

What is Yeoville Studio?
Yeoville Studio, is a partnership between the Wits School of Architecture and Planning and the Yeoville Stakeholder Forum (YSF), its supporting organisation Yeoville Bellevue Community Development Trust (YBCDT), and the French Institute in South Africa (IFAS).

The studio is located within the Wits School of Architecture and Planning – under the auspices of the Centre for Urbanism and Built Environment Studies (CUBES).

Yeoville Studio has been running since October 2009. It was launched in Yeoville on the 28 February 2010, with a series of workshops around four major themes: Urban Stories, African Diversity, Public Space and Housing.

Yeoville Studio aims to provide practical research that focuses on three aspects of sustainable livelihoods: street-trading, community restaurants and affordable housing in the area of Greater Yeoville (comprising the suburbs of Yeoville, Bellevue and Bellevue East), Johannesburg.

The objective of Yeoville Studio is to work closely with organisations in Yeoville to produce relevant and locally-adapted research; and to disseminate findings to Yeoville residents in a way that enables them to use it for advocacy and sustainable development. The project also entails training Architecture and Planning students to work with communities and to locate their professional practice in real-life situations.

Learning from Yeoville: The Urban Infill Project
The design process was based on students' ability to see, read and record urban complexities and then to interpret those understandings into housing prototypes, within the larger concept of 'contextual urbanism.'

Therefore the project unfolded in 3 stages:

Stage 1 focused on fieldwork-based research in and about Yeoville along 6 different themes related to housing: 1) Urban Histories; 2) Housing Types; 3) Subdivision of Houses or Flats; 4) Renting and Subletting; 5) Vacant Lots and Abandoned Buildings; and 6) Other Uses of Residential buildings.

Stage 2 focused on the development and design of new models for urban living in Yeoville, based on findings in stage 1 and previous case studies.

Stage 3: The five most promising approaches were selected and entered for the national SHIFT housing competition. This will hopefully allow these ideas to be given greater visibility in policy circles.

These housing stories - My place in Yeoville - were collected through a housing workshop involving Yeoville residents and students and staff of the Wits School of Architecture and Planning, held at St Aidans Church, on 29th March, 2010.

The objective of the workshop was to understand how Yeovillites live - in order to propose spaces that can accommodate both private and community concerns. It was very important to understand some of the challenges and opportunities met by residents in their diversity and complexity.

Residents were asked to explain their housing conditions through conversations with students and staff. They were also invited to draw the places in which they have lived in Yeoville, as well as the places they might like to live in the future.

Using the basic equipment of an architect: a pencil, an eraser, a ruler, paper - as well as beds and mattresses in the form of paper rectangles - residents described the layout of their homes. The students then took the drawings and converted them into architectural conventions. Residents were also given a disposable camera and asked to take photos of their space.

Yeoville Studio's dreams on housing
All experts, activists, policy makers and municipal officials agree that there is a gap in current housing policy as far as inner city housing is concerned. The absence of an inner city housing strategy that is able to provide households with affordable housing - while maintaining a balance between different income levels - leads to serious housing and urban challenges: over-crowding, slum-lording, living with limited or no access to basic services and urban decay.

As much as these dynamics need to be criticised and dealt with, they have been the only means to provide accommodation and access to jobs and livelihoods opportunities, to low-income and marginalized people in the central locations of the City.

Our aim is to imagine and develop - together with residents and local activists - proposals on various layers of housing design and policy. We hope that these proposals can be used for possible debate and implementation and thus positively impact on the future lives and livelihoods of Yeoville residents.

The re-design of an existing neighbourhood in a prime location next to the city centre could become a new South African prototype: multicultural and inclusive, dense, green, and respectful of its citizens - a neighbourhood that is fair and affordable.

This exhibition is the first step on that path.

photograph below:
Where the search for accommodation often starts: Notice board with private rental ads in Yeoville, at Checkers supermarket, Raleigh Street cnr Bedford. The cars parked in front of the wall are informal moving companies and ready to transport any belongings of residents changing places.

...to understand how Yeovillites live - in order to propose spaces that can accommodate both private and community concerns...



