

Embracing the Complexity of Community Safety Challenges

The STS Methodology to reduce violence in Khayelitsha and Johannesburg

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01.
Women's legal
centre complaint
(2013)

Crime and violence are severe problems for communities throughout South Africa¹. While there are many strategies to respond to the threat of crime and to combat crime, criminal justice responses are over-burdened and inadequate. Like many complex problems, unsafety is intractable and does not respond well to linear or simple solutions. This paper regards crime and violence as outcomes of other social and economic ills and aims to embrace the complexity of the challenge at local level by using systems thinking and practice (Holtmann 2014).

Any attempt to address local safety as an inclusively local issue, rather than as an issue that must be addressed from a national perspective, requires an inversion of traditional South African governance models. (See figure one below). In this model, leadership is conceived as a support function for local action, with feedback providing opportunity for leaning, improved policy, and treasury allocation. This encourages community ownership and increases accountability at local level.

The methodology

The Social Transformation System (STS) offers a process of collective introspection in which it is safe to embrace complexity. It promotes the vision of systemic transformation through collaborative actions, agreement of value attached to thematic interventions, the alignment of strengths, and capacities for the achievement of shared objectives. It allows for participative rapid assessment to benchmark current status and develop and manage action plans.

This methodology has been developed through an iterative process, with exposure to projects in a range of settings and with a range of intended outcomes over some years. Of these, the facilitation of crime prevention strategies or local safety plans for 24 police precincts in the

Previous page:
Children in
Khayelitsha
expecting to get
entry to the public
swimming pool
which was closed
for undisclosed
reasons.
Photo:
Kosta Math y

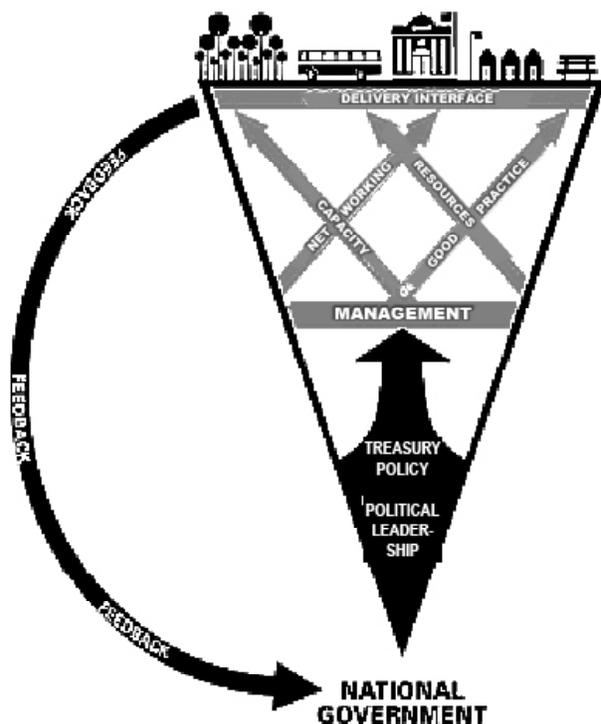


Figure one
Governance for
Local Development
and Active
Citizenship

Western Cape was significantly informative, although the plans were never implemented. The plan for Khayelitsha, a township in Cape Town, has recently been revisited as a result of a Commission of Inquiry into policing in Khayelitsha.

Khayelitsha is a predominantly black working-class and poor community situated about thirty-five kilometers from the central business district of Cape Town. The area is barren and windswept and suffers heavy flooding in the winter months. Although the population is not accurately known, it is estimated at about 750,000 inhabitants. Khayelitsha has grown rapidly over nearly 40 years. It is Cape Town's largest township, very densely populated, extremely poor, and with exceptionally high levels of unemployment. There are formal areas with brick homes and electricity, water, sanitation services, and regular refuse removal. However, other residents live in informal structures, commonly referred to as "shacks" or as backyarders², with no access to services. They have poor health, and high levels of unsafety. In a complaint by the Women's Legal Centre, it was stated:

"Community members report that girls and women are frequently beaten and raped whilst walking to and from communal toilets or fetching water from communal taps close to their homes. Domestic abuse [also] poses a threat to the safety of many women within their own homes. Between March 2003 and March 2011 there has been a 9.36% increase in the number of reported sexual crimes in Khayelitsha" (Women's Legal Centre).

