



KNOWING AND ACTIVATING JOHANNESBURG CITY STREETS WITH CHILDREN:

Open Streets and Reggio Emilia Inspiration

A REPORT ON OPEN STREETS AUCKLAND PARK EVENT ON 7 APRIL 2019

Report by

Judith Browne, Iginio Gagliardone,
Theresa Giorza, Alex Halligey,
Philip Harrison, Lerato Mabaso,
Stefan van Niekerk

With contributions from

Pauline Borton, David du Preez, Abigail
Godsell, Tamara Last, Thandeka Mlaza-
Lloyd, Mark Schaerer, Lisa Seftel and
Mimosa teaching staff



SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH CHAIR IN
**SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE
& SPATIAL ANALYSIS
& CITY PLANNING**



UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND
JOHANNESBURG



Cover photograph: A view down Ditton Avenue during Open Streets in Auckland Park, 7 April 2019. *Photograph by Chris Anderson*

Inside cover illustrations: Kayla and Shalom from Mimosa School's Grade 0 group drew what they'd love to do in the street if there were no cars.

FOREWORD



The City of Johannesburg was privileged to be a partner in the Open Streets event on the 7th April 2019 in Auckland Park ward 87. This report reflects the enthusiasm and commitment of both the stakeholders and community of Auckland Park and surroundings to embrace new ways of using their streets.

On that day, the streets in Auckland Park became a site of diversity and social cohesion, community participation and togetherness, learning and expression which will never be forgotten and which is described in more detail in this report.

The event would not have been such a success if it was not for the active partnership between Brixton Community Forum, Auckland Park Residents Association, Ward Councillor, Bridget Steer, Mimosa Pre-School teachers and parents drawing on the lessons of the international Open Street movement.

The City of Johannesburg is committed to learn the lessons of this event and roll out future events which will spread the word about road safety, the benefits of walking and cycling, the needs for our streets to embrace the needs of all road users and the need for more active and participatory methods of learning.

A big thanks to all who made the day and this report possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Seftel'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lisa Seftel
Executive Director: Transport
City of Johannesburg

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The compilation of this report was facilitated by Mimosa School and the NRF Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning, attached to the Wits School of Architecture and Planning, with contributions from: the city of Johannesburg Transport Department and the Transformation and Spatial Planning Directorate, researchers from the Wits Foundation Studies Division and the Wits Media Studies Division and representatives of Auckland Park Residents Association, Brixton Community Forum, Play Africa and #ArtMyJozi as managed by The Trinity Session.

Many organisations and individuals made Open Streets Auckland Park possible on 7 April 2019. Thank you to all those involved in organising the event from initial stages to realisation.

Thank you to organising committee members, including: James Buchanan of Hope Church, Camdon Juby of Art House Melville, Kyla Davis of Well Worn Theatre, David du Preez of Breeze Block, Eli Kodisang of the African Reclaimers Organisation, Tamara Last, Mbali Mthethwa of Skatesistan, Mark Schaerer of the Brixton Community Forum, Sharize Schaerer of Netcare Rehab Hospital, Ann Simmonds of Play Africa and the Auckland Park Residents Association, Dominique Soma of WeHeartBeat. The event was made possible by the City of Johannesburg Transport Department and the City Transformation and Spatial Planning Directorate, with many specific thanks to Lerato Mabaso and Mbongiseni Masuku from the Transport Department and to Stefan van Niekerk, Abigail Godsell, Thobile Ntuli and Lemohang Cindi from the City Transformation and Spatial Planning Directorate, especially for their help on the day.

Thank you to those who held a central position between the organising committee and the research subcommittee: Heather Barclay, Judith Browne, Iginio Gagliardone, Philip Harrison and again all those from City Transformation. Thanks to the research subcommittee members: Theresa Giorza and Alex Halligey.

A big thank you to Phyllis Kramer from Region B Citizen Relationship and Urban Management for assisting in contacting various departments and contacting volunteers; Bridget Steer, the Ward Councillor for Ward 87; Brixton Kerk for the loan of the tables; the Brixton Recreation Centre for lending more tables and chairs as part of the City's Sports and Recreation Directorate and assisting with volunteers and all the volunteers from the Brixton Community Forum and Riverlea.

Thanks too, to the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) for coming on board through their #ArtMyJozi programme and The Trinity Session who run the programme for the JDA.

Thank you to families in the extended Mimosa community who helped on the day and with research exercises before and on day, including: Serena and Chris Anderson, Hedwig and Maya Barry, Luke Buckland, Natalie Jacklin-Chetty, Keletjo Chiloane, Ruth Cox, Adila Khan Deshmukh, Ana Ferreira, Kelsey Glennon, Samantha Hargreaves, Ayesha Jacob, Bradley Kirshenbaum, Marcel Korth, Jadeija Laurent, Petunia Nare Lemekoana, Sinethemba Makanyana, Cosmo Mapitsa, Smangele Mathebula, Nkosinathi Ndlovu, Candice Nolan, Sims Phakisi, Carmen and Justin Roberts, Amina Sader, OThandiwe Sekhibane, Dominique Soma, Tracy Lee Starke, Tristin Storme-Westraad, Mammatti Thakhuli-Nzuza, Amy Hertz Tekie, Juliana Thornton, Adel van Niekerk, Jacques van der Watt and Yan Yang.

Lastly, thank you to all those not already listed above who were involved in the activations on the day: the Academy of Sound Engineering, Chance to Play, Children of Fire, Leon Andrew Labuschagne for the hip-hop activations, Sipho Mthiyane for the musical accompaniment, Maria Motshweni for the weaving, Daniel Muchunju the Wire Doctor and Masako Osada for the tai chi.

Photos of Open Streets Cape Town events reproduced with permission from the organisation.

Where children's faces are clearly visible, permission was sought and obtained.

The preparation of the report was sponsored by the South African Research Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning (SA&CP). Alex Halligey, a post-doctoral scholar in the programme co-ordinated the preparation and production of the report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Open Streets Auckland Park event was held in a section of Auckland Park on 7 April 2019. Ditton and Twickenham Avenues were officially closed from Henley Road up to and including Cookham Road to allow for a fully pedestrianised and non-motorised vehicle use of the area. The closure lasted from just after 08h00 in the morning – to allow for set-up and preparation before the event start-time of 10h30 – to just after 14h00 in the afternoon. Officially the streets were meant to open again at 15h00, once all activations and stalls had been packed away, but on the day the barricades were lifted just after 14:30.

The initiative started with interest from Judith Browne and Heather Barclay from Mimosa School in having an Open Streets-like event in Auckland Park and was quickly picked up and championed by Lerato Mabaso and Stefan van Niekerk, respectively from Johannesburg's Transport Department (in line with their Streets Alive programme) and the City Transformation and Spatial Planning Directorate. Mark Schaerer from Brixton Community Forum (a volunteer-run organisation dedicated to making Brixton a safe, livable place for all who reside there), Ann Simmonds from Play Africa (a not-for-profit and social enterprise company focused on working with children and city spaces) and Kyla Davis from Well-Worn Theatre Company (a physical theatre company with a strong environmental ethos) came on board as organising committee members early on in the process. A number of organising committee members were parents of children at Mimosa School, as well as having a vested interest professionally in a children-orientated Open Streets initiative. This was an event realised through a collaboration between city official programming, non-governmental advocacy and activist organisations and civically and environmentally conscious individuals. Centred around Mimosa School and with the committee members invested ideologically in children and their relationships to the world the event had a children-and-family-centred ethos in creating activations for making Johannesburg streets more socially vibrant and functional as public spaces.

A subcommittee focused on the research opportunities that the project presented. This was comprised of Judith Browne and Heather Barclay from Mimosa; Philip Harrison from the South African Research Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning attached to the Wits School of Architecture and Planning and one of his postdoctoral fellows, Alex Halligey; Theresa Giorza from the Wits School of Education Foundation Studies Division; Iginio Gagliardone from the Wits Media Studies Division and at various stages members of the City's Transport Department and City Transformation and Spatial Planning Directorate. This group dialogued about the research exercises on streets Mimosa School was already running and proposed new ones in the lead up to the event and for the day itself. The primary intention of the subcommittee was to document and critically reflect on Open Streets Auckland Park as a children-centred intervention into streets.

Several other stakeholders connected to Johannesburg City became involved over the course of the organising process. In early March the #ArtMyJozi team, managed by the Trinity Session, commissioned by the Johannesburg Development Agency, got in touch with Mimosa School to run a workshop with Mimosa children towards an exhibition for the Open Streets event day as part of the #ArtMyBrixton programme. This was another valuable contribution to the overall research focus for the event. With the Region B theme as part of Johannesburg City's Streets Alive programme being Sports and Recreation, this department came on board in the last week before the event, helping with chairs and tables.

Attendance

Many event attendees were residents, pedestrians and users of the streets such as families connected to surrounding schools, and university students in nearby student housing. Many came from neighbourhoods around Auckland Park, like Brixton, Melville and Westdene – but others, drawn by the Open Streets concept and the idea of children-friendly streets, travelled in from as far as Orange Farm and Rustenburg. All the people interviewed said they came either because they had a connection with children and/or because they were invested politically in the idea of people being drawn together in public spaces for recreational activities.

The research desks at the official entrance points to the closed-off area, counted 252 people, made up of 92 men, 74 women and 86 children. These numbers provide a conservative estimate of the amount of people attending on the day as many did not use the official entry points. Organisers estimated nearer 400 people, making this a well-supported, small-scale public event.

The JMPD provided 51 officers and 23 cars. The organising committee, including researchers, but not stall holders, numbered 20. The number of storeholders/activation organisers was 28. The volunteers working as marshalls and assisting with set up and packing numbered 100 and were either from Riverlea or attached to the Brixton Community Forum. Phyllis Kramer from Region B Citizen Relationship and Urban Management assisted Mark Schaerer of the Brixton Community Forum in securing the help of the volunteers.

Activities on the Day

Street activations on the day included: a pop-up playground provided by Play Africa, a skate park provided by Skateistan, a street theatre production Galela and roving puppets provided by Well-Worn Theatre Company, a bike school provided by BreezeBlock, involvement of patients and staff from Netcare Rehab Hospital, attendance by a group of children from Children of Fire, a team of roving artists managed by Art House Melville, a mud kitchen and inside-out school hosted by Mimosa teachers, an activation of an alleyway with invented games by Mimosa School Grades 1, 2 and 3, planting with Kelsey Glennon from Wits' School of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences, slacklining, a trash to treasure art station, chalk art on the street, a wire workshop with Daniel Muchunju the Wire Doctor, a weaving plastic bags workshop with Maria Motshweni, food trucks and picnic tables, with families invited to set up picnic blankets and chairs and enjoy the space together, face painting and book exchange hosted by Hope Church, art activation and exhibition of work done in the Brixton social cluster by #ArtMyJozi, a hip-hop stage and hip-hop lessons with Leon Andrew Labuschagne, storytelling for kids (available every hour on the hour) at a reading picnic set up Smangele Mathebula, the African Reclaimers Organisation and a dance activation by OThandiwe Sekhibane.

Research activities on the day included an exhibition of children's research into neighbourhood streets, welcome desks with interactive maps, questionnaires and verbal interviews, a philosophy circle, teams of children interviewing local residents in their homes, audio interviews for a podcast conducted by Candice Nolan, photography by Chris Anderson and filming by Adel van Niekerk.

Responses

The Open Streets Auckland Park event was very well-received. Parents reported that they took pleasure in seeing their children play on the streets and in not having to worry for their safety in terms of traffic or crime. Children took great delight in all the activities of the day and the reflections from Mimosa School children subsequent to the event have been extensive and are ongoing. Their conceptual thinking in drawings, verbal narratives and games is reflecting the notion of connection that roads inspire. Children are verbalising a curiosity in streets in their normal, daily use, as well as reflecting back on the freedom and exceptionalness of the streets during the Open Streets event. Interviews with participants on the day as well as with pedestrians in the lead-up to the event offered data on public opinions of streets in different areas in Johannesburg and as a city on the whole, as well as desires for how Johannesburg streets might function and what the perceived obstacles to achieving these desires are. Details of this research can be found in the attached report.

Thandeka Mlaza-Lloyd and Stefan van Niekerk for City Transformation and Spatial Planning both felt the day was very positive in offering an alternative experience of how streets could be used. Van Niekerk felt that the majority of people were engaging with it as a carnival, rather than seeing the longer-term implications the event proposed for shifting daily street-use. He felt that a more overt framing of the activist intentions of the event would have made for a greater self-aware involvement among participants on the day. In a similar vein, several organising committee members thought having the JMPD involved earlier on in the organising process would have allowed for a greater integration of questions of road safety and how this affects different road users - cyclists, pedestrians, children, differently-abled people, motorised vehicle drivers. Mlaza-Lloyd expressed the

need for more publicity in general to alert people to the event and the need for more of these events to happen in all areas of the city with greater frequency.

In attendance were also former MMC for transport, Rehana Moosajee, and current MMC for development planning, Reuben Masango, as well as executive director for transport, Lisa Seftel, and ward councillor for region B, Bridget Steer. All of these officials expressed pleasure in the event and viewed it as a positive intervention, advocating for a more active use of streets as public spaces.

The organising committee felt the event to be a great success in terms of turn out, the responses of participants and in the range of activities available on the day. There were disappointments: wanting to have bring-and-share, free food and water distributed from tankers rather than in bottles which proved too difficult to organise in terms of city legislation on health and safety requirements; certain activations that were planned one way and then had to shift and be improvised differently in the situation of the day. There was also a hope that more schools in the area, University of Johannesburg Residents and other local organisations would get involved and that there would have been more capacity for marketing, as Thandeka Mlaza-Lloyd among other participants expressed a need for. The organising, especially to have the event as an official road closure, took a great deal of planning, teamwork and perseverance, but the committee assessed all this labour as well-worth the results on the day. Having a group of committed people with a network of connections made it possible to realise the event in its eventual form and the disappointments were minor in relation to the overall effectiveness of the event in creating a children-and-family-centred activation of the streets as motorised vehicle free, freely available public space for four hours.

Contents

Foreword by Lisa Seftel.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Summary of Report.....	iii
Contents.....	1
List of Figures.....	2
Introduction.....	4
Section 1: Background to the Open Streets movement.....	7
Section 2: Children in the City.....	17
Section 3: Planning and Realising the Auckland Park Open Streets Day, 7 April 2019.....	21
Section 4: Research.....	41
Section 5: Reflections and recommendations.....	53
Appendix A: Timeline of Event Planning.....	56
Appendix B: List of Research Exercises.....	59
Appendix C: Report from Mimosa School.....	65
Notes and References.....	74

List of Figures

Figure 1.....	13
Figure 2.....	13
Figure 3.....	20
Figure 4.....	27
Figure 5.....	27
Figure 6.....	28
Figure 7.....	29
Figure 8.....	29
Figure 9.....	31
Figure 10.....	34
Figure 11.....	39
Figure 12.....	40
Figure 13.....	40
Figure 14.....	40
Figure 15.....	46
Figure 16.....	47
Figure 17.....	49
Figure 18.....	52
Figure 19.....	54
Figure 20.....	60
Figure 21.....	61
Figure 22.....	62
Figure 23.....	65
Figure 24.....	65
Figure 25.....	66

Figure 26.....	67
Figure 27.....	67
Figure 28.....	68
Figure 29.....	69

Introduction

This report reflects on an Open Streets day held in Auckland Park on 7 April 2019. The initiative started with interest from Mimosa School in having an Open Streets-like event in Auckland Park and was quickly picked up and championed by Lerato Mabaso and Stefan van Niekerk, respectively from Johannesburg's Departments of Transport and Development Planning. A team comprised of Mimosa staff, parents, individuals and organisations invested in the Open Streets movement and City of Johannesburg officials planned and realised this public event within six months of the initial idea in November 2018. The final event honoured the Open Streets movement format in that the road closures were official and complete and that the public space then took on a festival character for the hours of the closure. Open Streets Auckland Park saw the official closure of Ditton and Twickenham Avenues from Henley Road up to and including Cookham Road to allow for four hours of fully pedestrianised and non-motorised vehicle use of the area. Food carts were set up, as were interactive street games, live performances, tai chi classes, slack-lining, bicycling, skateboarding, a reading corner, a philosophy circle and more. This report compiles the process of setting up the event, what happened on the day and what the implications of this and similar events might be for city streets and people's desires for how they might function.

A number of the people and organisations involved in organising Open Streets Auckland Park are informed and inspired by the City of Reggio Emilia's municipal system of early childhood education. Open Streets Auckland Park on 7 April 2019 became an experiment to test both the possibilities of activating city streets as communal, motorised vehicle-free, social spaces, but also the benefits of an intervention like this being orientated around children. To this end there were three main sources of inspiration driving the Open Streets Auckland Park event: the Open Streets movement, the Reggio Emilia approach to education, and using the event as an opportunity for research.

The Reggio Emilia philosophy of childhood and pedagogical approach emphasises the inclusion of children in the company of humanity, learning with and becoming responsible for (and able to respond ethically to and with) our world. Reggio Emilia is an approach to early childhood education developed in the Italian town of Reggio Emilia just after World War II. The approach sees children as co-investigators in the world and as learning or rather 'becoming different' through their interactions with the environment and all that that might include: other people, nature, structures, weather.¹

Theresa Giorza draws attention to the important distinction between considering children in isolation and in age-based cohorts and considering them through their relationships.² Orientating children's education, activities and involvement in society according to an idea of the child as

separate from people of other ages and as separate from non-child specific social situations, fails to account for how interconnected children are socially and materially. This “child-centred” focus in education owes much to the biological and developmentalist tradition in early years education influenced strongly by the discourse of developmental psychology.³ As the Reggio Emilia approach suggests, children are profoundly influenced by their already established relationships with people of all ages and their entire social, cultural and material environment and conversely that environments and people can be powerfully and positively influenced through an attentiveness to their relationships with children. A participant and parent of a child at Mimosa School commented on the day that the Open Streets Auckland Park event was more “family rather than child centred”, pointing towards the event’s focus on children in their relationships. This report sticks to the terms children-centred and children-orientated, but with the understanding that these terms signify a Reggio Emilia sense of children in relation to their social, cultural and material worlds and not as isolated child entities.

The outward focus of a Reggio Emilia-inspired understanding of children lends itself to a critical and active engagement with public space and puts it in sympathy with the ethos of the Open Streets movement. Open Streets is an established movement globally characterised by events where city streets are officially closed to motorised vehicles for a number of hours and the space is activated with festival-like, social happenings. Summatively, this intervention into the city streets is a way of providing temporary public space for social use and to advocate for streets as accommodating to pedestrians, non-motorised vehicles, recreational and communal social use, outside of Open Street event activations.

