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According to Withaar (in Teffo and Roux 2002: 173), *“the West has used an individualistic and objectivistic framework, and that has given it a civilization where the individual is powerful, where liberty is a good that is absolute, where there is room for the play of free enterprise, where scientific and technological progress covers the world with its achievements. In Africa things are quite otherwise, since African civilization is characterised above all by solidarity, communitarianism, traditionalism, participation.”*. The traditionally African civilization is based on a concept which Western language is to a large degree unable to express: *ubuntu*, which is *“the root of African philosophy...simultaneously the foundation and edifice”* (Ramose 2002: 230).

Ubuntu may be understood as ‘be-ing human’, a “humane, respectful and polite attitude towards others” (Ramose 2002: 231). *Ubuntu* is actually two words in one: a prefix *ubu-* and stem *-ntu*. *Ubu-* evokes the idea of be-ing, i.e. *“enfolding be-ing before it manifests itself in the concrete form, always oriented towards unfoldment...”* (Ramose 2002: 230). *-ntu* is the nodal

3.1. Warwick Junction: the site between the Shrine of Hazrath Badsha Peer and Berea Road station, Durban, before intervention.

point at which be-ing assumes concrete form or a mode of being and may be construed as ‘temporarily having become’. In this sense, *ntu* is a noun; *ubuntu* is thus a verbal noun.

At the ontological level there is no literal separation between *ubu-* and *-ntu*: they are two aspects of being as a one-ness: *be-ing-becoming* and not *be-ing and becoming* (Ramose 2002: 230). However, Western linguistic structure assumes and imposes a strict divide and a necessary sequence in terms of subject-verb-object. The rheomode allows an understanding that ‘whole’ *“cannot appropriately describe ‘be-ing’ since it already implies the fixation of be-ing and its replacement by ‘being’*. Precisely because motion cannot be stopped, since in the very act of stopping motion is already present, we cannot talk about the whole of be-ing as though be-ing had attained to the state of complete stagnation: absolute rest” (Ramose 2002: 231). The rheomode allows be-ing to *be* and *become* simultaneously; hence *be-ing becoming* and not *be-ing and becoming* (Ramose 2002: 233). Whereas fragmentative thinking holds ‘fact’ as an objective state of affairs susceptible to verification, rheomodic thought defines truth as the contemporaneous convergence of perception and action. Thus: *“human beings are not made by the truth. They are the makers of the truth”* (Ramose 2002: 235).

Similarly, in African philosophy **human beings make time and place. The Westerner lives in time and place.**

According to Ramose (2002: 231), the African civilisation is grounded in the maxim *“umuntu ngumuntu nga bantu”*, which may be construed to mean that *“to be a human be-ing is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them.”*

“Architecture ruptures the cyclic nature of time and progression in more traditional societies” (Morojele et al. 2002: 104).

Morojele argues for a sanctioned impermanence as a strategic approach to the development of spatial identities in the transitional environment. This impermanence “requires the promotion of baggy space: space that may be experienced as being significant without being prescriptive.”

is set around significant but common places to create e.g. funeral space. Often domestic space will be temporarily transformed to bring certain social structures into relief. Hence, buildings are required to be flexible in order to encourage and allow for human agency and to anticipate the unintended. According to Morojele (2002: 105), “the requirements of late modernity and global tourism are transforming this ephemeral and light-footed affirmation of identity towards a more fixed, permanent and therefore consumable one”. Morojele argues for an architecture that will accommodate

