Trading tensions on Rockey/ Raleigh

A main focus of Yeoville Studio’s research both last year and this one has been on informal trading in Yeoville-Bellevue. Street trading has been a contentious issue for years, and the interventions thus far have not proved entirely successful. Recently, the situation has been heating up again with market traders saying street traders are taking their valuable customers away. The Metro Police continue with raids almost daily on the informal traders.

Yeoville Studio has long been involved in trying to understand the issues at stake. Findings from research done last year were published in Yeovue News on 12 April, in the hope of bringing residents and interested people a different way of looking at informal trade.

Abdul Abed, Claire Benit-Gbaffou and others met with market trader representatives, to discuss a workshop on how to make the market more attractive and encourage business there. This idea was met with enthusiasm, but market traders disagreed with the research findings. They attacked YS in a meeting with the City, saying that they were not even aware of the research, and that YS had ‘manipulated’ street traders in the process. However, several community leaders denied these allegations, and YS addressed a letter to market traders in response to their allegations.

Aly Karam and Claire Benit-Gbaffou also met Jason Ngobeni, Executive Director for the Department of Economic Development, to discuss partnerships between the School of Architecture and Planning and the Department, especially with YS. This went well and they are due to meet again soon with regards to findings on trading.

Growing Partnerships

Yeoville Studio’s activities have been noticed in many different places. The Wits Vice Chancellor will be presenting YS as a ‘key Wits community engagement’ at an international conference in Spain. In addition, we were nominated for the Halala Joburg Awards, ‘recognizing an innovative, inventive and inspirational impact’ to the city center.

Our current partner, the Goethe Institute, is interested in continuing its support for YS for the second half of 2011, and IFAS is investigating the possibility of financial support for an online archive for YS. We will be meeting this coming week.

We have also approached the French Institute’s Civil Society Development Fund for a grant that would be very helpful in keeping us going – keep your finger’s crossed!

Katsaura Presents in ‘Postgraduate Lunchbox Seminar’ Series

Obvious Katsaura, a PhD candidate at our School and active contributor to YS, was invited to present his findings thus far to staff, students and other interested people. Entitled ‘Socio-spatial politics of community-based policing in Johannesburg’, Katsaura presented on current methods of crime prevention the Yeoville Bellevue community is engaging in, amongst other relevant topics.

Accessing our research

All research done in the last 18 months is archived in the School of Architecture and Planning library and at the Yeoville Bellevue Community Development Trust office in Rockey/ Raleigh St. The resources are available for anyone interested, and is very useful for researchers just getting going in the area. Some of the material is also available on our main webpage and on the YS libguide, with thanks to Janie Johnson: go straight to www.bit.ly/yeolib. These online archives are in the process of being updated so look out for new resources up soon!

Yeoville Studio’s First Book(s)

YS will be producing a complementary pair of books at the end of this year, using research over the past 18 months as well as studies being done this year. The first book, ‘Yeoville Stories’, will be an exciting collection of narratives, photographs and the like, for the ‘mainstream’ audience. The second will be a more theoretical reflection on similar material, targeted at an academic readership.

Chapters include a diverse array of topics, from ‘love stories’ to the management of xenophobic discourses’ in the community.

The first meeting of 2011 was relaxed, with contributors able to share their ideas and work so far.

Please send all comments and news items to ssmayson@gmail.com/Ph 0711176522
Wits YS Coordinator Claire Benit-Gbaffou
Administrator Simon Sizwe Mayson
YSF Chair George Leborne
Yeoville Library, where Yeoville Studio has an office, was officially launched by the Mayor, the MMC for Community Development, and the Director for City Library Services, on 7 May 2011. Several community representatives participated in the event: our Yeoville Studio partner the Yeoville Stakeholders Forum (YSF), and the African Diaspora Forum (ADF). They mentioned Yeoville Studio as an example of the Library’s opening to the community and the outside world.