02.
Township backyard shacks have been constructed in the backyards of existing legalized houses with an own plot, when the ban on free movement was lifted for the black population after Apartheid. Those migrants would normally squat on empty land. But when the national elections were celebrated with black participation for the first time, all voters required a formal and legal address, which a backyard dwelling could provide.



*View over
Khayelitsha
Township, Cape
flats.*

Photo: K. Math y

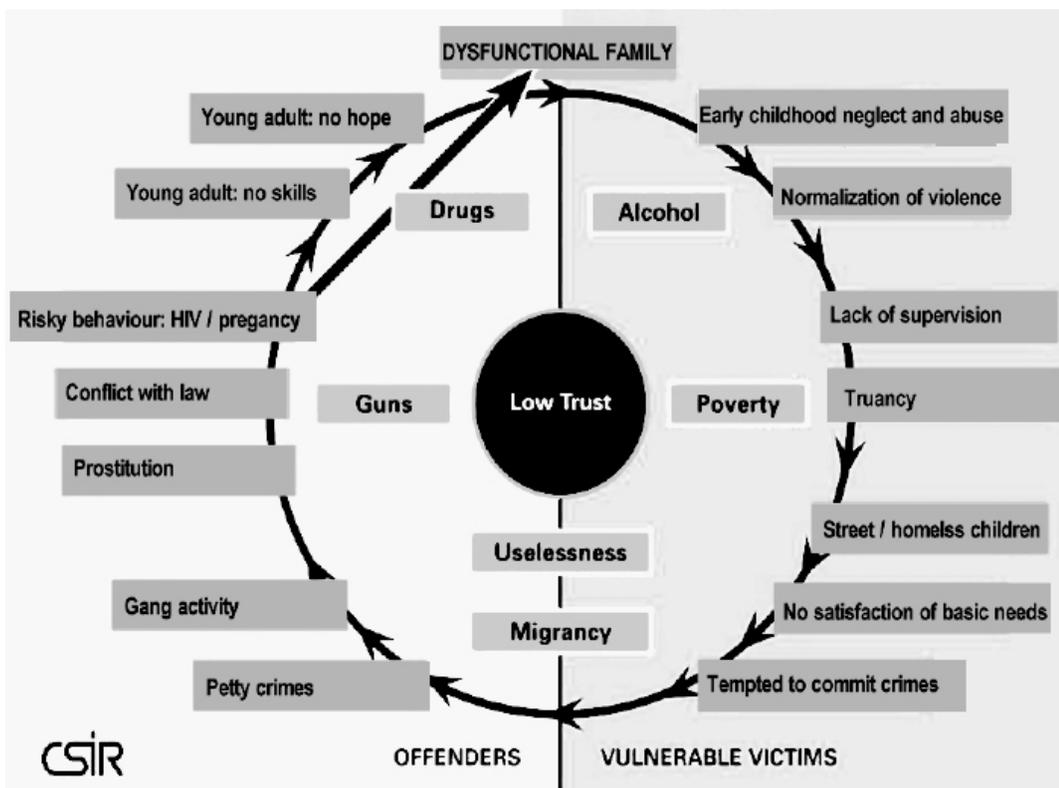
The Western Cape Project in Kayelitsha came about as a result of a workshop towards the end of 2004.³ The workshop aimed to explore the role of police in addressing crimes related to social issues. Based on a research model from the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), *Breaking the Cycle of Crime and Violence* (Figure 2) included interpersonal crimes associated with alcohol, sexual offences, drug related crimes, and youth involved with gangs.

