

## Land Use and Physical Structure Changes: An Expo of Maboneng Precinct

*Bonolo Helen Letlape, Trynos Gumbo*

(Miss Bonolo Helen Letlape, University of Johannesburg, P. O Box 17011, Doornfontein, 2028, bonololetlape@gmail.com)  
(Professor Trynos Gumbo, University of Johannesburg, P. O Box 17011, Doornfontein, 2028, tgumbo@uj.ac.za)

### 1 ABSTRACT

Most cities have over the years experienced high developmental changes dating back from the 1940's to present which are seen in various themes of influx, generation, exodus and decline. The question of what kind of city we desire cannot be divorced from the question of what kind of people we want to be, the types of social relations and land uses we seek, the style of daily life we want, the types of relations to nature we cherish, kinds of technologies we deem appropriate and the aesthetic value we hold. Development during the apartheid period was based on racial classification as the elites of the country spatially separated themselves from the poor, whether through work spaces or residential areas. The problem is that the inner city regeneration of Maboneng has displaced and segregated certain groups of people while accommodation other groups founded on social economic classes. Against this backdrop, this paper focuses on the Maboneng Precinct area which is located in Jeppestown east of the Johannesburg CBD. The paper aims to discuss the changes in land uses that have occurred in Maboneng following urban regeneration. The case study design is adopted and a qualitative research approach is used to collect data. Data is collected through structure interviews with persons that have seen and experienced changes land uses of Maboneng following regeneration; observations and photographic surveys of Maboneng's different land uses. Research findings reveal that there have been significant land use changes that have occurred in the Maboneng precinct since its urban regeneration. The results reveal that land uses in Maboneng since urban regeneration have changed drastically and for the better from light manufacturing, heavy manufacturing, business and warehousing to residential, commercial, institutional, industrial and public services land uses. Although land use changes in Maboneng have resulted in many benefits, these benefits have come with challenges such as marginalisation of the poor minority and the exclusion of a certain group in society through the eviction of illegal tenants. The study concludes by recommending that more efforts need to be exerted in encouraging land use changes that are inclusive of all in society and that more land uses such as open spaces need to be encouraged in Maboneng going forward.

Keywords: Maboneng, Land uses, Development, Urban Regeneration, Cities.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

Most cities have over the years experienced high developmental changes dating back from the 1940's to present which are seen in various themes of influx, generation, exodus and decline. Thus, according to Park (1967, p. 3), "Man's most consistent and on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart's desire. But, if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself". The question of what of city we desire cannot be divorced from the question of what kind of people we want to be, the types of social relations and land uses we seek, the style of daily life we want, the types of nature we cherish, kinds of technologies we deem appropriate and the aesthetic value we hold. Development during the apartheid period was based on racial classification as the elites of the country spatially separated themselves from the poor, whether through work spaces or residential areas. Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, some of South Africa's oppressive legislation for example the Group Areas Act were removed, thousands and thousands of people migrated from the townships on the periphery (CBD) area which they had been excluded from during apartheid (Puttick, 2011). They moved into buildings that were abandoned by their owners due to the fall of the property prices during 1980 to 2000 (Wood & Moll, 1994). As time progressed, the inner city became less attractive to young professionals, the middle and upper class hoping to settle in the city; they instead settled in suburbs far away from the crime and decaying streets of the Johannesburg CBD area (Mashiri, 2017). In an effort to revitalise and attract suburbanites and investors back into the inner city, various urban regeneration projects have emerged in various parts of Johannesburg. The problem is that the inner city regeneration of Maboneng has displaced and segregated certain groups of people while accommodating other groups founded on social economic classes. Against this backdrop, this paper focuses on the Maboneng precinct area which is located

in Jeppestown east of the Johannesburg CBD. Subsequently, this study aims to discuss the changes in land uses and physical structures that have occurred in Maboneng following urban regeneration, this is done using a case study survey design and a qualitative approach method to collect data.

### 3 CONCEPTUAL SYNOPSIS

All cities are affected by patterns of transformation and by advances in morphological structural changes. Some are able to adapt to such changes while for others, structural changes result in multiple decline in the city (Kerr & Menadue, 2010). It is not the town or the city that performs but it is the individuals or a group of people and it is their actions that cause changes to the land uses and morphological structure of a city or a town (Lang, 2010). Thus, this section discusses the conceptual issues in line with land use changes and physical structural changes which are urban morphological structures.

