

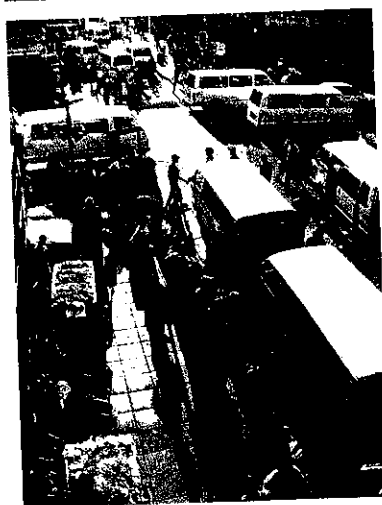
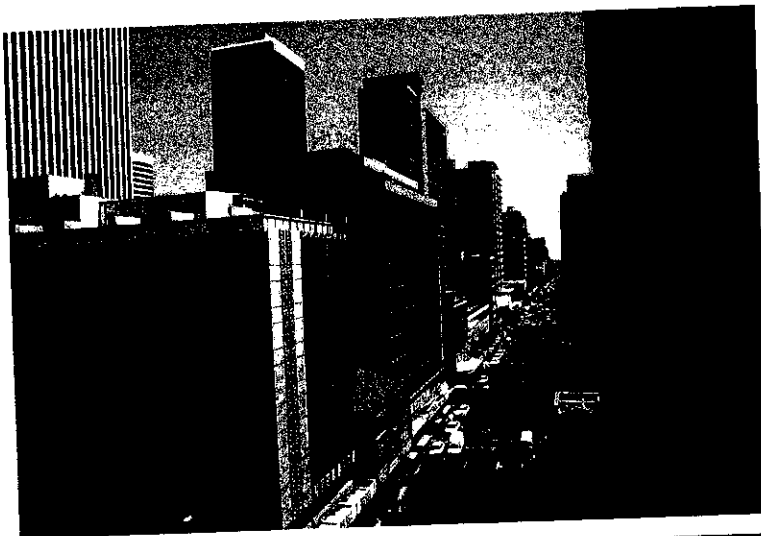
CASCO LAND

INTERVENTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE

DRILL HALL JOHANNESBURG SOUTH AFRICA

CASCOLAND JOBURG 2007

CASCOLAND, AMSTERDAM / EPISODE PUBLISHERS, ROTTERDAM 2008



PREFACE JOUBERT PARK PROJECT

The realization of the second South African edition of the Cascoland project in February and March 2007 at the Drill Hall took place in the context of a unique set of stresses – and attendant opportunities – generated by the nature of the location.

Six months prior to the Joubert Park Project hosting the Cascoland Project from its base at the Drill Hall, a soldier from the Rand Light Infantry – one of the four anchor tenants at the precinct – was shot on his way to work. For the military, this represented the last straw, bringing their general disgruntlement with the noise and messiness of the location into sharp focus, and within weeks they had evacuated the precinct.

Redeveloped as a multi-use heritage site in the wake of two catastrophic fires borne out of the implosion of the inner city in the late 1980s and 1990s, the Drill Hall has been a curious and disassociated public space – a beautifully designed oasis located in the midst of one of the most chaotic and unmanageable corners of the inner city of Johannesburg. The presence of the military at the site had marked it as a place decidedly not for public consumption in an area where little love is lost between an itinerant, vulnerable and largely immigrant population, and the emblems and instruments of law and state power. As a result, the departure of the military both created new opportunities for collaboration and engagement with local publics, as well as re-emphasising the precariousness and risk involved in working in this location. Within weeks of the departure of the military, the east end of the precinct had begun to be inhabited by a motley assortment of squatters,

drug dealers and their clients, and informal business from the surrounding area had begun to claim parts of the space.

This shift in the dynamics of the site also provided something of a tabula rasa dimension for the Cascoland project, an opportunity to rethink the spatial dynamics of the site, and to rethink how the site might interact with the complex social, cultural and economic fabric of the Joubert Park area. This has been a key ambition of the Joubert Park Project's since our occupation of the space in 2004 at the invitation of the Johannesburg Development Agency, and we were very excited at the prospect of hosting a project whose purposes were centrally located within this ambition. The departure of the military also created another important opportunity – for the out-of-town participants to take up residence in the vacated military barracks, a situation which gave rise to unexpected levels of intimacy between the project context and the project participants.

