



Asiye eTafuleni at 10

Fostering an economy that prioritizes spatial justice and social capital



The Mealie Cooks Facility, 2018. Photo: Phume Mkhize

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About the Author

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See more examples of Pauline's work at www.paulineconley.com.

Foreword

I first met Richard Dobson and Patric Ndlovu – the co-founders of AeT – in the late 1990s when they were working for the Durban-eThekweni municipal government as leaders of the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project. I was impressed by their leadership style, their rapport with the street vendors, market traders and other informal workers in Warwick Junction, and their innovative approach to urban design and advocacy for the informal workers. I was impressed how they worked with different departments in the city government to develop an inclusive policy response to the informal economy. And I was impressed by Richard's architectural skills directing the redesign of an abandoned warehouse into efficient, bright and inviting office and meeting spaces.

But I was even more impressed – and deeply moved – when Richard and Patric decided to leave their government jobs when the city government changed its policies towards Warwick Junction and the informal economy. I asked Richard what they planned to do and he replied: “We want to continue doing what we were doing in Warwick Junction and to set up an NGO to allow us to do so”. They named the NGO Asiye eTafuleni which, in isiZulu, means “bring it to the table”, a fitting name which captures their vision statement. They acquired a lease in a building on the edge of Warwick Junction which Richard again turned into a bright and inviting office space. They continued their innovative design and advocacy work and were soon caught up in two successful legal struggles: one to save the Early Morning Market in the heart of Warwick Junction from being demolished to make way for a mall; the other to challenge the arbitrary confiscation of street vendor goods.

Asiye eTafuleni at 10 should be proud of its achievements. Its achievements in urban design include designing more efficient and safe stoves for mealie cooks, improved kitchen space, stoves and equipment for bovine head cooks, more efficient carts for waste pickers as well as shelter and stands for traditional medicine vendors and other groups of traders plus first aid stands with kits in the different product markets. Its achievements in urban advocacy include preservation of an historic fruit and vegetable market, a precedent setting legal case against arbitrary confiscation of street vendor goods, acquisition of public space to be used as sorting and storage space for waste pickers. Through its work, Asiye eTafuleni has shown that urban design and advocacy for those at the base of the urban economic pyramid is not only feasible but also desirable. And, most fundamentally, Asiye eTafuleni has helped empower and enhance the dignity, solidarity and livelihoods of countless informal workers in Warwick Junction – and shown urban informal workers around the world what is possible, what they too can dream for.

Marty Chen
Co-Founder and Senior Advisor, WIEGO Network
Lecturer in Public Policy, Harvard University



Introduction

Urban planning and design are key drivers of change that can support the livelihoods of informal workers. AeT brings communities together through inclusive processes in order to build a better, more sustainable, urban future for everyone at the table.

Asiye eTafuleni: isiZulu for 'bring it to the table'

AeT facilitating a design simulation with Bovine Head Cooks, 2016 **Photo: Tasmi Quazi**



Aerial View of Warwick Junction, 2010. Photo: Andrew Griffin

It's a Wednesday morning in March 2019 at the AeT offices in Durban and Richard and Patric are scrambling to get visas and book flights to NYC, where AeT will be feted as one of five organisations short-listed for the WRI Ross Prize for Cities 2019; another in an ever-growing list of honours and accolades accumulated in the first 10 years of this insightful and devoted

team. However, Richard Dobson and Patric Ndlovu – the co-founders of AeT – would be the first to tell you that success is mercurial. Despite fairly constant and wide-reaching recognition for AeT's work with urban informal workers, the 'two-steps-forward-one-step-back' battle toward sustained progress doesn't always *feel* successful. On the morning in question

there are several issues on the table: the day to day conflicts and catastrophes that are typical of life in Warwick Junction. The work of advocating for a truly inclusive Durban has never been without its moments of crisis, and AeT continues to respond to what walks through the door while staying true to a continuum of progress toward long-term changes.

- The AeT team estimates that there are over 60,000 informal workers operating in public spaces across the metro, 21,000 are located in the inner-city and 8,000 in Warwick Junction.
- Each street vendor or market trader employs between 3 and 5 'invisible' workers, such as assistants, barrow operators, water carriers.



Early Morning Market Protests, 2009. Photos: Demetria Tsoutouras

“To me what I have seen that Asiye eTafuleni has done, there were things like I have explained like the lack of knowledge about the law, they have advised us or they will bring to us those who have the knowledge of law like law students and they educate and run educational workshops. And perhaps another thing, it happens when the municipality will do something – I can make a clear example with the Early Morning Market, they wanted to demolish it. If we didn’t have the skill, the market would have been demolished. ”

Khulomu Mkhize (aka Khabazela), trader leader in Brook Street, February 2019

AeT was, in fact, born of crisis. Beginning in 1995, Patric and Richard were members of the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project team that was – under the aegis of the eThekweni municipality – internationally recognized for its innovative and inclusive approach to urban planning. The success of the project was credited in part to a municipal council that was ‘prepared to suspend conventional management practices in favour of a participative inter-departmental approach’¹; which included informal workers in all stages of planning and implementation.