Yeoville Studio partners (Maurice Smithers, Claire Benit-Gbaffou, George Lebone) pose with the Mayor Amos Masondo, in front of the plaque commemorating the official launch of the Library.

Yeoville Studio at Library Launch

Wits Open Day Exhibition

Work produced by Yeoville Studio students and staff was exhibited at the Wits open day this Saturday. New flyers were also designed to interest prospective students.

The John Moffat building teemed with high school learners wanting to know more about Planning and Architecture, and Yeoville Studio proved an interesting way of showing students practical and useful research output, involving both planners and architects. As Fana Sihlongonyane said, Yeoville Studio is often one of the School’s most successful marketing tools…

Update on the trading tensions

Representatives from YS met informally with George Lebone of the Yeoville Stakeholders Forum to discuss events of relevance to the partnership. The flair-up with informal trading in the area was the main topic on the agenda, and different solutions were touched upon. Letters from YS to representatives of the Market Traders are to be delivered by George. These letters explain the YS research and are an attempt to gain a smooth working relationship again.

Election time

With the upcoming elections taking up the time of many of the more politically-involved, YS research has had to take a backseat to some extent. Those researchers involved in public meetings such as the Ward Meetings or Stakeholder’s Forum monthly meetings, have found them postponed until the election excitement has cooled.

New Publications

The African Cities Reader this year will publish ‘Yeoville Studio – negotiating the line between research and activism’, by Claire Benit-Gbaffou. The Reader is an annual publication edited by Edgar Pieterse and Ntone Edjabe. The online edition will be on display soon at www.africancitiesreader.org.za/ Also, the next Chimurenga Chronicle will be focusing on the May 2008 xenophobic attacks, and will feature a restaurant map from YS, back-dated to represent the establishments of the time. Contributions will also come from YS members part of the African Diaspora Forum: memories of the atmosphere at the time of the attacks. Check out www.chimurenga.co.za/

Yeoville Studio on display: A tour of the library was organized after the speeches, and Yeoville Studio latest outputs were on display in ‘the Aquarium’.

YouTube Trading Vid

A video on trading featuring various residents and Yeoville stakeholders has been edited and will be shown at a meeting with the City shortly. Check it out at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMyNX(Ja03U

SIMON SAYS: On Sat 14 May Yeoville will hold a debate with all ward councilor candidates from different parties. Come have your say at the Recreation Center at 14:00!
Exhibition with Goethe Institute

Last week Claire Benit-Gbaffou and Simon Mayson met with the Goethe Institute, one of Yeoville Studio’s valued partners. Seated in the courtyard at their attractive headquarters, we presented our plans for the year, focusing on the potential of a large-scale exhibition to showcase this and last year’s work. The idea was welcomed, and the Goethe Institute has agreed to fund this exhibition to the tune of R70 000!

Different ideas were discussed, one of them being to lay the exhibition out in different sites in Yeoville; to use the pilot trading stalls as exhibition spaces. This could allow the exhibition to be laid out like a story, and people to wander around taking in some sights as well as the work on display.

Goethe Institut advised us to draw on the skills of a professional curator. Any ideas are welcome for the exhibition layout and specific research. The exhibition will be taking place in late November.

Research Spotlight

Street Trading Unit Design

Inspired by projects such as http://www.dezeen.com/2009/03/06/spaza-de-move-on-by-doung-anwar-jahangeer/, students working with Kiki Doermann in the Architecture Program at Wits will be designing different prototypes of mobile street trading stalls. One of these ideas, we hope, will go right through to the construction phase and be on show at the YS year-end exhibition.

The Research Spotlight will be a regular feature in YS News so watch for it!

Africa Week off to a vibrant start

This Saturday saw the Yeoville Recreation Center rocking to some moving speeches and great music, as part of the ‘Migrant Rights are Human Rights’ day, hosted by the African Diaspora Forum (ADF). The band ‘Sigauque project’ from Mozambique ended off the day by getting people onto their feet and jiving even right up onto the stage. A full band played a mix of Afrojazz and more traditional beats.