Thus were the conditions established for an extra-ordinarily intensive working engagement between a group of local and international artists, designers and architects over a six-week laboratory period in which public art projects were conceptualised and realized at breakneck pace out of interactions and negotiations between the 'imported' creatives and local people. The formulation of these projects was informed by two complementary research processes looking both inward and outward from the site. The local urban design-architectural practice sharpCITY undertook a detailed survey and review of the structural potentials embedded in the site, which provided an analytic platform for artists to conceptualize with and against. Ismael Farouk convened a team of local 'urban geographers' around the identification and mining of the social, cultural and economic networks active in the area. This led to the development of a textured, multi-dimensional map of the area, and a set of resources and local

contacts that the project could draw on, both on a practical and conceptual level. This base of information was further enriched through an intensive engagement between artists and the local community during the 'laboratory' phase of the project. An amazing variety of projects were generated out of this process, with a mix of fugitive interventions, and those that have involved more permanent alteration and addition to the physical ordering of the space: both species of project have provided the JPP with a rich set of propositions and possibilities for the future development of programming at the site.

The project more than achieved the objectives that had been set for it: it resulted in a massive influx of inner city audiences to the Drill Hall, comprised of different ages, nationality and economic and social position, responsive to a variety of unusual experiences and entertainments. From a more qualitative perspective, the generative and defamiliarising effects of creative work were everywhere apparent, and provided a basis for audiences and participants to recast their location in and experience of the inner city. The project also involved the effective rebranding of the Drill Hall as a safe space for the entertainment and exercise of the imagination for local people, as well as for 'outsiders' (mainly from the north of Johannesburg), people normally hesitant to venture anywhere near this part of Johannesburg. These achievements are to a significant degree testimony to the skilled artistic direction and management of a project team led with determination and quiet boldness by Fiona de Bell, as well as the dazzling energy of Vincent Truter, who drove the partnership between the project and a group of students from the VEGA, the Brand Communications School. Aside from anything else, the project has been a mind-expanding experience in the management of complexity – rich material for a proper case study in this regard.

There are inevitably some conundrums embedded in a project of this nature. In the minds of many the Cascoland project became an emblem of the possibilities for renewal and development in the chaotic east side of the inner city, just as the fires at the Drill Hall in 1999 and 2001 became an emblem of its neglect and decay. The private and public sector are on the brink of radically reshaping the Joubert Park area through a range of instruments such as the recently launched Mayoral Charter for the Inner City, the high speed Gautrain and the 2010 Soccer World Cup. Entire blocks of buildings in the Joubert Park area and surrounds are currently being bought up and property prices in a previously untouchable area are on a rapid incline. While an active participant in this process of change, the JPP – through initiatives like Cascoland – has sought to do so in a way that seeks to engage rather than bulldoze the creative and cultural resources that inhere in the spaces, buildings and people of the Joubert Park of today.

JOSEPH GAYLARD & DOROTHEE KREUTZFELD: JOUBERT PARK, 2007

PREFACE CASCOLAND

Cascoland is a multidisciplinary public art project involving international artists, architects, designers and local talent and initiatives as well as urban communities and stakeholders.

Cascoland is exploring a series of interventions in public space to create awareness of urban issues, mobility and the use of public space in a positive and creative framework. Through artistic interventions, the construction of architectural objects and audience participation public space is temporarily intensively activated. Audiences, artists, residents, initiatives and organizations are stimulated to participate in the shaping of their public space, making it more accessible and a reflection of the identity of its users.

During a six week laboratory-phase they are mobilized to become active participants in the processes initiated by the artists, to develop events and artistic interventions or assist in projects as trainees. Eventually this culminates in a ten day presentation/festival in public space.

In the process individuals, communities and organizations are given the chance to become part of an international collaboration, which can act as an incentive to launch and continue ongoing projects after Cascoland is over. An important part of Cascoland is the participation of design students. We believe that, starting in education, active participation and engagement in community life and public spaces forms the basis of innovative and relevant design solutions. From the participation of Vega students in Johannesburg valuable lessons were learned regarding design education.

The first edition in South Africa, Cascoland eNewXds2006, took place between 1 February and 12 March 2006 in the township of New Crossroads, Cape Town. For a second edition,

Cascoland Joburg 2007, Cascoland was invited by Joubert Park Project from Johannesburg for an installation of the project at the Drill Hall in the downtown/Joubert Park area between 1 February and 18 March 2007.

Both projects received wide acclaim and were praised for their pragmatic and resourceful approach, culminating in a range of projects and activities that changed the perception of the use of public spaces in the targeted areas.

Although only of a temporary nature, Cascoland aims to inspire individuals and communities, unleashing a dynamic creative process within a period of only two months.