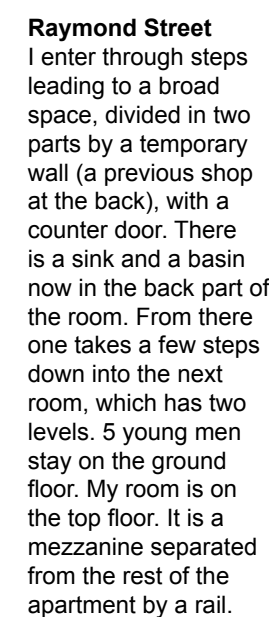
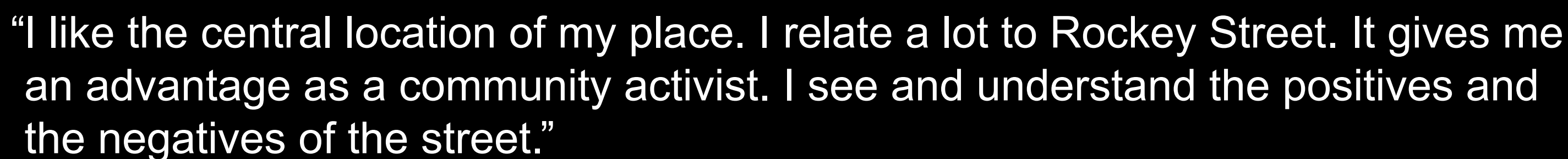
The dream: the re-design of an existing neighbourhood in a prime location next to the city centre to become a new South African prototype: multicultural and inclusive, dense, green, and respectful of its citizens ...fair and affordable...



Housing workshop at St Aidans Church. Yeoville residents draw their places - past, present and future - with Wits architecture students.



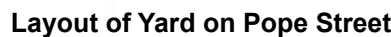
**SCHOOL
OF ARCHITECTURE
& PLANNING**



Dis/likes about his place



The worst place I lived was on Harley Street. There were 21 people in the main house and we paid £1300 per room to the landlord. He was a nice man, but it was a very old house with wooden floors – nobody took care of the building. The kitchen was the most horrible place. The floor had holes and there was an old gas stove, there were big rats there. I used to cook in my room. I would only use the kitchen to wash my dishes.

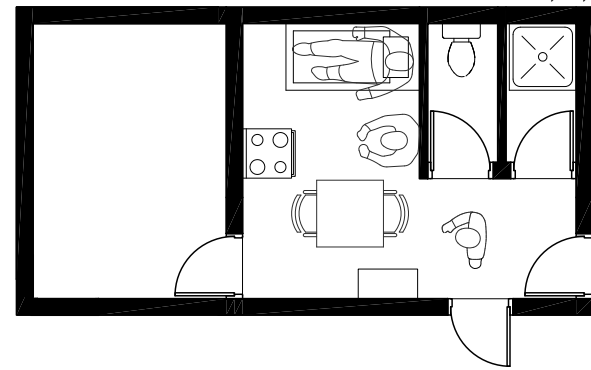
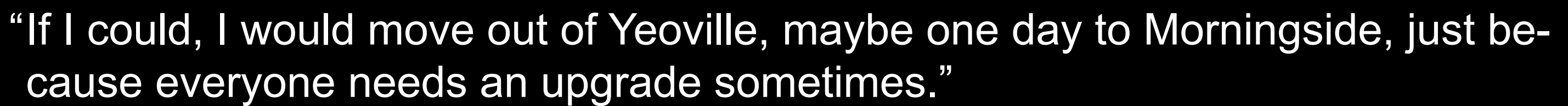


1. Jackie's Cottage (1)
2. A man from Ghana, his South African wife and their 3 children. Moved in April 2007, moved out June 2008 due to disagreements with owner. (5)
3. Jackie's niece and her 2 children moved in, in 2007, moved out 2008 due to disagreement with landlord. (3)
4. Old Zimbabwean Lady moved in later
5. A woman from Zimbabwe, her Nigerian husband and their baby. Moved in 2007, moved out 5 months later due to disagreements with landlord.



I live in a small cottage at the back of the plot with my son. My niece and children lived in an adjacent cottage. The main house has 3 bedrooms, which include 2 master bedrooms with separate bathroom attached and one guest room. There are 4 cottages around the main house (3 in the back, one in the front). At one time, a total of 24 people lived on the property.

