresswell T. (2006), *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*, Routledge, New York.
- Cresswell T. (2010), "Towards a politics of mobility", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 28, no.1, pp.17-31.
- Cross C. (2010 a), "Shack settlements as entry to the labour market: toward testing upgrading paradigms", paper presented at the Urban LandMark Conference on 'Rethinking emerging land markets in rapidly growing southern Africa cities', 1-2 November, Johannesburg.
- Cross C. (2010 b), "Shack Settlements as an Entry to the Labour Market", paper presented to ulm conference 2010, available at: [http://www.urbanlandmark.org.za/conference/2010\\_presentations/20.pdf](http://www.urbanlandmark.org.za/conference/2010_presentations/20.pdf)
- Crush J. and Frayne B. (2010), *Surviving on the Move: Migration, Poverty and Development in Southern Africa (Eds)*, Idasa and Development Bank of Southern Africa, SA.
- Crush J., Skinner C. and Chikanda A. (2015), "Informal migrant entrepreneurship and inclusive growth in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique", *Migration Policy Series*, no.68, Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP), International Migration research Centre (IMRC).
- Dados N. and Connell R. (2012), "The global south", *Contexts*, Sage Publication, vol.11, no. 1, pp.12–13.
- Davis M. (2006), *Planet of Slums*, Verso, London.
- De Boeck F. and Plissart M.F. (2006), *Kinshasa: Tales of the Invisible City*, Ludion, Brussels.
- Deboulet A. (2016), "Introduction. Rethinking precarious neighborhoods. Knowledge and recognition", in Deboulet A. (Ed.) *Rethinking Precarious Neighborhoods*, Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD), pp. 9-35.
- De Bruijn M., Van Dijk R., & Foeken D. (2001), "Mobile Africa: an introduction", in de Bruijn M., van Dijk H. and Foeken D., *Mobile Africa. Changing patterns of movement in Africa and beyond*, Brill, Leiden, pp.1-7.
- de Certeau M. (1984), *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- de Haan A. (1999), "Livelihoods and poverty: The role of migration - a critical review of the migration literature", *The Journal of Development Studies*, vol.36, no. 2, pp.1-47.
- Deshingkar and Grimm (2005), "Internal Migration and Development: A Global Perspective", *IOM Migration Research Series*, no. 19, International Organization for Migration, Geneva.
- De Soto H. (2000), *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism triumphs in the west and fails everywhere else*, Black Swan, London.
- Dijk R. A., & Foeken D., (Eds.) *Mobile Africa: changing patterns of movement in Africa and beyond*, Brill, Leiden, pp.1-7.