We want to thank Public Eye's Roger van Wyk, Mandlovu Development Institute's Josette Cole and the community of New Crossroads for their collaboration in realizing Cascoland eNewXds 2006. Secondly we want to thank Dorothee Kreutzfeldt, Bie Venter and Joseph Gaylard from the Joubert Park Project and Vincent Truter from Vega the Brand Communication School for their assistance in adapting the Cascoland concept to the South African context. Their confidence and support were crucial in the realization of Cascoland Joburg 2007.

Thanks also to our sponsors, for this project and in the past, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Mondriaan Foundation, the Netherlands Architecture Fund, FondsBKVB, Stichting Doen, NCCO, National Lottery, BASA, National Arts Council and AdvTech.

Last but not least we want to thank all those not mentioned in this book, all the young creatives, guides, runners, caterers, handymen, drivers, volunteers and members of the inner city community of Johannesburg, without whose help this project could never have been realized. You know who you are!

RESEARCH & INFORMATION: FIONA DE BELL, VINCENT TRUTER, JOSEPH GAYLARD, DOROTHEE KREUTZFELD

OBJECTIVES

Cascoland Joburg 2007

Key aim of Cascoland Joburg 2007 is to activate the public function of the Drill Hall and the adjoining Quartz Street through audience-participation and – mobilization. What does this mean?

Public space

To activate the public function of the Drill Hall precinct we need to look at what makes a space public.

Most important is its accessibility – free access for everyone – and its usability. Notions of what public space is vary from the physical place where people meet and interact to the digital virtual places, where people also meet and interact. Parameters are the same, accessibility with disregard of social class, ethnicity or age and usability.

For a large part authorities and planners 'design' public space in an attempt to 'direct' the use of spaces, possibly out of a desire to control that use.

Mismanagement, misinterpretation of data and lack of maintenance can render a space 'useless'.

In an attempt to activate the public function of a space through artistic interventions it can be necessary to interfere with the planned design of a public space or challenge the objectives of authorities.

Mobilization

'...Mobilization is the 'stimulation of a conscious experience by the audience', in which the final artwork is not merely an object, but a 'changed perception of the environment'.

Mobilization literally means to motion, to motivate people to actively participate in the process the artist has initiated.

It is different from communication, the aim of all art. It is also different from participation, in which the audience is expected to assist in the artists project.' (Boiten, 2001:43)

COMMUNICATION	ARTIST - AUDIENCE
	ONE WAY
PARTICIPATION	ARTIST - ARTWORK - AUDIENCE
	TWO WAY
MOBILIZATION	ARTIST - AUDIENCE - ARTWORK
	ONE WAY

'Because public art is rooted in the sensory perception of every day life, opportunities are provided to revive the need for human contact, stranded in informal communication-etiquette and virtual networks' (Boiten, 2001: 198, 199)

According to Boiten a new engagement is emerging to activate public space, not only through entering a dialogue, but to stimulate this within the audience. In her view this is the essence of the artist as mobilizer.

Within Cascoland Joburg 2007 audiences were mobilized to become involved through

- Active participation in the processes initiated by the artists. Once initiated, participants are stimulated to take on the process.
- Workshops as a means to transfer and exchange skills and experiences. Workshops including 'Recycling', 'Animation film making' and other creative skills were hosted by the artists and were free to enter.
- Development of events by existing initiatives. Cascoland provides a platform for initiatives to present themselves to a wider audience.
- Development of artistic interventions by local artists in collaboration with Cascoland artists. Local creatives are invited to initiate their own interventions within Cascoland.
- Training by assisting in the development of an artistic intervention by a Cascoland artist. By assisting logistically, creatively and productionwise, trainees are becoming part of an international collaboration, which can act as an incentive to launch and continue ongoing projects after Cascoland is over.

Public art and audience participation

Public art is an important tool in activating and developing public space.

In the kind of public art Cascoland promotes, inter-disciplinary artists engage themselves in communities to collaborate with audiences and members of the communities in shaping their public space through dialogue and participation.

The intention is to motivate and mobilize audiences to become an active participant in the process initiated by the artists and in which the eventual artwork is not as much a physical object but a change in perception of public space with the audience.

Cascoland artist/initiator Fiona de Belli is involved in the development of all subprojects and events, directing the audience participation. This process is informed by the artists and in which developed after years of international experience with location theater groups and audience participation in particular.

In the method of theater group Warner on Consorten, of which she was a member for many years, artists from different disciplines are trained, through an intensive process, to become theater makers. Bringing in their specific skills they are trained to become multi-disciplinary artists specialized in working with audiences. The audience is treated as material out of which a performance is created.

Now this method is applied to the multi-disciplinary Cascoland projects. Objectives remain the same: activation of public space through audience participation to alter perception of public space.