Although many Open Streets events globally and many of the Streets Alive events that the City of Johannesburg has facilitated locally have been inclusive of children, to the best of our knowledge the very specific focus on young children that the Open Streets Auckland Park 7 April offered is unprecedented in both the Open Streets movement and in the Streets Alive activations. So one of the main research questions of this report is: what might a Reggio Emilia-inspired approach to children in an Open Streets activation offer to working with and reimagining Johannesburg streets?

This leads to the third aspect of the Open Streets Auckland Park event. From early on in the process the organising committee set out to use the event as a research exercise. The research had a number of aspects. There was the documenting of the event to assess what the event itself did, but there was also using the event as a framework for researching streets, how they do and might function as public spaces. We wanted to offer a report that could give something of a “how to” guide for other groups organising similar events, but that would also unpack potential answers to the question of the value in a children-centred Open Streets event. The hope is that this research

will be of practical, local use to other Open Streets-like events in Johannesburg. Beyond this the hope is that this report will contribute more globally through a case-specific example to the Open Streets movements and Reggio Emilia-inspired approach to childhood development.

Section 1 discusses the history of the Open Streets movement internationally as well as in Africa and South Africa to lay the groundwork for what is at stake in cities generally and in Johannesburg specifically in terms of the Open Streets ethos. Section 2 gives a background to the Reggio Emilia educational approach. Section 3 charts the initiation of the project, its planning and realisation. Section 4 describes the research done in tandem with the project process. Section 5 reflects on the findings from the event and makes recommendations for future events or other parties interested in organising an Open Streets event of their own.

Section 1: Background to the Open Streets movement

History and Context of Open Streets movement:

The concept

Very simply, Open Streets involves the temporary closure of a road to motorised vehicles and the use of the 'reclaimed space' for communal purposes such as recreation and socialising. Open Streets is a form of 'tactical urbanism' (or 'DIY urbanism')⁴ that responds to the overwhelming dominance of the motor vehicle in the road space of our cities and the dearth of safe public space.

In South African cities around 25 percent of land area is used for road space, and yet this space is largely sterile, serving almost exclusively as corridors for vehicular traffic and for installed infrastructure. There are some parts of our cities, including some of the densely packed townships, where streets have other functions including social interaction, community bonding and physical activity. But, in other areas, children grow up in protected private spaces, and in enclosed commercialised spaces such as malls, experiencing neighbourhood streets as unsafe, unfriendly and largely deserted.

As a concept and a social movement, Open Streets seeks to reclaim spaces for people; for walking, jogging, cycling, creative arts, partying, learning, and much more. The vibrancy of our streets during the 2010 FIFA World Cup provided us with a glimpse of the possibilities for street space but we soon retreated again into private spaces.

Open Streets are of course not a panacea for the ills of our cities, but together with other initiatives such as the promotion of sustainable transport, may start shifting perceptions and patterns of behaviour. To infiltrate the bureaucratic, political and public consciousness, Open Streets need to be held regularly with support and partnership from a range of social actors, in government and civil society. As Marcela Guerrero Casas, the founder of Open Streets in Cape Town, indicated, "to have impact it has to happen over and over again over a long period".⁵

Also, for success, Open Streets needs to become a social movement rather than only a series of discrete events. In the sections below, we show how Open Streets has in fact evolved in many parts of the world as a social movement and how the seeds of this movement may be germinating across Africa, and specifically in cities in South Africa.

International perspective

The Open Streets movement brings together diverse threads and influences from different places with the most important, arguably, being the *Ciclovía* ('bicycle path') of Latin America. Latin

American cities have the existing advantage of a culture of vibrant communal life in public spaces, but even here the quality of communal life has been threatened by the motor vehicle and the privatisation of space. In December 1974, three young cyclists in Bogota, Colombia⁶, frustrated by growing car traffic, used their connections to persuade city officials to permit them to close 80 blocks of a city arterial for an event they called “The Great Pedal Demonstration”. The event attracted a modest 5000 people but was, importantly, able to draw participation from across social classes.⁷

In 1976 the event was officially recognized by the city administration but it had an erratic beginning, and was even discontinued for a few years. It was resuscitated in 1983 by Mayor Ocampo who expanded it to 54 km of streets. At the time there was a massive increase in the city’s population with very little provision of recreational public space, and Ciclovía was a way of efficiently producing public space. In the late 1990s, under Mayors Mockus and Peñalosa, the initiative was linked to a broader programme of transformation in the city, as Bogota tried to shed its image as a crime and drug-ridden city. The street closures expanded at the time to over 120 km, and attendance per event ranged from between 600 000 and 1 400 000 people.⁸ Ciclovía had become Bogota’s most iconic public event, with the citizens coming out in huge numbers every Sunday for cycling, jogging, skateboarding, skating, aerobics, yoga, theatre, socializing, and much more. However, Ciclovía had its detractors and in 2007 a Colombian congressman attempted to have the event banned on account of the traffic jams it caused. But, leading politicians and communities mobilised in support and the motion was defeated.

Between 1974 and 2003, there was a modest uptake with a few other cities in Latin America adopting the model. However, from around 2003 the idea of Ciclovía spread through Latin America and internationally, accelerating further after 2008. Ex-mayor Peñalosa, for example, moved to New York in 2000 where he convinced the New York-based Institute for Transportation and Development (ITDP) to champion Bogota’s developmental initiatives such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and the Ciclovía.⁹

Brazil’s cities were energised with the Sunday closures of major thoroughfares including Avenida Atlântica in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, and Avenida Paulista, Sao Paulo’s main thoroughfare. In Buenos Aires work on a Ciclovías network began in 2009, and currently more than 100 km of road is closed to car traffic every Sunday. There are also now major events in Mexico City (*Vía RecreActiva*)¹⁰, Santiago de Chile (*CicloRecreoVía*)¹¹, Cartago in Costa Rica, Quito in Ecuador (*Ciclopaseo*)¹², Guatemala City, and Lima in Peru. Various local and community organisations have emerged to support these events but active championing by a progressive mayor is often a key factor for success.

There is a small academic literature on the Latin American Ciclovía which explores the benefits of these initiatives in terms of health and community cohesion.¹³ One study compared the cost of managing Ciclovía-type events with the economic benefits of improved public health and concluded that there was a very positive cost-benefit ratio, with these events far more efficient in cost terms than most other programmes for physical activity.¹⁴

In Asia, many cities are densely packed and street life is abundant. However, in the IT capital, Bangalore, a Cycle Day (including multiple street events) was launched in 2013. In the somewhat sterile new city of Gurgaon an event called *Raahgiri* (meaning ‘Our Streets, Our Freedom’) was launched the same year. The idea spread to the neighbouring cities of Delhi and Noida (where it is branded as ‘Happy Streets’)¹⁵, with the Chief Minister of Haryana announcing financial support for expanding Raahgiri Day into all cities in his state. Even in one of Asia’s most chaotic cities, Jakarta in Indonesia, two major thoroughfares have been closed to car traffic on Sundays since 2012.¹⁶

In Europe too many cities are fairly dense, and there is well-used public space car dominance and privatisation of space. Belgium hosted its first Ciclovía in 2011, with the closure of 10 km of streets in the capital. The real challenge comes however from those parts of the world where urban density is low, cities sprawl outwards at a rapid pace, and public transport systems are poor. Over the past decade there has been surge of activity in these regions, partly inspired by the Ciclovía, but hosted under names such as “Streets Alive”, “Summer Streets” and “Open Streets”.

In Melbourne, Australia, events of this sort have been held periodically since 2006, while the Gold Coast in Queensland hosted its first “Bike and Street Fest” in 2014. In New Zealand, “Open Streets” events have been held in Christchurch, Auckland and Wellington since 2013, with the event in Christchurch held to commemorate the re-opening of the central city after the earthquake.¹⁷

The most rapid spread of Open Streets has however happened in North America where cities are notoriously unfriendly to pedestrians and cyclists, and where open space is often sorely lacking. In Ottawa, Canada, there is in fact a long tradition of street closures for cyclists, joggers and pedestrians, going back to the 1970s but since around 2011, Open Streets have been hosted in cities including Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg.¹⁸ These events are generally characterized by community ownerships (although there are partnerships with local government) and non-consumerist ethos.

The biggest uptake, however, has been in the United States where at least 70 cities had introduced Open Street events by 2015.¹⁹ These included Atlanta (“Atlanta Streets Alive”)²⁰; Austin, Texas (“Viva! Streets Austin”)²¹, El Paso and Fort Worth in Texas; Houston, Texas (“Sunday Streets”)²²; Albuquerque, New Mexico (“CiQlovía”)²³; Baltimore; Cambridge in Massachusetts; Cleveland (“Walk

'n Roll"); Durham in North Carolina ("Bull City Summer Streets"); Honolulu, Hawaii ("Hele On Kailua")²⁴; Los Angeles, California ("CicLAvia"); San Francisco, California ("Sunday Streets")²⁵; San Jose, California; Lincoln, Nebraska ("Streets Alive"); Louisville, Kentucky ("cycLOUvia"); Madison, Wisconsin ("Ride the Drive"); Miami, Florida ("Bike Miami"); Minneapolis, Minnesota ("Open Streets"); New Brunswick, New Jersey; New York ("Summer Streets")²⁶; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Portland, Oregon ("Summer Streets"); and, many smaller cities.²⁷

The pioneering cities in the United States were New York and Portland, Oregon, which hosted their first Open Streets events in 2008, sponsored by progressive mayors. Atlanta and Los Angeles followed in 2010, and many cities since then. It is claimed that there has been a tenfold increase in organised Open Street activity over the past five years.²⁸ However, unlike in Latin American cities, these events are often sporadic, with a handful organised each year.²⁹ In a number of cities, however, there are regular events during the summer months. The size of events varies considerably from a few hundred participants to 100 000 in New York and 150 000 in Atlanta. As indicated, the branding of events is diverse, ranging from variants of the term Ciclovía (especially in the southern parts of the USA where there is a strong Latino influence) to Streets Alive, Summer Streets, Sunday Streets, Open Streets, and more.

The ownership and organisation of Open Streets (and their variants) often rests with community organisations, although there are events organised by city authorities, and many forms of partnership. Open Streets is a movement and has no umbrella organisation but the Open Streets Project in the USA, launched in 2011, offers a valuable toolkit to community organisations wishing to launch their own Open Streets. The toolkit offers advice from choosing routes, constructing partnerships, navigating city bureaucracies, the logistics of organisation, complementary programme, and methods and measures of showing impact.³⁰ A study in the USA which compared the relative success of different initiatives emphasised the importance of structured collaboration, community buy-in, volunteerism, efficient programming, route selection and active promotion of events.³¹

There are other movements with something in common with Open Streets. The "Living Streets" Movement, for example, is about designing streets in such a way that they can be used for multiple purposes.³² "Play Streets" is about closing low-volume local streets to provide the opportunity for safe, active free-play in communities that are under-resourced with public space.³³ They are often adjacent to schools. Then there is the global "Car Free Day" movement which began in France in 1998.³⁴

It is important to note also that in parallel with the Ciclovía-Open Streets initiatives internationally, there is a more politically oriented movement called Reclaim the Streets (RTS). The

objectives are similar but the tactics are different and is framed in a more radical language. Whereas Ciclovía-Open Streets is mainly pursued in partnership with local government, and relies on formal mechanisms of approval, RTS has its origins in a global protest movement which emerged in the early 1990s but was resuscitated in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. It emerged in reaction to the alienating forces of globalisation and private car-oriented interests.

RTS is involved in “non-violent, direct, street reclaiming” action and does not seek official approval for occupying a street for public purposes.³⁵ RTS activists speak of creating “temporary autonomous zones”.³⁶ The movement emerged in the UK in the early 1990s at the intersection of the counterculture rave movement, the anti-road building movement and the global anti-capitalist movements.³⁷ In the 1990s a number of street action parties were held across cities in the UK in streets and other public spaces. They often involved rave-style music and dancing but there were occasions when streets were blocked using children’s jumping castles or when the activists used streets for public gardening.³⁸

From the late 1990s RTS spread internationally with direct action events held across cities in Europe, in Australia, and in Hong Kong. This form of street activism has connected with global concerns including climate change, corporate power, and solidarity action against various forms of social oppression, and was to influence the Occupy Wall Street movement which spread globally after 2008. Open Streets clearly lacks this radical edge and has very different origins from the RTS but there is the common objective of reclaiming streets for public purposes.

The international experience on Ciclovía-Open Streets offers multiple lessons and insights. All events offer road closure to automobile traffics but there are many variants in terms of frequency of events (partly determined by the climate of individual cities). Some events happen along a wide network of roads at city-scale (up to 120 km in the case of Bogota) but others are neighbourhood oriented along short stretches of road. Some events are focused only on a stretch of road but others connect roads with parks, cycling tracks, walking trails, community gardens, points of historical interest, and so forth. There are also organisational variants. In many cases the driving force is an existing community organisation, or an alliance of organisations, but the city administration is also a driver, and most events involve some form of partnership, as was the case with Open Streets Auckland Park. All events emphasise family fun, fitness, socialising, and community with activities such as cycling, walking, jogging, skateboarding, playing, and arts, but there are differences between events, and also special activities offered in individual cases. In some cities, for example, these events offer opportunities for community and other organisations to profile their work. The biggest difference, however, is in the approach to vendors and business activities. Most events avoid large corporate activity in street closures but some do provide space for artisan vendors and other small

business. Others, however, are deliberately non-commercial or only permit certain types of commercial activities (such as health food and environmentally friendly products). International experience also indicates the value of information and networking services (such as the Open Streets Projects in the USA), the importance of individual agency (whether community leaders, activist officials or inspiring city mayors), and the importance of documenting events, all of which this report aspires to highlight.³⁹

Open Streets Africa

Streets in Africa were historically places of “constant hum and buzz”⁴⁰ and there are still many places of vibrancy, but many streets and urban landscapes have been increasingly sterilised in recent decades. The idea of Open Streets has, however, come to Africa through a number of parallel initiatives.

Open Streets Cape Town (OSCT), a non-profit organization (NPO) has been a pioneer. It describes itself as “a citizen-driven initiative working to change how we use, perceive and experience streets”.⁴¹ Founded in 2012, it registered as an NPO a year later, and has worked with other NPOs, many community organizations, the City of Cape Town, and academics at the University of Cape Town, in pursuing its goals.⁴² The inspiration for OSCT was Bogota’s Ciclovía⁴³, with the idea of Open Streets brought to Cape Town by Marcela Guerrero Casas who moved to the city from Colombia in 2006. Marcela explains that in her home city she was “surrounded by open streets, raised by open streets”.⁴⁴ She speaks of Cape Town as a city “sadly so divided”, and of her hope that reclaiming the streets of the city will both help bridge divides and provide a way of reimagining the future of the city.

OSCT is a citizen-driven NPO with a tiny staff and a small budget, supplemented by the help of volunteers. Although it did not initially request the assistance of the city administration, the city has come on board, offering marshals and a police presence for events and assistance in navigating the bureaucratic requirements for street closures. Open Streets events are now held every full moon in Cape Town, and in diverse communities, ranging from Bree Street in the CBD to the very low-income neighbourhoods of Mitchell’s Plan and Khayelitsha.



Figure 1: Open Streets Cape Town, Langa, 24 February 2019.

Photograph by Bruce Sutherland.



Figure 2: Open Streets Cape Town, Mitchells Plain, 31 March 2019.

Photography by Rory Williams.

While the OSCT has been formed with the immediate inspiration of Bogota's iconic initiative, parallel initiatives have emerged elsewhere in Africa with different inspirations and beginnings. In Accra, Ghana, for example, the Chale Wote Street Art Festival was launched in 2011. Since then, each year in August or September the street is closed for energetic festival of art installations, street

performance, graffiti, music, and more. In 2015, in Lagos, Nigeria, a creative arts agency initiated street block parties along a main street on Lagos Island, bringing together on Sundays street vendors, music, entertainers and artists. In Dakar, graffiti artists use the walls along streets as art canvases, inviting public commentary on the “speak-pieces”. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, car-free days were introduced annually from 2016, opening the streets, and creating safe spaces, for all sorts of communal activity.⁴⁵

These individual activities came together in an Africa-wide network in October 2018 when the OSCT hosted an Open Streets Exchange for Africa together with the Nairobi-based UN Habitat. Participating cities included Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and Pretoria from South Africa, and Kitwe, Addis Ababa, Kampala, Nairobi, Abuja, Accra, Cairo and Luanda from elsewhere in Africa⁴⁶. The event included networking, city presentations and a practical demonstration of Open Streets in Woodstock, Cape Town. Networking from this event enabled the initial phases of the Open Streets Auckland Park event.

Open Streets Johannesburg

Open Streets have also arrived in Johannesburg. In 2013, the City’s Transport Department launched a Streets Alive Campaign to encourage the use of streets as safe, shared spaces to improve livability, encourage healthy lifestyles, encourage cycling and walking, contribute to environmental improvement and reduce accident rates. This was part of a broader initiative in the city including road safety campaigns at schools; the distribution of 1200 bicycles to health workers, learners, and community patrollers; a Freedom Ride; and the pedestrian bridge between Alexandra and Sandton. Lisa Seftel, the Executive Director of Transportation in the City of Johannesburg explained “Streets Alive” in the following way:

The City of Johannesburg is committed to make streets in our neighbourhoods safer for our children to walk to and from schools, visit their friends or play in the street. We want our roads to be safe places for people to walk and cycle. For public transport users to safely get to and catch their bus and train. We believe that our streets can become safer if:

- We take ownership of our behaviour on the roads: We improve law enforcement against those who break the law on our roads;
- We make our roads safer by designing them so that can be safe and maintaining them well;
- We spread the message especially to our children through education and awareness campaigns; and
- We change behavior in partnership with residents and communities

This is where the Streets Alive programme comes in.⁴⁷

Over time, further initiatives were introduced. In 2015, for example, Johannesburg hosted the Ecomobility World Festival with a series of Ecomobility Festivals held in the streets of Sandton.⁴⁸

Streets Alive has since evolved into Johannesburg's Open Streets initiative which has connected also with the OSCT in Cape Town, and initiatives elsewhere in Africa through the Open Streets Exchange for Africa. Over a period of two years the Transportation Department in the city facilitated 10 Open Streets events across all seven regions of the city, and in diverse neighbourhoods, these included Diepkloof in Soweto; Meadowlands in Soweto (3 events); Alexandra (2 events); Diepsloot and Yeoville. The events have been held in townships and in a densely populated neighbourhood close to the inner city. The Auckland Park event is different in that it targets a largely middle class suburb where the active street cultures of townships and inner ring suburbs is missing. In the Streets Alive/ Open Streets initiatives, the Transportation Department has emphasised community partnerships. As Seftel explains:

Over the years, the Streets Alive programme has facilitated and promoted:

- Changing the way streets are built. We have built complete streets in parts of Soweto, Orange Farm, MilPark, Diepsloot where streets are designed and built for all road users – car users, public transport users, pedestrians and cyclists;
- Closing streets for car use on certain days for health, recreation and public awareness. This is what the partnership with the Auckland Park community was all about.
- Changing behaviour so that we act to make our streets safer for all, especially by reaching out to school children but also to taxi drivers.