- Dirlik A. (2015), "Global South", in Wolvers A., Tappe O., Salverda T., Schwarz T., *Concepts of the Global South - Voices from around the world*, issue 1, Global South Studies Center, Cologne, Germany.
- DPUM-Development Planning and Urban Management (2007), "Denver Hostel. Status Quo and Spatial Analysis", report retrieved from:  
[https://joburg.org.za/2011/inner\\_city/denver\\_hostel\\_spatial\\_analysis2007.pdf](https://joburg.org.za/2011/inner_city/denver_hostel_spatial_analysis2007.pdf)
- Duminy J., Odendaal N. and Watson V. (2014), "Case Study Research in Africa: Methodological Dimensions", in Duminy J., Andreasen J., Lerise F., Odendaal N., Watson V. (Eds.), *Planning and the Case Study Method in Africa. The Planner in Dirty Shoes*, Palgrave Macmillan, UK, pp. 21-47.
- Eighty20, (2012), *Informal Settlements - Gauteng*, Research report, Research series published by the Housing Development Agency.
- Eighty20, (2013), *Informal Settlements - Gauteng (2013)*, Research report, Research series published by the Housing Development Agency.
- Esson J., Gough K.V., Simon, D., Amankwaa E.F., Yankson P.W.K., Ninot O. (2016), "Livelihoods in motion: Linking transport, mobility and income-generating activities", *Journal of Transport Geography*, vol.54, pp.34-40.
- Fabricius D. (2008), "Resisting representation: The informal geographies of Rio de Janeiro", *Harvard Design Magazine*, vol.28, pp. 4–17.
- Flamm M. and Kaufmann V. (2006), "Operationalizing the Concept of Motility: A Qualitative Study", *Mobilities*, vol.1, no.2, pp.167-189.
- Gadanho P. (2014), "Mirroring uneven growth: A Speculation on Tomorrow's Cities Today", in Gadanho P. (ed), *Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, pp. 14-25.
- Garcia M., Eizaguirre S., Pradel M. (2010), "Theorising governance in social innovation dynamics and strategies", in Moulaert F., MacCallum D., Mehmood A. and Hamdouch A. (Eds), *Social Innovation: Collective action, social learning and transdisciplinary research*, Katarsis Final Report, pp. 31-39.
- Gotz P. and Todes G. (2014), "Johannesburg's urban space economy", in Harrison P., Gotz G., Todes A. and Wray C. (eds), *Changing Form, Changing City: Johannesburg after Apartheid*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, pp. 117-136.
- Gough K.V., Andreasen M.H., Esson J., Mainet H., Namangaya A. H., Yankson P. W.K., Agergaard J., Amankwah E., Kiunsi R., Møller-Jensen L., Yemmafouo A. (2015), "City dynamics: mobility and livelihoods of urban residents", *RurbanAfrica. African Rural-City Connections*, Project no. 290732, 2012-2016, SP1-Cooperation, Deliverable No. 3.2.
- Green M., Kothari U., Mercer C., and Mitlin D. (2012), "Saving, spending, and futuremaking: time, discipline, and money in development", *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 44, issue 7, pp.1641-1656.
- Gurney K., Pieterse E., Govender T. (2014), *SA City Futures FutureHood: A Project Synthesis Report*, African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town, available at:  
<http://cityfutures.co.za/sites/default/files/SACF%20FutureHood%20Project%20Report.pdf>
- Haferburg C. and Huchzermeyer M. (2014), "An introduction to the governing of post-apartheid cities", in Haferburg C. and Huchzermeyer M. (eds.), *Urban Governance in Postapartheid Cities: Modes of Engagement in South Africa's Metropolises*, Borntraeger Science Publishers, Stuttgart, and UKZN Press, Scottsville, pp. 3-14.
- Hannam K., Sheller M., Urry J. (2006), "Mobilities, immobilities and moorings", *Mobilities*, vol.1, no.1, pp. 1 - 22.
- Hansen T. and Vaa M. (2004), "Introduction", in Hansen T. and Vaa, M. (eds.), *Reconsidering Informality: Perspectives from Urban Africa*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Oslo, pp. 7-24.
- Harrison P. (2009), "New Directions in the formalisation and Upgrading of Informal Settlements", report available at:  
[http://www.shisaka.co.za/documents/20091111\\_Leadership%20Forum\\_CoJ\\_Harrison\\_New%20Directions%20in%20formalising%20and%20upgrading%20Informal%20Settlements.pdf](http://www.shisaka.co.za/documents/20091111_Leadership%20Forum_CoJ_Harrison_New%20Directions%20in%20formalising%20and%20upgrading%20Informal%20Settlements.pdf)
- Harrison P., Gotz G., Todes A., Wray C. (2014), "Materialities, subjectivities and spatial transformation in Johannesburg", in Harrison P., Gotz G., Todes A., Wray C. (Eds.), *Changing space, changing city. Johannesburg after Apartheid*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, pp.2-39.
- Harrison P. & Todes A. (2012), "Spatial Considerations in the Development of Urban Policy in South Africa: A research paper as input into the preparation of the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF)", Report to the SA Cities Network, pp.1-63.
- Harrison P. and Zack T. (2014), "Between the ordinary and the extraordinary: socio-spatial transformations in the 'Old South' of Johannesburg", *South African Geographical Journal*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, pp.1-19.