After almost a decade of positive momentum (the impact of which was gaining international attention), the tide started to turn with a shift in priorities for city leadership. Richard and Patric both saw the writing on the wall. Richard recalls a “foresight that [Warwick Junction] was at risk”, and that his decision to leave was one of self-interest: “I wanted to carry on doing the work, and couldn’t do it with the city.” Mere hours after resigning from the city, Richard learned through a mutual colleague that Patric had also resigned. Within one hour, the two cofounders of AeT were conceptualizing the way forward at Richard’s kitchen table. Based on their growing reputations Richard and Patric found the support they needed from partners like WIEGO, and AeT was born not a moment too soon: In 2008 – in preparation for the FIFA World Cup – the city announced that it would support a developer’s proposal to build a shopping mall on the site of the Early Morning Market. Richard and Patric could not have anticipated what would follow: three years of supporting legal challenges to save one of the oldest and largest market areas in Warwick Junction. The silver lining was that these events helped establish AeT’s identity. “The city did the branding for us by campaigning against us” says Patric. “The traders saw that we were fighting alongside them.”

A minimum of 18,000 people – about 3,000 informal workers who support, on average, 7-12 dependants on the incomes they derive from the Market precinct – would have been affected by the Early Morning Market closure. These would have been displaced by an estimated 400 temporary jobs in the proposed shopping mall.

¹ Dobson, Skinner and Nicholson. 2009. *Working in Warwick: Including street traders in urban plans*. Durban: School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

² Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) – AeT was included as a sub-grantee / partner in the Inclusive Cities Project – this provided the funding for the institutional setup of AeT as a not-for-profit.

The Building Blocks Defined: some essential enabling conditions that allow AeT to use its tools and techniques

Building Bridges

By working overtime to build relationships and to involve market traders in decision-making, AeT establishes and maintains bridgeheads in many communities and professional groups, and leverages those bridgeheads in order to facilitate effective negotiations and partnerships amongst key stakeholders.

Knowledge of City Institutions

The AeT team represents almost 50 accumulated years of working in and for the City of Durban in capacities ranging from patrol officer to design and architecture. This kind of deep institutional knowledge is one of the bedrocks of their success and must be cultivated from the collective wisdom of stakeholders at all levels.

Knowledge of Existing Local Infrastructure

Creating cities that work for everyone requires knowing the practical realities on the streets, and where gaps exist. It also requires knowing not only the state of the existing infrastructure, but how that infrastructure is being maintained and used. AeT has undertaken thorough ground-level audits of existing infrastructure using participatory research methods.

Knowledge of Informal Economy City Policy

Another important bedrock of AeT's work is facilitating the development and implementation of supportive legal and policy frameworks. This could include testing bylaws that aren't working, advocating for new policies and laws where gaps exist, and monitoring the implementation of existing laws in real time. Ultimately, this knowledge of legal and policy frameworks – and related resources – needs to be put in the hands of the workers.

Understanding of Grass-roots Solutions

In the absence of supportive urban systems, users of public space will create their own solutions using existing resources. Traders will work out their own systems for regulation and use of infrastructure, and these systems represent important precedents regarding the real time needs of informal workers who rely on access to public space to earn a living.

Forging of Local-Global Partnerships

Working with like-minded academics and organisations has increased the strength and impact of AeT's work locally, while drawing on and learning from best practices from a global sector-side network of like-minded organisations. International collaborations and exposure have created the kind of authority that can be leveraged into positive changes at home.

The founders of AeT want to be clear, though, that the city is not the enemy: The city is the dream. A vision of a vibrant city that works for all its residents is at the heart of AeT's work. Though the relationship between organisations like AeT and municipal governments could be characterized as oppositional, they shouldn't be. "Cities need co-development partners to [find] solutions," explains Richard: "Solving problems in cities is a complicated process, which does not need marginal commitments. It needs expertise from urbanists who have some time to work actively within an urban environment – not just focus on buildings." That Patric and Richard have a combined 50 years working in Warwick Junction is by no means a marginal commitment. Richard shares: "Working in the same area for 20 or 30 years might seem a little indulgent, but it's also a great test tube to interrogate the benefits and limitations of area-based management."

This publication marks not only AeT's first ten years, but also celebrates what is to come. From its chaotic beginnings, and despite the surprises that arrive on the office doorstep every day, AeT has defined a way of working. A combination of pre-existing conditions, values, rules and methods is a framework on which to hang not only the considerable successes of the past, but also the priorities of the future. The sections to follow outline AeT's 'Pathway to Securing Urban Transformation' according to the four work streams (Urban Design; Urban Intelligence; Urban Education; and Urban Advocacy), and the legacy of 'kitchen tested' participatory processes and technical innovations.