The image of the cycle that traps so many South African communities visualizes in one snapshot why it's so difficult to enable sustainable community development (and safety). It does not attempt to describe everything that is relevant or may occur, but rather to provide a systemic view of the complexity. It serves to frame the challenge of community intervention and development as difficult and to guide participants to an understanding of why it is so hard to intervene systemically.

The outer circle of the figure above demonstrates how someone who displays antisocial behaviour is the same person as the vulnerable victim of anti-social behavior: the individual is just at a different point in the cycle. In the centre of the circle, and at the centre of the challenge of community development, lies the problem of low trust. South Africa is a society where there are low levels of interpersonal trust, as well as low trust in the criminal and social justice systems. When people do not trust others they are more likely to themselves behave in a way that is untrustworthy, and this deepens divisions. The context for antisocial, criminal, and violent behaviour is described using 6 key, systemic, social, and historical factors in the centre of the circle: these are characteristics of communities in which community development represents a challenge because of issues that include high rates of migrancy, a sense of uselessness, guns and violence, poverty, drugs, and alcohol abuse. The systemic nature of

03.

This workshop was co-hosted by The International Centre for Prevention of Crime (ICPC), the South African Police Service, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) on matters of policing and community safety in preparation for the ICPC Colloquium, held in Oslo (November 2007).



these factors is linked to the policies of the apartheid government, which was designed to serve a small minority of the population. The infrastructure and services established by that government were not intended to uplift and support the needs of the majority and many of the contemporary factors can be traced directly back to the apartheid policy of divide and rule. As a result of these and other oppressors, the life cycle of many children begins with fragile and fragmented families – often as a result of accidental pregnancy. In many instances, male children head households, as the father is absent. They do so however, without adult skills and without resources to nurture the other children for whom they might provide care.

Part of the workshop were field trips designed to explore the environments in which this cycle commonly occurred and facilitated group discussions to identify appropriate roles for police in the prevention and reduction of such crimes. The outcomes of this workshop highlighted the complexity of the challenges facing police in these crimes. Subsequently a research project was initiated to distinguish between police roles and responsibilities, and those of other departments and stakeholders, in order to develop integrated, multi-sector strategies which would address “social crimes” at a local level. The focus of the resulting Safety Plans was to identify and articulate achievable objectives that could be reached by the full Provincial range of stakeholders, who together could make a community safe. These were thus not intended as operational policing plans, but as integrated plans, inclusive of all departments and stakeholders.