- Hart K. (1973), "Informal income opportunities and urban employment in Ghana", *Modern African Studies*, vol.11, no.1, pp. 61–89.
- Harvey D. (2008), "The right to the city", *New Left Review*, n.53, pp. 23-40.
- Harvey D. (2012), *Il capitalismo contro il diritto alla città*, trans. Carlo Vareschi, Ombre Corte, Verona.
- Harvey D. (2014), "Para erradicar las distinciones de clase hay que reorganizar la ciudad", interview by Simón Espinosa, 24 October 2014, available at <http://www.theclinic.cl/>
- Heynen N., Kaika M. and Swyngedouw E. (2006), "Urban political ecology: Politicizing the production of urban natures", in Heynen N.C., Kaika M. and Swyngedouw E. (Eds.), *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*, Questioning cities series, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, pp. 1-19.
- Hindson D. (1987), *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg.
- Hindson D. & McCarthy J. (eds., 1994), *Here to stay: informal settlements in KwaZulu Natal*, Indicator Press, Dalbridge (South Africa).
- Holston J. (2008), *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Hopkins T. and Wallerstein I. (1986), "Commodity chains in the world economy prior to 1800", *Review X* (1), pp. 157-170.
- Huchzermeyer M. (2004), *Unlawful Occupation: Informal Settlements and Urban Policy in South Africa and Brazil*, Africa World Press/The Red Sea Press, Trenton NJ.
- Huchzermeyer M. (2006), "The struggle for *in situ* upgrading of informal settlements: Case studies from Gauteng", Paper presented at the Southern African Housing Foundation Conference & Exhibition, Cape Sun, 9-11 October 2006.
- Huchzermeyer M. (2010), "Pounding at the Tip of the Iceberg: The Dominant Politics of Informal Settlement Eradication in South Africa", *Politikon*, vol.37, issue1, pp.129–148.
- Huchzermeyer M. (2011), *Cities with "Slums". From informal settlement eradication to a right to the city in Africa*, UCT Press, Claremont.
- Huchzermeyer M. (2014), "Troubling continuities: use and utilities of the term 'Slum'", in Parnell S. and Oldfield S. (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Cities of the Global South*, Routledge, London, pp.86-97.
- Huchzermeyer M. and Karam A. (2006), "The continuing challenge of informal settlements: An introduction", in Huchzermeyer M. and Karam A. (eds.), *Informal Settlements A Perpetual Challenge*, Juta/UCT Press, Cape Town.
- Huchzermeyer M., Karam A. and Maina M. (2014), "Informal Settlements", in Harrison P., Gotz G., Todes A. and Wray C. (eds), *Changing Form, Changing City: Johannesburg after Apartheid*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, pp. 154-175.
- Jefferey C. (2008), "Guest editorial: Waiting", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 26, pp.954–958.
- Jenkins P. (2004), "Beyond the Formal/Informal Dichotomy: Access to Land in Maputo, Mozambique", in Hansen T. and Vaa, M. (eds), *Reconsidering Informality: Perspectives from Urban Africa*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Oslo, pp.210-226.
- Jenkins P. (2006), "Informal settlements: Infernal and eternal? The role of research in policy advocacy and urban informal settlements in Angola", in M. Huchzermeyer & A. Karam (Eds.), *Informal settlements: A perpetual challenge?*, UCT Press, Cape Town, pp. 84-100.
- Jiron P. (2009), *Mobility on the move: Examining urban daily mobility practices in Santiago de Chile*, PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK.
- Kaika M., Swyngedouw E. (2011), "The Urbanization of Nature: Great Promises, Impasse, and New Beginnings", in G. Bridge and S. Watson (eds.), *The New Blackwell Companion to the City*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, pp.96-107.
- Kamalipour H. (2016), "Forms of informality and adaptations in informal settlements ", *Archnet-IJAR*, Vol. 10, Issue 3, Original Research Articles, pp.60-75,
- Kaufmann V., Bergman M.M. and Joye. D. (2004), "Motility: Mobility as capital", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol.28, no.4, pp.745-756.
- King, B. (2011), "Spatialising livelihoods: Resource access and livelihood spaces in South Africa", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol.36, issue 2, pp. 297-313.
- Klug N., Rubin M., Todes A. (2014), "The north-western edge", in Harrison P., Gotz G., Todes A., Wray C. (Eds.), *Changing space, changing city. Johannesburg after Apartheid*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, pp. 418-442.
- Koolhaas R. and Harvard Project on the City (2001), "Lagos", in Lavalou A. (ed.), *Mutations*, ACTAR, Barcelona, pp. 650-720.