the informal, the unintended and the unanticipated. -----

The African City

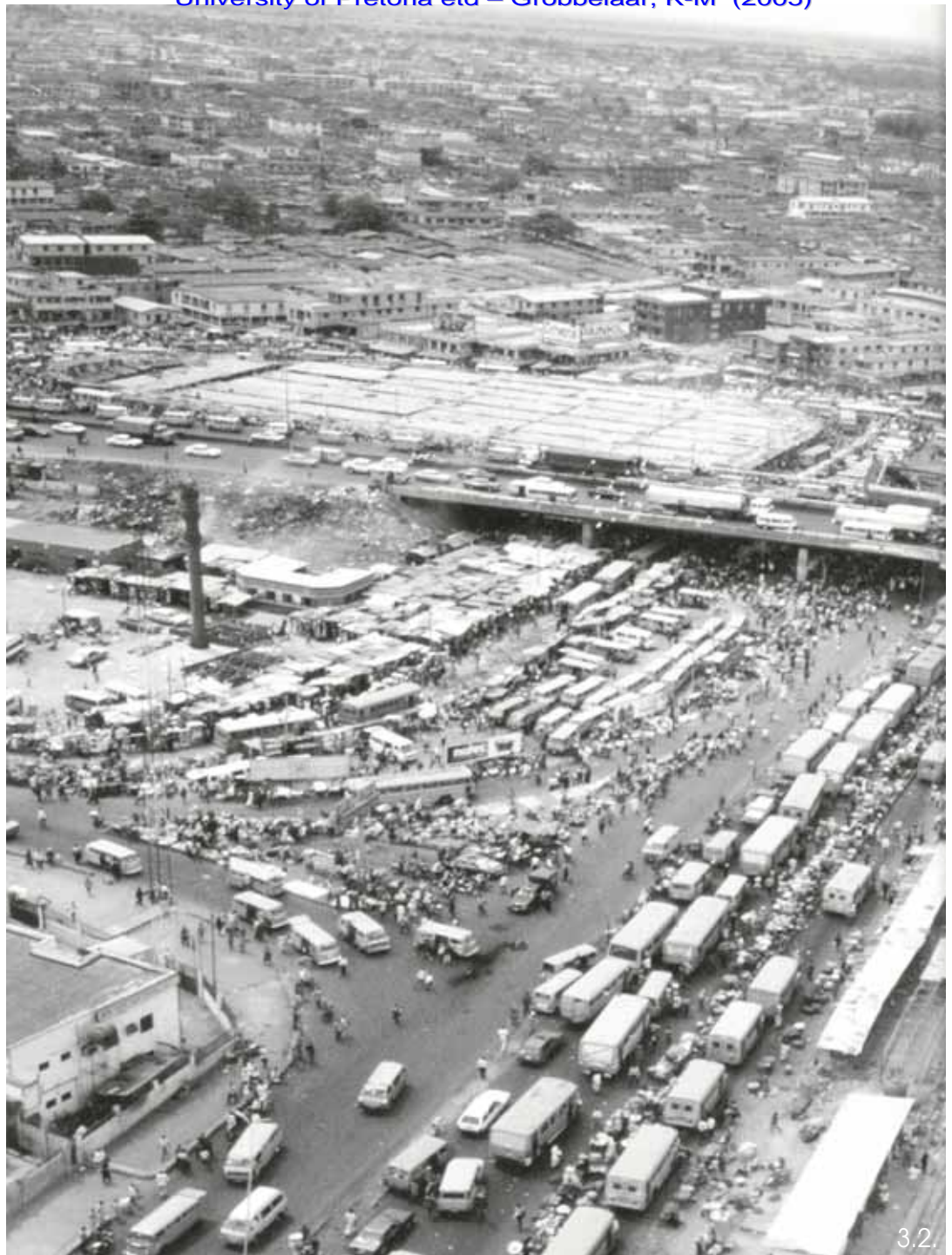
A decade of democracy has seen a massive influx of previously marginalised individuals into South Africa's city centres. In these new 'African' cities, Apartheid has been replaced by new dichotomies: between the urban elite and the increasingly marginalised urban poor; between the city and the increasingly rural hinterland, and between the formal and informal sectors.

The African CBD Project - hosted in Natal in 1998 - attempted to deal with the *prospects and predicaments of African cities and their place within today's rapidly transforming world* (Wall 2000: V). Participants of the workshop used the mangrove tree as metaphor for the African City - **a resilient entity that survives between contexts** (Pearce in Wall 2000: 91). According to the metaphor, the African City is adaptive and subversive. Like a mangrove forest - an interface between land and sea - the barriers that separate the African City have the potential to become edges that integrate and facilitate the exchange of ideas and the meeting of different cultures - a zone of synergy (Wall 2000: 91-2).

Like the Constitutional Hill development between Hillbrow and the northern suburbs, the site for the Cultural Centre has the potential to become an 'edge' of meeting and exchange; a zone of synergy between Braamfontein and Hillbrow; between foreigners and xenophobes and the formal and informal sectors.

The development and growth of the African City requires strategies for the integration of the formal and informal sectors to create a city which can accommodate the daily activities of rich and poor urbanites in multiple layers within a single urban environment.

The informal sector should not be romanticised - it remains one of necessity and not of choice. Nevertheless, it can teach the formal sector lessons *about vibrance, diversity, creativity and alternative models of survival* (Harber 2000: 149). The precedent study (Addendum D) includes an investigation of various modes of accommodating the informal within South African cities.



3.2. Lagos.

3.2.