Since conducting this interview, Jackie has moved out of the cottage.



Regent Street
I now live in the
backstage dressing
rooms for the stage
at St Aidan's Church.
I pay no rent, and
no rates. I have hot
water all the time. Two
other adults share the
cottage. They have to
go through our room
to go to theirs. I share
my bedroom with a
friend who works with
me. The four of us share
the bathroom and
kitchen.

Age	30
Place of Birth	Nyanga, Zimbabwe
Occupation	Performance Artist
Rent	Care-taking on church grounds in exchange for room and board
People/ Unit	4 (2 in his bedroom)
Bio	<p>I fled Zimbabwe and moved to South Africa when I was 20.</p> <p>I was an undocumented immigrant between 2000 and 2006. I spent those years running away from the police until I applied for political asylum.</p> <p>I now teach acting to children in local schools and run drama workshops with them.</p>
Dis/Likes about his place	<p>Living here isn't so bad. All the areas I need to access (work, groceries, entertainment, and friends) are in walking distance.</p> <p>I like to relax with my friends at the Rasta House. But I hate that there is never any privacy, and that everything is all in the same room.</p> <p>I don't like that people have to go through my room to go to theirs, or to go to the bathroom.</p> <p>I would like not to have to share my space with anyone unless I chose to.</p> <p>I would like a separate kitchen, bathroom, lounge and bedrooms. These are simple needs that I feel I can achieve in the future.</p>

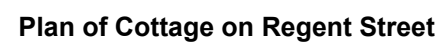




This storeroom was in the basement of a 3 storey apartment building. We were let in by a security guard, a friend. I shared this room and 1 bed with 4 other people: each night some of us had to sleep on the floor. There was no window; the plumbing inside the room was noisy and sometimes leaked.



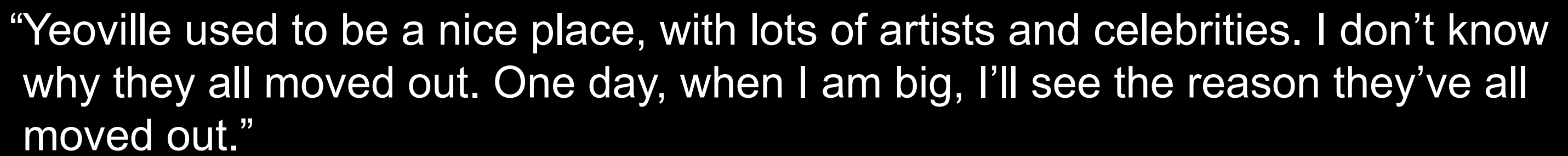
There was a single plug and no bathroom nor kitchen. The walls were turning white – like the paint is coming off. The room smelled. I was waking up finding flu every day. It was for free, but I was so pleased to move out of this house.



I share a room with a friend who works with me on the church grounds. There are another two adults with us. We share the bathroom.

as my daughter. But I have no emotional attachment to Yeoville and could move anywhere else. If I could, I would move to Sandton.

32
Kwazulu-Natal
Pre -school assistant and church gardener
Low
4 (2 in his bedroom). My room-mate is a keyboardist in the church, so he doesn't pay.
I moved to Johannesburg to find work.
After 2 years in Yeoville, I went to Katlehong where my family stays, and remained in a shack which was my worst housing experience.
I moved back to Yeoville, and requested the room for myself from the church. As they were looking for a gardener I took over the job.
I like Yeoville because it's a quiet place, unlike Hillbrow. At least we have police volunteers – they're cool people.
If they can open the Recreational center, everything will be cool. We want Yeoville to be a place for children to showcase their true talent.
I like that my current place has a lot of windows and light, and that I can walk everywhere in Yeoville.
I don't mind sharing the kitchen but would like my own bedroom and bathroom.
In my dream house, I would like a big, up-market house with large rooms, and space to entertain guests.
I don't like the sports bars on Rocky Street. They're dealing with drugs to corrupt people – even children.



Plan of Flat on St. George

Plan of Flat on Kenmere Street

►►► Housing Trajectory

Pope Street
It is a cottage at the back of a plot. The two adults and the baby sleep together in the bed, which is divided from the rest of the cottage by the wardrobe and TV stand. The two girls sleep together on the sleeper couch, the two boys sleep on the carpet beside the sleeper couch. During the day the lounge acts as a recording studio.