- Kornienko K. (2013), *Engaging informal settlements as landscapes of Place: Reconceptualising urban communities in the struggle for in situ upgrading*, PhD Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Kornienko K. (2017), "Waiting, Hope, Democracy, and Space: How Expectations and Socio-economic Rights Shape Two South African Urban Informal Communities", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 52, no.1, pp. 34–49.
- Kothari U. (2002), "Migration and Chronic Poverty, Chronic Poverty Research Centre", Working Paper No. 16, Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester.
- Landau L.B. (2009), "Changing Local Government Responses to Migration in South Africa", paper presented at Conference Urban-Rural Linkages and Migration, September 17th 2009, available at: <http://www.raumplanung.tu-dortmund.de>.
- Landau L.B. (2013), "Mobility, Belonging, and Governance in Africa's Urban Estuaries", *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Fall/Winter 2013, vol.xx, issue 1, pp. 107-122.
- Landau L.B. and Freemantle I. (2010), "Tactical Cosmopolitanism and Idioms of Belonging: Insertion and Self-Exclusion in Johannesburg", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol.36, no. 3, pp.375-390.
- Landau L. B. and Monson T. (2007), "Immigration, sovereignty, and power in South African cities", *Migration Studies Working Paper*, Series #33, pp. 1-30.
- Lawhon M., Ernstson H. and Silver J. D. (2014), "Provincialising Urban Political Ecology: Situating UPE through African Urbanism", *Antipode*, vol.46, issue 2, pp.497–516.
- Lefebvre H. (2003), *The Urban Revolution* (First published 1970), trans. Bononno R., University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Lefebvre H. (2004), *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, London.
- Lefebvre H. (2014), *Il diritto alla città* (First published 1968), trans. Morosato G., Ombre Corte, Verona.
- Legg S. & McFarlane C. (2008), "Ordinary urban space: Between postcolonialism and development", *Environment and Planning A*, vol.40, issue 1, pp.6–14.
- Lemansky C. (2009), "Augmented informality: South Africa's backyard dwellings as a by-product of formal housing policies", *Habitat International*, Elsevier, vol.33, issue 4, pp. 472–484.
- Lemon A. (1991), "The apartheid city", in Lemon A. (ed), *Homes Apart: South Africa's segregated cities*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp.1-128.
- Lewis O. (1966), "The culture of poverty", *American*, vol. 215, no. 4, pp. 19-25.
- Lombard M. (2013), "Struggling, Suffering, Hoping, Waiting: Perceptions of Temporality in Two Informal Neighbourhoods in Mexico", *SAGE Journals*, vol. 31, issue 5.
- Lombard M. (2014), "Constructing ordinary places: Place-making in urban informal settlements in Mexico", *Progress in Planning*, vol.94, pp.1–53.
- Maina M. (2013), *Challenges in policy transition: In SITU upgrading of informal settlements in Johannesburg and Nairobi*, MSc Dissertation in Town Planning, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Massey D., 2005. *For space*, Sage, London.
- Maylam P. (1995), "Explaining the Apartheid City: 20 Years of South African Urban Historiography", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, special Issue: Urban Studies and Urban Change in Southern Africa, Taylor & Francis Ltd., pp. 19-38.
- Mbembe A. (2015), "Democracy as a community life", *Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism*, available at: [http://jwtc.org.za/volume\\_4/achille\\_mbembe.htm](http://jwtc.org.za/volume_4/achille_mbembe.htm)
- Mbembe A. and Nuttal S. (2004), "Writing the World from an African Metropolis", *Public Culture*, vol.16, n. 3, Duke University Press, pp. 347-372.
- Mooshammer H., Mörttenböck P., Cruz T. and Forman F. (eds, 2015), *Informal Markets Worlds – Reader: The Architecture of Economic Pressure*, nai010 Publishers, Rotterdam.
- Murray J.M. (2006), "Photographic Essay - Johannesburg Fortified", in Murray J. M. and Myers G.A. (eds), *Cities in contemporary Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan, UK, pp. 95-101.
- Murray J. M. (2008), *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.
- Murray J. M. (2011), *City of Extremes: The Spatial Politics of Johannesburg*, Series: Politics, History, and Culture, Series Editor(s): Julia Adams, George Steinmetz, Wits University Press, Johannesburg.
- Myers G.A. (2003), "Designing power: forms and purposes of colonial model neighborhoods in British Africa", *Habitat International*, vol.27, issue 2, pp. 193–204.
- Myers G.A. (2011), *African cities. Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practices*, Zed Books, London and New York.