Comments on working in public space with audiences and by-passers

INTERVIEW WITH VAN WELY: THE ARTIST'S ROLE IN CASCOLAND

In choosing a unique/striking location and placing objects or actions that don't belong there, the environment will automatically respond.

Don't just exhibit installations but plan actions contrasting with the urban landscape. Avoid working from strict art conceptions or

disciplines, do what is possible and exciting at a given location. Use all skills available. Connect to and try to rediscover the identity of the environment. Mobilizing residents and audiences is essential. By literally putting them in motion make them actively participate in the process the artist initiates.

Aiming at the experience of the spectator: undermine rooted prejudices about the everyday world. Create space for new experiences.

How do we change part of the city for a moment for the people that visit it every day?

Play with reality, rules and the specific functions a space has. Change those functions and visualize the rules that apply to everyone by making things suddenly work in a different way. It enables us to look again and wonder why the environment is organized in a certain way and not different.

Use the senses and impulses of by-passers in the public space. If there is an unusual thing happening, it will attract people. The challenge is to use aspects of different disciplines to mobilize people. People are eager to experience.

The spectator can switch in his way of experiencing. This will happen automatically if the spectator is involved with all his senses.

The spectator can witness the process of completion of the work. We visualize what we do. Everything is part of the happening. The construction of objects and the research, be it in the field or theoretically. The process is the core but the outcome (object/action) is as important.

Locations are not identical, there are going to be unexpected factors. Disturbing factors that are inevitable in the public space can turn into an advantage. Strict planning can be a disadvantage. Improvisation is important.

Artists hail from different disciplines, yet are equal next to each other.

Look at it as a 'collage'. The separate parts are independently next or opposed to each other. They all contain their own information. The total image does not refer to one meaning.

The spectator continues to be amazed about such a curiously remarkable combination of elements.

ADVENTURES IN SPACE

All it took to turn one of downtown Joburg's no-go zones into an urban playground was a few artists and some Dutch courage. Adam Levin was hooked.

The geography of separateness is buried in our psyche. Although no longer exclusively racial, Joburg's spatial schizophrenia is such that getting in my car in malled suburbia and careening through the frenzied, dusky orchestra of minibus taxis to get to the Drill Hall was like a journey to another country.

To me, Joubert Park is a nowhere land, lost in the anonymity of illegal migrants, thousands of hurrying commuters and hawkers hauling their loaded trolleys onto cracked pavements. Nothing is fixed. Danger is palpable. The traffic screams. But to most South Africans this exotic urban jungle is artlessly ordinary. One couldn't think of a more dense, challenging and, possibly, ludicrous place to launch an international public-art initiative. But as Fiona de Bell, one of the founders of the Cascoland project, casually remarked, 'We like a challenge.'

In February and March, a group of around fifty multidisciplinary artists from SA and the Netherlands set up camp in Joburg's notoriously dodgy inner city to launch a series of so-called 'interventions' that stretched notions of art and challenged preconceptions of public space in an African metropolis.

This was the third, and probably most radical, in the Cascoland series. The first took place in 2004 during a theatre festival on the safe, quiet Dutch island of Terschelling. With the Dutch word 'casco' translating as 'hull', the event focused on DIY architecture such as transparent motels and a five-storey bath tower that you'd

clamber into for a dip. The second took place last year in New Crossroads township in Cape Town. 'It's a really alienated community with an absolute absence of public amenities,' De Bell commented, stealing a moment in the chaos to shake back her tousled locks and focus. 'But it's still a settled community, so it presented very different challenges from this site.'

Fifty years ago, the Drill Hall was an SADF base and, in 1956, it was the site of the Treason Trial — which is why you'll now spot a neon sign on Twist Street that reads, 'We stand by our leaders'. This has provoked much discussion among the community's youth: Who were our leaders? And who are they today? But the focus, according to Bronwyn Lace, a local artist, was on not getting too bogged down by history but to simply interact with the people who live and pass through there. And from my serial excursions to Cascoland this appears to have happened against all odds.

Boundaries are both spatial and social, and investigating their validity has proved the project's strength. SA suburbanites are well versed in the rituals of monumental walls, alarms and shatterproof glass, but safety becomes its own prison, relegating interaction to razor-wired gardens and sterile malls — and, if only briefly, Cascoland proposed some alternative solutions.