Figure 2:
Cycle of Crime and
Violence

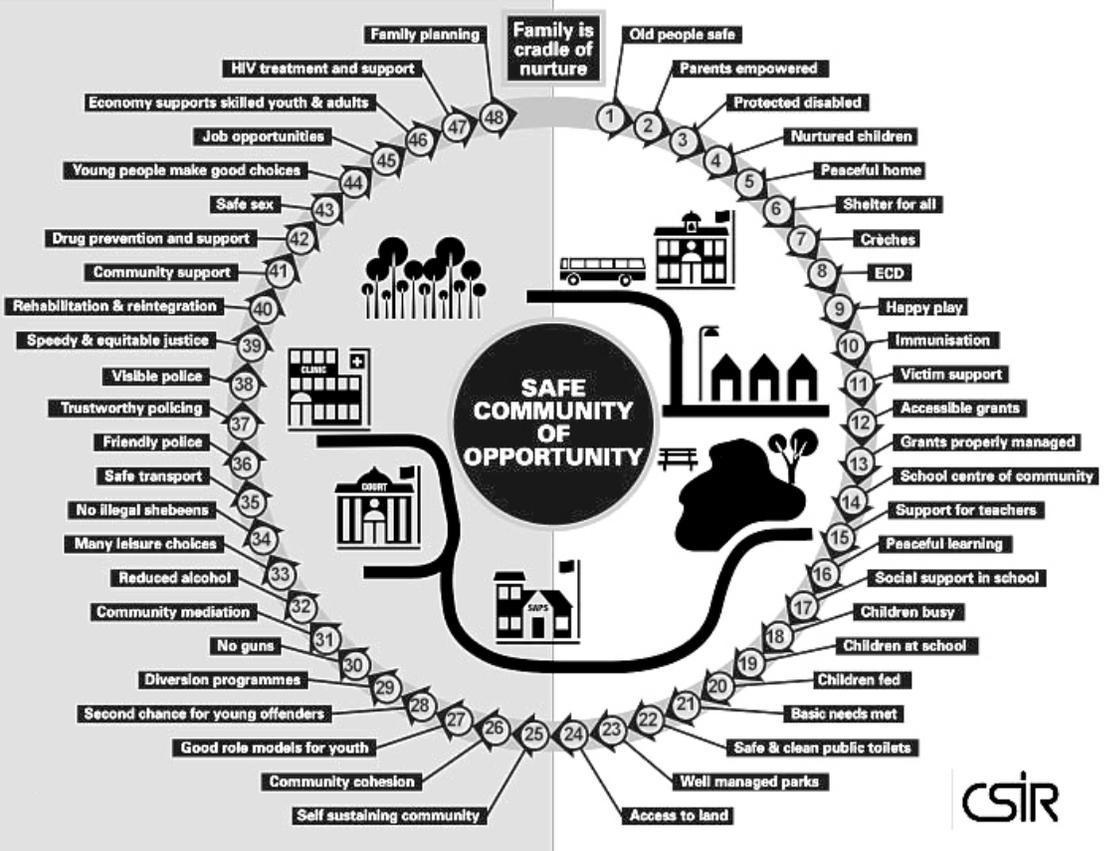


Figure 3: Safe Community of Opportunity

It was also not the intention of the South African Police Service to lead implementation of the Safety Plans; it was the intention that such leadership should be sought from within Provincial Government.

The Safety Plans were developed using a combination of literature review, undertaken by a team of experts in different aspects of community safety, and applied a safety lens to (for instance) nutrition, early childhood development, schools, parenting, young people, and families. At the same time, the team undertook consultative workshops in which service providers and community members were asked to respond to the cycle by drawing, in groups, “what it looks like when it’s fixed”. These drawings were then analyzed and taken back to the experts with the question “are these people right? Is this what it looks like when a community is safe?” Based on this process, a model, the Safe Community of Opportunity model, was compiled, representing an inclusive range of elements and outcomes that must be in place for sustainable community safety (Figure 3).

Useful insights that emerged from revisiting the Khayelitsha Safety Plan included:

- Safety Plans should be seen as a tool for all government and not just for the police.
- Safety Plans are not about fighting crime; they are about addressing

safety concerns and moving towards a vision of a safe place.

- Safety Plans should be formally institutionalized into local government development and planning processes.
- Safety Plans will not succeed without leadership, commitment, and constant communication; information sharing and feedback are likewise fundamental.
- Community engagement is essential.
- Civil society should be seen as an excellent resource.
- Monitoring and Evaluation should be participative, inclusive, and objective in order to incrementally improve implementation from one budget cycle to another.
- Communication about the Safety Plans and of successes as they are achieved will provide vital engagement and motivation for sustaining what are often difficult and complex partnerships.

The Social Transformation System methodology has since been refined and used to develop community-specific models with various transformational objectives for various settings, including both urban communities and rural villages. This allows the Social Transformation System to bring existing research into each new setting, while simultaneously incorporating local knowledge and experience.

The original “cycle of crime and violence” has, with subsequent learning, evolved to become the “cycle of inequality and poverty” (Figure 4), which focuses more on the complexity of local settings and challenges than on a direct response to unsafety. The updated model makes important links between the lack of opportunity, at a local level, and high levels of crime and violence. Many communities experience low levels of support from state service providers and this is reflected in almost continuous service delivery protests and community disruption. The cycle perpetuates with high levels of teenage pregnancy, high rates of school drop-outs and truancy, and young people experiencing low levels of hope for the future.