The "Streets Alive" programme is committed to come up with solutions in partnership with communities and stakeholders to create great safe streets and thus great places and communities. The solutions can either be engineering, behavioural change, education and enforcement measures or a combination of them. We encourage residents to discuss with their local councillors' plans for their streets and neighbourhoods and then approach the Transport Department for partnership.⁴⁹

The involvement of the Directorate: City Transformation in the Department of Development Planning has been important in linking the Open Streets initiative to the broader objectives of urban spatial transformation.

The African, South African and Johannesburg experience with Open Streets have raised a number of particular challenges and insights. We learn for example of the need for long-term sustained engagement for real impact, rather than relying on the benefits of occasional events; the importance of inclusivity and partnership in the planning of events; and the challenge of securing approval permits for street closures. A major concern of particular pertinence in South Africa cities is the question of safety. A key objective of Open Streets is to make streets safer from crime and traffic, and to do so by claiming space rather than avoiding the unsafe spaces. However, there is a clear need to ensure that Open Street events are themselves safe. The OSCT and city authorities have correctly emphasised the responsibility that comes with road closure. A final challenge for

South African cities is that in the suburbs or middle-class neighbourhoods, there is sparse experience with public space, and cultures and behaviours orientated towards enclosed and privatised spaces such as malls and fortified individual properties. Behaviours do change but it is likely to be a long process that will require sustained attention.

It is into these international, regional and local contexts that the Open Streets Auckland Park initiative must be placed. There is, however, another critical context as the event was driven also by a children-centred approach.

Section 2: Children in the City

The second, original, inspiration behind the Open Street Day on 7 April was a unique take on how children experience urban spaces. To our knowledge, this was the only Open Street event that has made children, and their perspectives, the centre from which to imagine how roads could be reclaimed and inhabited. Not only did many activations have a playful twist – including a mini bike track, a skate park, a play area, multiple maker spaces and art areas – but children’s observations, theories and creations inspired by the street became a starting point from which to re-think urban spaces. Numerous factors led to this children-focused approach: the presence of many schools in the area closed off to traffic and its surrounds, the composition of the organising committee, and the role that Mimosa School played in envisioning and planning the event.

The Reggio Emilia approach offered original frameworks and ideas to imagine the event, in ways that deeply resonate with – and complement – the spirit that has animated the Open Streets movement. The Reggio Emilia approach, which takes its name from the Italian city where it first originated, not only charts original ways to teach and learn in schools, but places particular emphasis on the relationship children develop with the space that surrounds them and within their communities. The space is considered as a teacher, and students are encouraged to actively engage with it. Similarly, children are framed as citizens, whose presence should be felt in their communities, as they engage in projects that give them direct experience of public buildings, parks, and anything that is worth noting in their immediate environment. As Carla Rinaldi, one of the driving figures behind the Reggio Emilia approach explained:

Recognising the child as citizen makes it necessary to re-examine the very concept of citizenship, but especially to revisit the organisation of all the social and educational places of children’s lives, not only early childhood centres and schools, but also hospitals, theatres, swimming pools, the town squares and streets, the architecture of our homes.⁵⁰

The origins of the Reggio Emilia Approach

In 1945, at the end of World War II, Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy and its surrounding villages were in ruins after heavy bombing. The city was a site of resistance during the war, and many of its partisans had been executed for their opposition to Fascism and Nazism.

Parents of a local community, Villa Cella, began to build with the ruins, taking rubble and timber to make a school for their children, and selling off abandoned German war equipment to fund what they could for the school. Loris Malaguzzi, the inspiring figure behind what only later came to be known as the Reggio Emilia approach, then a young teacher working in the area, cycled to the village to see the construction for himself. In 1946, after studying child psychology in Rome, he returned to teach at this parent-run school, and help found others in the region.

This post-war context was important. After fascism, local communities were determined to provide education for their children that would ensure they would never tolerate injustice, discrimination or authoritarianism. They were prepared to build and run these schools themselves, and it was only in the 1960s, after much mobilisation by women's movements and workers, that the municipality started to fund and oversee these schools.

The greater visibility of the schools and the endorsement by local authorities, however, also attracted resistance from individuals and institutions fearing that secular preschools might have a negative impact on families. As Loris Malaguzzi recalled, the schools' response was to further engage with the community of Reggio Emilia, seeking to win their trust and respect: "Once a week we would transport the school to town. Literally, we would pack ourselves, the children, and our tools into a truck and we would teach school and show exhibits in the open air, in public parks or under the colonnade of the municipal theatre. The children were happy. The people saw; they were surprised and they asked questions".⁵¹ Later in the 1970s, a new offensive was launched by a local radio against the early childhood policies of Reggio Emilia. Also in this case the answer of teachers and parents was to engage the community, opening up the schools to public scrutiny and debate for a period of several months. "The parents and the community confirmed their support for the guiding principles of the Reggio approach to early childhood education, creating the strong reciprocal relationship between the preschools and the community that still exists today".⁵²

These early experiences of community involvement and parent collaboration in the schools represented a foundational moment, and have continued to inform the approach to this day. In its essence, the Reggio Emilia approach is deeply democratic, placing strong emphasis on children's rights, the importance of relationships and social connection, and the value of solidarity.

Reggio Emilia and South Africa

During apartheid years, the City of Reggio Emilia supported Southern African liberation movements – an act borne out of Reggio Emilia's own struggle with oppression. In the 1970s, the city was actively involved in the promotion of the anti-apartheid movement abroad and the support of struggle exiles like Oliver Tambo and Anthony Mongalo. The city signed a solidarity pact with the African National Congress (ANC) in 1977. In 1978 Reggio Emilia hosted the National Conference of Solidarity for the Independence and Sovereignty of the Peoples of Southern Africa Against Colonialism, Racism and Apartheid. In 1978 the Municipality of Reggio Emilia published *Sechaba*, the official newsletter of the ANC, in Italian, and also published the first Italian edition of *The Struggle is My Life*, a collection of Nelson Mandela's speeches and political writings in 1982. On the occasion of the second national consultative conference of the ANC, held in Zambia in 1985, the city of Reggio

Emilia was declared “a constituted strength against the regime of apartheid”, the only European city to be mentioned.⁵³ This history of friendship has represented an important component for the introduction of the Reggio Emilia approach in South Africa. As Oliver Tambo wrote: “We always carry Reggio Emilia in our hearts; when we speak of Italy we cannot but think of Reggio Emilia. We are linked with profound attachment and immense gratitude that is hard to put into words.”⁵⁴

Recreating a Piazza

A central element in the Reggio Emilia approach is the idea of [the “piazza” \(“the square”\)](#).⁵⁵ The piazza can be simply thought of as the architectural environment where different types of people, rhythms, and stories meet. This simple concept, however, does not have an immediate equivalent in South African cities, or is faintly reproduced in the commercialised experience of the shopping mall or a market. In the Reggio Emilia approach, the piazza is also a physical space within the school, where children of different ages can meet, and engage in different types of – mostly unstructured – activities. While Mimosa has sought to create such an environment within its premises, in the school’s immediate neighborhood – as in many others in Johannesburg – such a space is missing.

The Open Street day was thus seized as an opportunity for children to connect with their surroundings, understand who lives “around” them through the lenses of the residents’ own relationship with their space. As further illustrated in Section 4, by creating moments when children could meet with local residents, ask questions, and visit their houses, we sought to re-create a piazza as a web of relationships, getting to know better who lives around Mimosa, what their stories are, what they like, what they do not, and what they would like to see around them. This activity, and how it evolved after the Open street day (including in this report) was also imagined as a way to “give back” to the community, offering a possibility for residents to develop a shared history of the place where they live.

LORIS MALAGUZZI

Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia approach drew on educational theorists like Montessori, Piaget, Vygotsky and Dewey. It was his own theories, however, coupled with the schools' ability to marry theory and practice, and the educational community of parents, teachers and children working together that put these schools in a league of their own.

Malaguzzi died in 1994, but the approach has continued to evolve and grow. Here are just a few thinkers and educators who have influenced the approach:

- From cognitive psychology: Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Gregory Bateson, Jerome Bruner, Humberto Maturana, Francisco Varela, Edgar Morin
- From the active schools: Ovide Decroly, Édouard Claparède, Adolphe Ferrière, Célestin Freinet, John Dewey, Maria Montessori
- From neuroscience: Vittorio Gallese, Giacomo Rizzolatti, Stanislas Dehaene, Brian Butterworth
- From embodied cognition: George Lakoff, Rafael Nunez

But that's not where Reggio's reference material and research ends: Loris Malaguzzi encouraged educators in the schools to read widely, not only about education itself, but also about art, architecture, biology, mathematics, philosophy... anything that could enrich their thinking and teaching practice. – written by Judith Browne taken from page 48 of the Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance booklet, edited by Tessa Browne and Des Hugo, designed by Kevin Shelley Davis, commissioned and published by the board of the Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance in October 2018.

56



Figure 3: Ditton Street, the piazza for Open Streets Auckland Park on 7 May.

Photograph by Sims Phakisi

Section 3: Planning and Realising the Auckland Park Open Streets Day, 7 April 2019

Before describing the unfolding of Open Streets Auckland Park, this section provides some background on Auckland Park, the suburb the event took place in and Mimosa School, which the event centred around organisationally and geographically.

Auckland Park, Johannesburg⁵⁷

Auckland Park is an old, historically white suburb of Johannesburg which has transitioned in recent years into a socially diverse neighbourhood. The gentle northern slopes of the Brixton Ridge were bought in the 1890s by a New Zealander, John Landau, who named his estate after his home city. Landau established the Johannesburg and Auckland Park Estates and made an early and unsuccessful attempt to develop the estate for residential purposes. He tried again with more success in 1903 just after the South African War. In laying out the suburbs many of the street names were called after places along the River Thames (Ditton, Twickenham, Kingston, Richmond). This was to appeal to the Victorian gentry who had country homes in Auckland Park which was then still outside the boundaries of the gritty mining city and sheltered from the dust and grit of the gold mines to the south of the ridge.

Auckland Park was a place of genteel recreation and residence. The Auckland Park Hotel and Lake was a popular weekend retreat although it became rather more exclusive in 1906 when it was converted into the Johannesburg Country Club. The present-day campus of the University of Johannesburg (UJ) was a horse-racing track. The suburb gradually changed, of course, as it was enveloped by the growing city but it remained an attractive place to live. Even the Prince of Wales lived in Auckland Park for a time in 1925 (at No. 1&2 Greenlands).

By 1945 there was a tramway running along Kingsway and Lothbury Road, with Kingsway still a quiet street lined with blue gum trees. Along the street was Kingsway Mansions which was, perhaps, Johannesburg's most bohemian address. In the 1950s, not far away, the bustling multi-racial slum of Sophiatown was razed to the ground by the apartheid government but Auckland Park remained a secluded white English-speaking suburb. There was some change from the 1960s. The tramway was closed by 1961 as the private motor vehicle became the overwhelmingly preferred mode of transport for the white middle class. In 1967, the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) was opened on the old race-track. This was followed in 1975 when the new headquarters of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) opened in Auckland Park. South Africa's first television broadcast followed a year later. These institutions, as well as the JG Strijdom Hospital, brought significant numbers of professional Afrikaans-speaking residents into Auckland Park.

With the ending of apartheid in 1994, the character of the neighbourhood changed again. The biggest change happened in 2004 when RAU became the main campus of the new University of Johannesburg. UJ soon emerged as one of South Africa's largest universities. UJ's total student population is now around 50 000 with about 37 000 on the two Auckland Park campuses (Kingsway and Bunting Road). This has significantly changed the character of areas surrounding UJ, including Auckland Park (although to a lesser degree than suburbs such as Brixton and Westdene).

Just before the 2010 FIFA World Cup a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route was constructed along Kingsway and then, in 2013, Johannesburg's Mayor, Parks Tau, announced his Corridors of Freedom programme which would include mixed-use, mixed-income type densification along the BRT route. The segment of the Corridor passing through Auckland Park has been quite attractive to developers with Auckland Park's large plots being redeveloped for medium-rise student housing. As part of the Corridors initiative, Auckland Park was identified as falling within a proposed Knowledge Precinct. There is indeed a significant concentration of educational institutions within the neighbourhood. This includes, of course, the University of Johannesburg but also schools such as the Auckland Park Preparatory School (for girls), Auckland Park Academy of Excellence (Muslim), McAuley House School (Catholic), Deutsche Internationale Schule Johannesburg, Johannesburg School for the Blind and, of course, Mimosa School (which played the key role in initiating Open Streets, Auckland Park (see box insert on page 33).

The box insert below gives further information on the characteristics of the suburb. Unfortunately, the last national census was in 2011 and so the demographic information is somewhat dated. However, by 2011, the trends which followed the ending of apartheid and the establishment of UJ were clearly apparent. The data suggests the emergence of a diverse neighbourhood with a transition process that is rather different to adjoining suburbs. While there has been a significant growth in the student population, with a large concentration of young adults, the area remains attractive to professionals, employed in sectors such as media and education. There is a significant cluster of both university students and highly educated professionals. In terms of language and race, Auckland Park is highly diverse without any group overwhelmingly dominant. Auckland Park is today a mixed suburb shaped by the presence of major institutions including UJ and SABC and sandwiched between gritty Brixton and the café society of Melville. It is a suburb in transition but unlike many other neighbourhoods in Johannesburg, and because of the institutional presence, it is likely to maintain its diversity.

In terms of streets, Auckland Park has the usual features of a middle class Johannesburg suburb with road space overwhelmingly dominated by the private motor vehicle. The thoroughfares through the suburb are busy during rush hour but otherwise quiet during the day with Kingsway an

exception as this is a city-level arterial. However, there are features which offer the potential for change. First, is the BRT which transects Auckland Park along Kingsway. Although the BRT has developed more slowly than anticipated, the possibility for a more effective use of the BRT remains. Secondly, with the concentration of students, there are higher pedestrian volumes than many other suburbs with potential for activating pedestrian routes connecting places of student residences, commercial nodes such as Campus Square, BRT stations, and more.

For an Open Streets initiative key characteristics of the neighbourhood that offer a potential resource include:

- Its racial, linguistic and ethnic diversity
- The large concentration of educational and media-related institutions
- The large concentration of young adults studying in the university (and a handful of other specialist institutions)
- The large number of residents with high levels of skill and educational attainment
- The BRT as a public transport line and the pedestrian volume created by a concentration of university students.

AUCKLAND PARK: A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

In 2011, Auckland Park had 3 277 residents. Significantly, 72% of the residents were between 20 and 65 years old - far more than the 59% for Johannesburg. 25.4% of the population was in fact in the cohort 20-24 years, compared with only 11.3% for Johannesburg, reflecting the large student population. It is likely that this concentration has increased since 2011 with the further development of student accommodation in Auckland Park. The student population is, however, layered on a fairly stable population of older middle-class professionals.

53% of Auckland Park's population was female, more than the 49.8% for Johannesburg. The preponderance of females is particularly marked in the 15-34 age cohort, reflecting the female-intensive composition of UJ's student population. The population was diverse racially with 51.7% black; 30% white, 3.3% coloured, 13.2% Asian, 1.9% other. The student population is overwhelmingly black African but there are also growing numbers of black professionals working for institutions including the SABC, Media Park and UJ. The significant Asian minority partly reflects the presence of Muslim religious and educational institutions. In terms of language, 37% of households had English as a first language, followed by 17.4% with Afrikaans, 8.8% IsiZulu and 7.3% Setswana.

78% of households were of South African origin, slightly less than the 83.6% for Johannesburg as a whole, suggesting slightly greater diversity in origins. Most non-South Africans were from neighbouring countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Educational levels in Auckland Park are high. In 2011, 79% of residents over 20 years of age had a matric or higher educational qualification, compared with Johannesburg's 53%. There was a very significant concentration of residents with Masters, Ph.Ds or equivalent postgraduate qualification (429 residents). 23% of the population (or 750 residents) were studying at a university or college compared with 5.8% for Johannesburg, and this figure is likely to have increased.

Formal levels of unemployment for Auckland Park were 9.8% compared with nearly 25% for Johannesburg, and the overwhelming majority of residents with jobs were in the formal sector, although there are residents in domestic employment. 36.7% of those with jobs are employed as professionals or senior managers and officials, which is high for the city.

AUCKLAND PARK: A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE (CONT.)

There were 1663 households in Auckland Park, with an average of only 2 persons per household, and 50.7% of households having one person only. This compares with an average of 3 persons per household in Johannesburg, and 30% comprising single individuals. Again, this is likely to reflect the relatively high proportion of students. With only one-fifth of households having 4 or more persons, Auckland Park cannot be regarded any longer as typically suburban, but there is clearly still a suburban underlay, giving the suburb more demographic stability than neighbouring Brixton, for example.

16% of households arrived in Auckland Park as migrants in the decade preceding 2011, which is higher than Johannesburg's 12.8%. Again, however, this may be because of the disproportionately high student population. The major source of income migrants was Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. Also significant is that a high proportion of households rented their accommodation – 60.3% compared with Johannesburg's 41%. However, although rental may dominate, 100% of households were formally accommodated, with 68% of households in a single house on a plot, 17% in an apartment block, and 11% in flatlets, granny flats or domestic quarters. With growing numbers of students, there is likely to be an increase in the latter two categories.

Almost one hundred percent of residents had full access to basic service (water, sewage, refuse removal). However, significantly, just *under* one half of households owned a motor vehicle which is unusually low for a middle class suburb in Johannesburg but this almost certainly reflects the student presence. Although figures on mode of transport use by suburb are not available we may speculate that there is higher pedestrian activity and a higher use of public transport use than in many other suburbs.

MIMOSA SCHOOL

Mimosa is a diverse community of families who believe schools should do more than simply reflect society – it believes schools should challenge and actively shape a kinder, more sustainable, more just world in which we can all live. The school is run on democratic principles, and values diversity and inclusivity. It believes in the intelligence, curiosity, and creativity of all children, and the collective potential of parents, teachers, and children to shape a better future – and a better today – together.

Mimosa is currently made up of a preschool and foundation phase in Auckland Park (going from 18 months to Grade 3), but has visions of growing up to Grade 7, and increasingly opening up the school to other educators and community groups as a place of learning and mentorship. Mimosa also sees their role and responsibility as not limited to their own children and families; rather, but believes they should be advocates for the rights of all children. While their capacity in this final regard is still limited, it's a big-picture vision that definitely informs the school's day-to-day operations and small exhibitions and activations they host – like Open Streets.