When I left the Eastern Cape in 1997, Yeoville was the only choice for me, as my brother was the only family who could support me. After my brother made it big as a guitarist, he moved to Fourways. I stayed in Yeoville, but I could not settle in one place because of my irregular income as a musician. In the thirteen years I have lived in Yeoville, I have stayed in twelve different places.

However with my current fiancé, a music producer, my life has become far more settled with the additional income. I now live with him, our 4 month-old baby, my son and daughter from a

previous relationship, and my late sister's son and daughter.

I also live with my friend (“auntie”) who is going through a personal crisis. There are 8 people living currently in the cottage.

We pay R2000 per month for rent to the owner of the house. Unfortunately, the home owner passed away last year, and there are issues about who should collect the rent.

We might need to leave soon.

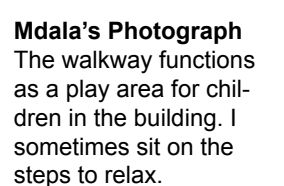


Ndithini's Photograph

Age
Place of Birth
Occupation
Rent
People/ Unit
Bio


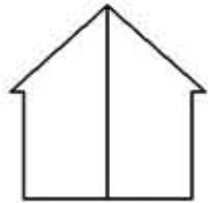





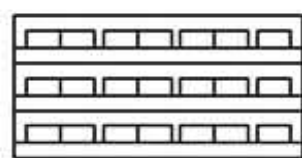
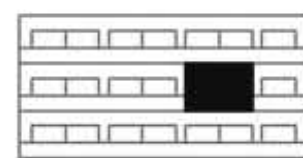


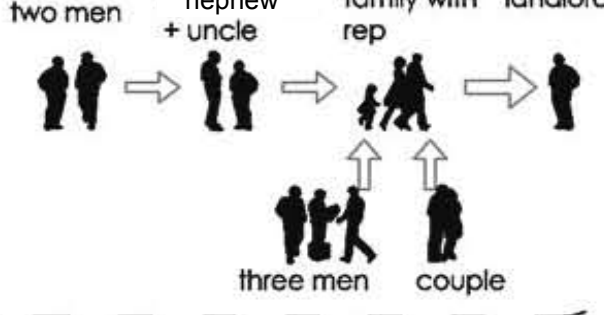

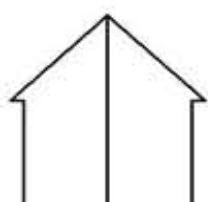



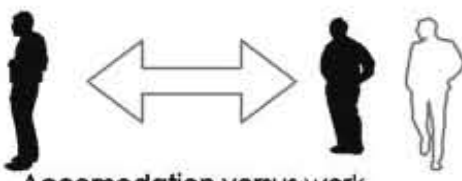

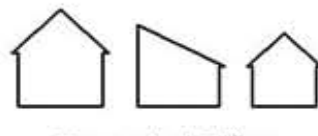





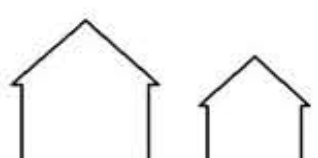





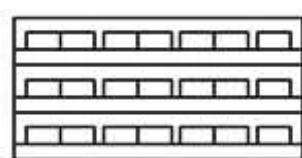
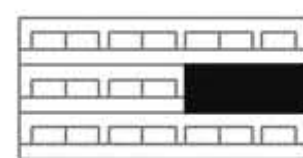