1. Urban Advocacy

/ˈædvəkəsi/
advocacy (of something) (formal) the giving of public support to an idea, a course of action, or a belief³

³ Throughout dictionary quotes are from here: https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/advocacy

Barrow Operator in the Early Morning Market, 2018. Photo: Jonathan Torgovnik



Warwick Junction Barrow Operators, 2013. Photo: Angie Buckland

Support workers (such as traders' assistants, barrow operators, storage assistants, water and kerosene suppliers, repair workers, etc.) are specialists who are indirectly dependent on the sector. An important link in the informal trader value chain are barrow operators:

- There are an estimated 800 to 1,000 barrow operators working in Warwick Junction
- Traders pay the barrow operator about R120 per week (about \$9 USD) for both transport of goods to and from the trading site each day, and overnight storage
- At the end of each day traders pack up their goods and leave their wooden boxes (locked) on their trading site, barrow operators then collect the boxes and wheel them to overnight storage and are responsible for returning the box to the traders site early the next morning, – and in some cases – guard the goods overnight
- Storage spaces owned by the city rent for about R1,600/year for 20 sqm (about \$10 USD per month)

On an evening in early March 2019, armed Durban city police officers with a compacting machine confronted barrow operators. Police were responding to goods being stacked and guarded for overnight storage outside the gates of an inadequate and overflowing facility. Traders' equipment – such as tables, chairs and portable shelters – were confiscated and destroyed.

By the following morning Patric has already been to the site to gather firsthand reports, and is getting the word out; there are strategies to plan, facts to record, bylaws to interpret, and reparation to be sought. Patric and Richard put their heads together to brainstorm.

Conflicts such as these portend a failure, and failures indicate that the complex system that is a working city may be under duress. According to Richard and Patric, vulnerabilities are inevitable: the provision of infrastructure changes the way people use a space, business practices change, putting new stress on infrastructure. Increased inventory indicates more business – which is a good thing – but also triggers an increased demand for storage. A solution that worked in the past will not necessarily work in the present or the future. Urban Advocacy is essential to bringing stakeholders continuously in line with each other, in order to find solutions that meet ever-changing needs and expectations.



Early Morning Market Protests, 2009. Photo: Demetria Tsoutouras

“ I know [Asiye eTafuleni] to be an organisation that is helpful in skilling us because there is a lot that we don't know, and lot of it we fight for but we do it wrongly because of the lack of understanding of laws and policies... They help open our minds and find ways to approach things. There are many things that are happening, like court cases. Sometimes you see that someone is arrested for nothing. This is where Asiye eTafuleni gets involved to help that person succeed where we could see that they were being harassed. ”

Khulomu Mkhize (aka Khabazela), trader leader in Brook Street, February 2019

In the aftermath of this conflict the AeT team set a time and place to take statements so that the matter could be addressed further, but barrow operators were unwilling to come forward and give evidence. Though interventions in this case won't reach to challenging the confiscations, gains have still been made. Any opportunity to build trust, or to increase awareness that a challenge is tenable, is significant. Patric explains that it's situations like this that demonstrate AeT's willingness to come alongside informal workers; in future, workers will know where to find help, and that it will be the sort of help they need to deal with a problem on their own terms. The steps made are sometimes small, and the progress limited, but the direction does not change.

This is a fitting portrait of Urban Advocacy in action – AeT style. From day to day facilitation, to longer-term strategic litigation, AeT supports both local informal workers and officials to come together in pursuit of a city that works for everyone. This work is not only about changing attitudes and perceptions of informal trading and use of public space, but also about empowering informal workers to achieve the city they want.

“Therefore the power to impound, remove and dispose of goods discriminates against street traders as members of a depressed socio-economic class which compounds their historical disadvantages. The effect of [the existing relevant bylaw section] is that it is discriminatory directly and indirectly against poor and mainly African traders.”

From the Draft Report: John Mpini Makwicana v Ethekewini Municipality, the MEC for Finance and Economic Development, The Minister of Trade and Industry and Officer K Shonken, p.9, Sect. 57



John Makicwana, 2014. Photo: Tasmi Quazi

A big problem for informal traders in Durban and throughout the world is indiscriminate law enforcement – especially when it involves confiscation and impoundment of goods (as in the example above). In 2012 AeT started to imagine the perfect scenario for strategic litigation – to test the bylaws and also the enforcement practices that had become a daily reality for traders in Warwick Junction. An opportunity arose on June 6, 2013, when police confiscated goods from a permitted trader named John Makwicana – despite Makwicana having met all requirements for lawful trading in a sanctioned space. The subsequent legal challenge and decision (spanning four years) uncovered weaknesses in existing laws, including constitutional implications regarding interactions between enforcement officials and some of the poorest and most vulnerable workers in the city. Because of the embedded constitutional challenge, workers in other cities and countries have been able to use the Makwicana decision to further their own struggles.