WE ARE RESISTING THE NOTION THAT LAGOS, ACCRA AND ABIDJAN REPRESENT AFRICAN CITIES EN ROUTE TO BECOMING MODERN, OR, IN THE MORE POLITICALLY CORRECT IDIOM, THAT THEY ARE BECOMING MODERN THROUGH A VALID, 'AFRICAN' WAY. RATHER, WE THINK IT POSSIBLE TO ARGUE THAT THEY REPRESENT A CRYSTALISED, EXTREME, PARADIGMATIC SET OF CASE STUDIES OF CITIES AT THE FOREFRONT OF GLOBALIZING MODERNITY.

MANY OF THE MUCH-TOUTED VALUES OF CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CAPITAL - AND ITS PROPHETIC ORGANISATIONAL MODELS OF DISPERSAL AND DISCONTINUITY, FEDERALISM AND FLEXIBILITY - HAVE BEEN REALISED AND PERFECTED IN WEST AFRICA.

THIS IS TO SAY THAT LAGOS IS NOT CATCHING UP WITH US. RATHER, WE MAY BE CATCHING UP WITH LAGOS.

LAGOS, AS AN ICON OF WEST AFRICAN URBANITY, INVERTS EVERY ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC OF THE SO-CALLED MODERN CITY. YET, IT IS STILL - FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD - A CITY; AND ONE THAT WORKS. RAPIDLY EXPANDING, TRANSFORMING AND PERFECTING, THE AFRICAN CITY ALLOWS FOR THE SURVIVAL OF MILLIONS OF INHABITANTS.

THE AFRICAN CITY FORCED THE RECONCEPTUALISATION OF 'CITY' ITSELF. THE FACT THAT MANY OF THE TRENDS OF CANONICAL MODERN WESTERN CITIES CAN BE SEEN IN THE HYPERBOLIC GUISE IN LAGOS OR ACCRA ALSO SUGGESTS THAT TO WRITE ABOUT THE AFRICAN CITY IS TO WRITE ABOUT CHICAGO, LONDON OR LOS ANGELES. IT IS TO EXAMINE THE CITY ELSEWHERE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD. IT IS TO RECONSIDER THE MODERN CITY.

IN SHORT, WE COULD ARGUE, IT IS TO DO AWAY WITH THE INHERITED NOTION OF 'CITY' ONCE AND FOR ALL.

WESTERN DISCOURSES ON THE CITY HAVE BEEN TRAPPED BETWEEN TWO POLES - THE 'FORMAL' AND THE 'INFORMAL'. IN ORDER TO AVOID THE REDUCTION THAT THE AFRICAN CITY IS MERELY 'FLEXIBLE' OR TOTALLY INDETERMINATE, WE WILL EMBELLISH A THIRD TERM - THE **INFORMAL** - IN ORDER TO ACCESS THE SPECIFICITY OF ITS OPERATIONS. THE INFORMAL IS NEITHER FORMED NOR UNFORMED; ALTERNATELY, IT LOOKS LIKE BOTH.

IT IS NOT IDENTIFIABLE AS A PATTERN OR MORPHOLOGY, BUT NONETHELESS MANUFACTURES THE MATERIAL, REALITY OR URBAN FORM. IT IS AN ALLIANCE OF TRANSFORMATIVE INGENUITY AND THE TACTICAL MOBILISATION OF RESOURCES, PRODUCED FROM CONDITIONS OF NEED AND IN THE ALMOST COMPLETE ABSENCE OF CENTRALISATION.

IT IS A FREEDOM FOUND IN THE INTERSTICES OF THE GENERIC, THE INSERTION OF LOCALISED INTERVENTIONS TO ACCESS OVERLOOKED WELLSPRINGS OF VALUE. **THE INFORMAL IS AN UNDERSTANDING THAT THE LARGEST EFFECTS CAN BE GATHERED FROM OPERATING AT THE SMALLEST SCALE, THAT THE HUMBLEST MEANS CAN ACHIEVE THE GREATEST ENDS, THAT LIMINAL SPACES HOLD ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES FOR PROGRAM, AND THAT TIME IS A SOURCE OF WEALTH.** DESPITE ITS MARGINALISATION, THE INFORMAL CAN RADICALLY ALTER THE CITY. THE WEST AFRICAN CITY DEPENDS UPON IT TO SURVIVE.

The LAGOS CHARTER

West - African Metropolis

Nine national censuses have been conducted in Nigeria since 1911, of which not a single one produced accurate figures. The population of Lagos, Nigeria's commercial and cultural centre, is currently estimated to be between 7 and 10 million. The UN predicts a population of 21,1 million by 2010 (Ip 2002: 368). Over 60% of Lagosians responding to a 1994 employment study described themselves as traders (Hamilton 2002: 257).