As foreign artists, relatively naive about Joburg's suburban paranoia, the team approached this as simply engaging with a community. 'A lot shifted when we actually moved onto the site,' said Alison Scott, an animator from the UK. 'Just crossing the street to buy our coffee and bread, we met people in the neighbourhood and it became a more normal place.' Jan Korbes, a garbage architect whose hands were suitably covered in grease, was initially concerned about bringing his six-month-old daughter to Johannesburg. 'But we've made a lot of friends in the neighbourhood,' he said. 'We go to the Zimbabwean mamas down the road to eat African food, and it's clean and delicious.'

'Of course, you hear many stories about the inner city being dangerous,' De Bell conceded. 'But it's a thin layer and when you break through it you discover a normal world, with people who work and whose kids go to school, and it's not that scary. There's definitely a gap between what you hear and what we've experienced.'

One Friday evening, I arrived at Cascoland for a performance by the Swenkas, the dandies who have long paraded for trophies in the migrant-worker hostels. The crowd was an odd mix of neighbourhood kids, their parents and curious suburbanites, sitting on tyres and bales of hay. The contestants paraded elegantly, showing off their striped socks, red suits and cuff links in frozen, balletic poses.

'What amazed me is that the white audience here had never seen this kind of thing before,' De Bell said afterwards. 'Last week, we had the opposite — a contemporary dance piece. None of the neighbourhood had ever seen anything remotely like it, so, in that way, I guess we are crossing boundaries.'

Although the Drill Hall sits on a public square, its east end had been home to squatters. 'We had to fence off this area to make it a safe space,' the bubbly Vincent Truter, who co-ordinated the involvement of students of the local Vega Brand Communications School, told me as he trotted me around on a tour. 'But, on the Twist Street side, we removed the fencing to open it up and within a day there were hawkers setting up there.'

I caught Bié Venter, who has been working in the area as part of the Joubert Park Project (JPP) for the past five years, hurrying about like a downtown trooper. Venter started the JPP with Dorothee Kreutzfeldt and Joseph Gaylard as a non-profit collective of artists with objectives similar to the Cascoland team's. They have run everything from photo workshops with the photographers who work in the park to art and carnival workshops with the neighbourhood kids. A subsequent exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery drew the attention of foreign artists, who then brought performance art to the park — even though it is generally thought of as a no-go zone. Venter, who lives in the neighbourhood, feels more passionate about Joburg's east end than about Newtown. 'It's just less sterile here,' she said. 'There are more buildings available and more of a sense of possibility.'

In 2004, the JPP moved from an office in the art gallery to the Drill Hall. 'The military only finally vacated the site when this project began,' she explained. 'So, a key challenge lay in making this a safe space, both physically and in terms of perceptions. We've launched many projects here before, but we were in and out. The intensity of having the artists living on site for six weeks made this far more powerful.'

What amazed De Bell was how quickly people responded to the changes. 'Little things made a huge difference,' she said. When Korbes created swings from used car tyres — they hang from the monolithic and semi-vacant old Ster-Kinekor building on the site — the kids began playing on them that afternoon. 'The parents followed the kids and soon became regular visitors.' At night, local films screened on the buildings attracted delighted audiences.

Although the city council was supportive of the project, the team circumvented the red tape that would have made the project impossible. When they discovered a public toilet on the site that had been locked for years, the council refused to open it. It seemed ridiculous and, out of necessity, the Cascolites broke in and turned it into a functional facility. Two women from an adjoining building keep it clean, and donations help cover expenses.

Similarly, the idea of painting on the streets in the area would have taken months to be approved, so the team simply went ahead, splashing a sidewalk with pink paint for people to leave hand prints as a kind of walk of fame. Maja Marx, a local artist, created a zebra crossing on Twist Street, inscribed with the words, 'These are bridgeable divides'

She installed a scholar patrol, which infuriated some of the anarchic taxi drivers. On one occasion, a driver provoked Marx by bumping her with his vehicle. 'It was a moment of conflict,' she recalled. 'But I slapped his taxi back and stood my ground, and explained that pedestrians also have rights here. What was incredible was that the mamas who need to cross the street applauded and yelled back at him.'

'We could never have done this in Holland,' De Bell admitted. 'Everything is extremely regulated and the police would have stopped us immediately. Here we were able to do things really quickly, and that dynamism has been very exciting.' Bronwyn Lace elaborated. 'We may

have contravened the bureaucracy, but we did it responsibly. We didn't do anything to jeopardize anyone's safety and whatever we did was in the interests of engaging the community.'

The activity on site was constant. On another evening, a choir was singing Shosholoza from the rooftops. I looked up at the crowded apartment blocks and a curious new audience was peering down through the windows. I inspected a frail garden of medicinal herbs used to alleviate HIV/Aids symptoms, planted by local sex workers. A rehabilitative occupational project? I asked Truter. 'Nah,' he laughed. 'They hated it.'