Mimosa is a school inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to education. What this means in terms of learning is that our curriculum draws on our immediate context, children's interests, and what we as a learning community believe to be important. Children and teachers research the world together, and areas of investigation often have a connecting theme – like movement, identity, citizenship, or storytelling. As children explore and develop their ideas, they're encouraged to express themselves through a variety of creative media – through drawing, light and shadow, dance, music, clay, painting (what we call 'the 100 languages' of children). Part of the teacher's role is to document these investigations, and display this documentation so that children, teachers and parents can participate in the learning process. This documentation helps make children's thinking and creativity visible – to themselves, to our school community, and to a broader community. We see this as serving a kind of advocacy role, a way to champion children's rights and capabilities, and shift the way in which society sees children and early childhood. – compiled from Mimosa School website

What sparked the initiative?

Where do good ideas come from? Rather than coming like a lightning strike, they seem to percolate, to coalesce. In the case of the Open Streets event in Auckland Park, Johannesburg on 7 April 2019 they came from many different people coming to a similar idea, or aligned objectives, over a period of time and together making the improbable possible.

The initiative started with interest from Judith Browne and Heather Barclay from [Mimosa School](#) in having an Open Streets-like event in Auckland Park and was quickly picked up and championed by Lerato Mabaso and Stefan van Niekerk, respectively from Johannesburg's Department of Transport and the City Transformation and Spatial Planning Directorate. Mark Schaerer from [Brixton Community Forum](#) (a volunteer-run organisation dedicated to making Brixton a safe, livable place for all who reside there), Ann Simmonds from [Play Africa](#) (a not-for-profit and social enterprise company focused on working with children and city spaces) and Kyla Davis from [Well-Worn Theatre Company](#) (a physical theatre company with a strong environmental ethos) came on board as organising committee members early on in the process.

Judith Browne, atelierista for Mimosa School, describes the inception of Open Streets Auckland Park as follows:

From Mimosa's point of view, the idea for an Open Streets-style event in the neighbourhood started incubating in August-September 2018. At the time, I was working on a booklet for the Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance, on the main principles of the Reggio Emilia approach, and how local educators can take inspiration from these principles in their own contexts. What really stood out for me during this research and writing process was 1) the role of community and family participation in the creation of schools, 2) the importance of a contextual approach, where children see themselves in relationship with their own city or environment, as citizens who belong. I was reminded of one of the last remarks made by Reggio Emilia pedagoga, Tiziana Filippini, during a September 2017 visit to Johannesburg. Tiziana is a pedagoga in Reggio Emilia (and has been since 1978) and co-ordinates the professional development activities for teachers and atelieristas of the infant-toddler centres and preschools of the Reggio Emilia municipality. She observed:

While travelling around the city, I was struck by the lack of children. In Reggio, we believe that if a city is friendly for children, it's friendly for everyone. Where are your children?⁵⁸

These thoughts – about the importance of public spaces, about children's access to them in a city like Johannesburg, about the value of places to play – prompted me to contact Marcela Guerrero Casas, the main founder of Open Streets Cape Town, asking if she knew anyone in Johannesburg who was interested in starting a local Open Streets movement.

Marcela responded in early September with connections to Augustine Morkel from the WWF, an organisation that has worked closely with Open Streets Cape Town, indicating that Augustine was interested in an Open Streets movement in Braamfontein, and to Mikhaela Donaldson, from the Braamfontein Improvement District. Then in November 2018, following the hosting of the [Open Streets Exchange for African Cities](#), Marcela wrote again. This time she copied in Stefan van Niekerk and Lerato Mabaso, both from the City of Joburg (from the departments of Development Planning and Transport respectively). Both had been on the Open Streets exchange, and were interested in taking the City of Joburg's Streets Alive initiative further.

The connection was a serendipitous one: the City of Joburg's Transport Department had a mandate and budget to host three-to-four Open Streets-style events in different regions across the city. Region B (in which Mimosa is situated) had not yet been activated in this way. Mimosa in turn was able to promise its own support, and access to an interested community: the school had already started thinking about its relationship to the city three years prior, while working on a co-research project with children, *Jozi through the eyes of the child*. And it knew that many families in its learning community – made up of activists, researchers and artists – would be broadly in support of the Open Streets idea.⁵⁹

A subcommittee focused on the research opportunities that the project presented. This was comprised of Judith Browne and Heather Barclay from Mimosa; Philip Harrison from the [South African Research Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning](#) attached to the [Wits School of Architecture and Planning](#) and one of his postdoctoral fellows, Alex Halligey; Theresa Giorza from the [Wits Foundation Studies Division](#); Iginio Gagliardone from the [Wits Media Studies Division](#) and at various stages members of the City's Transport Department and the Transformation Directorate. This group dialogued about the research exercises on streets Mimosa School was already running and proposed new ones in the lead up to the event and for the day itself. The primary focus of this subcommittee was to document and critically reflect on Open Streets Auckland Park as a children-centred intervention into streets.

So Open Streets Auckland Park 2019 had two streams in its planning process: organising the event itself and structuring research processes in connection with the event. Minutes reflect that from the first meetings, all collaborators in the project saw the 7 April 2019 Open Streets Auckland Park as an experiment for future, similar events, where Open Streets would be an experiential advocacy vehicle for more mixed-use, children-friendly streets orientated towards multiple modes of transport.

The research component of the process was critical in this regard for adequate reflection and taking the work of a children-centred Open Streets further. The research had two interrelated intentions: to use Open Streets Auckland Park as an anchor for researching the city and to research the event itself (including its planning) as an intervention in city spaces. So while road closures and permits, activities and food carts were organised, the Mimosa children were doing exercises in learning about the public spaces that immediately surrounded the school, workshoping the materiality, infrastructure and experiences of cities, and conceptualising what city futures might be. On the day, alongside games, entertainment and non-motorised, recreational transport activities, research stations and exercises were set up to learn what the public experienced and felt about streets and cities generally, as well as their thoughts and experiences of the Open Streets Auckland Park event.



Figure 4: Reading picnic hosted by Smangele Mathebula.

Photograph by Art My Jozi team

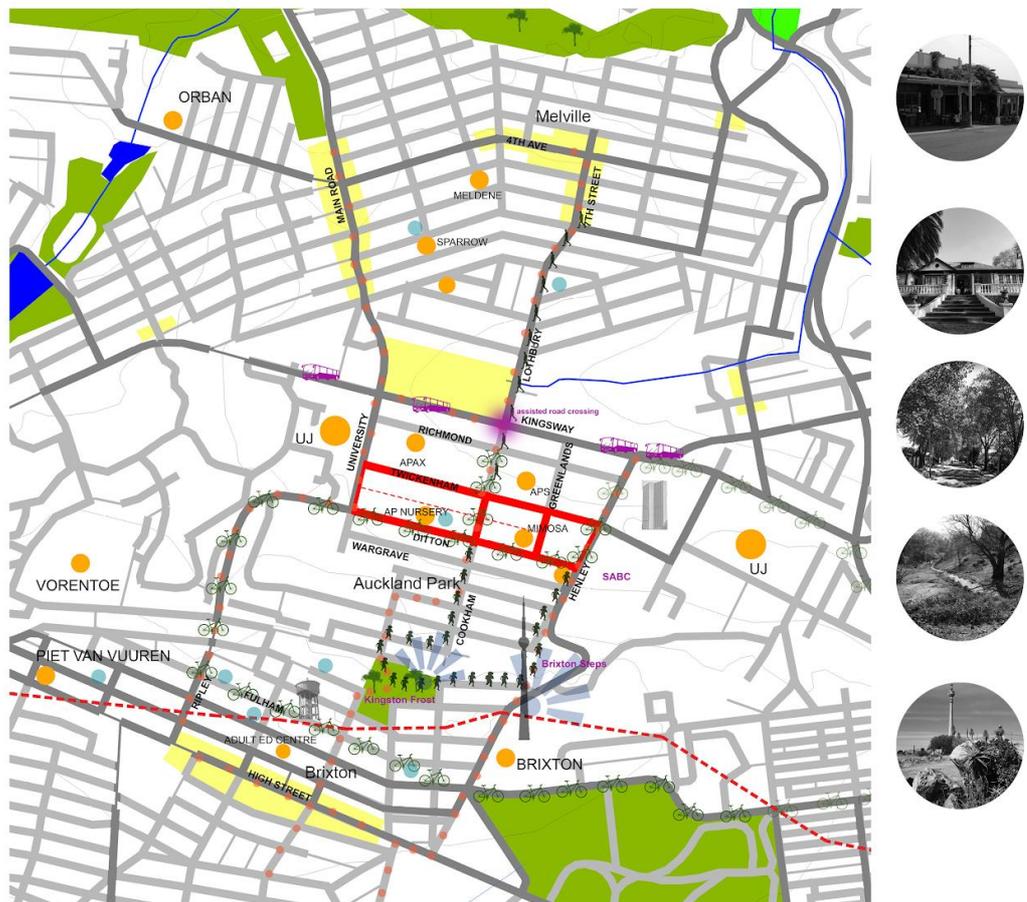


Figure 5: Initial proposed closure.

Map by Mark Schaerer.

The Day

Open Streets on 7 April was held in a section of Auckland Park, with portions of Ditton, Twickenham, Cookham, Greenlands and Henley closed entirely to cars. The closure lasted from just after 08h00 in the morning – to allow for set-up and preparation before the official event start-time of 10h30 – to just after 14h00 in the afternoon. Officially streets were meant to open again around 15h00, once all activations and stalls had been packed away. This was a small-scale, low risk city-supported public event, meaning there would be under 500 people in attendance and road safety was relatively easy to insure.



Figure 6: Open Streets Auckland Park Activity Map.

Map by Mark Schaerer, with drawings by Mimosa children, Kayla and Shalom, imagining what they would do if Ditton Avenue was totally free of cars.

Attendance

Many event attendees were residents, pedestrians and users of the streets such as families connected to surrounding schools, and university students in nearby student housing. Many came from neighbourhoods around Auckland Park, like Brixton, Melville and Westdene – but others, drawn by the Open Streets concept and the idea of children-friendly streets, travelled in from as far as Orange Farm and Rustenburg. All the people interviewed said they came either because they had

a connection with children and/or because they were invested politically in the idea of people being drawn together in public spaces for recreational activities.

The research desks at the official entrance points to the closed off area, counted 252 people, made up of 92 men, 74 women and 86 children. These numbers provide a very conservative estimate of the amount of people attending on the day as many did not use the official entry points. Organisers estimated nearer 400 people. As Mbongiseni Masuku observed this was an ideal turn out and you would not want to grow the event much more as having more than 500 people would turn it into a medium scale event and City permission and safety procedures for the road closures and use of public space then naturally become much more involved.⁶⁰

In attendance were also former MMC for transport, Rehana Moosajee, and current MMC for development planning, Reuben Masango, as well as executive director for transport Lisa Seftel, and ward councillor for Region B, Bridget Steer.

The JMPD provided 51 officers and 23 cars. The organising committee, including researchers, but not stall holders, numbered 20. The number of storeholders/activation organisers was 28. The volunteers working as marshalls and assisting with set up and packing numbered 100 and were either from Riverlea or attached to the Brixton Community Forum.



Figure 7: Marshall volunteers assembled.

Photograph by Art My Jozi crew

ON THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG PROCESS FOR A PUBLIC EVENT WITH ROAD CLOSURE

The initiating department invites relevant departments (such as Health and Sports and Recreation; Community Development, etc.) to co-host or to feature on the day of the event. The featuring of other departments take place regionally, i.e. if the Open Street is held in Auckland Park which is Region B, it means the other departments will be coordinated at the region. Each event has a focus area or theme depending on the participating community. If the community's theme is health, the Open Street will feature predominantly health-related activities such as promotion of healthy lifestyle. In this example, healthy lifestyle links up with sports and transport in terms of mild exercises (walking, yoga, skateboarding, etc.), healthy foods, etc. If the other departments have an approved budget for such projects, they may provide financial resources to the Open Streets event initiated by Transport Department.

The following departments are paid for their services by the hosting department. The JMPD – Traffic Management; EMS – Emergency services, Fire Safety; Medical and Security Plans; JRA – Road Closure equipment & Wayleave; Public Liability. Etc. – Mbongiseni Masuku, Johannesburg Transport Department, on the City Of Johannesburg's event organising procedures



Figure 8: JMPD, among the many teams who made all the logistics for Open Streets Auckland Park possible on the day.

Photograph by Chris Anderson

STREET ACTIVATIONS ON THE DAY:

- Pop-up playground provided by [Play Africa](#)
- Skate Park provided by [Skateistan](#)
- Street theatre production *Galela* and roving puppets provided by [Well-Worn Theatre Company](#)
- Bike school provided by [BreezeBlock](#)
- Involvement of patients and staff from [Netcare Rehab Hospital](#), who were navigating the streets with the aid of wheelchairs, crutches, etc, as well as helping people experience and understand what it is to navigate the streets in this way
- Attendance by a group of children from [Children of Fire](#), an international NGO that offers medical interventions for child burn-victims as well as doing advocacy and awareness work around fire safety and burn-management
- A team of roving artists managed by [Art House Melville](#)
- Mud kitchen and inside-out school hosted by Mimosa teachers
- Exhibition of children's research into neighbourhood streets
- Activation of alleyway with invented games, by Mimosa School Grades 1, 2 and 3
- Planting with Kelsey Glennon (from [Wits' School of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences](#)), who shared plant cuttings, soil, containers, decorations and plant knowledge for free
- Slacklining
- Trash to Treasure art station (where waste goods were turned into something of value)
- Chalk art
- Wire workshop with Daniel Muchunju the Wire Doctor
- Weaving with plastic bags: a workshop with Maria Motshweni
- Food trucks and picnic tables, with families invited to set up picnic blankets and chairs and enjoy the space together (happening all day)
- Face painting and book exchange hosted by Hope Church
- Hip-hop stage and lessons with Leon Andrew Labuschagne
- Storytelling for kids, available every hour on the hour, at a reading picnic set up [Smangele Mathebula](#)
- African Reclaimers Organisation
- A dance activation by OThandiwe Sekhibane
- A sensory play and maker space curated by former Mimosa teacher Amina Sader
- A performance of Macy Gray's *Beauty in the World* by Mimosa Grade 1s, 2s and 3, with accompaniment by Siphon Mthiyane (and sound provided by the Academy of Sound Engineering)
- Activation by [Chance to Play](#)
- Children's yoga with Jadejia Laurent
- Tai Chi with Masako Osada



Figure 9: Galela performance by Well Worn Theatre Company.

Photograph by Art My Jozi

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES ON THE DAY:

- Exhibition of research done in the lead up to the event
- Art activation and exhibition of work done in the Brixton social cluster, by [#ArtMyJozi](#)
- Welcome desks:
 - Interactive maps for participants to say where they had come from and in what mode of transport, maps made by Mark Schaerer
 - Written questionnaires and longer, free-form verbal interviews
 - All the above facilitated by the City of Johannesburg Department of Transformation (city planning) team and Zakiyyah Seedat, Sikhumbuzo Bulose and Alex Halligey from the University of Witwatersrand
- Philosophy circle facilitated by Theresa Giorza, with assistance from a teenage friend and her younger siblings.
- Teams of children with Mimosa parent chaperones visiting local residents to interview them in their homes
- Audio interviews for a podcast, conducted by Candice Nolan
- Photography by Chris Anderson
- Filming by Adel van Niekerk

Support

This event would not have been possible without the City of Johannesburg's Transport Department (and main points of contact in it, Lerato Mabaso and Mbongiseni Masuku). The Department guided community members through the planning process, as well as how to navigate and comply with the City's Joint Operations Committee's (JOC) requirements for hosting an event of this kind. The department covered large costs like medical services, insurance, Johannesburg Metro Police Department (JMPD) charges for road closures, payment of marshalls, and catering for volunteers. Simply put, Open Streets just would not be possible without the vision, buy-in and active support of the Transport Department – especially while ordinary citizens cannot close neighbourhood roads by themselves, but need to comply with the same conditions set out for large private events like music festivals. As Philip Harrison reflected on the event, the buy-in of the Transport Department and the Transformation Directorate were also important symbolically. Through their involvement the event became a collaboration between the City, private organisations and invested individuals, enacting an ideology that cities are made through the relational interactions between all these sectors of society.

REFLECTION FROM ONE OF THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

My involvement was very simple. My son is at Mimosa school and Judith, one of his teachers, asked me if I knew of and would like to be involved in an Open Streets Event. I said yes! She was aware that through the Brixton Community Forum I had been involved in planning numerous community events on varying scales. Most of these events involved the use of public space from parks to alleys and even closing off streets (albeit illegally). I was able to bring some experience on the JOC processes and contacts who were able to assist in getting the project going. Open Streets was an opportunity to assist in arranging a much bigger scaled event in conjunction with the City of Johannesburg. It also gave a new opportunity of not organising for purely the Brixton Community in mind but for but for a far greater community with children as the key participants.

The organising of the event was much like my previous experiences of event organisation: a little haphazard but somehow things worked out well. No one on the organising committee was a professional events planner so ideas were thrown around and not committed to immediately, especially as we didn't have a defined leader or chair. Decision making was more organic and often based on who volunteered! Some things were forgotten but throughout the event the principles of pushing the boundaries of what streets can be; children as key participants; and as many free activities as possible was maintained. We initially didn't have a good idea of the scale of the space relative to the number of people who would attend. We also weren't particularly sure on how we would get people there. Somehow through some background organising and advertising (that we weren't all aware of) and the help of social media we had a great turnout and the streets were busy and well activated.

The day was a very positive experience with a relaxed atmosphere. Since food and drink wasn't a huge focus people had to engage with activities or merely walked the streets to experience the spaces as they would not have done before. The children were much freer and certainly helped parents to engage much more. While the event wasn't slick and some things like the horses and mapping table didn't work out there was a wonderful community spirit brought by the multiple role players, children and residents who partook. - Mark Schaerer, Brixton Community Forum and Mimosa parent.

Open Streets of this kind would also not be possible without an active and involved organising committee, who draw on their own networks and wealth of experience in making sure the event comes to pass. There were many hitches along the way, which needed attention from individual committee members – ensuring JMPD buy-in, securing tables for the picnic, making sure road closure notices went up in the neighbourhood before the event, as just some examples. It certainly helped that many committee members had access to involved communities of their own, who they could call on for additional support. For example, Mimosa School was able to call on families of the school to assist in organising the event, to volunteer on the day, to run specific activations, to research outcomes of the event, to advertise the event and share it with their own networks. The same could be said of Brixton Community Forum and Auckland Park Residents' Association. There is much 'hidden work' in organising an event of this kind – and it took a committed central organising committee (many of whom delayed on income-generating work to help with event organisation), as well as a large network of people who could help for smaller periods of time, to pull the event together.