According to UNCHS statistics, in 1987 only 70% of Ghana's urbanites had access to potable water. Only 40% of Nigeria's urban residents had access to drainage and sewerage (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 143). In Lagos, refuse is removed regularly from the central business and administrative zones and upper-class residential areas. The Lagos State Refuse Management Authority has taken to clearing refuse at night to avoid the daily traffic congestion. Very little effort is however made to clear refuse from the areas where most people live, even where reasonable road access exists. Moreover, 60% of Lagos's inhabitants live in areas inaccessible to trucks (Rakodi in Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 143). Electric power is supplied erratically. On several occasions, including recently in 1999, Lagos remained without power for several days. When the power goes, pumps stop and the water supply fails (Rakodi in Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 143).

The question looms: how do the residents of Lagos and other large West-African metropolises survive?

Flexible Infrastructure

An understanding requires a reconsideration of the modern western notion of infrastructure as being large-scale, official, centralised, highly capitalised and immobile. In Lagos's case, the services of conventional infrastructure have been adopted by the informal or marginal sectors of the economy - *small traders, entrepreneurs, thieves, unlicensed electricians and*

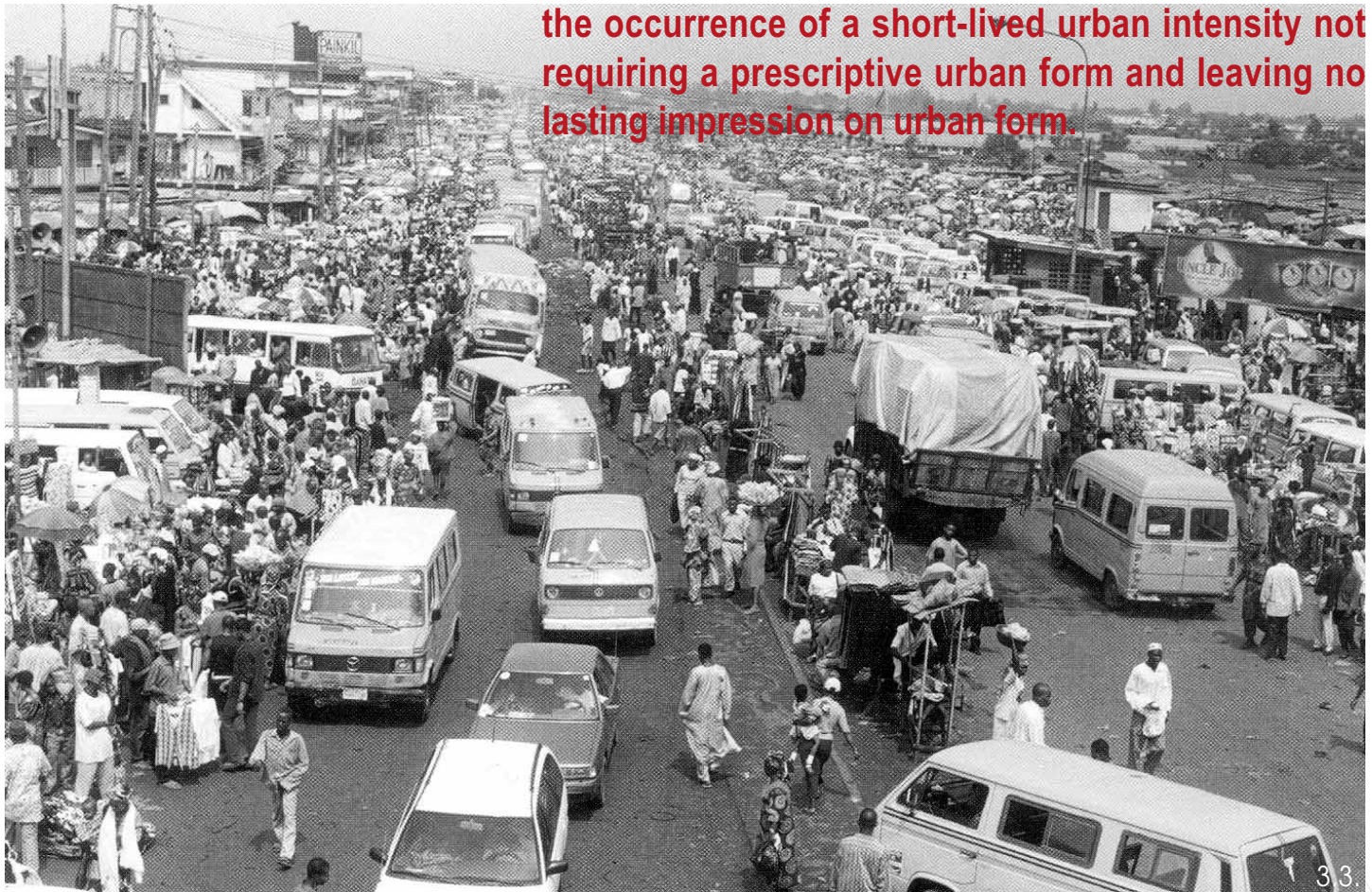
plumbers, small contractors and thousands of trucks swarming to pick up and deliver (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 144).