Other interventions were more successful. On the site's south end, De Villiers Street housed a crew of Mozambican street mechanics. 'I guess people were put off because they're quite dirty,' said Korbes. 'But actually it's a very safe and friendly community.' The team welded workbenches for the mechanics along the fence that can be cleverly stashed, should the sidewalk be patrolled. A freshly repaired wreck was proudly displayed in the courtyard. 'They're brilliant,' said Truter. 'They've fixed up my car for next to nothing.'

I spotted a giant, sliced rainbow arc — a sly take on the rainbow nation. 'It used to play "We Are the World" continuously,' explained Johan Gustavsson, an artist from Sweden. 'But no one could bear it. It was supposed to be ironic but I'm not sure people got it.'

Nothing produced in Cascoland was saleable in a gallery. The whole project probably cost the same as a decent Kentridge drawing. 'But this is a different kind of art,' said De Bell. 'It's really about using art to affect a public space for a moment in time, and it's very difficult to define or capture because after it's happened it's invisible.'

Although the JPP is determined to investigate how some of the projects can be sustained, there was a distinct sadness around Cascoland when I visited on the last day. It felt like the circus was closing down. 'It's really been a great experience,' Zisi Duse, of the Thusanang Youth Project, said. 'He had been involved throughout. But everyone's wondering what's going to happen now. Will there still be movies?'

And what of the swimming pool that was installed? The outdoor lounge? The walks through the precinct? The answers are not clear. 'We also can't only depend on funding for this sort of project. The community must take ownership of it,' Venter said. 'As quickly as the space changed, it can change back,' De Bell cautioned. 'We give people a manual and show them how things can be done, but it's up to them to sustain it. But hopefully we've left something behind... I do remember that, when I was a little girl, the circus came to my small town,' she twinkled. 'And that made me want to become an artist.'

As much as Cascoland was a short-lived experiment, it challenged some of the fundamental preconceptions of a city — and a country — that is clearly in crisis when it comes to public space. 'For me this proved that walls and barbed wire are not necessarily a solution,' said Lace. 'Activating a space, making it useable and engaging the community provide a very different kind of security.'

Sceptical as I may have been initially about the sheer gall of a bunch of foreign artists launching an art project in our urban jungle, Cascoland proved me wrong. What could have been patronising was surprisingly relevant. What could have been perilous proved free of crime. I guess just seeing what a bunch of gung-ho mavericks achieved in a wild urban moment left me feeling hopeful and engaged in a city in which it is easy to feel isolated. Can we break the invisible walls within us? Can we really inhabit our cities? Perhaps we can. Perhaps the divides are bridgeable after all.

Crime problem

Since 1992 the population of Johannesburg has dramatically increased in the inner city. In 1992 there were twenty five thousand dwelling units for sixty thousand residents. In 2002 those numbers had increased to forty two thousand dwelling units for well over two hundred thousand residents. Many of them luck seekers from other African countries. It is a guess how many there are now in the inner city. Add to that more than half a million trader tourists from other African countries visiting the country each year.

The transformation from apartheid to democracy has brought about an enormous influx into the city. The inner city is over populated and is a place of fear. In the area around the Drill Hall, Zimbabwean gangs roam the streets by day, seeking an easy target to rob. Mobile phones are desired, petty criminals usually target single people and in most cases, victims are left unharmed.

Farouk blames a failure to recognize the rights of immigrant populations and a failure to provide housing for the urban poor as a contributing factor to the escalating crime in the city. 'What are you supposed to do if you are sub-letting a room in a building with ten other people? Where are you supposed to go? Sub-letting of rooms in bad buildings is the only option available to you. The lack of citizenship and the ability to find formalized work forces people into the informal sector, which is also increasingly criminalized, as the city enforces by-laws restricting trade in the city. So immigrants are breaking the city by-laws by trading on the sidewalks by day and are occupying bad buildings by night. Immigrants cannot rest easy at night as the threat of being evicted into the streets is a constant fear'.

'You suddenly don't have a place to stay. You are thrown out with all your belongings without any alternative accommodation. To me that is complete dehumanisation. I am not surprised that people are not adhering to the by-laws of the city. Immigrants feel like the laws of the country don't apply to them. Even if you try to sell something in the streets you are persecuted. So you cannot even put a piece of bread in your mouth.'

'We need to respect the rights of all the residents of the city. It starts with recognition of activities and cultures; it starts with planning and

providing basic facilities and housing. The city has got no strategy for the poor. We only seem to plan for people who already command an access to financial resources.'