Figure 10: Food carts and ‘The Long Table’.

Photograph by Chris Anderson

Planning

Planning the event required a mixture of more formal check-ins with main organising committee members, interspersed with more open-ended and exploratory conversations. The organising committee started by meeting every two weeks, and then increased the frequency of check-ins closer to the event itself. Between meetings, small clusters of committee members were troubleshooting problems, exploring possibilities, and tapping into their personal networks where needed.

Communication is key. While face-to-face conversation was important (especially at the beginning, as committee members were establishing relationships and understanding), much planning and follow-up happened online – over email, WhatsApp, Facebook and Google Drive. Access to a computer, colour printer and reliable internet should not be underestimated. The event benefited from having organising committee members with mapping and basic design skills (to illustrate road closures and event activations, as well as create event posters and flyers), as well as experience promoting events over traditional and social media. Committee members gathered in small groups or clusters to plan specific aspects of the event.

Challenges

There are, of course, challenges in putting together an event of this nature, and it is important to note these for future occasions and, where possible, make adjustments or persuade regulatory authorities to do so.

The City of Johannesburg is a complex institution, and while the organising committee had the strong participation and support of key departments in the City it was still necessary to navigate the intricate regulatory domain of the administration. There were a number of issues that required trouble-shooting:

- **Approval for the event:**

Approval is needed for a temporary street closure to stage an event, and the procedures and decision-making is guided by a policy entitled 'Guidelines and Procedures for Staging Events within the City of Johannesburg'. An application has to be presented to a Joint Operations Committee (JOC) comprising different departments of the City at least two weeks prior to the event, and the applications must deal with matters including: a risk categorisation by the South African Police Service, a detailed plan of events, disaster and evacuation, environmental health (including Certificates of Compliance for food vendors), crowd management, the appointment of a safety officer, proof of wayleave granted by the Johannesburg Roads Agency, cleaning plans, power and water plans, community participation plans, and so forth. It is an onerous procedure for a once-off event but many of the required elements are necessary, and there was support forthcoming from within the city administration. The process did not go smoothly. There appeared to be some confusion within the administration and also an objection to the event at the first JOC meeting from the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD) which was under the impression that this was a private street party. Unfortunately, also, the first dry-run for the event failed because of the illness of a city official. Matters were eventually clarified and the event was approved at a second JOC. Also, meetings were held with the JMPD to discuss future processes. It is clear from the experience that the City needs to consider the nature of its processes and ensure greater internal coherence while organisations initiating and planning events of this kind need to understand approval requirements, take account in their timeline of possible negative contingencies, and develop supportive relationships with officials and departments within the administration.

- **Procurement:**

It was necessary to go through procurement procedures as the event required catering and identifying clothing for volunteers and marshalls. Initial advice from the City's procurement officer was that full procurement procedures had to be followed as the event fell in a region where the Transport Department had not yet supported an Open Streets event. It would not have been

possible to hold the event on the date envisaged if this were the case. However, the Transport Department made representation and was allowed to follow a simplified process with Requests for Quotation. Even so, the appointment of providers came very late in the planning process with the appointment of providers only finalised two days before the event, putting the whole process at risk.

- **Other logistical and practical challenges:**

Alongside the buy-in and services the Transport Department, the Transformation Directorate and the JMPD provided, there were many other logistical concerns that needed to be dealt with and much related to the tenuousness of the Request for Quotation process: environmental health clearances, getting maps signed off, attending the Johannesburg Joint Operations Committee meetings, arranging marshalls. As Judith Browne from Mimosa reflects:

Going into an event of this nature, there's just so much you don't know and don't know you don't know. And misunderstanding or missed expectations are inevitable. For example, we knew we needed marshalls, but assumed this was handled by CoJ and the councillor. It only dawned on us three or four days before that we were expected to secure marshalls from the community ourselves. Thank heavens for Mark [Schaerer, of the Brixton Community Forum] and his connections in Brixton! Really, an event of this nature takes incredible flexibility and teamwork: we had core members of the team who held the vision together and also kept a close eye on necessary details, and then others who stepped in and supported as and when they could. So many hearts and hands and heads holding this event together!⁶¹

There were many other practical challenges. For example, the organising committee wanted an event that was low impact and free to participants. They initially envisioned free food through a bring-and-share system, water from a tanker, no plastics. The City's requirements, liability wise, made this impossible. Food could not be served without a Certificate of Acceptability, which only established caterers have. Any source of electricity or fire in the street needed clearance too, ruling out the possibility of a braai. Even the water tanker needed health clearance for the container or tanker itself, in case it transferred some infection or disease to event attendees and the City was sued.

The organising committee had to adjust for practical complications. For example, it had to accept water in plastic bottles, choosing this over sachets, as they understood bottles to be more recyclable. Leftover food from the catering for marshalls and volunteers went to local charities and churches and as a school Mimosa tried to recycle what it could of the boxes and paper packets used in the event, drawing on the support of informal local recyclers.

Critical for the success of the event in the face of these numerous challenges was the role of volunteers in the committee. The event was able to draw on their time, professional skills, and professional and social networks for planning, managing, problem-solving, and execution on the day.

Reflections on the day

Successes:

Logistics:

Lerato Mabaso confirmed that this was the biggest Open Streets event the City of Johannesburg has supported so far. The [Ecomobility Festival](#) in Sandton, which ran for the month of October in 2015, was bigger but the roads were not closed. Mabaso also said she found the community of Mimosa and the network they connected to a pleasure to work with.

There was a general consensus from participants, organising committee members and volunteers that the size of the road closure was sufficient for containment, but big enough to feel substantial. The majority of performances and interactive games happened on Ditton making it too congested for bicycle riding or skateboarding. Balancing this with an open area dedicated for skating and biking on Twickenham Avenue worked well and the skateboarding in particular was very popular. The range and spatial distribution of activities also encouraged people to move around the circuit of the road closure and not to get stuck at one point.

REFLECTION FROM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE TRANSFORMATION DIRECTORATE

I was fortunate to be invited to attend the Open Street Day/Event of with my 5 year old son and helper. My impressions are from a parental perspective.

My impression of the event: I welcomed the idea behind the initiative. Streets have become a “no go” zone for parents together with their little ones today, based on a suite of factors with safety being the primary one. I appreciated the setup and the evident work that went behind organizing the event. The entertainment stations and their focus on family friendly entertainment was great, not to mention other age appropriate activities for all family members. My son particularly enjoyed the foam pit, the skateboarding lessons and being part of the general festivities. Our helper also had a lot of fun taking part in the yoga sessions and the delicious eats. We hope for such initiatives to occur at more frequent intervals.

The social and health benefits of these initiatives are unmatched considering the character of a number of neighbourhoods in the city. It is a hope that at some stage similar initiatives will be rolled out throughout the city, at more frequent intervals. They introduce huge opportunities around social capital (neighbours interacting), education, recreational and health benefits (kids playing on the street, storytelling, exercise etc.) and simply taking back neighbourhoods to what they were when we were growing up with kids running and playing in the streets as opposed to solely being channels of (fast-moving) vehicular traffic.

What could have been better: Communication relating to the actual event could be improved. It was not well communicated. - Thandeka Mlaza-Lloyd, Assistant Director City Transformation and Spatial Planning Directorate, Development Planning Department, City of Johannesburg

Experiences:

There was consensus and delight from all parent respondents that they were worry free as their children played on the streets. The parent’s reflection on the event as family rather than ‘child-orientated’, suggested a great inclusion of age groups and allowing for dynamic relationships across

age groups. The overwhelming feedback was that the event facilitated a freeing and joyful experience of the streets and expanded the imaginative possibilities of what streets could be. As Mark Schaerer said, in the weeks that followed with the roads returned to normal and himself driving them in his private vehicle as before, he found he could hold in his mind more easily the way of being the Open Streets day allowed.

Concerns/Elements to be improved on:

The concerns mainly relate to communication in some way: the need for more communication before the event, for more or specific kinds during it. However, these concerns also point to the inevitably improvisational nature of the event. It can be as well-planned as possible, but there will still be contingencies that need to be dealt with in the moment and that finally offer their own kind of valuable experience. This echoes the sense of respondents' feedback below, where the desire for the streets is that there be well-maintained, structuring containment, but that within that there can be social and experiential flow.

Logistics:

A number of volunteers and organising committee members were concerned that there were moments when JMPD officers allowed cars through on roads where small children were on tricycles. Twickenham Avenue in particular was the issue (but also the Henley road side of Ditton Avenue). There was also a concern that roads were opened up earlier than the official 15:00 and while packing up was still in process. Some organisers were put in the position of being in the road, folding up tables or taking down bunting, while having to negotiate vehicles. There seemed to be general consensus that for future events it would be beneficial to involve the JMPD in organisational meetings earlier and to use the event to promote and model the work the JMPD does on road education and safety. Less seriously the JMPD's mounted division went to Campus Square and never found their way to the actual event.

The guided bicycle ride:

This was an important element of the event, following the underutilised lanes that had been implemented by the City of Johannesburg. There were however challenges with the event. The bicycle ride up to Brixton took a slightly different course than was imagined with fewer cyclists but more children than expected, water forgotten and marshalls often arriving at key intersections too late. The ride was taken more slowly to accommodate the children and they made do without water. While the ride helped create an experiential thread showing ways in which the street could be used differently in everyday life, this aspect of Open Streets could clearly be improved in future. Apart from the basic logistics, more attention could be given to linking the cycling and walking to the use

of public transport to get to the events. This would require attention also to the ways in which the closed streets linked to other streets in the neighbourhood.



Figure 11: Cyclists set off to Brixton.

Photographer Chris Anderson

Experiences:

Heather Barclay of Mimosa expressed concern that in terms of timing, the ‘event’ moments of the day, like scheduled performances, were too spread out, dissipating something of their impact. More generally, there was a sense that children in particular had not necessarily participated in all the activities. Theresa Giorza suggested for future events a system of collecting something at each activation to make up a full set of things. Lerat Mabaso also felt it would have been useful to have a central point for organisations to announce who they are, why they are at the event and where you can find them.



Figure 12: Skate area facilitated by Skateistan.

Photograph by Chris Anderson



Figure 13: African Reclaimers organisation

Photographer Chris Anderson



Figure 14: Play Africa at the beginning of bustling Ditton Street.

Photograph by Art My Jozi crew

Section 4: Research

If Open Streets Auckland Park was about a children-orientated approach to an Open Streets movement, the research activities that ran alongside the process of the event sought to investigate some of the questions that these two combined intentions raised. How do people experience Johannesburg streets? How would they like to experience them? What do these two questions add to knowledge of experiences of streets in relation to other South African and African cities? In relation to cities globally? What are the streets like in Auckland Park, specifically those falling into the area of the road closure on the day of the event? How do the streets of Auckland Park differ from the streets in other neighbourhoods? What did Open Streets do for the streets and the people using them on the day of the event? How did or how might the Open Streets event affect the streets of Auckland Park and the people using them in the future? How might the impact of Open Streets Auckland Park be valuable to a broader dialogue about Open Streets? What did the focus on streets and the concepts of Open Streets offer to the children involved on the day of the event? What did it offer to the adults the children connect to? What did it offer to the streets of Auckland Park to have children research them and to have children participate in them in the way they did on the day? How was a Reggio Emilia-inspired Open Streets different from other Open Streets events?

Broadly, these questions can be grouped into two categories: understanding the streets and people's experiences and desires for them; and understanding the impact of an intervention like Open Streets in critically engaging and possibly shifting how streets are used. For Open Streets Auckland Park, both these questions were inflected with the role of children as investigators as well as social actors in streets generally and in interventions like Open Streets. This section starts by giving an overview of the research methods used and their overarching effects and then goes into some of the findings that came out of them.

The majority of the research activities were conducted by the children of Mimosa School with facilitation from adults. All age groups within the school were involved in a great variety of exercises connected to the Open Streets event, starting on 17 January when the Grade 0s had a walk on the streets surrounding Mimosa, after much discussion and drawing about what a street is. This was the first of many enquiries over the following months into 'what is a street?'. Projects included: the signs and languages of the street, an exploration of treasure and trash to be found, music inspired by street sounds, what the children would do if the street was free of cars, what freedom feels like, practicing interviews on trees and on one another and many more smaller explorations of what streets are and what they might be.

Two specific research exercises were initiated out of the discussions in the research subcommittee. One was conducted by the Grade 1s, 2s and 3s in the lead up to the event and was a quantitative and qualitative assessment of Ditton Avenue and Cookham Road at two different times of day. The second was interviews that small groups of children conducted with Auckland Park residents, in their homes on the day of the event. A third exercise was run by The Trinity Session as part of the Johannesburg Development Agency's #ArtMyJozi, #ArtMyBrixton programme. Using arts-based methods, the #ArtMyJozi team spent a session exploring how the Mimosa children use roads and their ideas for what roads could be.

REFLECTION FROM #ARTMYJOZI

The JDA aims to upgrade the precinct in terms of the multiple functions of the area and its daily users, through a participatory design process which #ArtMyJozi forms part of, highlighting the importance of place-making through art along the Transit Oriented Corridors and their surrounding neighbourhoods. The Trinity Session as mandated by the JDA to co-ordinate #ArtMyJozi, creatively seeks urban design solutions through community-led design programs. Open Streets provided a perfect public platform for us to showcase potential design solutions for the Brixton Social Cluster, place making through art program (#ArtMyJozi/#ArtMyBrixton). Inspired by workshops with local children from Mimosa School and creative workshops in Brixton we presented a makeshift built environment that talked about young people as road users, drawing on the power of the imagination to create innovative urban design. This intervention was intended to be a kind of "soft social protest" – a visual signifier that shouts out: WE MAY BE SMALL BUT WE ARE HERE! LOOK OUT FOR US! – Pauline Borton for the #ArtMyJozi team

All the research exercises did a number of things simultaneously that can be divided into three categories: developing the children, providing information on streets, and initiating activist interventions. The exercises offered the children a range of developmental experiences: extending the sense of their worlds out into the public space of streets; introducing them to different research methods (observation, interviewing, documenting, counting), opening their awareness to streets as concepts, including urban infrastructure and planning and the social life of public spaces; engaging them in contributing their own imaginative/conceptual powers to the subject of streets; offering them encounters with people and situations outside of their usual worlds. In terms of streets these exercises provided a vast amount of quantitative and qualitative data on the streets of Auckland Park surrounding Mimosa, as well as the streets beyond that are part of the children's lives.

The data gathered is not the most strictly systematic or exact (It was not meant to be), but it does offer a sense of the Auckland Park streets on a daily basis, and a sense of Johannesburg streets more broadly as encountered by the children. Finally, the activism in these exercises lay in

presenting children on street spaces and as boundary crossers between private and public spaces, both on 'normal' street days before the event and on the Open Streets day. In resonance with the Reggio Emilia approach, the children extended their relationships with their environment beyond school and home; and the streets, street-users and some residents of Auckland Park had children brought into active engagement with them.

The active engagement of children with streets immediately proposes questions about street safety in terms of crime and road safety, about street design in terms of road relative to pavement, how pavements are used and so on. Conversely, for the children their active involvement with the streets, conceptual skills and knowledge development aside, initiates the imaginative possibilities for a different culture in street usage in Johannesburg among the children and the adults they connect to. As several teachers said at the beginning of the research processes, the Mimosas children tend to see streets mainly from their parents' cars. If the City of Johannesburg's Transport Department's Streets Alive programme is partly about making streets safer and more actively used through infrastructural developments, the other, equally significant part is about shifting the culture of street use. Similarly the Open Streets movement proposes both structural changes to facilitate more varied, sociable street use, and a different culture for street use. So the research exercises for Open Streets Auckland Park documented existing street use, made infrastructural propositions, but also activated in the lead up to the event, and through the event itself, a culture of street use out of the ordinary, and one that focused on children as an integral part of the city. The Open Streets Auckland Park project, as it developed, could be imagined as a response to the provocation that Reggio Emilia pedagoga, Tiziana Filippini made on her September 2017 visit to South Africa about where were the children on Johannesburg's streets. The intention of the Open Streets Auckland Park project to get children out onto the streets was also heightened by the self-reflexivity of built-in research processes.

Other research exercises as part of the project and the compilation of this report were conducted by adults. On the day of the event there were three welcome stations which used questionnaires, interactive maps and longer form, verbal interviews to find out where people had come from, what transport they had used and their general experiences of and desires for streets every day and on the Open Streets day. Rather than children as researchers these exercises were facilitated by researchers from the Transformation Directorate, Alex Halligey and Zakiyyah Seedat and a second year Wits Education student volunteer, Sikhumbuzo Bulose. Theresa Giorza facilitated a 'Philosophy Circle', with help from a teenage friend and her younger siblings and with participation from adults and children alike who were attending the Open Streets event. Photographer Chris Anderson, filmmaker Adel van Niekerk and podcaster Candice Nolan, as Mimosas parents

volunteered their professional services to document the event itself. As the photographs in this report show, photographic contributions also came in from a range of people involved as parents, through their organisations or as individuals invested in the ethos of Open Streets and orientating public spaces around children.

The process of collating data and reflections on the event and its synthesis into this report was done by the Open Streets Auckland Park research subcommittee. The report compilation is the biggest arc of the research process to not be led by children in some way, but rather to be composed by adults with the children's experiences, responses and behaviour shifts in mind.

Children's Research

This section provides a very broad summary of the findings from the Mimosa children's extensive research exercises before the event, on the day and in reflection after the event. More detail on specific exercises and their findings can be found in Appendix B.

MIMOSA SCHOOL TEACHERS REFELCTIONS ON RESEARCH

Overall, the children wanted to introduce things of beauty in the street (especially colour and natural beauty), people or figures who could make it safe or more welcoming or calmer (like Spiderman or a princess or a robot), and things that would also make it more interesting (especially things they'd never seen before like volcanoes or giant wheels or aeroplanes flying sideways) or more magical (like unicorns or fairies). Streets of beauty, magic, wonder, awe. Places we feel safe, welcome, invited, interested, curious. – compilation of teacher's responses to the #ArtMyJozi sessions

As a baseline for the Auckland Park streets on a normal day the children found them to be dominated by motorised, private vehicle traffic. That said, there is still a small, but potentially lively pedestrian street life to be engaged. Pedestrians interviewed expressed a similar desire to the Open Streets day respondents for streets that are infrastructurally well-maintained, aesthetically beautiful, safe for and encouraging of cultural and social activity. Respondents from the public were charmed and readily engaged by the children as interviewers, testimony to the Reggio Emilia approach, not just in broadening the experiential and conceptual scope of children, but also in the value of children as investigators and thinkers in the city.