- National Research Council (2003), *Cities Transformed: Demographic Change and Its Implications in the Developing World*, The National Academies Press., Washington DC.
- Neuwirth R. (2006), *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, A New Urban World*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Nunez Ferrera I.P. (2014), *Territories of scarcity and creativity: a critical view of informal settlements and emerging tactics under conditions of scarcity in Nairobi, Kenya and Quito, Ecuador*, PhD thesis, University of Westminster, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment.
- Nusp (2015), *Introduction to Informal Settlement Upgrading*, developed by: Shisaka Development Management Services (Pty) Ltd., University of Witwatersrand, Centre for Urbanism and Built Environment Studies, Jill Schlachter HRD and Performance Consulting, available at: <http://www.upgradingsupport.org/>
- Oldfield S. and Greyling S. (2015), "Waiting for the state: a politics of housing in South Africa", *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 47, issue 5, pp. 1100 – 1112.
- Parnell S. (2015), "Poverty and 'the City'", in Lemansky C. and Marx C. (eds.), *The City in Urban Poverty*, EADI Global Development Series, Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 16-38.
- Parthasarathy D. (2009), "Rethinking Urban Informality. Global Flows and the Time-Spaces of Religion and Politics", *Global cities conference*, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Gottingen, Germany. pp. 1-24.
- Peraldi M. (n.d.), "Itinerari algerini, scenari urbani: esempi di emancipazione e di deterritorializzazione delle classi medie nel commercio mondiale", disponibile al sito <http://periples.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/REMSH/seminaires/Genes/Peraldi-ital.pdf>
- Perlman J. (1975), "Rio's Favelas and the Myth of Marginality", *Sage Journals-Politics&Society*, vol. 5, issue 2, pp. 133-163.
- Perlman J. (1986), "Six Misconception about Squatter Settlements", *Development, seeds of change, village through global order*, issue 4, pp. 40-44.
- Pieterse E. (2008), *City futures*, Zed Books, London.
- Pieterse E. (2012), "High wire acts: knowledge imperatives of Southern Urbanisms", Paper presented at the conference: *Emergent Cities: Conflicting Claims and the Politics of Informality*, University of Uppsala, Uppsala, Sweden, 9-10 March, available at [http://jwtc.org.za/salon\\_volume\\_5/edgar\\_pieterse.htm](http://jwtc.org.za/salon_volume_5/edgar_pieterse.htm)
- Portes A., Castells M. and Benton L. (1989), *The Informal Economy*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD.
- Rigg J. (2007), *An everyday geography of the global south*, Routledge, New York.
- Rigg J. (2015), "The Global South", in Wolvers A., Tappe O., Salverda T., Schwarz T. (2015), *Concepts of the Global South - Voices from around the world*, issue 1, Global South Studies Center, Cologne, Germany.
- Robertson S. (2014), "Time and temporary migration: the case of temporary graduate workers and working holiday makers in Australia", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol.40, no.12, pp.1915-1933.
- Robinson J. (2002), "Global and world cities: A view from off the map", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol.26, no.3, pp.531 – 54.
- Robinson J. (2003), "Postcolonialising geography: Tactics and pitfalls", *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, vol.24, issue 3, pp. 273–89.
- Robinson J. (2006), *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*, Routledge, London.
- Robinson J. (2014), "New geographies of theorizing the urban Putting comparison to work for global urban studies", in Parnell S. and Oldfield S. (Eds), *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South*, Routledge, New York, 57-70.
- Robson B., Lymperopolou K. & Rae A. (2008), "People on the move: exploring the functional roles of deprived neighbourhoods", *ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING*, no.40, pp. 2693-2714.
- Ross F. C. (2010), *Raw Life, New Hope: Decency, Housing and Everyday Life In A Post-Apartheid Community*, UCT Press, Cape Town.
- Roy A. (2005), "Urban informality: towards an epistemology of planning", *Journal of the American Planning Association*, vol.71, no.2, pp. 147-158.
- Roy A. (2009), "The 21st-century metropolis: new geographies of theory", *Regional Studies*, vol.43, no.6, pp. 819-30.
- Roy A. (2011a), "Urbanisms, worlding practices and the theory of planning", *Planning Theory*, vol.10, issue 1, pp. 6–15.
- Roy A. (2011b), "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking "Subaltern Urbanism"", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol.35, issue 2, pp. 223-238.