The STS process is used to:

- Safely embrace the challenge of these complex systemic problems;
- Envision: “what it looks like when it’s fixed”;
- Align social investment strategy with business visions and objectives;
- Enable everyone to be useful in moving towards a shared vision;
- Promote essential, sustainable collaboration based on mutual need;
- Impart participatory, intuitive bench-marking and impact assessment;
- Manage multi-dimensional, thematic actions’
- Negotiate terms of engagement with delivery partners;
- And maximize return on investment in a transformed system.

The model and methodology encompass an optimistic process to establish “what it looks like when it’s fixed”. This focuses not solely on the

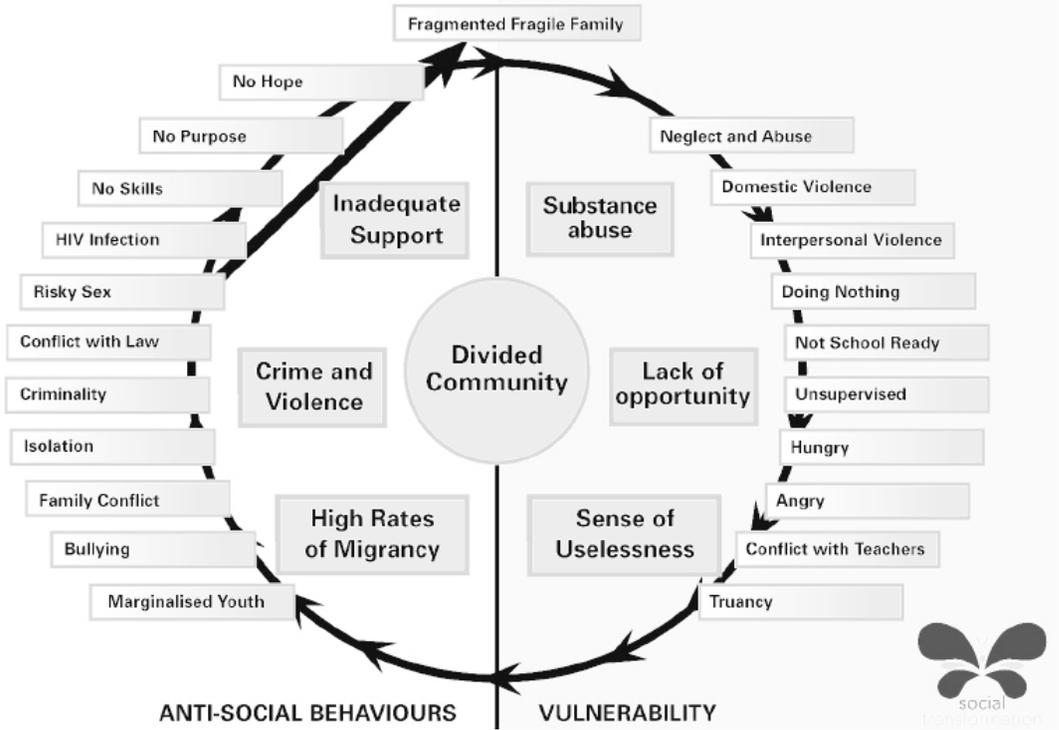


Figure 4:
 Cycle of Inequality
 and Poverty.
 Copyright:
 Barbara Holtmann
 2013.

intervention but the intended outcomes, envisaged in the investment (or mobilization) of stakeholders. It requires that interventions be tested against outcomes and that there is a possibility that proposed interventions may not prove to be the most appropriate...