Africa Week celebrations continue for the rest of this week – check out the program in the latest Yeovue News.

YS ‘getting around’ in Joburg

Yeoville Studio will be featured again, this time on the Joburg City news site. The team from BigMedia found out about us through this very newsletter and was keen to find out more about what projects are happening in our city. So – please keep forwarding this newsletter to raise even more awareness of our work! And a big thank you indeed to BigMedia for taking that initiative 😊

Elections Predicament

Last week’s elections produced some interesting results. According to the new ward allocations, Yeoville/ Bellevue falls over 4 wards. Wards 64 and 67 have elected ANC councilors, 66 and 73 elected DA. This poses quite a challenge for YS research: do we attend and present in all 4 wards?

I’m hoping it will give me a real feel for housing issues in Yeoville, and contribute to my own development just as much as my research.

I will be moving in on 1 June and hope to include something as part of an ‘Impressions Series’ every two weeks.

New ward allocations: It will serve us well to think about the complexities of the new boundaries as we proceed.

Yeoville Impressions Series

Space Shopping at ‘The Wall’

Much of Elections Day for me was spent at the Yeoville community noticeboard outside Shoprite – ‘The Wall’. I was shopping for a space in Yeoville, and there are many going. But there were loads of people to help me. An old Zimbabwean electrician, an young IT specialist, a Congolese assistant, Ghanaian aerobics instructor, South African student. All keen to help me even having to ask. And every place I saw had a different set of people, different dynamics. From one small family in a flat to four families in one room. The place I settled on for the moment is a decent-sized room in Rockview Heights up in Percy St. The block is really vibrant and decent public space means great communication potential with other residents.

Pic for the Week: His dancing efforts land him a big kiss from a Sigauque Project singer. The kids were by far the best dancers in the concert finale.

Please send all comments and news items to ssmayson@gmail.com/Ph 0711176522
Wits YS Coordinator Claire Benit-Gbaffou
Administrator Simon Sizwe Mayson
YSF Chair George Lebone
Trading Talks with the City

Aly Karam, Fana Sihlongonyane and Claire Benit-Gbaffou gave a presentation on behalf of Yeoville Studio to around 30 members of Managerial Support: Department of Economic Development at the City of Johannesburg. An attempt to consolidate links between the School or Architecture and Planning and the Dept, Fana presented on activities and research of relevance to the Dept. Claire followed with a presentation on YS findings on perceptions of street traders and issues of trading in the market.

The YS presentation raised a lot of interest in our work, and sparked some healthy debate. YS was called on to provide some more detailed recommendations, and a discussion workshop was proposed. YS was also invited to present and discuss their findings at the Informal Traders Forum.

Yeoville Studio is helping to put together a focus group which will possibly seek a mediator to ensure the process runs smoothly and democratically from here.

Housing Research Theme

Neil Klug’s second year Planning students have, over the past semester, been investigating four themes on land management in an area of Yeoville. Groups researched absentee landlords, expropriation, alternative land registration and land tenure possibilities, respectively. A number of findings were made, kickstarting Yeoville Studios Housing research theme for the year. In the eight blocks under examination, they found, for instance, over 20 activities contravening zoning laws.

Joubert Street Design Interventions for Trading: Abdul Aziz has produced a comprehensive document on the Joubert Park trading area and surrounds, with several possible design interventions. Check it out on YS’ new noticeboard.

Yeoville Impressions Series – Simon says

What’s Wrong with a Little Romanticism, Anyway?

So I’ve been living in Yeoville for three weeks now, and I’ve yet to experience the hostility, ‘crime and grime’ people warned me of. In fact, I cycle to Wits every day through Hillbrow along what some refer to as the ‘suicide strip’, and yet I feel safer than I did along the leafy (deserted) avenues of more affluent suburbia.