- Roy A. (2014), "Worlding the South: Toward a Post-Colonial Urban Theory," in Parnell S. and Oldfield S. (Eds), *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South*, Routledge, New York, pp. 9-20.
- SACN (2016), *State of South African Cities Report 2016*, SACN, Johannesburg.
- Saunders D. (2012), *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History is Reshaping our World*, Vintage Books, New York.
- SDI - South African Alliance (2013), *Masikhase: Community Upgrading Finance Facility (Cuff)*, Published research report, Cape Town.
- Secchi B. (2013), *La città dei ricchi e la città dei poveri*, Anticorpi, Laterza, Bari.
- Sheller M. (2011), "Mobility", *Sociopedia.isa*, pp. 1-12.
- Sheller M. & Urry J. (eds, 2006 a), *Mobile technologies of the city*, Routledge, New York.
- Sheller M., & Urry J. (2006 b), "The new mobilities paradigm", *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 38, pp. 207- 226.
- Simone A.M. (2001), "Africities: Popular Engagements of the Urban in Contemporary Africa", *Space and Culture*, vol.4, issue 7-9, pp. 252-264.
- Simone A.M. (2004), "People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg", *Public Culture*, vol. 16, no.3, pp. 407–429.
- Simone A.M. (2005), "Introduction: urban processes and change", in Simone A.M. and Abouhany A. (Eds), *Urban Africa. Changing contours of Survival in the City*, Codersia Book (Dakar), in association with Zed Books (London, New York) and University of South Africa Press (Pretoria), pp.1- 28.
- Simone A.M. (2011 a), "The Urbanity of Movement: Dynamic Frontiers in Contemporary Africa", *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, XX(X), pp. 1–13.
- Simone A. (2011 b), "The surfacing of urban life", *City*, vol. 15, nos.3-4, pp. 355–364.
- Simpson Z., McKay T., Patel N., Sithole A. and van den Berg R., Chipp K. (2012), " Past and present travel patterns in the Gauteng City Region", Research report commissioned by the Gauteng City Region Observatory, available at:  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264991722\\_Past\\_and\\_present\\_travel\\_patterns\\_in\\_the\\_Gauteng\\_City\\_Region](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264991722_Past_and_present_travel_patterns_in_the_Gauteng_City_Region)
- Skovly Aakvik L. H. (2016), "Controlling Time? The Influence of UK Tier 2 Status on Migrants' Relationship with Time", UCL Migration Research Unit Working Papers, No. 2016/3, 1-59, available at: <http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/research/research-centres/migration-research-unit/working-papers/MRU%20WP%202016%203%20Linn%20Aakvik.pdf>
- Smith M.P. (2001), *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Smith J. (2013), "The Spatiality of (In)justices", *Sociological Imagination: Western's Undergraduate Sociology Student Journal*, vol. 2, issue 1, available at: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/si/vol2/iss1/2>
- Soja E. (2009), "The city and spatial justice", *JSSJ*, no.1, available at: <https://www.jssj.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/JSSJ1-1en4.pdf>
- Soja E. (2010), *Seeking spatial justice*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Sparke M. (2007), "Everywhere but always somewhere: Critical geographies of the global south", *The Global South*, vol.1, no.1&2, pp.117–26.
- StasSA-Statistics South Africa (2012), Census 2011 Statistical release (Revised) – P0301.4 / Statistics South Africa.
- Stokes C.J. (1962), "A Theory of Slums", *Land Economics*, vol.38, no.3, pp. 187-197.
- Swyngedouw E. (2006), "Metabolic urbanization. The making of cyborg cities", in Heynen N.C., Kaika M. and Swyngedouw E. (Eds.), *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*, Questioning cities series, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, pp. 20-39.
- Swyngedouw, Erik & Heynen, N.C. (2003), "Urban Political Ecology, Justice and the Politics of Scale", *Antipode*, vol.35, issue 5, pp.898-918.
- Todes A. (2014), "The external and internal context for post-apartheid urban governance", in in Haferburg C. and Huchzermeyer M. (eds.), *Urban Governance in Postapartheid Cities: Modes of Engagement in South Africa's Metropolises*, Borntraeger Science Publishers, Stuttgart, and UKZN Press, Scottsville, pp. 15-35.
- Tomlison R., Beauregard R. A., Bremner L. and Mangcu X. (2003), "The Postapartheid Struggle for an Integrated Johannesburg", in Tomlison R., Beauregard R. A., Bremner L. and Mangcu X. (Eds.), *Emerging Johannesburg. Perspectives on the Postapartheid City*, Routledge, London.
- Tormey J. (2013), *Cities and Photography*, Routledge, Oxon and New York.
- Turner J. F. (1968), "Uncontrolled urban settlement: problems and policies, Urbanization: development policies and planning", *International social development review*, no. 1, United Nations, New York, pp. 107-128.