Adult facilitators in all exercises primed the children with certain intentions for their research exercises, whether it be to get a history of the area through an interview with a resident, to find out where a pedestrian had come from or was going to, or to observe the natural aspects of the street-world. Children did follow this priming and yielded all sorts of information as summarised above, but they also followed their own whims of curiosity. Whether someone had goldfish was a more pressing concern than what they remembered of Auckland Park ten years ago. Noticing trees was dutifully done, but a fast, fancy car was much more exciting and made its way into drawing reflections afterwards. One child persisted in initiating his practice interviews in preparation for the

residents interviews with, “Can I buy your house?” Adult facilitators intended and desired for imagination to be a big part of all the exercises in reflecting what streets might be in the future, but in reality imagination was part of all considerations past, present and future for the children. Their imaginations took exercises in all sorts of idiosyncratic directions, which makes for a degree of incoherence, but also exposes in a dream-like way diverse concerns about what it is to live as people in community in cities. Capital, acquisition, domestication of exotic animals, people living with animals, the man-made and the natural all come out in a stream of curious attention.

However two things stand out as deeply useful from this children-orientated approach to researching and actively intervening in city streets, in affirmation of the propositions this report set up in its introduction. Firstly, children in street spaces and as researchers provoke awareness and responses from other children and adults in a way that adults cannot. Secondly, that the children’s involvement in the world is significantly shifted through the experiential engagement with streets on normal days and through events like Open Streets. This is reflected in the children’s imaginative responses to all the research exercises, but also in their behaviour after the Open Streets Day Auckland Park event.

Children of a range of ages at Mimosa continue to draw streets and, more figuratively, connecting lines between drawings (in the 4-5-year-old group in particular, it is as if their material engagement with streets has led to an internalised conceptualisation of making connections between things). They have also continued to reflect to their parents and teachers on streets, but also about the event itself, incorporating the streets they drive through, researched and played in on the Open Streets day into their broader imaginative worlds.

Through the Open Streets project Mimosa parents and teachers report on their children’s openness to engaging with strangers on the streets and with the general world of streets with a respectful curiosity. Parents and teachers themselves also reflect that their own sense of streets has been broadened and enlivened with alternative possibilities through watching their children engage in the various Open Streets exercises.⁶²



Figure 15: Quote from Mimosa child.

Photograph by Chris Anderson

Interviews with Participants on the Day

All respondents except for recycling reclaimers indicated they use private motor vehicles as their primary mode of transit. Experiences related to daily commutes were mostly a sense of frustration with regards to traffic congestion, driver behaviour and parking. Vehicle-dependent respondents indicated a willingness to shift transit use, but indicated irregularity, lack of information and unreliability as barriers.

Most of respondents were from the area and the only reason for them being in that space in that particular time was because of the activation. Respondents indicated that on a daily basis they frequent/enter the area for two primary reasons: to drop off and pick up children from Mimosa and because they live in the area. Only one respondent indicated that she passes through the area as part of her route to work.

Concerns regarding the use of streets included speeding motor vehicles, broken pavements, cycling lanes that are often used by other users (taxis and inconsiderate drivers) forcing pedestrians into the street itself or onto pavements, lack of surveillance and associated feelings of isolation and vulnerability, lack of activation, poor public lighting and related infrastructural challenges. Very few (absolute minority) respondents initially hinted towards a preference of streets for cars only, but even these respondents upon further interrogation expressed rather that their concerns were for ease of mobility on the streets, rather than keeping them solely for motorised vehicles.



Figure 16: Questionnaire board.

Photograph by Chris Anderson

Responses to the particular streets of Auckland Park varied. Respondents from the area or similar quiet, leafy suburbs expressed frustration at the lack of community spirit and active social life on the streets. Respondents from outside of the area and who spend some of their time in the CBD or inner city suburbs like Yeoville, see the Auckland Park area as beautiful, peaceful, feeling much safer than other parts of the city and the streets as better maintained. One respondent even went so far as to say that the streets of Auckland Park are ‘perfect’. These different responses create a curious paradox because the kind of mixed use, vibrant, pedestrianised street life that is desired by suburbanites and discussed more below, is active in the Johannesburg CBD and suburbs like Hillbrow and Yeoville. However the road and pavement maintenance in these areas is not to the level of Auckland Park and rates of street crimes like muggings are much higher. On one hand these differences of experiences of and aspirations for city living reflect the material disparity of the streets across the city and how they are inflected by economic class and, through apartheid and colonial legacies, race. On the other hand, combined, these opinions indicate that street culture and street infrastructure and management are equally important in achieving desirable streets. These findings reinforce the approach of the Streets Alive programme to focus on infrastructure as well as shifting street culture in the hearts and minds of Johannesburgers. These findings also argue for the value of Streets Alive events across all Johannesburg’s areas and for comparative studies between

these events in different areas and what they expose of the disparity in street functioning, infrastructure and social use.

All respondents reacted positively to the event and indicated a yearning for more such events. Respondents focused more on the event itself as a type of festival as opposed to a contestation of streets in its current format. However when discussing an Open Streets way as a more 'permanent' reality for city streets, most people were in favour of it and placed strong emphasis on community building and safety aspects that such streets could offer a neighbourhood. Several respondents also drew comparisons with their experiences of street life in other cities (Buenos Aires and a number of European cities) as being more pedestrianised, having retail and residential use alongside each other and social and cultural lives lived more publicly and in community with other people on the streets. They longed for a similar experience in South Africa and accounted for the obstacles to making this a reality as relating primarily to safety from crime and a need for a stronger sense of community. Although others also emphasised the importance of aesthetics and infrastructure maintenance in creating a positive and attractive street culture.

Some suggested that the separation of residential and retail use in city areas meant less pedestrian traffic on the streets and therefore less visibility feeding an insecurity about crime (no-one will see and stop anything if something happens to me) as well as potentially actually creating a certain invisibility for criminals to operate on the streets. These same respondents also pointed to high walls as creating a similar system of separation and invisibility. Others focused more on formal management systems for streets: CCTV cameras on corners and neighbourhood watch lookout points, formalising and monitoring street trading, dividing pavements into landscaped beds and dedicated sidewalk paths, placing more dustbins on streets and making the dustbins more visible, more intervention from the City of Johannesburg's waste management provider, Pikitup. Others proposed artistic interventions to enliven streets and provoke thoughts about their use: land art, sculptures, creative designs for pavements. Others still focused on a civically engaged public: Saturday morning clean-ups that served both to tidy the streets and facilitate neighbourly bonding; drivers being more pedestrian sensitive.

Specific propositions aside, the overall sense was that although many respondents felt there could be more intervention on a city planning level to facilitate the kind of social life of the streets they desire and enjoyed so much in other cities, they mostly concluded their ruminations with the opinion that individual people's perceptions of what is possible on the streets needed to change too before the streets would change. The majority of respondents suggested that shifting the culture of the streets required a shift in the public imagination of cultural possibilities for the streets. All of these comments illustrate that active, vibrant streets might be best achieved through a combination

of City, civil society and individual intentions, as well as combining material interventions with artistic and cultural ones.

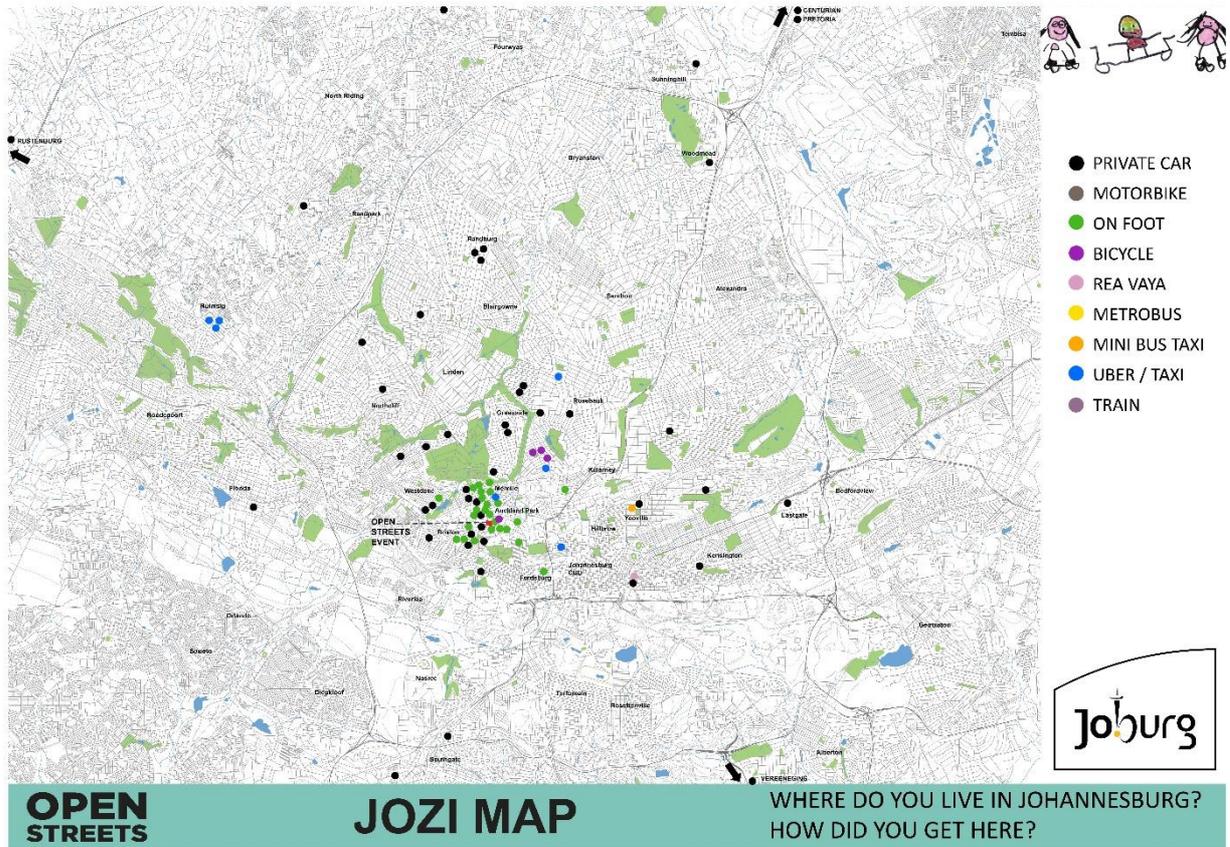


Figure 17: Map showing the distribution of areas participants came from to attend the event and by what mode of transport.

Map designed and data collated by Mark Schaerer

Findings of the Philosophy Circle

I and my young helpers arranged our gazebo, colourful bunting and the child-size wooden Mimosa chairs to create our philosophy circle at the corner of Ditton and Cookham streets. Early in the day people came to greet and find out what we were about. A number of parent-child partnerships (dyad seems a far too clinical term – but there needs to be a collective noun for this creature) promised to return once they had explored what else was on offer. A few did. For one particular child this place was exactly where she wanted to be – with a sigh, she said, “I am happy because I have found the philosophy place”.

We were strategically positioned next to the research desk. There was a steady flow between our two spaces. People located their homes on the maps (to which we had added key landmarks and names of suburbs) and added stickers to show their mode of transport. They then responded to a series of questions about why they had come to the event; how they thought streets should be used; and how this could be made possible. They could either draw or write. We were able to invite visitors to come into our circle to share, extend and deepen their thoughts about Open Streets. Questions, comments and drawings on small pieces of paper were added to our philosophical washing line. Christopher (6) drew the wind; B (5) asked why the streets couldn't always be like this; N (5) asked “Why did cars take over the world”.

Next door to us was the Hope Church's face painting station. We welcomed superheroes and their parents in to play some “philosophical games”. Batman, two butterflies and a tiger played the stand-up game for example. The game requires close attention to all members of the circle so that we stand up one at a time to introduce ourselves. If two people stand up at once, we have to start all over again. We also had a “penny for your thoughts” arrangement on a low table. One jam jar had blank note papers in it; one was for collecting thoughts or ideas written on the blank papers; and the last one had an assortment of out-of-circulation South African coins for thinkers to take in exchange for their thought. Thoughts collected in the jar included the possibility of pavement food gardens and political musings on the future of the world and the impossibility of freedom in a capitalist society. One adult expressed delight in finding an old one cent coin for his collection.

Although it seemed foolhardy to attempt focused dialogical thinking in the midst of a crowd, I took a pragmatic view and enjoyed the way that the circle became something quite new in this very fluid and multi-generational context. Perhaps a more structured programme at certain times of day could have given those who might have wanted a more planned experience that possibility. Particular games or activities could have been programmed and signed up for. – Theresa Giorza of University of Witwatersrand's School of Education Foundation Studies Division, on facilitating the Philosophy Circle

Teams of children visiting local residents to interview them in their homes

The main goal of this activity was trying to recreate a “piazza” (a square) as a web of relationships; introducing children to the Auckland Park residents living behind the many walls that surround Mimosa School, and possibly building the foundations for a more regular and long lasting engagement. Small units of children and parents were paired with residents that had agreed to open their houses during the day and answer children's questions about the histories of their houses and neighbourhood. One of the purposes of this activity was also to find a way to “give back” to the community, initiate a process of collecting the many histories of Auckland Park, as remembered by its residents, and combining them in the form of shared knowledge. This was in part inspired by a specific understanding of “oral history”, championed in the 1970s (in the same period when the Reggio Emilia approach first emerged) as an emancipatory tool, as a way to collect the memories of ordinary citizens, rather than political leaders or influential individuals.⁶³ This exercise was also part of laying a foundation for bridging from an event *for* the Auckland Park residents to an experience *with* them, as Anne Simmonds assessed of this project and its potential future iterations.⁶⁴

As illustrated by the videos, taped interviews, photos, and notes collected as part of this activity, residents of Auckland Park warmly welcomed children and parents, opened their houses, and were glad to answer children's questions. Children, however, gave an original twist to this activity. The "research units" involved two or three children aged between 4 and 6, accompanied by one or two adults. Before the Open Streets day, during their school days at Mimosa, children had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the format of interviewing. They could interview teachers, as well as one another, they could formulate their own questions as well as try to follow a script. They also attempted more creative forms of interviewing, asking questions to trees, streets, and walls and coming up with imaginative answers.

On the Open Street day, the focus of the interviews, as discussed among teachers, parents, children, and the organising committee, was expected to be on the histories of houses and residents, also including some exploratory walks around houses and gardens to understand how each house was different. As the interviews began, however, almost every unit realised how, for children in this particular age group, the concept of history seemed distant and difficult to grasp, as a way to "read" a house and its residents. In many cases, children soon turned to other categories to map the space surrounding them. They started asking "how many trees", or "how many rabbits" were in the house. Among these "what was the favorite tree, and favorite leaf". In some cases parents attempted to bring children back to the script, with limited success. In others, they stepped in to try draw out some personal and collective histories, as residents had indeed fascinating stories to tell, well worth gathering.

Retrospectively, while this activity had only limited success in uncovering histories through the eyes of children, it was revealing of the importance of some specific elements and categories used by children to map space. It reaffirmed the importance of nature in urban spaces to make a house different from another. A special tree (because of its uniqueness or the value attached to it by its residents) or an unusual animal (e.g. fishes in a pond, a turtle) seemed way more significant than the number of rooms a house had, or how old that house was.

The nature of this particular activity - which needed a special event like Open Streets to be imagined and first implemented, but does not necessarily need other special events to be repeated - can allow teachers, parents, and children to explore some of the insights that emerged from the first interviews further, continuing the interactions with residents as a way to strengthen ties built with the community.



Figure 18: Some of the Mimosa children’s research exhibited on the day.

Photograph by Chris Anderson

Section 5: Reflections and Recommendations

Although the organising committee felt the day to be a great success in terms of turnout and positive feedback from participants of all ages and stations (officials to children to parents to activation facilitators to general members of the public), there was a sense that future events could build more 'educational' components for participants about why the event is organised and what it is that the organisers are trying to test and achieve. Although there was a strong framing for the event in its publicity, it came across that many people were still primarily fixated on the concept of a street carnival and only upon further and deeper interrogation did respondents open up about their experiences of streets in general. Organisers felt that more pre-event campaigning with a strong focus on the street as opposed to the event would have a number of uses. It could encourage participants to travel to the event by either public transport or bicycle or on foot, rather than using private vehicles. This would extend the experience of the event beyond the discrete area of the road closure and also facilitate an experience of under-utilised city infrastructure like Rea Vaya bus routes and bicycle lanes. Pre-event campaigning more broadly would create a deeper engagement with the Open Streets intervention and its potential to shift concepts and use of streets on the part of participants.

However, at the level of Mimosa School community, this kind of deep awareness was really achieved. There was a rich, sustained engagement for Mimosa children, teachers, family and friends before, during and continuing after the event broadening their sense of streets and ways of participating in them as public spaces. In one of the earlier City of Johannesburg Streets Alive initiatives in Orlando East, Rehanna Mosajee, then councillor on the Mayoral Committee for Transport, reflected a certain disappointment in the turnout of people for a promotional event, but expressed her hope that people would gradually be drawn into a more active engagement with streets as the programme persevered.⁶⁵ The deep work of the Mimosa School's process through the Open Streets event testifies to the potential for generating significant shifts in hearts and minds of all ages if an Open Streets event is embedded in a school environment. Conversely, the impact on Mimosa School models the power of an Open Streets event not just on the day, but through the whole planning process as an experience that for its length and depth can make the kind of profound changes desired by the Streets Alive programme, by the Open Streets movement and a Reggio Emilia-inspired philosophy. So while the broader public might benefit from more pre-event campaigning, a great deal of deep value was achieved on the Mimosa School community level.

To come back to Ann Simmonds's observation that the event was for but not with the Auckland Park residents, the deep work at Mimosa creates a core group at the heart of the event,

which is potentially powerful in spreading this ethos of street awareness throughout the neighbourhood in future Open Streets iterations. Ultimately future events might become events made with the residents. The success of working with Mimosa School at the geographic centre of the event, made members of the research committee hypothesise that anchoring Open Streets around specific institutions and the themes they inspire could be a valuable way of embedding the events more strongly in their areas and offering very particular experiential effects that expose new possibilities for streets. If a Reggio Emilia inspired children-orientated approach to Open Streets offered so much value, what might a science-orientated one linked to SciBono in Newtown offer? Or a fashion-themed one in the Fashion District?