#### 3.1 Land use changes

Land use refers to the manner in which land has been used by human beings and their habitat; often with an emphasis on the functional role of land for economic activities (Digo & Koomen, 2016). Land use change is a serious problem for policy makers, for mainly those working on development and mitigation plans (Foley, et al., 2005). This is due to the fact that land use change is important for human development (Digo & Koomen, 2016). However, the resulting negative impacts of land use change present possible challenges for the achievement of such development. Mankind depends on land-based natural resources like shelter, food, medicines and fresh water. When these resources are not used in a sustainable manner, this leads to degradation of their sources and the ecosystems at large, resulting in resource scarcity (Sulle, 2014). This in turn results in supply shortages of these resources (water, medicines, fresh water) all of which are a necessity for economic growth (Sulle, 2014). Therefore, addressing the negative impacts related to land use change promotes the intention of reducing development impacts that are associated with resource degradation.

Understanding land use change requires more than merely looking at the complete area of certain land uses that appeared and disappeared (Research Institute for Knowledge Systems BV, 2008). It is the change in structure and the underlying causes of this change that are also important. It is various elements that provide understanding in land use changes, the different elements include the following:

- Appearance and disappearance
- Growth and shrink of different land use categories
- Cluster size change of different land use categories (Research Institute for Knowledge Systems BV, 2008).

All of the above mentioned elements assist us in determining whether there has been a change in land use and what effects the changes in land use have. In most cases changes in land use are accompanied by changes in land use categories (residential, commercial, industrial, public, recreation, institutional) marked by either an increase or a decrease in the land use categories.

#### 3.2 Physical Urban Morphology

Urban morphology is the study of urban forms and the means and routes accountable for their transformation, the urban form is the key physical element that shapes and structures the urban area many such as the streets, urban tissues, urban plots and buildings (Oliveira, 2016). The urban characteristics of a place exhibits itself in the following terms:

- Environment: there are various environmental factors that influence the cityscape such as the topography, geology and climate. The accessibility of resources regulates the where settlements are to be located geographically;
- Streets and urban spaces: the width of streets and their resultant street section regulate urban proportions comparative to building height. In addition, the city block results from the street layout;
- Building parcels: the form and dimensions of building parcels are major factors. The relation between individual parcels and their disposition within the city block is also important. The following elements might be noted: the amount of parcels per block; for each parcel the length of the street façade of each

parcel; the presence of parcels that traverse the block between adjacent streets; the manifestations of parcels in the inside of the block served by a system of semiprivate ways.

- Parcel occupation: the location of the building on the plot, its relation with its neighbours regulates the resultant urban spatial quality, there may be one or more structures forming a courtyard or collected separately, there could be a garden, the structure can be freestanding in the middle or on the outer edges of the plot;
- Utilisation: this refers to the kinds of function of an area that each parcel has such as commercial, industrial, residential, diverse activities and their mixture define its character;
- Architectural morphology: these are the kinds of materials and their treatment, typical characteristics; kinds of windows- their sizes, angles, making bay-windows; arcades at street level as well as balconies;
- Regulations- these are the building heights, plot occupation, land uses, profiles comparative to the neighbouring buildings and street and within the acceptability of various types of morphology (Rabie, 1999).

Each of the above urban occurrences are excavated by the time factor, as many of our cities are a result of long process of building and developed over centuries, where various layers continuously overlap without erasing the previous layer

#### 4 STUDY AREA

Maboneng which is a Sesotho word meaning “place of light” and was named such by its founder Jonathan Liebmann who felt that the area represents an enlightened community (Propertuity , 2016). As seen in Figure 1, Maboneng precinct is found in the east of the Central Business District (CBD) of Johannesburg and is bordered by Main street, fox street and Berea street (Propertuity , 2016). It lies south of Ellis Park stadium with Commissioner street running eastwards from the CBD to Maboneng precinct (Nevin, 2014).



Figure 1: Maboneng Precinct boundary in yellow. (Source: Kluth,2014)

Figure 1 shows the Maboneng boundary as City and Suburban and the surrounding areas such as Doornfontein, Ellis Park, Joubert Park, Troyville and Carlton centre to mention a few. The area where the now Maboneng is found was affected by deindustrialisation processes from the 1980's that led to empty warehouses and factory premises (Mashiri, 2017). In 2008 a developer bought the old construction offices and warehouses that had decayed in the Maboneng area and conceptualised what is now known as “Arts on Main”, created a mix of studio's, creative office spaces and galleries (Mashiri, 2017). By 2012 a privately company called Propertuity had purchased 25 buildings in the area and began branching out with additional developments such as Main Street life building (Propertuity , 2016). It is worth noting that all these developments initially began on one street, Fox Street that had developed into the main activity street within

the precinct. Maboneng has since 2008 been developed with various land uses and physical structural changes which are discussed in this study.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

This study has taken up an exploratory research design approach as it seeks to access the changes in land uses that have occurred in Maboneng following urban regeneration (Swanson, 2015). A qualitative research approach was used which enabled the collecting of qualitative data. The research was carried out through in-depth interviews with personnel involved in the establishment of the Maboneng Precinct area and those that saw or experienced the transformation for the area to what is known as Maboneng Precinct today (Friedman, 2019). The site was visited for observation and photographic survey purposes and photographs of the Precinct were taken using a camera. Historical photographs of Maboneng were also collected at the Museum Afrika. Qualitative data collected was analysed through the use of observation results, data reduction, theory building and testing. The purposive sampling and snowball method was used to recognize the main informers who are part of the building team of the Maboneng Precinct (Black, 2010).