This process involves the convening of a workshop or workshops in which an inclusive range of participants deliver a collective vision, alongside individual introspection, to identify the way in which each will contribute to achieving the vision. This vision must be clearly defined and mandate appropriate collaborative partnerships based on mutual benefit, a rapid assessment (based on knowledge in the room), and action plans that focus on shifting the status of the whole towards sustainable resilience. The outcome of the workshop process is a populated model of a “fixed” state or transformed system, clearly articulated as a shared destination towards which -through collaborative effort over an agreed time period- there is a collective commitment.

A software tool supports the process, prompting the capture of the elements of a defined “fixed” state and a rapid assessment of the current status of the system against the “fixed” state.

The elements of each particular vision are verified by embedded research. The model provides the research behind the interdependencies amongst an inclusive range of elements and in this way, verifies elements that emerge through the visioning process. The participants score elements on the basis of pre-researched simple indicators – how close or distant is the achievement of each element. Once all elements are scored, participants agree on a benchmark in the form of an overall score for how

far the current position is from the fixed state. This becomes the baseline, against which progress will be measured. Participants then identify their individual and partnership roles and functions: identifying leaders, key partners and supporting partners. All then develop action plans. Typically the workshop delivers themed interventions based on pre-determined simple criteria, for instance:

1. Interventions that aim to improve the outcomes that demonstrate the greatest deficit or need (if nothing is done about the biggest problems, they threaten to bring down the overall system; also, ignoring the worst problem areas will be a barrier to real change to the system score).
2. Interventions that build on the outcomes that demonstrate existing promise or progress (this is typically the easiest area in which to score relatively quick and demonstrable wins).
3. Interventions that focus on the outcomes where there is the greatest alignment of interest and strategic objectives.

The methodology relies on respectful interaction amongst participants. All voices are equally valued; regardless of relative power or hierarchical relationships outside of the process, in the workshop all have equal standing. Anomalies in the baseline rapid assessment undertaken in the workshop will quickly emerge – the measurements are systemic and where there is a gap in knowledge the logic of the model will demonstrate it. This often provides the entry point for engagement with absent stakeholders who may not know at the outset why they should participate in the process. Action plans are developed according to a simple template that links all actions to elements of the model. Participants simulate their intentions so that they can anticipate the impact that actions will have on the status of the whole system, rather than against isolated or individual terms of reference. If the simulation doesn't demonstrate impact, then the action plan will not meet the approval of the whole group. In

*Informal
preparation of
food to be sold at
the street.
Photo:
Kosta Mathéy*



each instance, all participants must agree on the steps, the elements, and the action plans; moreover, they are contracted to play their part. Action plans cannot make promises on behalf of others, only the participants themselves can commit to actions. Thus if stakeholders are missing, the action plan must include the way in which the present stakeholders will achieve the buy-in from the absent ones. All this is framed in terms of individual and collective value, placed on the ability to achieve the consensus driven vision and the elements thereof.

Throughout the process, everyone has a function and all functions have equal value. The “Social Transformation System” delivers practical, pragmatic action plans because it begins with the opportunity to imagine a highly valued outcome and moves quickly into the space of realistic expectation. Furthermore, the system is constrained by what can be contributed by the participants themselves and is thus not elevated by unrealistic expectations of others.

Social transformation system applied in Johannesburg

In another setting, the methodology demonstrates the power of civil society leadership in local responses to unsafety. Johannesburg attracts migrants from all over South Africa and the rest of Africa. Infrastructure in the inner city, although less than 130 years old, is over-burdened. Developed and evolved as a thriving business hub, the city centre is now home to an estimated 500,000+ people, many undocumented (City of Johannesburg 2011: 18). The population is multi-cultural and multi-lingual and there is little cohesion amongst immigrants from different countries (Simone 2001; Murray 2008). Locals are often hostile towards immigrants and children experience xenophobia in schools (Osman 2009), with language representing a barrier to education and inclusion. Many formal businesses have moved out of the inner city; much of the business and trade conducted is informal and hard to regulate. Every day over 20,000 minibus taxis bring in at least another 500,000 people from surrounding townships and suburbs. Sanitation and waste management are under significant pressure and the city is congested and hard to navigate. The delivery of safety, social, education, developmental, and health services in the inner city is a severe challenge (City of Johannesburg 2007).