According to Shepard and Comaroff (2002: 144-50), flexible infrastructures function in three manners: **Parasitic** infrastructure depends on the modification or manipulation of existing formal infrastructural systems as a basis for providing services to a larger client base than government is able to. Electricity-tapping is a common technique for illegally diverting power to a house or business. Such measures are often necessitated by municipalities' failure to provide basic services even to the elite. Virtually any electrician in Lagos can provide an electrical connection by splicing into the existing system. The Nigerian government has done little to counteract the tapping - the wire-tappers maximise the efficiency of the existing service provision while minimising demand for additional connections. The distinction between prohibited and permitted; formal and informal; effective and defective is all but erased.

Mobile infrastructure rely on cars, trucks, buses, bicycles and mammy-wagons to take care of *waste, power, transport, shopping, telephoning, factory production, judgment and prosecution* - either by trafficking or delivery. Hawkers sell the same merchandise one would find in malls or department stores by the side of major roads to drivers waiting in traffic. This has the effect of worsening traffic, making road-shopping a necessity due to lack of time and the boredom of gridlock. It can take as long as four hours to cross Oshodi Intersection [fig. 3.3], a blind eight-way conjunction and informal street-market in the north of Lagos. When it is not provided at the roadside, merchandise itself becomes mobile and is delivered or ported about for sale. As a result, infrastructure in Lagos has become unmappable, being simultaneously everywhere and non-existent.

Nodal infrastructure concentrates services and goods in a compact point servicing a wider area. Communities will go so far as to clear land, build a physical structure, employ a worker and then petition the state to begin the service of a post-office, market place, school, gas station, health centre, or motor park. These nodes rely on a reciprocal relationship between the informal sector and state enterprise. Periodic markets are typical nodes - they produce a spatial concentration of demand for the full-time trader and a temporal concentration of demand for the part-time trader while distributing the little available resources over the largest possible area such that waste is minimised.

The periodic market's temporal use of space facilitates the occurrence of a short-lived urban intensity not requiring a prescriptive urban form and leaving no lasting impression on urban form.



Fission (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 174-9) describes a social and spatial phenomenon resulting from the weakening of the traditional powers of the head of the extended family and leading to the disintegration of the compound and the individualisation of housing units. According to Mabogunje (in Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 175), the compound represents the base unit of indigenous African urbanism - a property bounded by a perimeter wall and arranged around a courtyard and a communal alley (Ip 2002: 365). Fission creates boundaries - small-scaled negotiations - hidden under the umbrella of the traditional form and, in an advanced stage, the filling in of smaller structures in the interior courtyard. With fission; however, comes fusion - a reoccupation of traditional space within social and economic formations and beyond their mere fragmentation (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 176). These mutations are visible only in the smallest scale of physical accretions which control permeability and surface program - the widening of spaces between compound segments to increase permeability for the generation of income and the formation of new associations replacing the familial centralisation of compound life; encroachments onto accessways and the insertion of additional vertical surfaces as fences or walls.

The material world is constantly on the verge of collapse, or in a ... constant state of mobility. The activity in cementing back together, patching up, taking down the architectural substance of the city is evidence of a network of provisional tactics for finding the maximum potential for income from the most minimal establishment... [a process] completely intertwined with the complex reassessment of boundary conditions and liminal zones within which community formation occurs (Shepard and Comaroff: 179).



3.4. Lagos:industry.

Combing of streets (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 181-5) refers to a pattern of tightly packed streets which may stretch for distances of up to 2km without defined cross streets. The lots are extremely shallow and form long two-faced bands of densely built urban fabric which often occupy less area than that dedicated to street circulation. Cross streets occur at indeterminate points without challenging the primacy of combing.

The hierarchy between private and public is virtually eliminated - a flexible relationship [exists] between the activity at any single address and the tremendous flow of commercial activity that occurs along these linear thoroughfares... Urbanisation is a process occurring at the doorstep (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 181).