## 6 LAND USE AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN MABONENG PRECINCT

### 6.1 Land use changes

The Maboneng precinct area has over time experienced a lot of changes. Before Maboneng, City and Suburban was mainly made up of industrial, warehousing, man hostels and clothing factory land uses. It was similar to the inner-city and had poor socio-economic conditions, was poorly maintained, with low levels of safety and poor levels of public space as illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2: City and Suburban area. (Source: Mafela, 2013 )

This was mainly because after democracy most businesses moved out of the area and moved to more lucrative areas such as Sandton and Rosebank. As a result, most buildings were abandoned, becoming derelict as seen in Figure 2 and crime became prevalent.

Today as seen in Figure 3, Maboneng precinct is marked with mixed land uses. The entire Maboneng precinct area has the following land uses:

- Commercial: offices, retail, hotel, restaurants; art galleries; book shops
- Industrial: all industrial land uses according to the Johannesburg land use scheme
- Residential: studio apartments
- Educational: primary, secondary and tertiary institutions

- Public services- police station, public library (Propertyuity , 2016).

The Maboneng precinct area has been transformed into a beautiful place which creates a sense of belonging. As seen in Figure 2, Maboneng; then City and Suburban there were not much land uses today there are more land uses as seen in Figure 3 indicating that the precinct area is being utilized more by different users with different skills

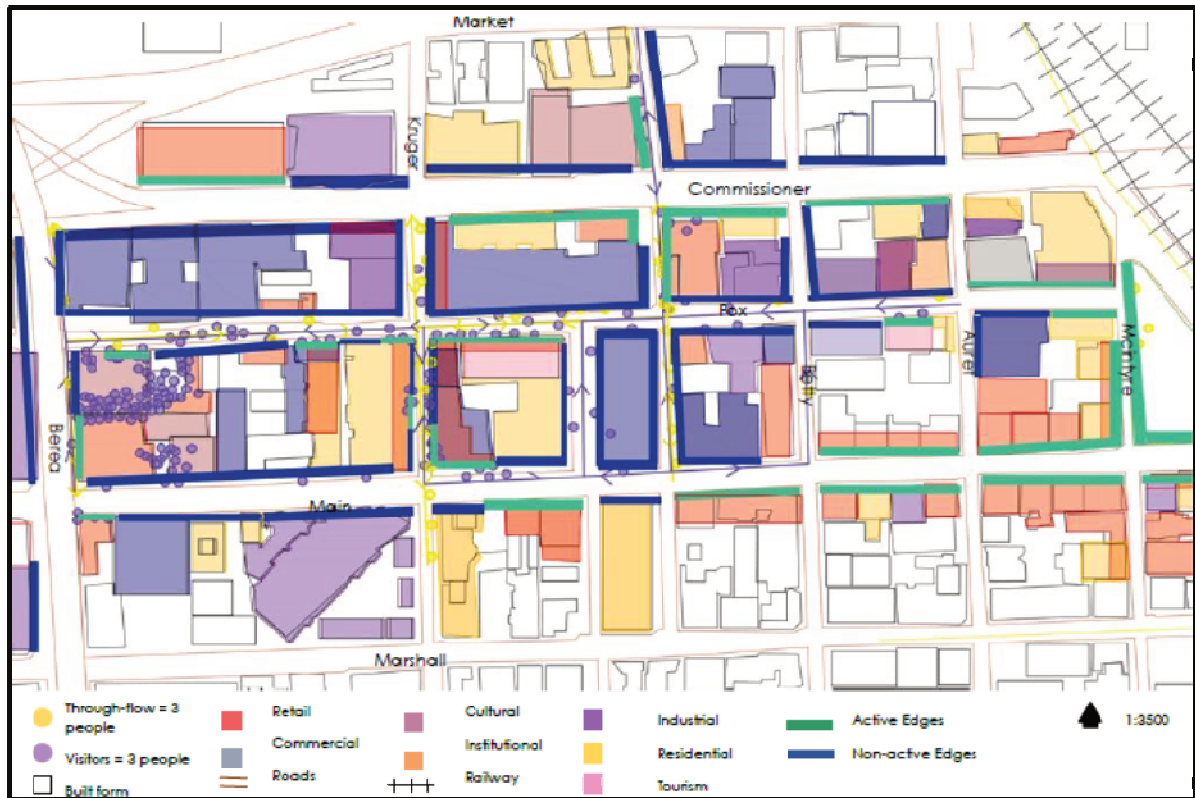


Figure 3: Maboneng precinct land uses. (Source: Kluth,2014)

More residential units within the 1km<sup>2</sup> radius have been introduced recently in the area. Most of the above stated land uses are currently taking place in old buildings that have been renovated in the precinct.