The AeT team uses this story to remind us that the advocacy process is dynamic, and gains must be managed in order to be sustained. Though the Makwicana Decision has become a tool for informal workers globally – the local situation is not ideal. Five years later, the ordered bylaw amendments have not been drafted. City enforcement officials are less likely to confiscate traders' goods, but are no longer visiting consequences on unpermitted traders – which has triggered significant conflicts in the trader community. The Makwicana story will result in sustainable change to inclusive city management only through continued advocacy. In Richard's words, this higher purpose is about permissions and about developing tolerance of alternative uses within a planning environment: “we are always potentially at war with expectations; not necessarily with the law.” This war with expectations – and AeT's brand of Urban Advocacy – has to be a long term undertaking.

2. Urban Design

/di 'zain/ **Design**

1. the general arrangement of the different parts of something that is made, such as a building, book, machine, etc.
2. the art or process of deciding how something will look, work, etc. by drawing plans, making models, etc.
3. a drawing or plan from which something may be made



Barrow Operator moving through Early Morning Market, 2019. Photo: Dennis Gilbert



Bovine Head Cook Xolisile Mhlongo, 2014. Photo: Angie Buckland

“And then the senior manager told us that the place is going to be demolished and that it will be like this and that, but we didn’t know anything about design and which design was more appropriate, what it would look like... so we asked Asiye eTafuleni to help us understand the designs. We discovered that the design would not work for us and that is when we got an opportunity to give our input into the design and design something that would suit us and be able to use the way we want to continue from there. ”

Xolisile Mhlongo, Bovine Head Cook, February 2019

It's a sunny Tuesday morning at the AeT office, and Richard is talking about black soldier fly larvae. Clean bones are worth money, and what bovine head cooks are now discarding could be sold on to make bone meal. Further, the fattened larvae would make excellent chicken feed at the poultry market. He has heard of some success using the larvae at other facilities in the district, and is looking into testing his thesis.

Waste management at the bovine head market is on everyone's minds on this particular morning; private contractors have failed to collect waste at Warwick Junction, including a large pile of rotting bones and meat, and the smell is becoming difficult to avoid. Though the story of the bovine head cooking market is one of relative success, it's also a reminder of two important elements of urban design interventions: infrastructure needs change over time, and good design includes built-in maintenance.

Bovine head meat is considered to be a Zulu delicacy. If prepared ceremonially it's meant to be consumed by men only, but the commercially prepared product can be touched and eaten by women.

Bovine head meat is served with steamed bread in the Warwick Junction location, where 20 cooks provide an average of 300 meals per day.

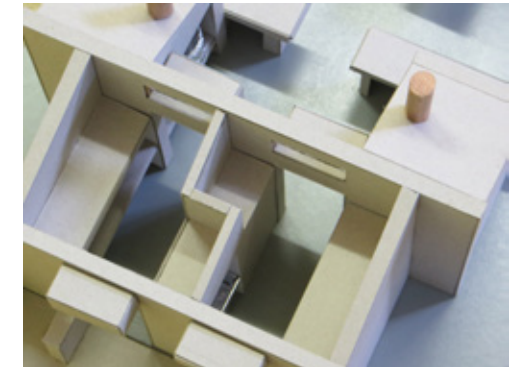


Prototype and testing the horizontal stove with the Mealie Cooks, 2018. **Photo: Emily Alter**

The demand for cooked bovine head meat has increased steadily since the 1980's when it began to appear as street food in Durban. As demand grew, so did challenges (hazardous working conditions, fat-clogged drains, and vermin), pointing to the need for purpose-based infrastructure. The city responded by making a unilateral decision to plan

and construct a new facility. When the head cooks learned that this process was unfolding without their participation they petitioned the city. They refused to vacate the existing premises ahead of the redevelopment of the site, and demanded a restarted planning process with AeT as their advisors. The cooks were then invited to participate in the redesign

process, and ultimately and ceremoniously signed off on the approved final drawings. Without a decade of working alongside AeT, it's unlikely the cooks would have had the resources to demand inclusion, or that they would now be on the brink of opening a new facility they co-designed with the municipality. The benefits of working in this redesigned



Model of the new cooking facility for Bovine Head Cooks.
Photos: Richard Dobson

space will go well beyond increased productivity for end users. As Patric says, end users are more likely to contribute to the maintenance of a facility that is working for them. However, he cautions, the city will always need to shoulder some of the maintenance burden (for instance, by collecting waste). Black soldier flies can only ever be part of the solution.



Local street food vendors, 2019. Photo: Dennis Gilbert

Mealies are a traditional and extremely popular South African Street food (also known as corn on the cob). The mealie cooking facility in Warwick Junction accommodates about 64 cooks, who have between 5 and 8 assistants each (who manage fuel supply, water supply, cooking, transport, distribution and selling), totalling about 650 to 700 workers. During the high season, a staggering 26 tonnes of mealies can be sold out of Warwick Junction each day.

A counterpoint to this success story is that of the city-provided mealie cooking facility. Mealies are cooked in 200 litre iron drums over a wood fire. Getting this potentially hazardous activity off city streets was a good idea, but the end users – the mealie cooks – were not consulted on the solution. The resulting facility has failed in a couple of basic but profound ways: The roof does not have adequate ventilation for the smoke and heat produced by the cooking fires, and the raised concrete cooking plinths have been designed in such a way that the cooks are required to lift and move immense drums of boiling water during the cooking process. Unlike the bovine head cooks, the mealie cooks opted to use the provided infrastructure and have been suffering the resulting consequences of increased respiratory complaints, burns and other injuries. The majority of mealie cooks have taken to doing their work in the passageways outside the building rather than in the building itself.