Whereas variation in terms of scale or activity in the conventional western street system is mediated by a hierarchy of primary and secondary streets, the unidirectional network in the comb system forces variations in land use, density, socio-economic status etc. to occur in a gradient manner. *Rigorous linearity facilitates a flexibility in urban hierarchies that supersedes any need for zoning and is fuelled entirely on the primacy of urban economic demand* (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 181). The linear street acts as an armature for constant change in economic transactions and social relationships, but remains unpaved and therefore free to expand and gradually lose its definition as a road.

In Accra's case, a two-way grid of streets is imposed. The **superblock** develops as the mid-scale unit - a block is pushed to its maximum size, *its edges ripped apart to create a flexible zone at its centre* [which allows] *agglomeration in spray multiplicities that dash the modernist hopes of Accra's Department of Planning* (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 203-7). Springing from Ghana's traditional system of land tenure - wherein an

individual acquires from the stool authorities the right to use a particular piece of land for a given purpose over a given period of time - ownership can be understood as an aggregation of legal rights. *The rights themselves being elastic, the concept of ownership is so also, making the privileges, powers and liabilities of ownership equally fluid and admittedly opaque to classification* (Ip 2002: 383). Every act of urbanism is locally negotiated. The interior of the superblock inherits *collectivisation, shared resources and capital and rituals not conducted in the home* (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 207). Far beyond the modernist notion of flexibility at the level of system and mass-production, the West-African urban system **replaces the 'fixed core-flexible exterior' with a gooey interior allowing the Informal to manipulate scale and directly respond to need in a full realisation of the concept of multi-use** (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 209).

Largely incompatible with the traditional system of land tenure, customary public land ownership in Accra and Lagos has necessitated the physical delimitation of property boundaries by **walls** (Ip 2002 366-7). As a result of increasing crime levels, the property line is transformed into vertical surface as a means of excluding outsiders and enforcing property. This phenomenon occurs across the socio-economic spectrum of real estate. The wall - *typically constructed of CMU blocks, barbed wire, shards of glass and pebbles* (Ip 2002:366) - has in turn become a new form of infrastructure that supports and serves a host of economies and small-scale industries. The wall becomes a shopfront - generating sidewalk activity - or acts as support for carpets, security gates or - in conjunction with a drain - a thickened zone between the plot/compound and the streets which is occupied by petty traders.

Open space in West Africa's large metropolises becomes the repository for a surprising variety of activities. Urban open space - **flexscape** as referred to by Stone and Belanger (2002: 303-7) - becomes the setting for a vibrant urbanism that facilitates a life of necessity. Flexscape may be understood as **an all-accommodating, flexible surface that is transformed over time as a result of the forces acting and demands placed upon the particular place**. Its undifferentiated surface makes no easy allowance for the permanent appropriation of public turf - through its neutrality it becomes an active mediator. Open space facilitates a *liminal economic structure* (Ip 2002: 328) - *one that operates only slightly above the level below which survival is impossible. Economic production...occurs in a minimum and specialised set of circumstances ...that is negotiated out of the matrix of existing but half complete conditions*. Every negotiation is unique: different players and contexts are involved, and the terrain is constantly renegotiated in both social and spatial terms.

As the largest reservoir of unbuilt space in West African cities, streets comprise the bulk of what can be considered flexscape, with width and location as the primary determinants of patterns of use. Lagos's roads are not *plan lines between points, but perhaps its most elastic and variable scapes; made more enabling by local modifications which deny the road's insistent linearity. Lagos has no streets... even the Lagos superhighway has bus stops on it, mosques under it, markets in it and building-less factories throughout it* (Slayton 2002: 402) [fig. 3.4.].

According to Ip (2002: 348-9), the densification of economic activity furthermore occurs at sites where multiple interests collide and economic demand peaks - such as go-slows, major intersections and railway stops. Hot spots of activity occur in an otherwise undifferentiated urban fabric. *This tendency for*

intensification and congregation of activity...points to a self-organising principle within the economic system itself - the system becomes viable and maintains a multiplicity of interests, relations and interactions. Structured on complexity, it becomes self-generating through the feedback engendered by its own actions and interactions (Ip 2002: 349).

Periodic markets thus occur by means of an aggregation of people, irrespective of the spatial coordinates of the marketplace. **A marketplace is made by the presence of one potential buyer and one potential seller.**

Two Cities

The urbanity of Lagos is one of vitality, intensity, surprises, incongruities, juxtapositions, and shortcomings. By all accounts, a dynamic public realm is a central characteristic of the urban condition found there (Slayton 2002: 319). Yet these are conditions born from necessity rather than intention.