There are difficulties, like the electricity being cut for almost a week. But that found people hanging out around the entrance, watching the sun go down and exchanging theories and stories. The spaza shop owners stacked up on baked beans and bread, and we huddled around candles sharing out the cold food, forced to grow closer in our common adversity. We found our way home and up the iron gates of the Ponte tower.

I was amazed at how people were able to laugh off yet another difficulty. To still have energy to work, walk with a baby, food and laundry to friends houses to wash and cook, and come home and clean by candlelight. I experienced the importance of my own social networks that came into play to ensure life could go on, the need for a range of alternative resources to rely on.

Articles, News

The African Cities Reader is just released, features Claire Benit-Gbaffou’s exploration of the Yeoville Studio experience: “Negotiating the line between research and activism”. Check it out at http://bit.ly/yivscities. We were also featured on City of Joburg News. See it online at http://bit.ly/ysjoburg.

Halala, Halala!

The Halala Awards were given out last week in a prestigious ceremony hosted at the Johannesburg Development Agency headquarters in Newtown. An exhibition featured detail on all nominated organisations, including Yeoville Studio. Although we did not win the fiercely contested ‘Caring Joburg’ category, we were given a chance to ‘network’ and engage about what we do with the ‘movers and shakers’ of Joburg.

No, Not Another Meeting?

Those involved in YS have certainly had our fair share of meetings over the past two weeks. We’ve been rounding off YS teaching and research for the first semester as well as collaborating for the next, ensuring the wide range of topics remains consolidated and work productive. THANK YOU to everyone for the pulling through!!

Please send all comments and news items to ssmayson@gmail.com/Ph 0711176522
Wits YS Coordinator Claire Benit-Gbaffou
Administrator Simon Sizwe Mayson
YSF Chair George Lebone
The water tower at sunrise

Ponte’s guiding light: the only light when the power’s off

Hillbrow from Rockview Heights

Ponte tower from roof of Rockview

Photos by Simon Sizwe Mayson
YS continues work with traders

Through a series of workshops and other involvements, Yeoville Studio is continuing their work with street traders, as they took up YS offer for support (also proposed to Yeoville market traders). By making use of solutions-based research, we are looking at whether it’s possible to have street trading in Yeoville, in a way that accommodates other stakeholders as well as street traders.

Yeoville Studio held a workshop that was well attended by informal traders, matching them up with Architecture students to discuss possibilities for designing stalls that could be accommodated on the street. Both mobile and fixed options are being modeled. The winning designs will be built to-scale from the indicated materials, and exhibited as part of our upcoming exhibition in Yeoville.

Many thanks to Monica’s Place, based in the Yeoville Market, for providing catering, as well as the Yeoville Recreation Centre for hosting us. Thanks also to the Yeovue News for featuring our work in the last issue.

Memory and City Conference

An international conference titled ‘Memory and City’, was held last month at Wits and the University of Johannesburg. The French Institute of South Africa (IFAS) was the primary organiser, and Yeoville Studio featured as well, putting together the opening exhibition and cocktail event at the School of Architecture and Planning. Along with showcasing relevant Yeoville Studio work, a number of speakers and great food meant for an evening ‘to remember’.

Tours were organised in Yeoville on the last day, and YS’s tourist guides and maps were tested out for the first time. Local residents were invited as guides, and there was a very positive response about the brochures from conference delegates as well as the guides! Through our current partnerships, and upcoming work with the City of Joburg, we look forward to the guides being used to promote real ongoing tourism in Yeoville soon!

Conference Presentations, and Publications

Yeoville Studio has been spreading its wings in the last month. Claire Benit-Gbaffou presented Yeoville Studio’s work at the South African Cities Studies conference in Cape Town (7-9 Sept), while Simon Mayson presented work on housing in Yeoville at the Royal Town Planning Institute conference in Wales (DATE).