Working alongside the mealie cooks, AeT began to search for ways to overcome the health and safety issues exacerbated – in large part – by the new facility. In partnership with student interns from MIT's technical engineering faculty AeT has accumulated extensive knowledge regarding the dynamics and challenges of work as a mealie cook. Based on this knowledge and ongoing consultation, AeT has spearheaded the drive for a more efficient and safer mealie stove – the pilot of which has been named 'Qeda usizi' by the cooks: literally 'end [our] suffering' in isiZulu.

Working with mealie cooks, AeT is seeking the necessary resources to produce more 'Qeda usizi' stoves based on the pilot. Richard predicts that within 3 years the bovine head cooks will have achieved a state of the art facility that is zero waste, with value added products such as bone meal and chicken feed. If success is achieved in either of these scenarios it will be down to the cooks themselves leading the innovation shoulder to shoulder with AeT. According to AeT's urban design principles, this long term investment in the community will proceed according to the cyclical growth and change of business practices and the related demands on infrastructure. This is the iterative and patient nature of the AeT Urban Design work stream.

3. Urban Education

/'u:ban/ **Urban**
connected with a
town or city

/,edzu'keijn/
Education
a process of
teaching, training
and learning,
especially in schools
or colleges, to
improve knowledge
and develop skills;
an interesting
experience that
teaches you
something



School students on a Markets of Warwick walking tour. **Photo: Asiyé eTafuleni**



Early Morning Market, 2019. Photo: Dennis Gilbert

“I was afraid to talk to people about this area. I didn’t think it was important to talk about street trading. But after I started this tour, many people really appreciate what we are doing.”

Toe Shozi, bead vendor and Markets of Warwick Tour Guide

AeT has hosted upwards of 15,000 people – ranging from school children to foreign dignitaries – on the educational Markets of Warwick Tour. As trained guides, market traders are instrumental in raising awareness regarding the size and importance of Durban’s informal economy.

“[AeT finds itself] in between a sort of old paradigm of development... and paving the way toward a new way of working.”

Erik Lønne, Anthropologist, PhD Candidate and AeT Intern during 2017.

One of AeT’s self-professed highest purposes is to challenge assumptions regarding the way cities are planned, designed, managed and used. Locally, this could mean fostering increased awareness and cultural bridges in cities like Durban, whose maps are drawn by a history of racial, political and socio-economic divides. Regionally, this could mean introducing built environment professionals and students of all levels to informal economy dynamics in the context of an urbanist agenda. This could also mean active exchanges with decision makers of the future.

At the centre of these challenges to the status quo is AeT’s ‘Urban Education’ work stream. From the Markets of Warwick Tour Project to curriculum development and professional development programmes, to hosting hundreds of local and international university students; AeT is not only raising the profile of informal workers as important contributors to city life, but is potentially influencing the cities of the future.

The national final examination paper for graduating high school geography students now contains an entire section of questions on the ‘informal sector’ – in large part due to AeT’s work in its Urban Education Stream.

Reflections from Interns

Rebecca Plumbley, Graduate student of City Planning, South Africa:

“One of the things that's really quite amazing about the work that [AeT] has done over a period of time is investment in understanding why people do the things they do.” Rebecca uses the example of the designing of a new stove for mealie cooks, and explains that while design professionals might have assumed that a gas burning stove was superior to a wood burning one, AeT observed the cooks for many years to learn why they were using wood instead of gas.”

Erik Lønne, Anthropologist and PhD Candidate, Norway

“[Patric] told me once that he never approaches people only when he needs something from them but approaches to ask about their day, their families...intimate knowledge of people's everyday lives is the foundation for all the other work that they do.” Erik goes further to say that this AeT way of working has inspired him to reconsider the way and to what extent he includes research subjects in his methodologies, and to practice this AeT trend toward the 'continuous and ever-present dialogue' that is ongoing consultation.”

Trang Luu, Graduate Student of Technical Engineering, USA

“[During my internship with AeT] I learned that there are a lot of gaps in my experience as an engineer; what are the societal and cultural consequences of my solution? I realized that my training as an engineer was technical, and missing the anthropological aspect, and that not every problem has a technical or engineering solution.”

Dorothee Huber, Architect, Austria

“As architects we tend to look from outside instead of asking people what they want. My design students will learn to go there and talk to the people and find out their issues and include [this information] in designs; to get to know the area and local needs.”



Former intern, Toe Shozi, participating in a street survey.
Photo: Richard Dobson.