Johannesburg Child Welfare is a South African Non-Profit Organization (NPO) which attempts to respond to the needs of close to 70,000 vulnerable children in and around Johannesburg annually (Johannesburg Child Welfare Annual Report 2012/2013: 8). The organization’s social workers facilitate adoptions, foster care, and counseling, relief from violence and poverty, and skills development. Thembaletu, a centre established in 1996 by Johannesburg Child Welfare to deliver skills development programmes to unemployed young women, is situated in the heart of the most degraded and unsafe area of the inner city, Joubert Park. The Old Drill Hall, the dilapidated Heritage Site that houses Thembaletu, is occupied by a loosely connected group of Non-Profit Organizations, delivering developmental child services. The site is situated directly across the road

and two blocks down from two of the city's biggest and busiest taxi stations and so experiences a high volume of traffic.

The Old Drill Hall site is not an environment conducive to the protection and support of children. The site is dirty, cluttered with litter, smells as a result of the lack of proper waste management, unclean toilets, and the often-unhygienic food preparation by informal traders on the streets outside. The garden has been appropriated by an informal business selling temporary parking, and is often inhabited by intoxicated people or vehicles that hinder access. The buildings themselves suffer as a result of poor management and maintenance and fixtures are broken and walls and floors visibly filthy.

In 2012, Johannesburg Child Welfare commissioned a consultative planning process to build strategies which would address the complexity of the systemic challenges in and around the Old Drill Hall and Tembalethu. Using the 'Social Transformation System' methodology, the collective vision for the inner city was articulated as "what it looks like when it's fixed" (Holtmann 2011) for a "Best Life for Every Child in the Inner City" programme. The programme was systemic and comprised a diverse range of outcomes, including infrastructure, service delivery, a culture of caring for the environment, support networks, safe and reliable transport, regulation and management of informal traders, waste management, safe and clean toilets, and much more.

The immediate recommendation that followed the initial consultative exercise for the programme was the establishment of three themed action forums, grouped according to shared interests and mandates of the diverse network of stakeholders. In a city with very low levels of trust, particularly between civil society and local government, stakeholders revealed a sense of isolation, each struggling alone with similar challenges. Relationships were characterized by blame, defensiveness and resentment. A stakeholder mapping process prompted opportunities for mutual support where partners shared objectives to promote trust. A coordinator was appointed by Jo'burg Child Welfare to facilitate introspective engagements with each stakeholder and explore relationships in order to answer "what do I bring that will take us closer to our vision?" During the 12 months that followed over 60 governments and non-government stakeholders were mapped against the vision and as the database grew, opportunities for short, medium, and long-term interventions presented themselves. From these, interventions were chosen for immediate implementation, such as:

1. The formation of an 'Activities Club' at the Old Drill Hall, for access to sporting and other extracurricular activities, oriented towards inner city youth and their parents. Key partners on this team include NPOs and local government departments;
2. Taxi Drivers as Agents for Social Change forming and exploring mutually respectful relationships between taxi drivers and other road users, with key partners including Taxi Associations and Local and Provincial Government departments;