- Turner J. F. (1972), "Housing as a Verb", in Turner J. F. & Fichter R. (eds.), *Freedom to Build: Dweller control of the housing process*, Collier-Macmillan, New York, pp. 148-175.
- Turner J. F. (1976), *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments*, Marion Boyars, London.
- Turok I. (2015), "Informal settlements: poverty traps or ladders to work?", *Econ3x3*, available at: <http://www.econ3x3.org/article/informal-settlements-poverty-traps-or-ladders-work>
- Turok I. & Borel-Saladin J. (2016), "The theory and reality of urban slums: Pathways-out-of-poverty or cul-de-sacs?", *Urban Studies*, Sage Journals, pp.1–22.
- Turok I., Budlender J. and Visagie J. (2017), "The role of informal urban settlements in upward mobility", DPRU WORKING PAPER 201701, no. 201701, pp. 1-43, available at: [http://www.dpru.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image\\_tool/images/36/Publications/Working\\_Papers/DPRU%20WP201701.pdf](http://www.dpru.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/36/Publications/Working_Papers/DPRU%20WP201701.pdf)
- UNDP (2010), *Mobility and Migration A Guidance Note for Human Development Report Teams*, United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report Office, available at: [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/nhdr\\_migration\\_gn.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/nhdr_migration_gn.pdf)
- UNEP (2011), *Decoupling natural resource use and environmental impacts from economic growth*, A Report of the Working Group on Decoupling to the International Resource Panel, Fischer-Kowalski M., Swilling M., von Weizsäcker E.U., Ren Y., Moriguchi Y., Crane W., Krausmann F., Eisenmenger N., Giljum S., Hennicke P., Romero Lankao P., Siriban Manalang A., Sewerin S.
- UN-HABITAT (2008), *State of the World's Cities 2008/2009, Harmonious Cities*, Earthscan, London.
- UN-HABITAT 2010 (rev. 2003), *The challenge of slum: global report of human settlements*, available at: [https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2003/07/GRHS\\_2003\\_Chapter\\_01\\_Revised\\_2010.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2003/07/GRHS_2003_Chapter_01_Revised_2010.pdf)
- UN-HABITAT (2014), *State of African Cities 2014. Re-imagining sustainable urban transitions*, UN-HABITAT, Nairobi.
- UN-HABITAT (2016), *World Cities Report 2016. Urbanization and Development: Emerging Futures*, UN-HABITAT, Nairobi.
- van Dijk H., Foeken D. and van Til K. (2001), "Population mobility in Africa: an overview", in de Bruijn M., van Dijk H. and Foeken D. (eds.), *Mobile Africa. Changing patterns of movement in Africa and beyond*, Brill, Leiden, pp. 9-26.
- van Lindert P., Cottyn I. and Schapendonk J. with contributions from Bart F., Birch-Thomsen T., Charlery de la Masselière B., Lazaro E., Lemoigne N., Mishili F., Nijenhuis G., Niyonzima T., Nuijen M., Owusu G., Pasini J., Racaud S., Toffe Hansen N., Tsalefac M., and Uwizeyimana L. (2013), *Mobility in Sub-Saharan Africa: Patterns, Processes and Policies* *RurbanAfrica*, Briefing No. 2, Department of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.
- van Nieuwenhuyze I. (2009), *Getting by in Europe's Urban Labour Markets. Senegambian Migrants' Strategies for Survival, Documentation and Mobility*, IMISCOE Dissertations, Amsterdam University Press.
- Vertovec S. (2015), "Introduction: migrations, Cities, Diversities "Old" and "New"", in Vertovec S. (ed), *Migration and Socio-Spatial Patterns in New York, Singapore and Johannesburg*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 1-20.
- Vicari S., Tornaghi C. (2010), "Social innovation research: questions to the theorists", in Moulart F., MacCallum D., Mehmood A. and Hamdouch A. (eds), *Social Innovation: Collective action, social learning and transdisciplinary research*, Katarsis Final Report, pp. 23-30.
- Waddington and Sabates-Wheeler (2003), "How Does Poverty Affect Migration Choice? A Review of Literature", Working Paper T3, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex.
- Wa Kabwe-Segatti A. and Landau L., (eds) (2008), *Migration in Post-apartheid South Africa: Challenges and Questions to Policy-makers*, Notes and Documents Series, Agence Française de Développement, Paris.
- Watson V. (2009), "Seeing from the South: Refocusing Urban Planning on the Globe's Central Urban Issues", *Urban studies*, vol.46, issue 11, pp. 2259-2275.
- Watson V. (2012), "Planning and the 'stubborn realities' of global south-east cities: Some emerging ideas", *Planning Theory*, vol.12, issue 1, pp. 81–100.
- Weakley D. (2013), *Recognising Vulnerability and Resilience in Informal Settlements: The Case of Kya Sands, Johannesburg, South Africa*, MSc Dissertation, Science in Town and Regional Planning, submitted to the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Wolvers A., Tappe O., Salverda T., Schwarz T. (2015), *Concepts of the Global South - Voices from around the world*, Issue 1, Global South Studies Center, Cologne, Germany.
- Yiftachel O. (2009), "Critical theory and 'gray space' Mobilization of the colonized", *CITY*, vol. 13, no. 2–3, pp. 240-256.