The African Cities Reader was launched at the Cape Town conference at the same time, and features YS’ work. Go to www.africancitiesreader.org.za to read it online…

Research continues

Research continues, structured around our 2011 themes of Housing, Trading and Community. Narratives of buildings in Yeoville are being collected by Planning and Politics students. Natal Street is having its turn of a comprehensive photo series ‘portrait’ by Architecture students. Stories on ‘Leaving Yeoville’ are bring collected, featuring the memories of those that have experienced Yeoville’s vibrancy through the last decades.

Further funding!

Several funders have come on board to fund our popular tourist brochures, including Trafalgar Properties, the Central Johannesburg Partnership, and hopefully the Region F of the City of Joburg. Many thanks to CJP Anne Steffny for her support in making this happen.

Guided tours of Yeoville: Five local guides used YS’ tourist guides to show delegates around

Upcoming Events

Upcoming events include a Housing Policy Roundtable series and final exhibition. Let me know if you have any ideas or are keen to get involved!

Please send all comments and news items to ssmayson@gmail.com/Ph 0711176522
Wits YS Coordinator Claire Benit-Gbaffou
Administrator Simon Sizwe Mayson
YSF Chair George Lebone
‘The End of a Project but the Beginning of a Process’

‘The end of a project but the beginning of a process ... Yeoville Studio has been key in crystallising this’. These were the words spoken by Edmund Elias of SANTRA, one of our partners, in a congratulatory speech for our final exhibition opening last week. The event showcased a selection of work that had been done over the course of 2011, and marked the official end to new research and the beginning to the ‘rounding off and consolidation’ process.

Conceptualised at the end of 2009, Yeoville Studio has been active for two years, producing an immense amount of research and practical output, holding workshops, exhibitions and public events, in its aims to produce material that is use-

Celebration, Food and Music

The YS Exhibition Opening wasn’t all about VIP speeches. Ama Afrika, a fantastic local band, kept people’s feet tapping. Kids and grandpas got up to dance, and even a puppet was seen showing off his moves.

A delectable array of dishes was served, tempting guests with aromas from all around Africa, cooked up by three different local caterers. The Ivorian Ginger Juice, for which YS events are starting to get famous for, was much enjoyed again: 16 litres was gulped down by guests within minutes!

But one of the best parts of the celebration was the interesting mix of academics, local activists, traders, residents and people just passing by. A mix that’s quite unusual, and as commented by many who attended, is something we should try for more often.

VIPs and Guests

Yeoville Studio was very lucky to have an extraordinary number of high profile guests attending the final exhibition. Several people spoke about the role of the YS initiative, and the many facets and experiences of Yeoville.

Joburg City Manager Trevor Fowler, who voted in the first democratic elections in Yeoville, and has had a relationship with the place for over 20 years, spoke about the value of participatory research in urban governance.

Wits Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof Yunus Ballim, spoke about the importance of initiatives such as YS in exposing students to social and urban realities, not only as an essential part of their professional training, but also as responsible citizens of this diverse country.

Rashid Seedat, Director of the Gauteng Planning Commission, reflected on the importance of local-scale research, often forgotten in policy-making.

And in one of the most enjoyed speeches, Tawana Kupe, as Wits Dean of Humanities and Professor of Media Studies, promised that this year’s project was just the beginning. Coming next would be Yeoville Studio, the TV series, and YS the movie!
So… What now?

Although we’re entering the ‘slowing down’ phase, it ain’t happening quite yet! We already have loads of activities planned as part of the process, including:

• The last Housing policy ‘Rounding up the Roundtable’ session at Wits and a feedback session presenting findings to Yeoville stakeholders (date to be announced)
• A series of booklets on rights and responsibilities of tenants, landlords and owners based on housing roundtable ‘findings’
• Archiving of all research and upgrading of the website
• Two books showcasing YS research! Due to be released end 2012

Band keeps the vibe going
Sikhumbuzo’s marimba outfit brought out a fantastic set of beats to keep guests vibing