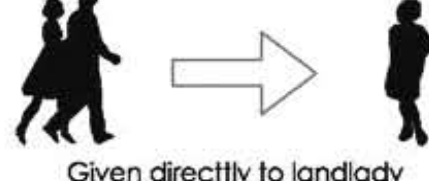

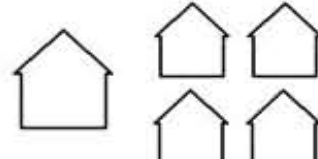
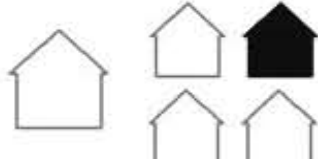
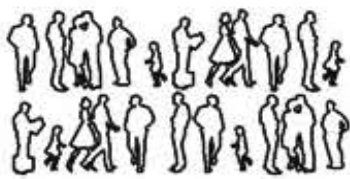
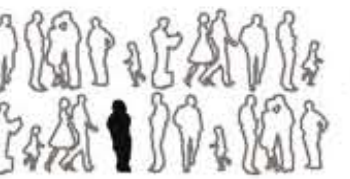
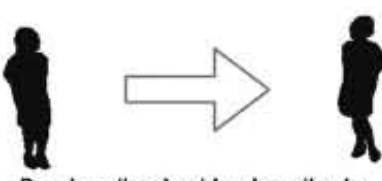
32
Eastern Cape
Musician
R2000
One bedroom backyard cottage, 8 people (extended family and friend)
I was born and grew up in the Eastern Cape. I came to Yeoville in 1997. I work as a freelance saxophonist, recording music albums from our home music studio setup.
I also manage a small band- organizing their gigs.
I like the fact that Yeoville is in the center of Johannesburg. If I am wanted somewhere, it is easy for me to go.
The problem is that Yeoville is not safe. It is so packed with clubs. I would not want my children to grow up here.
In my dream house, I need privacy in my bedroom, but also lots of space for the family, like an open kitchen and a lounge, a verandah with a braai place, a vegetable garden. I would like to own my house, as a way of saving and investment.

Since concluding this interview, Ndithini has moved out of the cottage.



*name has been changed

Rent/Space Processes

1		Building Type 	Space Rented  Lounge + entrance of semi	Number of People in Flat/Plot 	Number of People in Room 	Rent Paid R500	Overall Rent Paid R500	Rental Process  Deducted from salary
2		Building Type 	Space Rented  Two bedroom flat	Number of People in Flat/Plot 	Number of People in Room 	Rent Paid R1500	Overall Rent Paid +/- R6000	Rental Process  two men → nephew + uncle → family with rep → landlord three men → couple
3		Building Type 	Space Rented  Lounge + entrance of semi	Number of People in Flat/Plot 	Number of People in Room 	Rent Paid FREE	Overall Rent Paid R500	Rental Process  Accommodation versus work
4		Building Type  Converted Office	Space Rented  The mezzanine	Number of People in Flat/Plot 	Number of People in Room 	Rent Paid FREE	Overall Rent Paid FREE	Rental Process  Accommodation versus work
5		Building Type 	Space Rented  The entire cottage	Number of People in Flat/Plot 	Number of People in Room 	Rent Paid R2000	Overall Rent Paid	Rental Process  Wife 1 gets the rent Wife 2 wants the rent and evicts 10 tenants Owner died
6		Building Type 	Space Rented  Three bedroom flat	Number of People in Flat/Plot 	Number of People in Room 	Rent Paid R3500- R4000	Overall Rent Paid R3500- R4000	Rental Process  Given directly to landlady
7		Building Type 	Space Rented  One roomed cottage	Number of People in Flat/Plot 	Number of People in Room 	Rent Paid R1500	Overall Rent Paid R11 500	Rental Process  Rent collected by landlady

Mobility is high in Yeoville - one is able to find accommodation for free - at least for some time. Participants of this workshop moved on average, once a year, but sometimes stayed only a few months in one place.

Rent levels can be low – between R500 and R1500 on average, if one is willing to accept difficult housing conditions, This level of affordability has not yet been provided by municipal or public housing that in general, aims at rents of about or above R1000. On the other hand, ‘slum-lording’ constitutes the private provision of affordable rent (R500-R1000) in Yeoville. This often takes the form of overcrowded buildings. (see Rent/ Space Processes diagram)

Therefore, although planning, building, providing and managing decent housing with shared facilities, at an affordable price, has started in some pilot projects in Johannesburg, they remain exceptional cases.

In Yeoville you can find places for free, for some time. It helps in periods of crisis.
Yeoville provides many temporary housing solutions to new arrivals to the City, or to people who might be going through a personal crisis (family, health or job), at least until he/she finds his/her ground. Therefore, one can often rely on dense charity and social networks that provide accommodation, even if the standards of such accommodation might be low.