- Yin R. K. (1994), *Case study research: design and methods*, Second Edition, Applied Social Research Methods Series, Vol.5, SAGE Publications, International Educational and Professional Publisher, Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi.
- Zeegers M. and Barron D. (2015), *Milestone Moments in Getting your PhD in Qualitative Research*, 1st Edition, Chandos Publishing, USA and UK.
- Ziblim A. (2013), "The Dynamics of Informal Settlements Upgrading in South Africa: Legislative and Policy Context, Problems, Tensions, and Contradictions", Final Research Report, Study Commissioned by Habitat for Humanity International/EMEA Office, Bratislava, Slovakia.

## Annex 1

INTERVIEW TABLE \*

|         | Gender |   | Occupational status** |            | Parental status in the settlement |                             | Age |         |     |
|---------|--------|---|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----|---------|-----|
|         | F      | M | Employed ***          | Unemployed | living alone                      | some relatives in the sett. | -30 | 30<x<60 | +60 |
| Int. 2  | x      |   | x                     |            |                                   | x                           |     | x       |     |
| Int. 3  |        | x | x                     |            |                                   | x                           | x   |         |     |
| Int. 4  | x      |   |                       | x          |                                   | x                           |     | x       |     |
| Int. 5  | x      |   | x                     |            |                                   | x                           |     | x       |     |
| Int. 6  | x      |   | x                     |            |                                   | x                           |     | x       |     |
| Int. 7  |        | x | x                     |            | x                                 |                             |     | x       |     |
| Int. 9  |        | x |                       | x          | x                                 |                             | x   |         |     |
| Int. 10 |        | x |                       | x          | x                                 |                             | x   |         |     |
| Int. 11 | x      |   | x                     |            |                                   | x                           |     | x       |     |
| Int. 12 |        | x | x                     |            | x                                 |                             |     |         | x   |
| Int. 13 |        | x |                       | x          | x                                 |                             |     | x       |     |
| Int. 14 |        | x | x                     |            | x                                 |                             |     |         | x   |
| Int. 15 |        | x | x                     |            | x                                 |                             |     | x       |     |
| Int. 16 |        | x |                       | x          |                                   | x                           | x   |         |     |
| Int. 17 | x      |   |                       | x          |                                   | x                           | x   |         |     |
| Int. 18 |        | x |                       | x          |                                   | x                           | x   |         |     |
| Int. 21 |        | x |                       |            | x                                 |                             |     |         | x   |
| Int. 22 |        | x | x                     |            |                                   |                             |     |         | x   |

\* The collective interviews are not considered in this table

\*\* At the date of the interview

\*\*\* Any form of occupation is considered

interviews to Tinasonke's dwellers

interviews to Denver's dwellers

## Annex 2 \_ Consent form

UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES 'FEDERICO II' - UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND OF JOHANNESBURG  
***Participation to interview consent form***

Please read the following indications:

- Respondents will remain anonymous
- Data provided by respondents may be used for the academic research project
- Respondents can choose to not answer any question that they do not wish to

I, the respondent, have read the indications provided by the student Marika Miano and I agree to take part in this interview in order to develop the research project.

Signed:

-----