Former intern, Lihle Nyawo, participating in a street survey.
Photo: Chantal Froneman

Stories of impact are myriad. There are the stories of nervous locals who arrived for tours afraid to enter the infamous Warwick Junction, and went home feeling sheepish about having ever cultivated the bias. There's the story of a tour participant who became injured while separated from her group, received care and first aid from nearby traders (thanks to AeT's first aid programmes), who then escorted her back to the AeT offices. There are stories of tourism workers and hosts who have become comfortable sending their guests and clients to tour a part of the city that would not have been on their map of options in the past. No one at the AeT offices would characterize Warwick Junction as a consequence-free paradise, but it is a far more welcoming place than it once was. On a local level, the hard lines that might have existed at one time are showing signs of fading.

There is no less evidence of impact at regional and international levels – the nature of which is exemplified by the stories coming out of AeT's internship programme. Over the years, AeT has hosted student interns from undergraduates to PhD candidates, from universities and technical schools all over the world, in faculties ranging from development studies, anthropology and social work to engineering, architecture and urban planning. In addition, AeT has provided one-year internships to local informal workers (to date there have been eight worker internships).



*AeT staff members at one of the routine on-site meetings with informal worker leaders, pictured in front of the old Parish Centre where the new Dennis Hurley Centre was erected in 2013 **Photo: Tasmî Quazi***

What AeT is building through its internship programme is a vanguard of change makers. These are the urbanists of the future: architects, planners, designers, engineers, anthropologists, teachers and academics who will be making decisions that affect the way public space is used, and the way urban infrastructure is provided.

There are strong indications that the 'AeT experience' has left a permanent mark on these leaders of the future, and one of the most profound influences lies in practicing inclusivity at all levels of intervention. Interns are inspired by AeT's investment in long-term relationships and collaboration with end users in order to uncover meaningful and sustainable solutions. Interns learn to grasp the scope of the informal economy and its contributions – locally and globally – for the powerhouse that it is.

AeT is also keen to recognize the contributions that interns – in turn – have made to the organisation. In the words of intern Erik Lønne, there are layers to these benefits: "The interns are such different people... and contribute from many different angles [and sectors]. The interns are dispersing the AeT learnings and the methodologies and the ways of working out into the world, which is a goal itself for AeT... to distribute their learnings to other sectors." In this way, AeT has and will continue to shape inclusive urbanist practices well into the future.

4. Urban Intelligence

/in'telidzans/ **Intelligence**

the ability to learn, understand and think in a logical way about things; the ability to do this well



Warwick Junction Early Morning Market, 2007. Photo: Dennis Gilbert



Warwick Junction Herb Market, 2011. **Photo: Andrew Griffin**

The co-founders of AeT believe that to do their work well they must be essentially curious. As an example of this curiosity in practice, Richard submits the humble bread crate: “The size of a bread crate makes it an amazingly versatile object; one is a baby bed, two together are a perfect water cart. People are using them for all kinds of things all over the market. Which

came first; the crate or the job it's doing? How are the crates getting on the street? Are they stolen? You need to be intrigued by questions like this.” Patric talks about a city moratorium on regulating traders immediately after the fall of apartheid. “[The traders] figured out their own solutions,” he says, “and some of those solutions are still valuable. Good intentions are not suf-

ficient,” he adds, “You must watch”. Continuous and diligent watching and questioning is how Patric and Richard uncover solutions. Why do some traders choose relatively hazardous places to work? Why do some traders prefer to display merchandise on the ground instead of on a table? Why are there always baskets for sale next to Impepho? Why are some types of clay

pots sold in some areas of the market and not others? Richard and Patric know that if providers of infrastructure have not considered questions like these, then their solution might cause more harm than good. “In most cases” Richard says, “the street solution just needs a bit of sophistication, and – in some cases – validation.”



Table Design Proposal Using Existing Materials. **Photo: Angie Buckland Sketch: Richard Dobson**

Take, for example, trading tables. In the pre-AeT days when Patric and Richard were employed by the city of Durban, city workers designed new tables for the traders as part of the improvements to the Early Morning Market. Traders were not consulted on the design of the tables – which were created to replace the makeshift furniture being used. These new tables consisted of concrete boxes fitted with steel doors to facilitate overnight storage. Unfortunately, a locked steel door was more of an enticement than a deterrent, and the boxes were often broken into overnight. The city responded by installing stronger doors. By now the traders were unwilling to store goods in the boxes, but homeless people found them to be an excel-

lent sleeping place as the doors could be barred from the inside. Further, these concrete boxes made effective hiding places for offenders, and the incidence of crime in the area increased. To date these tables still exist, but the bottoms have been opened up to decrease their attractiveness as a sleeping or hiding place.

In other areas of the market – where display tables were self-provided – city officials set a new standard: all traders were now required to have folding steel tables. According to Richard, this was a disaster: the tables that the traders procured were expensive but of poor quality. For those who worked with liquids the surfaces of the inferior tables became

rusty and porous. They were difficult to store, and valuable enough to attract thieves. Further, the metal became extremely hot in the sun to the extent that perishables (such as fruits and vegetables) literally cooked while on display.

