

Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Contested visions of liveability: housing communities in the Corridors of Freedom in Orange Grove, Johannesburg

- **Format:**

Written paper and verbal presentation

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

In an ambitious initiative aimed at addressing apartheid spatial inequalities through targeted densification, bus-rapid transport, social housing and improved economic opportunities, the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) has launched the Corridors of Freedom (COF) project. A vision of improving the 'liveability' of Johannesburg – particularly for those who have been historically victimised and spatially marginalised – the implementation of the COF highlights the challenge of competing visions of home, neighbourhood and city, and the position of social housing therein.

In the suburbs of Orange Grove and Norwood, where this paper locates its case study, the CoJ is initiating the Paterson Park social housing project as a way of realising the COF vision of well-located housing for the poor. Middle-class residents, faced with the social housing project and fuelled by ill-conceived CoJ actions, have organised in residents associations to leverage their power against or within the CoJ to block or limit the social

housing project, insure their property values and further their neighbourhood vision. This has led to additional marginalisation of the poorest local residents of this mixed-income area.

Through key stakeholder interviews with City officials and residents in Orange Grove and Norwood, this paper illustrates the challenges that arise when ideas of 'liveability' and housing come into conflict between middle-class residents and local government, and exclude poor residents. This research asks what a liveable future in Johannesburg might look like, for whom it will be 'liveable' and the threats to a cohesive and inclusive vision for the city and housing therein.

The paper uses the case study of a mixed-income neighbourhood set to host a large social housing project to illustrate the challenges to an equitable and liveable future in Johannesburg if fractured community relations, the suppression of poor voices and obtuse CoJ actions become the norm in implementing the Corridors of Freedom vision.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Alexandra Appelbaum holds a Masters in Regional and Urban Planning Studies (with distinction) from the London School of Economics and Political Science where she was a Commonwealth scholar. She earned a Bachelor of Arts Honours in Urban History (in the first class) and a Bachelor of Arts in Politics and History (with distinction), both from the University of Cape Town. Her research interests include urban governance, housing, community activism, African urban history, LGBT+ and gender issues, urban poverty, urban informalities and the securitization of space.

At the South African Research Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning (SA&CP) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Alexandra runs an AFD-funded project, aiding the City of Johannesburg in realising the Corridors of Freedom vision. Before joining SA&CP, Alexandra worked in the NGO sector and in consulting for The Business of Cities. She was recognised by the Mail & Guardian as one of South Africa's 'Top 200 Young South Africans' in 2016.