Moving is often a response to a bad relationship between the landlord and tenant. Nevertheless, tenants can find alternative accommodation fairly quickly. However, this frequent relocation has its costs: it constrains the consolidation of tenants’ rights.
The rights and duties of both landlords and tenants are unregulated and the lease agreements are informal. Therefore, this relationship between tenant and landlord tends to depend on personalities - which often leads to the abuse of rights.

Although landlords in Yeoville might provide affordable housing options for such a mobile population –landlords may also exercise economic exploitation over tenants, by charging exorbitant rents for small, unsafe, and overcrowded accommodation e.g. A two bedroom flat that is rented out to 10 adults and 2 children, for a total of R6000/month; or a house with 4 rooms rented to several families and individuals that brings an overall rental income of R11.500.

Landlords are able to impose a range of obligations on tenants: vacating their homes after only a few days’ notice; prohibiting the use of a heater in the middle of winter and requesting unreasonable domestic chores from tenants.

However, the fact that other housing solutions are so readily available in Yeoville makes moving out an easier response to these abuses - rather than fighting for rights such as Notice for Eviction or in other cases Reasonable Repartition for Chores.

A diverse, affordable rental system is important – it is highly adaptable to constant changes in family size and revenue flow.
Moving allows for changes in family size, structure and revenue, in a time when waged labour is increasingly uncommon and economic cycles condition income flow. Renting also provides highly flexible housing solutions to non-waged workers, in a context where the rental offer is wide.

Micro-Management of Overcrowding
Residents design ‘solutions’ to share spaces with others on a daily basis.

However, this is not without negotiation and tensions. Private spaces (bedroom or bathroom) become collective spaces and collective spaces (living rooms, corridors, and staircases) are appropriated for private use.

Furthermore, loss of personal belongings, fear for personal

safety, the lack of privacy, noise, poor management of the environment and the impossibility of having guests or visitors, are some of the consequences of overcrowding. Therefore, most residents long for privacy, ‘my own bedroom’, and rooms with designated and separate functions.

‘Everyone needs an upgrade sometime’
Most participants have improved their housing conditions over time. Nevertheless, crises do alter this path.

The bottom end of the housing trajectory would consist of sleeping in spaces not meant and not equipped for residential use (basement storeroom, the street, on the floor etc); or sharing spaces to such a degree that there is no room for privacy nor easy access to basic amenities.

In some cases, core families stabilize over time and residents tend to desire more privacy i.e. Sharing with relatives or friends instead of complete strangers; or finding a place suited for a nuclear family an extended family.

The Rent/ Space Processes diagram is a graphical representation of these findings and raise questions for further investigation:

- How can we create models of inner city housing that are sustainable, flexible and respectful of tenant’s rights?
- What mechanisms are required for a housing system that is both flexible and affordable in the inner city?
- What are the challenges faced by landlords and tenants, in the management and maintenance of buildings?
- Can and should the renting process be regulated?
- What are the most appropriate building types and spaces to accommodate the needs and interests of the city, land lords and tenants?

This collection of housing stories is not representative of the whole of Yeoville. Nevertheless they do open up considerations of how Yeoville could be understood as a model for affordable rental housing.

In Yeoville you can find places for free, for some time. It helps in periods of crisis.



A diverse, affordable rental system is important – it is highly adaptable to constant changes in family size and revenue flow.

Credits
Studio Yeoville, Director
Claire Benit-Gbaffou
Workshop Participants
George Lebone
Ndithini Mbali
Jephias Ndlovu
Simba Sagide
Mdala Skhula
Jackie
Lerato Maduna
Guides
Maurice Smithers
Willy Claude Mbelege Hebandjoko
Stanley Chanda
Joseph Lebone

Compiling and Graphically Translating the Information
Bronwyn Allcock
Sarah de Villiers
Aaron Factor
Antonella Giuricich
Andrew Harrison
Megan Sharland
Maria Manala
Keitsumetse Matsipe
Lebogang Modikoane
Mfanelo Khosa
Anqi Lew
Graphic Production and Presentation
Sergio Duarte
Kay Hausler

Graphic Design
Thomas Moldovanos
Kirsten Doermann
Workshop Facilitators
Kirsten Doermann
Mpho Matsipa
Editorial Board
Claire Benit-Gbaffou, Kirsten Doermann and Mpho Matsipa
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