3. A Communications Opportunities task team working on messaging and branding for the programme and ensuring that each stakeholder was able to maximise the communications opportunity that the programme represents. This team must respond to the challenges of communicating with a constantly changing, transient local community;
4. An effective referral network for health and wellbeing social service providers in the precinct in order to promote effective access to the full network of social support services on offer in the inner city. Key partners include NPOs and the Local Government;
5. A gardening initiative at the Old Drill Hall providing gardening activities for children as learning and play, as well as generating food and beautifying the space. Key partners include NPOs, occupants of the site, and the local government's parks agency;
6. A management and maintenance committee comprising all the occupants of the site, which allocates roles and responsibilities in respect to maintenance, safety, a code of conduct, and development initiatives at the site;
7. A residential recycling initiative, establishing recycling initiatives in each of the residential buildings in the precinct with property owners, local government waste management, and residents;
8. Precinct Plan: this team is designing a spatial planning vision for the precinct, connecting the Old Drill Hall with St Mary's Cathedral, 5 blocks away and blighted by very similar challenges. Key partners include university architectural and planning practitioners and various local government departments;
9. As the timelines on these projects are long, an 'Island of Optimism' was planned for World Aids Day (December 1, 2013) to celebrate the value of and potential in partnerships. Partners in the programme took part in a neighbourhood event. The day began with a service at the cathedral, followed by a walk through the streets to the Old Drill Hall where there were exhibitions, music, drama and dance performances, and displays of services and projects. This event mobilised over 30 of the government and non-government partners in the programme;
10. Late in 2013 the local government cracked down on traders, removing them from the streets in a way that violated previous agreements (Boundless City 2013; City of Johannesburg undated; Holdsworth 2011). The traders took them to court and were reinstated. This was a setback to the "Best Life" project. In a workshop some of the children who use Thembaletu regularly expressed their fears and resentment of the traders, who contribute to the congestion, disorganization, and unhygienic conditions of the neighbourhood. This conflict of interests is exacerbated by the conflicted relationship between Local Government and the traders; a series of workshops is planned to facilitate mutually respectful navigation of the conflicting needs to find mutually beneficial solutions.

Lessons learned

- Integrated implementation requires a significant investment of time and energy from all stakeholders. Sustained and committed leadership are also instrumental. However much time is spent on establishing these relationships, while more will always be required. In an environment where many people are operating outside of the formal grid, are undocumented, and have no formal relationship with the city, trust is possibly the greatest asset in establishing sustainable and impactful collaborations, but it is also the scarcest commodity.
- The transience of too many stakeholders negatively impacts the stability and sustainability of partnerships; there is a need for constant recruitment and induction of new people in the environment.
- The value added by each stakeholder should not be measured in isolation, but rather in terms of the contribution made by connecting one stakeholder to others. No one stakeholder is more important than any other.
- Local government urban management structures bring value in networking the various role players in an urban transformation programme of this nature, since it is their mandate to work with all stakeholders.
- Without a dedicated facilitator, who focuses not only on existing needs but also on recruitment of new partners and on strategic engagements between partners, integrated interventions cannot be sustained. The role of facilitator requires a significant time investment to embrace the complexity of the social setting and the stakeholder network.
- Following this comprehensive approach it is possible to generate integrated and sustainable strategic plans, based on consultative, systemic thinking.
- Integrated planning and interventions benefit all partners, who support one another and who leverage one another's work to create deeper impact.
- Setbacks are part of the package; partners must expect them and try to deal with them in a mutually supportive way rather than apportioning blame.

Community leadership

Johannesburg Child Welfare demonstrates leadership in children's services as it has embraced the complexity of the challenges confronting vulnerable children in the migrant inner city (United Nations Children's Fund 2012). To build spaces which are conducive to the delivery of services to vulnerable women and children requires the support of a diverse range of partners. It requires programmes that are systemic and responsive to

the particular challenges posed by an unpredictable migrant environment. While Jo'burg Child Welfare does not have expertise to respond, for instance, to issues of waste management, transport services, informal trade, and spatial design, it cannot ignore these issues as they impact its ability to deliver within its mandate.

Johannesburg Child Welfare values the establishment and maintenance of sustainable and trustworthy partnerships and has demonstrated resilience and commitment to a long-term vision in which there is an opportunity for each child to live his or her best life. To deliver meaningful services to children in complex environments it is necessary to offer opportunities for service delivery to partners whose mandates and expertise impact the lives of vulnerable children in profound and particular ways.

This project demonstrates the value of community leadership in community matters.

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