## 6.2 Structural Changes

Over the year's various buildings within the Maboneng precinct have experienced changes. This could well be because of the flexibility of the structural design of various buildings within the precinct which allow for future changes in the use of the buildings. For example, the Arts of Main building has been able to withstand changes overtime due to its great interior flexibility which allows the building to expand and contract as necessary in the future (Mason, 2014). In the next subheadings various structural changes that have occurred in the Maboneng precinct area over the years are discussed.

### 6.2.1 Arts on Main

Most of the old buildings in the Maboneng Precinct area have been renovated. The Arts on main buildings are an excellent example as pictured in Figure 4 found on the corner of Main and Fox street and consists of various old previously dilapidated buildings which were used as a liquor store and a warehouse in the 90's.

Today in 2018, the Arts on Main has a mix of tenants such as a gallery, artist studios, a book shop, restaurants, artist press, retail stores which sell various designer clothing, cultural institutions and offices. The buildings have still maintained their original structure of red bricks and steel frames (Propertyuity , 2016). The Arts on Main building also has a rooftop bar and various other mixed uses. The courtyard is identified with olive and lemon trees, art sculptures and is surrounded by retrospective spaces that have been artfully cajoled out of their industrial past.



Figure 4: Arts on main buildings. (Source: Author, 2018)

### 6.2.2 The Cosmopolitan hotel

The Cosmopolitan Hotel as seen in Figure 5 is situated on corner Commissioner and Albrecht street in the Maboneng Precinct area. This building was built in the 1800's and it use to be a hotel, it has over the years had various changing uses, it eventually was dilapidated as seen in Figure 5.on the left side taken in 2014 before the building was renovated (Mason, 2014). However, between 2014 to 2018 the Cosmopolitan hotel has experienced a few changes as pictured in figures 5 on the right side.



Figure 5 Cosmopolitan hotel in 2014 before renovations on the left and after renovations in 2018 on the right. (Source: Mason, 2014)

The Cosmopolitan hotel has undergone what is often referred to as urban renewal and has received a face-lift but the actual structure of the building has not been changed as seen in Figure 5 on the right side. Today in 2018, the hotel is being used as a restaurant, art gallery, retail space and hotel at the top. When one looks at Figure 5 on the left and compares it to Figure 5 on the right hand side various changes in the structure can be seen such the wooden windows has now been replaced with glass windows, the building has been repainted with the same coat of white paint. There are now trees and plants on the pavement around the Cosmopolitan hotel building and the paving has been renovated.

### 6.2.3 Curiosity Backpackers

The Curiosity backpackers hostels as seen in Figures 6 is found on Fox street in the Maboneng Precinct, the building originally housed the Pacific Press and was also assumed to be a place of refuge for Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela during the Apartheid era. After South Africa gained democracy, the building was eventually abandoned when various businesses started moving out to more lucrative areas such as Sandton (Mashiri, 2017).

Today, the entire building has been refurbished and is used as a backpacker's hostel which was established in 2013. The backpackers has 11 rooms and some are for ladies only dorms or mixed dorms.

When one looks at the structural changes that have occurred a balcony was added to the Curiosity backpackers hostel as seen in Figure 6 and iron rods which act as a frame, the building is also clearly marked with the name of the business, on the far left and right of Figures 6 on the right hand side, there are graffiti drawings which add to the aesthetics of the area.



Figure 6: Curiosity backpackers before and after renovations. (Source: Greene Group Consulting Engineers (Pty) Ltd, 2018)

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Cities are multifaceted adaptive systems that are defenceless to external and internal influences and factors, they can be altered and are rarely destroyed. This is true of Maboneng precinct, the precinct experienced urban decay due to the shock of many businesses moving out of the area, buildings being hijacks and some being abandoned. Although land use changes in Maboneng have resulted in many benefits, these benefits have come with challenges such as marginalisation of the poor minority and the exclusion of a certain group in society through eviction of illegal tenants. Consequently the study recommends that more efforts need to be exerted in encouraging land use changes that are inclusive of all in the society and that more land uses such as open spaces need to be encouraged in Maboneng going forward.

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