Compounding, as referred to by Cosmas (2002: 502), once an act exclusive to the expatriate community, is fast emerging as the typology of choice to the rest of the social strata. In the new areas of expansion that have become the refuge for the new upwardly mobile class fleeing Lagos' problems, 'big man' style housing is being erected and consumed by affluent buyers who require security and exclusivity. According to Cosmas (2002: 490), businesses are similarly being fortified by the installation of walls, barbed wire, electrified fencing, gates, cameras and intercoms. Chance contact and public interaction is limited to these compounds' self-defined, homogeneous groups. The wall becomes the mechanism for guarding land against occupation by the poor masses. These suburbia are not confined to the periphery of the city - they implode the city. As a result, social disparity deepens and if there was ever

a sense of shared space, it is lost. Lagos becomes a giant assemblage of fragmented realities, fast becoming less and less aware of the truth about each another (ibid.).

I n t e r v e n t i o n

In 1975, General Murutala Mohammed initiated the project of designing of a new capital for Nigeria (Slayton 2002: 79).

At the time of the first constructions in Abuja, Air Commodore Hamza Abdullani commented: *It is impossible for slums to develop in Abuja. Every inch of the city has been predetermined. The way and manner of the structure does not allow anybody to go out of the original plan. If we give you a plot, you have a boundary for the plot and you cannot exceed that. There is what we called our land-use plan and this is our bible. We follow it carefully. There is absolutely no room for anybody to start building sub-standard structures. It's impossible* (Shepard and Comaroff 2002: 169). His statement is indicative of the military's faith in the masterplan as antidote to the inevitable manipulations of African urbanites.

Today, Abuja is billions of dollars over budget, at least 15 years behind schedule and dubiously organised. One third of the money spent on Abuja is said to be unaccounted for (Slayton 2002: 99). The geographic centre and political capital of Nigeria is a centre of gargantuan scales and libraries' worth of planning arithmetic for an almost non-existent population (Slayton 2002: 79). Abuja has failed.

It seems clear enough that no person chooses lifelong exposure to the reality of the West African metropolis. Those who have a choice retreat to the fortified strongholds of gated communities - a phenomenon only too familiar in the South African urban landscape. But the creation of another Abuja is not the answer: purist visions and a stubborn reliance on the doctrines of planning procedure will inevitably prevent the realisation of the generative urban potential the West African City .

The slum has gone but we only have to take a look at one of the new towns or a recent housing development to recognise to what extent the spirit of spontaneity has also gone into hiding. Architects left no cracks and crevices this time. They expelled all sense of place. They were fearful of the unpremeditated event, the spontaneous act, unscheduled gaiety or violence, unpredictable danger around the corner. They made a flat surface of everything so that no microbes could survive the civic vacuum cleaner. To think that architects are given to talking devotedly about space while they are actually meaning emasculating it into a void (Smithson, A. and P. in Kim 2002: 103).

Nigerian Uche Isichei (2002: 11) writes that in modern Nigeria *the traditional idea of market space has been transformed into an urban strategy*. What was once located in a specific time and place has mutated into a system of inhabitation. *Effectively, the city becomes inhabited as a market, and this enables goods and services to be taken directly to the point where they are consumed*. It is an essentially anti-structuralist and subversive approach to urbanity whereby traders gain free market space in apparent freedom from authority. Isichei (2002: 13) has criticised Koolhaas for investigating Lagos's alternative organisational strategies without investigating the quality of inhabitation, and argues for a differentiation between optimum organisation and basic survival strategies.

According to Isichei (2002: 12-13), a succession of coups and political mismanagement has crippled the Nigerian economy and created a pervading feeling of despair. The efficacy of survival strategies has encouraged Nigerians to grow insensitive to regulatory or territorial bodies. The informal markets are also a symptom of a transformation involving the fragmentation of society into smaller independent social and economic units which inhibit the development of communal projects (Isichei 2002: 14). The current manner of inhabitation is far from optimal. Isichei does not believe that there is an inherent logic in the city of Lagos that avoids building and structuring. According to Isichei, *Lagos would benefit greatly from attention to the planning of city fabric*. Whereas markets currently occupy left-over space, designers need strategies to plan public space in ways that facilitate the requirements of the traditional market.

The designer is left with the challenge of finding the balance between overplanning and underplanning.



3.6.

3.6. Lagos.

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informal

The social context study points towards the emergence in Hillbrow of a new mode of spatial regulation; driven by the subversion of the hierarchical structure of the formal socio-economy by the network of the informal socio-economy. The new spatial regime results from the inability of the formal system to support the survival of the lower socio-economic classes, which are compelled to turn to unsanctioned or illegal activities to acquire an income. Such activity is opportunistic and short-lived and operates at the smallest scale to achieve the greatest effect. The inability of the formal system to control or prevent illegal activity leads in turn to the increasing dissolution of the boundary between the permitted and the prohibited.