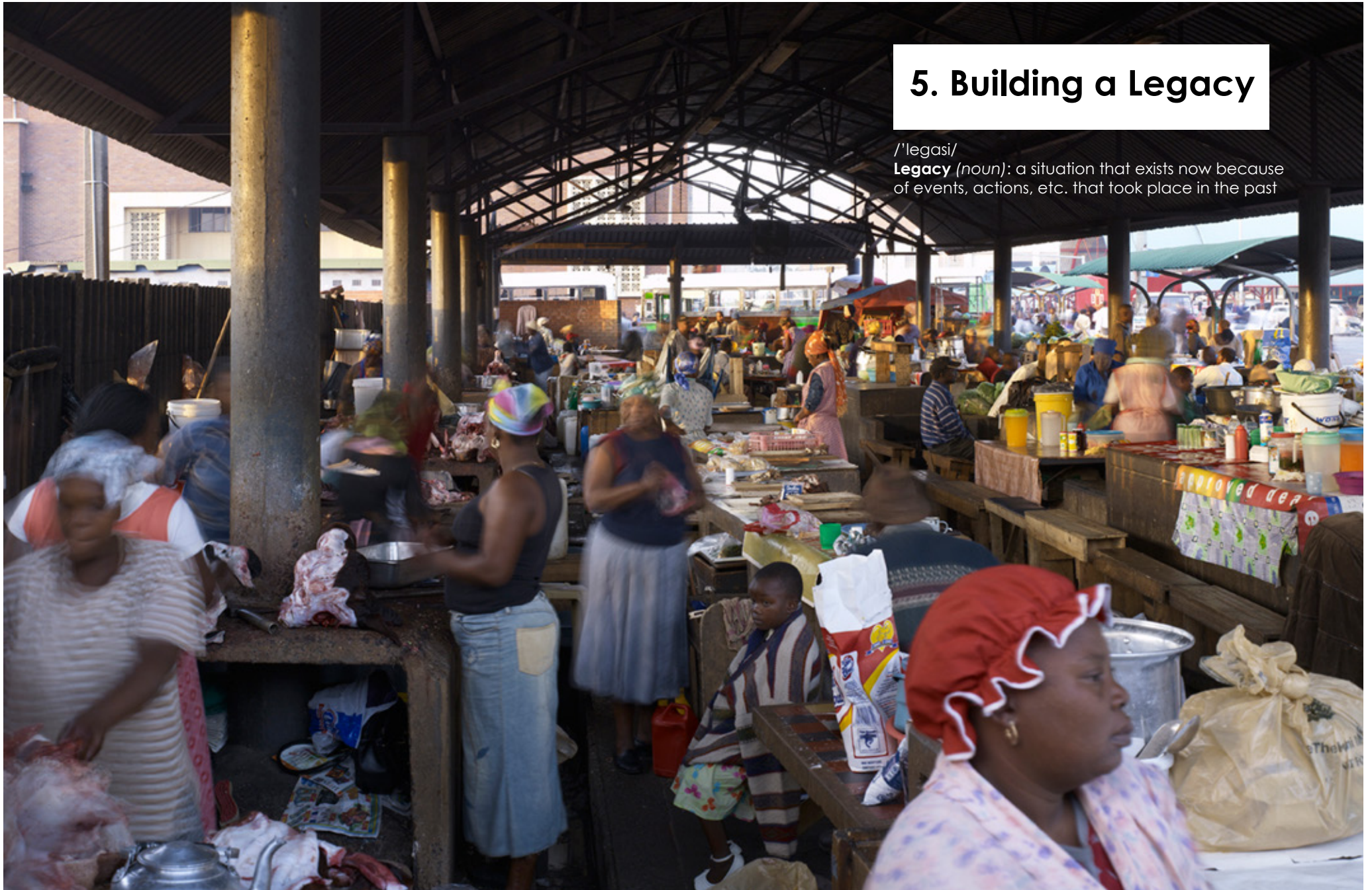
For Richard and Patric, going back to the drawing board meant deploying Urban Intelligence. The wooden pallet tables traders had been using were efficient, easy to store, and not attractive to thieves – but the downside was a shabby appearance and lack of hygiene (not ‘foodsafe’). As in many other examples, Richard and Patric relied on the solutions that the traders devised with the addition of a little finesse. Richard proposed a new and improved

table design sourced from the same pallet wood. Patric went from street to street handing out a drawing of the plans and getting feedback, and enlisted a local carpenter to build the first few prototypes. The addition of an impervious vinyl tablecloth for food sellers took care of the hygiene problem. Richard refers to this result as a “good example of the light touch of design with the springboard of Urban Intelligence – minimum impact for the user, affordable, aesthetically acceptable, easy to store, and not attractive to thieves.” There was no need – in the end – to design a solution, but rather to find the one that was already there and polish it. This is the nature of the Urban Intelligence work stream.