Looking at different regeneration projects taking place in other areas of town like Braamfontein, where streets have become sterilised with lots of security and no traders on the street, Farouk thinks that the Joubert Park area will also see some kind of transformation soon, mainly because of the Soccer World Cup in 2010. 'The dynamics of the area around the Drill Hall is endangered. Street trade will be outlawed, as it is perceived as an undesirable activity. I am left asking, who belongs here? By the looks of things it does not seem like the current residents of the inner city are wanted here. So where are people supposed to go to from here?

UNDERSTANDING CASCOLAND

HANNAH LE ROUX
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

'If we think, after all, that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens, you will understand why the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development (I have not been speaking of that today), but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.'

Michel Foucault ⁽¹⁾

What does Cascoland mean?

The casco seemed Italian, maybe from cascare, to fall ⁽²⁾. Something tumbling, as in a circus, or the consequences of something being dropped, with pieces ending up scattered around a place. This image evokes a process of chance, even an accident, then the pieces landing, somehow configuring a place. But casco, the noun, has developed more specific associations: in Italian it means helmet; the English word cask shares the roots, and in Dutch, it's the word for the hull of a boat.

How does the context of Johannesburg's inner city align with the meaning of Cascoland? Johannesburg is a landlocked site. This city uniquely lacks any river of its own. The only water comes from the sky, in the drenching summer thunderstorms. There's a nice line about Joburg: 'It has a reef, of course, but no diving' ⁽³⁾. The reef of gold that gave the means to the city has long been built over.

Perhaps the nature of Cascoland as an amphibious object is illuminating. If the hull is something designed for movement over the sea, what happens when it comes inland? This object that is migratory, that shelters, holds, forges ahead in a situation of flux, that contains the bounty of its trip – what happens when it comes out of the water to land on a site?

The site of Cascoland in Johannesburg is at the heart of the densest part of the city. The project provided some sort of urban life raft, and it took diverse groups of survivors from this very tough city on board. Amongst these are the people in the highrise surroundings of the Drill Hall site. Others came from a more usual art audience, curious to leave the suburban calm. One could imagine Cascoland, then, not as something land bound, but as a vehicle for escape. The very image of Cascoland seemed like a deck scene. Boatlike, but unspecific: cruise liner images

crossing with those of overloaded ferries. The underground pool, the flapping flags, the siren sounds, the bars and movies. The queues of kids, the chains hanging on the periphery, the life-preserving tyres.

The association of a boat with a project initiated in the Netherlands, which has unfolded at two South African sites, is appropriate enough. In 1652, in a first contact of hull to land, three Dutch ships landed at a bay in the south of Africa, so beginning the colonial settlement of Cape Town. The boats brought settlers, farmers who began the task of establishing a garden, the builders of a fort, and administrators who brought a system of recording and protecting land rights, Roman Dutch law, that remains in force until today.

And so this first casco-landing tied spatial practices from Holland with sites in Africa. The settlers cut lanes of oak trees through the dense fynbos, establishing the first lines of an urban grid. Canals were established to lead water to the gardens and reservoirs. And plots were demarcated, registered, and owned. The consequence was the establishment of a highly controlled spatial order, in which there was no common land, no really free space, and hence no escape from the rule of the state or the owner in the act of settlement.

Over four hundred years later, the system has spread to the whole of Southern Africa. The rigidity of Roman-Dutch land rights had become enmeshed with another system, that of apartheid. From 1948 onwards, the ruling National Party systematized the loose racial segregation in most colonial settlements into an almost absolute order. The right to reside in, or own land in a certain area was determined by race.

Inner city areas like Doornfontein, close to the Drill Hall, became White Group Areas. The effect was to displace many poorer black residents, whose choices are to return to rural homelands, to apply for the limited amount of state owned rental housing on the urban fringe, or to establish their own unsanctioned settlements. At the end of apartheid, the Group Areas Act was abolished, allowing people to buy and live in an area of their choice, regardless of race. But the ownership of the city was out of reach to the urban poor. The 1940's to 70's had been a period of speculation in the inner city, so there were many flats to rent, but the costs were high. Nonetheless the demand was great, not only from black South Africans, but increasingly from

immigrants, mainly from other African countries including Mozambique, Zimbabwe, the Congo, Nigeria and Ethiopia.

People are living in tough conditions in the inner city. Flats are often subdivided, families each taking a room. And many jobs are found on the streets, mainly retailing goods, sometimes making and repairing things. But there is a constant threat to these arrangements by local government, the absolute owner of public space. At any moment people can be evicted, their goods confiscated, and their very selves imprisoned for repatriation.