In addition, the emerging spatial regime is overlaid with the territorial dimension given to ethnic differences as a result of the increasing incidence of xenophobia. The resulting social and spatial system is highly complex and densely layered, requiring the designer to reconsider space as a merely architectural phenomenon: space becomes territory, the ownership of which is contested and negotiated on socio-political grounds. Its character is ephemeral; its owners nomadic.

While, in the case of Lagos, the informal has become the dominant system, the strength of the formal system in Hillbrow limits the ability of the informal to entirely subvert the traditional hierarchy. Instead, the informal lives inside of and remains greatly dependant upon the formal. Space is characterised by the constant play between the hierarchy of the static 'formal' and the nomadic 'informal'. Poised at the threshold between the formal and informal, we find the *sanctioned impermanence* Morojele (cf. p. 42) refers to.

Morojele's *baggy space* is Stone and Belanger's *flexscape* - space _which is experienced as being significant without being prescriptive; _which readily accommodates the unintended and spontaneous act; _which by its undifferentiated nature resists permanent appropriation, _and by its neutrality becomes a mediator whereby contested space becomes negotiated place. The single outstanding characteristic of flexscape or baggy space is the immense programmatic potential it acquires from the provisional tactics of the informal.

Shepard and Comaroff's investigation of the phenomena of combing (cf. p. 48) indicates a tendency of the informal to gradually eliminate the boundary between public and private domain. In the case of the Cultural Centre, the hostile surroundings however necessitate the demarcation of the defensible foreign territory with a boundary of some sort. It is argued that a 'boundary' is not necessarily an impenetrable physical edge, but may be psychological. Ip (cf. p. 47) refers to boundaries as *small-scaled negotiations*, suggesting a light-footed affirmation of ownership not requiring a prescriptive architectural expression and leaving no lasting impression on urban form.

The Centre is to contain both programmed spaces and flexscape, thereby ensuring the integration of formal hierarchy with informal network and allowing the informal to capitalise on formal activity.

The project brief and building programme is based on an interpretation of the complex socio-economic - and political systems prevalent in Hillbrow. Human activity and perception are the critical generators of an approach to the design problem and remain at the centre of the designed product. It is considered essential that the building not attempt to conquer the foreground, but instead provide a supportive background for human activity.

fragile architecture

Juhani Pallasmaa (2001: 51) has strongly criticised visually formalist 'foreground' architecture *that focuses on aesthetic effects* and that *emphasises the photogenic, instantaneous qualities of visual imagery detached from existential reality*. He argues instead for a tactile or haptic* architecture, which promotes intimacy and sensory interaction and is appreciated and comprehended gradually. Tactile architecture embraces the tectonic presence and materiality of architecture and develops from the experiential situation towards an architectural form.

Pallasmaa (2000: 81) speaks of a 'fragile' architecture, that is architecture of weak structure and image as opposed to architecture of strong structure and image.

The latter seeks a singular visual image, while the former is contextual and responsive. Strong urbanism is reinforced by the eye and a sense of control, whereas weak urbanism gives rise to the haptic medieval townscape of intimacy and participation. Fragile architecture does not aspire to a deliberate, preconceived image of beauty, but relies on *appropriateness, causality and contextuality* (Pallasmaa 2000: 84).

Strong image has minimal tolerance for change and is aesthetically vulnerable to the forces of time. It is obliged to simplify particularities in a quest for perfection.

Weak image allows weathering and decay to strengthen our experience of time, causality and reality (Pallasmaa 2000: 79). It embraces irregularities and discontinuities, which are *not only signs of life but sources of beauty* (Rushkin in Pallasmaa 2000: 83).

While vision flattens time and places us in the present tense and in opposition to the object being viewed, fragile or haptic architecture is layered and multi-sensory.

It replaces the object-viewer relationship with the bodily experience of a temporal continuum, which evokes meaning *in the acts of occupying and inhabiting space and experiencing matter, gravity and light* (Pallasmaa 2001: 52).

The objective, thus, is to create a 'background-building', a platform for human activity rather than an entity which is meaningful in itself. Depth, layering and tactility is favoured over façadism; and lyrical simplicity, material quality and honestly 'assembled' details over machined compositions and sleek finishes.

Architecture calls simultaneously for expression and restraint, innovation and a consciousness of history, courage , and modesty.

Pallasmaa 2002: 52.