For this particular event however, the benefits were marked of combining Open Streets with the Reggio Emilia children-centred approach and having a research programme for reflecting on the process. The combination of these three intentions made for a strong event with potentially lasting effects. Their combination offers a way for re-envisaging schools. Regular events that allow schools to spill out into their neighbourhoods will begin to make the boundaries between school and community much more porous. The movement is both ways: in-school pedagogies can become more focused on real world events and the public events are themselves pedagogical. Intergenerational and multi-species worlds can enter and confuse the predictability of the classroom. Pre-planning with the community beforehand as suggested by Simmonds can potentially generate deeper links and effective interconnected systems of organisation.



Figure 19: Daniella chalk drawing on the day.

Photograph by Sims Phakisi

We can “diffract” the image above through the ideas generated by the event. Although the main focus of the picture and set apart in this way, the child is more than an isolated child under evaluation: capable of holding the chalk in a particular way, or producing a certain kind of mark as predicted by an age-based developmental progression or even as the proud author of her own picture stories. This child is one part of a whole event unfolding in interconnected and unpredictable

ways in a space that has become a “piazza”, a shared space of “the commons” for a day. She is invited in by the chalk, the colour, and the surface of the road, and her brother who you cannot see just outside the picture frame. The image suggests a possibility for the street as a generative space of encounter and exploration. Even the pasts, presents and futures of this street haunt the image. The street has a past that allowed certain people freedom to be there and others only if they had permission from the pass office. The child asserts her presence and sends ripples through that memory of division and exclusion.⁶⁶

The research team’s final propositions are twofold. Firstly they recommend that the Open Streets project in Auckland Park continue with further iterations of the event to extend and enrich the culture of street use in the area. Secondly they think the 7 April, children-orientated, research focused Open Streets Auckland Park event offers itself as a model to be tried out and compared in a range of different areas in Johannesburg. Our initial propositions are for an inner city suburb (for example, another Yeoville event), a peripheral area (for example, Daveyton) and an informal settlement (for example, Snake Park, Soweto).

WHAT WAS OPEN STREETS AUCKLAND PARK, 7 APRIL 2019?

To open as a verb, is to uncover, display or show a hidden thing, something usually invisible or inaccessible. A street seems to be very much neither of those: People walk beside it every day, cars travel along it, entering or leaving it to or from destinations. So the concept of Open Streets may seem a confusing one, until you arrived at the Open Streets Auckland Park event. Then you understood. Opening the streetscape wasn’t at all to do with the function of the street as it is used every day, its far more about what the streetscape can and might be. The event explored, by creating rather than modelling or theorising, the street as a safe place to play, for children and adults alike. It demonstrated the street as a community connector, as a space of alternate mobility (skating, cycling, dancing), as a destination in and of itself, rather than as a tool to reach destinations.

The Street as physical space (tar, kerbs, pavements, front gardens) can, under the right circumstances (closures to cars, activation by the community, a sense of festival or occasion) become an expression of community desires and values. On the day of Open Streets Auckland Park, it became exactly that: a space in which children’s play was safe and celebrated, a space in which arts and culture is shared and cherished, a space in which the community meeting one another is its own reason for a festival.

Open Streets Auckland Park was as much about transforming the very ordinary into the extraordinary, and opening minds and futures as it was about restricting the reach of traffic into the suburb. – Abigail Godsell, strategic spatial planning officer in the City Transformation Directorate, Development Planning Department with the City of Johannesburg.

Appendix A: Timeline of Event Planning

- **8 November 2018:** Following an introduction from Marcela Guerrero Casas, Lerato Mabaso indicates the transport department's openness to host an Open Streets-style event in Melville and surrounds, and says she will speak to her team about it. Stefan van Niekerk suggests an informal meeting to discuss possibilities.
- **9 November 2018:** Lerato Mabaso writes to the initial organising committee indicating she has agreement to host an Open Streets-style event in Melville and surrounds. Message that goes out in weekly newsletter to Mimosa families:

Next week we'll be meeting with two officials from the City of Johannesburg who're interested in holding an [Open Streets](#) day in the Melville area in 2019. Inspired by Bogota's Ciclovía, Open Streets is a movement to close streets down to cars and open them up to children, families, cyclists and community – even if only for a day. What's the connection to Mimosa? We're interested in creating and advocating for more child-friendly, community-oriented spaces in our city and our neighbourhood.
- **14 November 2018:** Informal meeting with Stefan van Niekerk, Lemohang Cindi, Lerato Mabaso, Mbongiseni Masuku, Judith Browne and Heather Barclay at Mimosa School, after which Lerato sends stakeholder invitation letter, which Mimosa then uses as a formal invite to spread the word.
- **28 November 2018:** Meeting with Judith Browne, Heather Barclay, Lerato Mabaso, Mbongiseni Masuku, Mark Schaerer, Ann Simmonds, Jess Barclay, Augustine Morkel, Camdon Juby, Iginio Gagliardone. Meeting members discuss a tentative date of April 2019 for the event – enough time to plan, timed for when both government and private schools are not on holiday, and before the slew of public holidays that come in mid-to-late April. From this point on, meeting members start proactively approaching people in their networks to find organising committee members, volunteers, etc.
- **4 December 2018:** All of Mimosa staff discuss and agree to an overarching investigation for the school in 2019, aligned with the Open Streets opportunity. Our phrasing of this overarching investigation: how does Mimosa connect with our community through our streets?
- **6 December 2018:** Meeting members discuss tentative dates again, routes, as well as the vision for the event itself. Kyla Davis from Well-Worn Theatre Company, David Du Preez from Breeze Block and Philip Harrison from Wits Spatial Analysis and City Planning join the meeting. Based on community mapping done in this meeting and the previous one, Mark Schaerer designs and sends out a map.

- **16 January 2019:** Organising committee members agree on the main characteristics of this Open Streets event that it should be children-centred, involve all the local schools (which ultimately did not happen because of limits to how much could be organised and negotiated before the event), be freely accessible, ideally have everything freely available including food and beverages (this too could not be realised because of health and safety certification for serving food in public spaces) and to document the process and the thinking behind it so it could serve as a case study to advocate for children-centred Open Streets events.
- **17 January 2019:** First Mimosa class (Grade 0) goes for a walk on the street. The first of many street engagements.
- **22 January 2019:** Informal meeting with Judith Browne, Philip Harrison, Kyla Davis and Alex Halligey to discuss possibility of research component to Open Streets.
- **31 January 2019:** Following a walkabout of the proposed route, organising committee members run through what they would like Open Streets Auckland Park 2019 to be about, confirmed what activations were confirmed and which were likely. Eli Kodisang from African Reclaimers Organisation joins the organising committee for a walkabout of the streets.
- **1&15 February 2019 research meeting:** Heather Barclay and Judith Browne (Mimosa School), Philip Harrison and Alex Halligey (Wits' Spatial Analysis and City Planning, Philip a Mimosa parent), Iginio Gagliardone (Wits' Media Studies and Mimosa parent), Theresa Giorza (Wits' School of Education and Mimosa friend). Discuss what research for the project might involve: an opportunity to research the streets with children and to document and reflect on the value of the project process and the methods to use to do this.
- **5 March 2019:** Grade 2s do quantitative and qualitative research on Cookham and Ditton Streets.
- **12 March 2019:** Grade 1s do quantitative and qualitative research on Cookham and Ditton Streets.
- **14 March 2019:** First presentation at Joint Operations Committee attended by Lerato Mabaso and Ann Simmonds.
- **2 April 2019 research meeting:** Determining research exercise in lead up to the day and on the day.
- **3 April 2019:** Submission of final maps to EMS by Mark Schaerer and Lerato Mabaso.
- **4 April 2019:** Final presentation at Joint Operations Committee by Mark Schaerer and Lerato Mabaso.
- **16 April 2019 research meeting:** Reflection on event and process and report planning: from the City of Johannesburg: Lerato Mabaso from Transport Department and Abigail Godsell

from Transformation Directorate; from University of Witwatersrand: Phil Harrison, Iginio Gagliardone, Theresa Giorza and Alex Halligey; from Mimosa: Judith Browne and Heather Barclay.

- **23 May 2019:** Final research committee meeting to feedback on the initial draft of the report and workshop its final form and substance.

Appendix B: List of Research Exercises

This appendix describes the structure of some of the research exercises conducted as part of Open Streets Auckland Park and gives a list of findings.

Grade 1s, 2s and 3s (Foundation Phase – ‘Bokanang’) Street Research

The research exercise with Grade 1s, 2s and 3s (known collectively at Mimosa as ‘Bokanang’) was about gathering information on how the streets immediately adjacent to Mimosa are being used and by who at two different times of day. The information they were looking for was both quantitative (how many vehicles, pedestrians, animals etc. are moving through the street) and qualitative (what does the street feel like at different times of day, how fast or slow are the vehicles going, what kinds of people are you seeing with what attitudes). The purposes of this exercise were to:

- Use the children's findings to get a sense of a baseline for street life in the area on a normal day, to compare to the experience of the streets on the Open Streets day on 7th April.
- Access the children's insights as to how street life operates now and how it might operate in the future.
- Introduce the children to some foundational ways of approaching research: what is the difference between quantitative and qualitative research?; how to make a bar graph; how you might document and reflect on your findings through writing, speaking, drawing and sculpting.
- Introduce the children to concepts around the infrastructure and use of city spaces: streets as connecting places and allowing for mobility of vehicles, pedestrians, water, sewage, electricity, storm water, telephone lines; streets as social spaces; streets as trading spaces.

The research was conducted on two separate Tuesdays, with two sessions per day, one from 8:30-9:00 and one from 14:15-14:30. In each session the children were split into two groups with one observing Cookham Street and one observing Ditton Street. The ‘fieldwork’ was followed by a documenting of data: a bar graph for all the vehicles and pedestrians counted and drawings, sculptures and voice recordings done of all other observations. The Grade 2s and 3s did their exercise on Tuesday, 5 March and the Grade 1s did theirs on Tuesday, 12 March.



Figure 20: Counting and observing, 12 March, Ditton Street.

Photograph by Mimosa parent

The quantitative task was to count the pedestrians and the different kinds of vehicles seen on the road within the 'fieldwork' time. The qualitative task was to observe the streets through the senses. The prompts varied slightly in each session and between the Grade 1 and 2 groups, but children were guided to observe plants, the weather, vehicles and people, applying all five of their senses. They also interviewed willing pedestrians with the following set of questions (though frequently diverting from this course):

- Where have you come from?
- Where are you going to?
- Do you walk here often?
- What do you think of these streets?

Quantitative Data

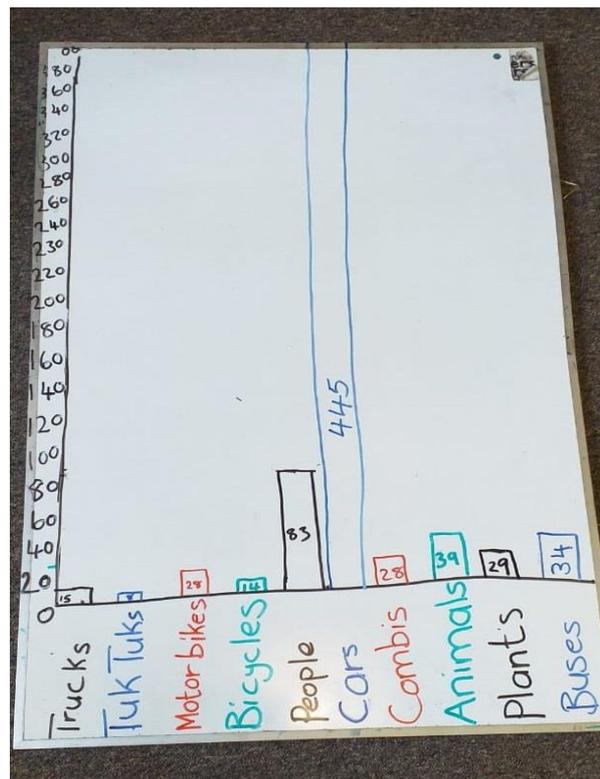


Figure 21: Grade 1s bar graph, from 12 March, both morning and afternoon sessions combined.

Photograph by Mary Kazembe

Although the numbers are not entirely reliably accurate, the counting over the two days showed definitively that cars by far outnumbered all other modes of transport, that morning and afternoon traffic was more or less at the same intensity and that the number of pedestrians was higher than we had anticipated.

Qualitative Data:

The children made many idiosyncratic qualitative observations about plants, weather, exciting vehicles (fancy cars) or curious ones (the Pikitup truck draining liquid waste from its undercarriage), but the most interesting aspect of this research was their interviews with pedestrians. From the Pikitup collectors, to University of Johannesburg students to gardeners to SABC employees, the children charmed all who they spoke to into a generous reflection on their routes through the area and their opinions on the streets. A highlight was a musician on his way to the SABC launching into song in response to Mila's interview. These findings echo the kinds of experiences and hope for streets that were captured on the Open Streets day through the welcome desk interviews and questionnaires and the podcast interviews. However the unique benefit of this exercise was allowing the children to have a significant interaction with an adult on the streets outside of their world of school, home, private cars and houses. The children and the pedestrians gained an unexpected

social experience in a space they normally experience predominantly for functional locomotion between one place and another. The children's explorations of city spaces and what streets are and might be also extended beyond the classroom and engaged an everyday public in their project.



Figure 22: Figuring it out with teacher Marion Drew.

Photograph by Alex Halligey

Welcome Desk Interviews

Conducted by Stefan van Niekerk, Abigail Godsell, Thobile Ntuli and Lemohang Cindi from the Transformation Directorate and Alex Halligey, Zakiyyah Seedat and Sikhumbuzo Bulose from the University of Witwatersrand.

Participants were asked to answer the following questions:

- How did you get here?
 - Most came by car.
 - Several walked.
 - As the map above reflects, some ubered, but hardly any one took public transport. Of the people interviewed only the local recycling reclaimers had come via minibus taxis.
- Why did you come here today?
 - Many answered that they came because they are a Mimosa parent or are involved in the life of a Mimosa child in some way.

- Some came because they were connected to organisations involved in the Open Streets Auckland Park day.
- But people also cited:
 - A desire to see the roads used for non-motorised transport and pedestrian-use for a day.
 - To interact with their neighbours for a sense of community.
 - A perceived rarity of street culture in Johannesburg, making this a novel and worthwhile event.
 - And an often repeated one: for fun.
- There were also several responses in favour of supporting an event that pedestrianised streets even if only temporarily.
- How would you dream of seeing streets being used?
 - A strong desire from many for more walking to be possible on the streets. The desire for walking was continually cited as symbolising freedom in the city.
 - Some hoped for no private vehicles – only public transport, non-motorised private transport and walking.
 - A desire for more free public spaces.
 - Others focused more practically on maintenance of streets and policing of its different areas: fixed pavements, no parking on pavements, bigger speed bumps, dedicated bicycle lanes on all roads.
 - Many expressed support for more Open Streets-like events.
 - ‘EVERYDAY LIKE OPEN STEETS!’
 - One participant wished for a ‘similar activation in Bloemfontein’.
 - One participant cited a sense of ‘respect/ubuntu’ with a shared valuing of shared spaces.
- What is preventing the streets from being used as you would dream?
 - A feeling of safety on the streets was the biggest obstacle for most people in terms of:
 - Crime, but some framed this as fear of crime rather than actual acts of crime.
 - Functionality of pavements.
 - Dangers of motorised vehicle traffic.

- Walking more made difficult by distances between places.
- Insufficient political will to make changes. This answer was not qualified as to whether it was the will of the public or the will of government that was lacking, but perhaps the respondent meant both.

- **Longer, free-form verbal interviews:**

Facilitated by the City of Johannesburg Department of Transformation (city planning) team, Zakiyyah Seedat, Sikhumbuzo Bulose and Alex Halligey.

- How people generally use and experience the streets.
- What kinds of transport they use.
- What their perception of safety on the streets is.
- What their perceptions are of Johannesburg streets as recreational, retail and community spaces.
- What they dream of streets being like.

The findings from these interviews are unpacked in the main body of the report under 'Section 4: Research'.



Appendix C: What Open Streets means to Mimosa

Mimosa School, as part of preparing for Open Streets on 7 April 2019 and guided by our own beliefs that learning is contextual (shaped in relationship with each other and the place and time in which we find ourselves), chose to centre our investigations for 2019 along an Open Streets-inspired theme:

How does Mimosa connect to its surrounding community via the streets?

This investigation has taken different shapes and directions depending on the age group and the children and adults involved. Many teachers started by taking neighbourhood walks with children on a more regular basis, to see what really captivated children's interest and attention on the streets. These walks were re-remembered together – mapped, drawn, made into clay, re-told as narrative – which further helped to inform and inspire each group's emergent explorations.

Here are just a few examples of where these explorations went:



Figure 24: The rules and game play for hoola-hoop soccer in the alleyway.

Photographs by Mark Straw (left) and Marcel Korth (right)

Children in Grades 1, 2 and 3 invented new games in the alleyway behind the school using loose parts – and then chose the best of these games and created instructions (with words and pictures) for each. These games were taught and played during Open Streets on 7 April 2019. On finding a large puddle in the alleyway after heavy rains, they began designing and inventing boats and other floating devices, and have since been making class trips to Emmarentia Dam to test their inventions in the local spruit.



Figure 25: Contemplating the sounds of the street, discovering an echo in a street pole, and then trying to find graphic language for an echo, as part of composing a song for the street.

Photographs by Mila Gould (left), Judith Browne (top right), Heather Barclay (bottom right)

Groups of Grade 0 children spontaneously began identifying and collecting items they called ‘treasure’ and ‘trash’ on the street, and began by exploring ways in which trash could gain value, and become a treasure. After this they began collecting and making different sounds with found materials on Ditton Avenue, and out of these sounds composed new pieces of music which they’re planning to give back to the street. In their own words “the street made a song for us ... so we should make something to say thank you.”



Figure 26: Identifying a ‘dinosaur footprint’ in the alleyway; later sharing a story of the children who discovered this ‘footprint’, and solved a mystery in the alleyway.

Photographs by Zohra Mira (left) and George Mlambo (right)

Groups of children aged 4-5 kept searching for (and finding) evidence of dinosaurs (and other monsters or other-worldly creatures) on the street. This interest in the real and imaginary has informed puppet shows they’ve made, books they’ve created, exhibitions they’ve visited. They seem particularly interested in the street itself, how it connects places; how it’s made, what damages it. For example, when discussing Workers Day, and how we can show gratitude to all the different kinds of people who make our lives and our world safe and welcoming, a number of this group (without prompting) focused on workers who clean the street and fix potholes – and ways to make their work easier.