As a result, these new residents make urban interventions that by their nature are light and temporary. Without the security of tenure and no way of entering into ownership, they remake the city with informal, ad-hoc arrangements of goods and their own presence. Activities with their roots in both township and rural practices have come to animate the city. Apart from the trading and small businesses, there are social events like funeral society meetings, churches, choir practices and Swenkas.

These practices are not a-spatial, they are not merely urban lifestyles. They make profound changes to the visual images and sounds of the city. Their space in the city is found in a fugitive way, and so the making of it draws on the quickest and most immediate material at hand: people's own bodies, their movements, their dress, their voices, and their capacity to carry, unfold, and occupy spaces.

Cascoland, which engages and celebrates these lively practices, and uses them as urban materials, has inverted proper urban renewal. In the way it considers the city not as the hull, the container, and by not even sticking to the map, the project represents a sort of urban piracy. This much is clear from the frustration with the stifling municipal bureaucracy, the decisions to force open the locked public toilets, to spill over events onto the pavements, and to paint crossings through the impossible rush hour traffic.

Once, in Venice, outside the workshop where they make gondolas, a friend pointed out the ambivalence of a landed boat. While the floating boat is suspended between earth and sky, when it is pulled ashore, and turned over, a reversal occurs. Not only does the hull become a sort of shelter – and there are many places where the roof is formed from the ribs of the boat – but the sky becomes the water, a blue mirroring blue.

Has the meaning of Cascoland been to draw attention to the social fluidity of the city that lies above and around its site? The acts of piracy represents a sort of inversion, where the usual order, of space controlling behavior, is replaced with a more spontaneous and socially engaged practice, in which a space is set aside to nurture fragile and human interrelationships. This is not a case of space merely representing publicness, or of social practices merely happening. It is rather a situation where both the container and its content are engaged in the creation of an exemplary alternative to the difficulty of everyday urban life.

In this sense, Cascoland is, and perhaps remains, utopian. And adrift, and certainly stateless. Not tied to any fixed processes, and not even strategically directed to any specific destination. But like Foucault's ship, it operates on the level of the imagination, prompting recognition of what might otherwise be unthinkable in its context.

For me, Cascoland allows us to imagine a city where the borderlines between ideas such as informal and formal slip away. In this city, people's rights to public space contest, overlap and even erase the rights of the defacto owner. The processes of urban change shift from the building of infrastructures towards the deployment of a host of engaging and lightweight technologies. The traders benefit from new markets of potential customers and a range of economies that condense at a site as leisure, consumption, politics and creativity overlap. Social barriers are erased, and the rights of marginalized people, specifically children, are celebrated.

Going back to the etymology of casco, there is a suggestion that the thing that is broken, that makes the curved shards of the helmet and hull, began as something round. A pot, or a skull. Is the casco, then, a memory of the whole, an indication of the lost potential of some kind of urban sphere that has been fragmented into systems and spaces that somehow are at odds with each other, each holding functions that fail to seamlessly overlap?

After considering all of this, I was let in on the last meaning of casco. In the Netherlands people can buy the shell of a house – a house hull, a casco – and finish it with their own labour using do it yourself - DIY - technologies. It's been this use of the word that Fiona and Roel

have worked from in conceiving their projects. The commercial idea at the heart of this sort of casco involves joining two delivery processes – one fast, multiple, market driven, and the other individual, slow, ad hoc and hopefully cheap. There are other promising aspects to this dual approach, not least of which is the highly personalized outcome of the complete process, and the way that it allows people to overcome the limits of the market, or the state, to provide housing, by exercising their own agency and choices.

So in closing, what does Cascoland really mean?

The meaning seems to lie outside any permanent physical trace: it was a shortlived event. The urban poor are still crammed in their flats, the suburbanites have gone home behind electric fences. Can something so short and fragile have any lasting meaning? Perhaps the record of this publication, along with the memories that small children have of the week that Cascoland came to town, is enough. It reminds me of something Labelle Prussin has written, after studying the pots and fabrics, palanquins and rituals of African nomads: "a movable structure is not necessarily temporary. What is seemingly transitory and ephemeral, processual and only a body of images, is often, by its illusion of stability, more durable than our eroding stone monuments"¹⁴.

NOTES

1. MICHAEL FOUCAULT, 'ON TERRITORY, ON CACCO, ON THE STATE OF THE ART OF THE CITY', IN *THE CITY OF MAN*, 1984, 22-23.
2. JAY MINSKOWITZ, 'CITY OF THE FUTURE', 1984, 22-23.
3. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
4. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
5. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
6. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
7. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
8. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
9. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
10. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
11. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
12. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
13. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.
14. JONATHAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY, 1984, 1984, 1984.

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