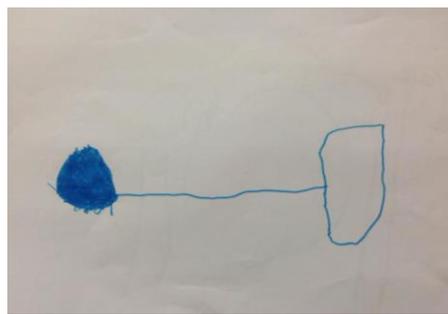


Figure 27: Sebu: “This is a sign that says NO LITTERING so the workers don’t have to work too hard.”; Matthijs: “This is a shovel. I will use it to clean up if there’s dirt on the street.”; Myriam: “This is the sign that says NO MAKING HOLES IN THE STREET.”

Photographs of drawings by 4-5-year olds by Zohra Mira



Figure 28: Discovering different (and recurring) patterns in the alleyway.

Photographs by Jadejia Laurent



Children aged 3-4 are very interested in the different systems of life that can be found on the street, loosely along the lines of ‘who lives here?’ – who lives behind this wall, under this rock, in this tree. As a group (and as a result), they now have a dedicated day in the garden, tending the soil, composting leaves, planting seeds – creating conditions conducive to life (and the homes of all kinds of creatures). This is alongside and with support from permaculture advocate Mary Howe-Watson.

Children aged 18 months to 3 years spent the first part of the school year connecting to each other and the school environment, and became particularly interested in different ways of looking: with magnifying glasses, mirrors, cameras and torches. In the second term, they’ve been taking these ‘looking tools’ out into alleyway as a means of exploring, and have been contending with things that are just out of view or out of reach – through a crack in a wall, down a drain, up a tall pole – and how to explore these places.

Figure 29: Investigating the world inside Mimosa’s walls with mirrors and magnifying glasses, and then investigating the world outside the school walls, to see what they yield.

Photographs by Nonkululeko Hlomendini (left) and Tasneem Pochee (right)

These explorations and investigations have been interesting and generative for us. But have they changed anything about how we ‘do school’, how we connect to the world, the people and the neighbourhood around Mimosa?

Loris Malaguzzi, the main founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, writes that there is a wall that prevents us as teachers from going beyond what we know, from the finite to the infinite. But “beyond the wall there is always a beyond”. Our work as teachers is to look beyond “the wall of habit, of custom, of the normal, of the non-surprise, of assumed security”⁶⁷ and (with the children’s help) find the

possible. Exploring our streets together has been an exercise in the possible. In the “what if”. And also in the “what is” – what beauty and interest and possibility is there already in our street, that we’ve been missing.

Here are ways in which our street investigations are disrupting our old ways of ‘doing school’, and of finding new possibilities:

A classroom doesn't need to have four walls: It’s been interesting for all of us to get out of our classrooms and into our world, in different ways. Classes are spending more time walking, exploring (or tending) the garden, or generally making use of our surrounding environment more (whether the school garden, surrounding streets, or nearby parks). As teachers, we’re learning to rely more on the multiple possibilities inherent in the world around us, to see the environment as a kind of teacher in itself.

It has opened my eyes to see what imagination and ideas have sparked within my group by just taking them to the alley. Open Streets have also given the Mimosa community a chance to interact with people beyond our gates and to see what lies beyond the Mimosa walls. –
Tasneem Pochee

Education as a participatory project: Overall, there are more people involved in our enquiries too, where we move beyond the model where the teacher is the ultimate expert and the classroom is her (or his) sole domain. Increasingly our work is collaborative, as we draw on each other for ideas and insights into the children’s learning and process. This participation is not just limited to other educators, but also draws on the insights, ideas and expertise of other people – parents, interested community members, researchers at our nearest universities. We’re learning to welcome in these different gifts and ways of being and knowing. Examples include the Grade 0s collaborative music project, which wouldn’t have been possible without the support of Sammi de Jager from Junior Jive. Or the streets research project Bokanang (our Grade 1s, 2s and 3s) took on, and how it was spearheaded by Philip Harrison and Alex Halligey (and supported by parents and family members from the foundation phase). It’s as if we’re finding new ways to draw on the richness, interests, expertise and talents of our wider community.

I especially liked the connection with Netcare Rehab Hospital (on the day of Open Streets) – especially as I have a child in my class in a wheelchair. It’s given me insight into the challenges she navigates during her daily life. It made me appreciate what she does more. It was a huge eye-opener that if something of this calibre was held more often, relationships would change. For example, if someone, a stranger, spoke to your child, you’d allow your guard to drop down a little bit more... It also opened up quite a relationship with bicycles and children. A lot more children began speaking about and drawing their bicycles... It created and consolidated a relationship between children, bicycles and the street.” – Zohra Mia

Learning that's connected: Overall, our school enquiries feel more open, as we all learn how we can be supported by the environment in our explorations, and make space for the ways children are already in conversation with the world around them (and the gifts, knowledge and insights they bring to any investigation). There's also a greater sense of connectedness between home and school, as children and families realise that what's happening or discovered outside of school time is connected to what's happening inside school grounds – and what is discovered or learnt or made after-hours is brought into the school and shared with joy. In this way, learning isn't seen as something that only happens inside a school; we're starting to see the way learning happens all the time, all around us, and how to connect these learnings, so that what we do together every day has value and context and meaning.

It's given us the ability to reach out and connect to the community... It has brought a sense of belonging to the community and a sense of knowing them better. – Nqobile Dube

Learning that's interconnected: Going into the street and exploring with children has been a real lesson in how knowledge and understanding isn't siloed, but deeply interconnected. When children are investigating a drain, for example, they comment on the sound it makes when you drop rocks down its holes, its smell, its purpose (real or imagined), the patternwork on its cover. Each encounter feels like it could open out into multiple areas of enquiry – the life and systems beneath the street, a study of urban fabric and texture (and their function), an exploration of the real and imagined lives of each street.

For me personally, it has changed how I look at the streets. I wander, and don't take things at first glance. For the children, I think it has allowed them to more deeply explore and take in what they may notice while driving or walking, and to connect with the 'languages' of the street, of which there are many. It has made our daily routine into a vast opportunity of research and connection. – Jadejia Laurent

Learning to see with new eyes: The children have taken a particular interest in taken-for-granted spaces like the alleyway (or elements of the urban fabric that too often go unseen, like a drain, a hole in a pipe, a giant recycle bin). They're making the invisible more visible to all of us. As a result, we're all starting to pay more attention to the world around us, and show it some of the attention it shows us. As we go onto the street, we greet the Brixton tower, the passing cars, a street pole, a tree, as if they were old and familiar friends. And together it feels like we grow a wider sense of belonging, a greater sense of responsibility to the world around us.

The Open Streets investigation has begun to open my mind to the idea of community. It has helped me to view the people living and working around me as more than simply strangers, but as parts of our working world where things can get done. – Ben Bankart

Growing a wider sense of community: What has been humbling is to see the children's response to strangers or other users of the street, and how open they are. As if they see themselves as ambassadors of the street. As an example, one parent expressed a sense of surprise and pride when her daughter and a friend from the school encountered someone who weaves mats out of plastic bags on the streets of Melville (Maria, who ultimately ended up joining our Open Streets activations) – and how curious and generous and respectful they were in their questions and comments to her. This was just following their streets research with Philip Harrison and Alex Halligey, where they'd spent time interviewing different users of the street. Or how aware the children are becoming of which day is recycling day, and when they can expect the big recycling truck and the reclaimers at their homes and at the school. Or how comfortable they're becoming asking questions of people (especially those they encounter on the street), to better understand them and what they're doing.

It brought more of a family feel to the school, and gave families the opportunity to bond and express themselves more in a safe and loved environment. The comments and feedback really had a good effect on Mimosa staff, families and school. It brought great joy and a lot of energy... It opened many people's minds and way of thinking. It was a warm feeling, being at Open Streets, and I think the rest of Open Streets people can say the same [about it being a 'loving space']. – Mila Gould

Education as emancipation: As a learning community, Mimosa believes schools should do more than simply reflect society. We believe they should challenge and actively shape a kinder, more sustainable, more just world in which we can all live. However, believing this is one thing. Knowing how to act is another. The act of stepping out into the streets, of reclaiming streets (even if only for a day) for families and children, of making ourselves (and specifically children) more visible, of organising an event with community members from outside the school walls, of researching our neighbourhood with children – all of this felt like an important and powerful socio-political act, an act of advocacy.

I felt linked to our community, to the city, in a real way. Through our shared work and research, we began to see schools as part of a living system, with the power to change things. Especially given that Mimosa acted as a centre of Open Streets organisation and research (where the majority of meetings were held), I felt like a worthwhile insider, not a passionate outsider. I feel like this event staked our claim within the progressive (dare I say post-humanist) framework or movement. Where the child is seen as part of a web of relations. It's the same for family, the same for the school. We're not a school alone, or a family alone. We're all interlinked and interwoven. – Heather Barclay

The value of negotiation: Each time we stepped out onto the street, we were conscious of needing to negotiate freedom and boundaries with the children. How should we behave on the street? What's ok? What's not ok? How do we show care and respect for others – human and non-human – in the space? How far should we walk? This route or that route? How much do we trust ourselves and each other, and

how much do we need clear and established rules before entering the space? This kind of ongoing negotiation is empowering for children, as we take time to sit and discuss with them, and make agreements or rules together. As a result, they take a greater sense of ownership of their choices and their actions. It also pushes us teachers out of our comfort zones, and into a space of generative discomfort, where we're evolving our approach and image of children (and what they're capable of) as we work with them each day. It grew our relationships with families, as we began to test what risks we all feel comfortable taking – and slowly became less risk averse as a community.

It changed the children's thinking about streets (like roads are not only for cars). It helped me to have more ways of connecting with our roads (like to have fun on our streets). – Nonkululeko Hlomendini

What now? What next?

We're still weighing what all of this means. What are the implications for how we take our investigations forward into the second half of the year? What is the significance for us as classes and as a school? As teachers, we'll be considering these things over the June holidays, and then meeting on Monday 8 July (before term III begins) to discuss. Please, if you have any ideas, insights, thoughts or expertise you'd like to lend to these discussions and investigations, get in conversation!

7 June 2019

Notes and References

- ¹ Dahlberg, G. & Moss, P. (2005) *Ethics and politics in early childhood education*. New York: Routledge.
- ² Research committee meeting discussion, 23 May 2019.
- ³ Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. & Pence, A. (2013) *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Languages of evaluation (3rd ed.)*. New York: Routledge; also Burman, E. (2016) *Deconstructing developmental psychology*. New York: Routledge.
- ⁴ See Mould, O. (2014) Tactical Urbanism: The New Vernacular of the Creative City, *Geography Compass*, 8(8), pp. 529-539.
- ⁵ On video at <https://tedxcapetown.org/videos/dreaming-open-streets-marcela-guerrero-casas>.
- ⁶ One of the young cyclists was Jamie Ortiz who became a policy advisor to an important policy advisor to mayors, governors and presidents.
- ⁷ Montero, S. (2017) Worlding Bogotá's Ciclovía From Urban Experiment to International "Best Practice", *Latin American Perspectives*, 213, pp. 111-131.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ <http://www.viarecreactiva.org/>.
- ¹¹ <http://www.ciclocreoia.cl/>.
- ¹² www.lifegate.com/people/lifestyle/quito-ciclopaseo.
- ¹³ Torres, A., Sarmiento, O., Stauber, C. and Zarama R. (2013) The Ciclovía and Cicloruta Programs: Promising Interventions to Promote Physical Activity and Social Capital in Bogotá, Colombia, *The American Journal of Public Health*, 103, pp. 23-30.
- ¹⁴ Montes, F. et al. (2012) Do Health Benefits Outweigh the Costs of Mass Recreational Programs? An Economic Analysis of Four Ciclovía Programs, *Journal of Urban Health*, 89(1), pp. 153-170.
- ¹⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZL_cmS8BeU.
- ¹⁶ www.whatsupcifor.org/portfolio/car-free-day-jakarta.
- ¹⁷ https://can.org.nz/system/files/CHRISTCHURCH_OPEN_STREETS_2013_presentation_FINAL.pdf.
- ¹⁸ www.openstreetsto.org; www.carfreevancouver.org; www.openstreetscalgary.com; https://nacto.org/docs/usdg/smaller_open_streets_guide_final_print_alliance_biking_walking.pdf.
- ¹⁹ Wolf, S. et al. (2015) The Impact of a Temporary Recurrent Street Closure on Physical Activity in New York City, *Journal of Urban Health*, 89(1), pp. 153-170.
- ²⁰ www.atlantastreetalive.com.
- ²¹ www.facebook.com/VivaStreets/.
- ²² www.houstontx.gov/specialevents/sundaystreets.html.
- ²³ <http://www.abqiqlovia.org/>.
- ²⁴ <http://cycloviahawaii.org/>.
- ²⁵ <http://www.sundaystreetssf.com/>.
- ²⁶ www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/summerstreets/html/home/home.shtml.
- ²⁷ See for example: The Alliance for Biking and Walking. (2012) *The Open Streets Guide*. Online at https://nacto.org/docs/usdg/smaller_open_streets_guide_final_print_alliance_biking_walking.pdf.
- ²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MSsAG8DOzs>.
- ²⁹ Of the 122 Open Streets Programmes in the USA by 2016, 62% only hosted one event per year. See Hipp, A. et al (2017) Moving targets: Promoting physical activity in public spaces via open streets in the US, *Preventative Medicine*, 103, pp.15-20.
- ³⁰ <https://openstreetsproject.org/>.
- ³¹ Zieff, S. et al. (2015) Ciclovía initiatives: engaging communities, partners and policymakers along the route to success, *Journal of Public Health Management Practice*, 19(3), pp.74-92.
- ³² Dumbaugh, E. and Gattis, J. (2005) Safe Streets, Livable Streets, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(3), pp. 283-300.

-
- ³³ Meyer, M. et al. (2019) Systematic review of how Play Streets impact opportunities for active play, physical activity, neighborhoods, and communities, *BMC Public Health*, 19. Open access on <https://bmcpubhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-6609-4>.
- ³⁴ <https://worldstreets.wordpress.com/2015/08/28/a-short-history-of-car-free-days-origins-timeline-progress/>.
- ³⁵ See Blanco, J. (2013) Reclaim the Streets: From Local to Global Party Protest, *Revista de Estudios Globales y Arte Contemporáneo*, 1(1), pp. 171-180. Online at <http://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/REGAC/article/view/regac2013.1.15/7319>; Marion, H. (2002): Reclaim the Streets! Global Protests and Local Space. Online: http://republicart.net/disc/hybridresistance/hamm01_en.html.
- ³⁶ Luckman, S. (2001) What are they raving on about: Temporary Autonomous Zones and 'Reclaim the Streets', *Perfect Beat* 5 (2), pp. 49-68.
- ³⁷ Jordan, J. (2009) Reclaim the Streets, *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest*, pp. 1-6.
- ³⁸ For an account of one of events, the occupation of the M41 in the UK see Fourier, C. (2003). *Reclaim the Streets: an arrow of hope*. London: Verso. <http://artactivism.gn.apc.org/allpdfs/050-Reclaim%20the%20Streets.pdf>.
- ³⁹ See, for example, www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMSsAG8DOzs.
- ⁴⁰ Triulzi, A. (2002) African cities, historical memory and street buzz, in I. Chambers and L. Curti (Eds) *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, Routledge: London & New York, pp.78-91 [p.78].
- ⁴¹ See Open Streets Cape Town website on <https://openstreets.org.za/about-open-streets-cape-town>.
- ⁴² Partners have included the TUMI (Transformative Urban Mobility Initiative), WWF Nedbank Green Trust, Cape Town Central City Improvement District, the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town (UCT), and the UCT Centre for Transport Studies.
- ⁴³ See an interview with Marcela on the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town website at <https://scalabrini.org.za/i-am-a-capetonian-series-4-marcela-guerrero-casas/>.
- ⁴⁴ See a video with Marcela 'Dreaming of Open Streets' on <https://tedxcapetown.org/videos/dreaming-open-streets-marcela-guerrero-casas>.
- ⁴⁵ See the BBC Report, No traffic in Addis Ababa as Ethiopia marks Car Free Day, 3 February 2019, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47107327.
- ⁴⁶ See the report on the event on Urban Net - <https://www.urbanet.info/streets-cape-town/>.
- ⁴⁷ Written by Lisa Seftel for this report, 3 June 2019.
- ⁴⁸ Information in a powerpoint presentation provided by the Transportation Department, City of Johannesburg, 2019.
- ⁴⁹ Written by Lisa Seftel for this report, 3 June 2019.
- ⁵⁰ Bonilauri, S. and Filippini, T. (Eds.). (2000) *Reggio Tutta: A guide to the city by children*. Reggio Emilia, Italy: Reggio Children. pp. 138.
- ⁵¹ Loris Malaguzzi, as quoted in Thornton, L. & Brunton, P. (2015) *Understanding the Reggio Approach: Early Years Education in Practice (3rd ed.)*. New York: Routledge.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ <https://reggiocoza.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/tiziana-filippini-2017-visit-to-sa-insights-answers-advice.pdf>.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g65ZO7zbVKI&t=37s> for a short documentary on a Reggio Emilia piazza project.
- ⁵⁶ Browne, J. (2018) *Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance*. Edited by Tessa Browne and Des Hugo, designed by Kevin Shelley Davis. Johannesburg: Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance, pp. 48.
- ⁵⁷ All demographic data is drawn from the 2011 National Population Census using Quantec Easydata as a tool. Historical information is drawn from diverse sources with a major source being City of Johannesburg (2016) Knowledge Precinct.
- ⁵⁸ <https://reggiocoza.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/tiziana-filippini-2017-visit-to-sa-insights-answers-advice.pdf>.
- ⁵⁹ Written for this report, May 2019.
- ⁶⁰ Research committee meeting discussion, 23 May 2019.
- ⁶¹ Written for this report, May 2019.
- ⁶² See Mimosa atelierista, Judith Browne's report in Appendix B.
- ⁶³ Alessandro P. (2010) *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories: Form and meaning in oral history*. Boston: Kluwer.
- ⁶⁴ Research committee meeting discussion, 23 May 2019.

⁶⁵https://www.joburg.org.za/media_/Newsroom/Pages/2012%20Articles/Team-walks-the-talk-in-Streets-Alive-programme.aspx.

⁶⁶ These ideas draw on the writings of a number of feminist new materialist and posthumanist scholars, in particular: Barad, Bennet and Murriss. Barad, K. (2007) *Meeting the universe halfway: quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Bennett, J. (2009) *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Murriss, K. (2016) *The posthuman child: educational transformation through philosophy with picturebooks*. New York: Routledge.

⁶⁷ Loris Malaguzzi's introduction to the 1980 exhibition on the work done in the municipal preschools and infant-toddler centres in Reggio Emilia, titled "*When the Eye Jumps Over the Wall*".

With thanks to all organisations
involved in planning and realising Open
Streets Auckland Park, 7 April 2019



#ARTMYJOZI



the trinity session