5. Building a Legacy

/ˈlegəsi/

Legacy (*noun*): a situation that exists now because of events, actions, etc. that took place in the past



Bovine Head Cooks Facility. Photo: Dennis Gilbert



The Phephanathi Project ("be safe with us." in isiZulu). **Photo: Richard Dobson.**

“I am thankful for [AeT’s] patience because people are not the same, I come with my things and another person comes with theirs, but they are patient. And also, I wish that Asiye eTafuleni could grow and be respected. At this time all the things that are supposed to be done by Business Support Unit where we pay rent, they are done by Asiye eTafuleni. ”

Xolisile Mhlongo, Bovine Head Cook, February 2019

As its first decade draws to a close, AeT’s work has caught the attention of people who want to celebrate it, laud it, and tell others about it. They also want to know if AeT’s methods can benefit similar work in other cities. Though the evolution of the work is rooted in a particular place and set of circumstances (not to mention the brilliance and dedication of the team at the helm), there are precedents, learnings and tools that can be shared more broadly.

Underlying all of AeT’s work is a basic and heartfelt understanding that achievements are not static. Working with people is an iterative process. Even tremendous success puts strain on expectations and infrastructure over time, and must be monitored in order to be sustained. Further, risk is inherent in managing changes of any kind. When workers demand infrastructure upgrades, or make legal challenges, they make themselves vulnerable. They are doing something that is essentially difficult, and – in some cases – doing it on behalf of the community rather than just themselves (as the legacy of John Makwicana attests). In light of these sometimes profound risks, the most important tools in AeT’s chest are, in fact, **trust, respect, transparency** and **patience**; the anchors of AeT’s social facilitation method.

Whether the operating principles to follow are received as a manifesto or a to-do list, it should be understood that the essential element here is time; if the success of AeT has taught us anything, it is that deep commitment, long-term investment, and patience are what works.

Asiye eTafuleni Social Facilitation Operating Principles Trust–Respect–Transparency–Patience

RELATIONSHIP

- Everything begins and ends with trust. Trust building is a long-term process, built on relationships that are responsive, personal, open, friendly and respectful.
- Rather than a transactional approach to relationships, intentional networking and referrals is an effective way to consistently expand reach.
- Meetings should be held on the terms and timing of the informal workers, including in the preferred location where possible.
- Leaders are to be invited to meetings without expectation or demand. Leaders should always agree on who will be in the room for specific meetings.
- Relationships must be based on respect, an assumption of equality of all people and parties.
- Offer respect first, and then humour, to dissolve tensions.
- Respect and respond to cultural differences.

DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING

- Build urban intelligence to know who's who within the city, police and other relevant departments, understanding the people, functions, roles and vested interests of all parties. Monitor who has access, privilege and power and how this shifts over time.
- Build a deep understanding of physical space and daily lived realities of informal workers operating at the heart of the city, beginning with understanding who owns the problem and who must live with the implications of a decision or solution. Then translate this knowledge for workers and city officials as needed.

RESPONSIVE

- Go the extra mile to respond to the needs of workers, which requires on-the-ground involvement.
- Be responsive to the needs and issues of workers, including personal issues when invited, following up and checking in on a regular basis.

NEUTRALITY

- Do not act on behalf of a community, or speak for them – support informal workers to speak for themselves.
- Never impose agreements(?) and remain open to alternatives.
- Seed ideas and options, but release ownership of them.
- Offer yourselves as a neutral body between the city and informal workers, showing respect for all parties, without undermining, belittling or intimidating either side.
- It's important not to show favouritism to particular leaders or groups.
- Build on victories and community strengths.
- Don't claim credit for successes and refuse to be heroes, expecting the community to own their decisions and allowing others (including the city) to shine.
- It's important to cultivate collective ownership of victories and failures.

COMMUNICATION

- Interpret technical and city process information for workers, always admitting when the answer and solutions for issues raised are unknown.
- Do not lie.
- Communicate openly and in language (including visual language and physical models) all parties will understand.
- Be open in all communication with all parties, fair and firm as needed.

ITERATION

- Listen and observe to truly understand the issues, personalities and agendas at hand.
- Be aware that there is always a cross-section of opinion and those that are silent in a meeting will still have opinions. We continually consult and reality-check to confirm our understanding.
- Understand that you don't have the only answer and be open to critique.
- Have long-term intentions and choose patience over expedience. No short term gain where long-term damage would result.
- Assume, and expect, that review of decisions taken is a normal part of the process to embed the decision, respecting mandates and community representation.

6. Milestones







Entry level opportunity for street vendors who supply their own vending equipment. *Photo: Richard Dobson*

Milestones 2008 to 2018

2018	64 Horizontal Cookstoves	65 Isiphingo Commission	66 Herb Market Fire Response	67 Incident Forums	68 Gender and Energy Research	69 LAP Analysis	70 Municipal Workshops	71 World Bank Webinar	72 Recycler Trolleys	73 WRI Ross Prize for Cities
2017	57 New City Bylaws	58 Biogas Research	59 Breastfeeding Project	60 Bovine Head Cooks Facility	61 Bovine Head Cookstoves	62 Curry Stone Prize	63 Lagos Consultation			
2016	48 Cape Town Consultation	49 Bogota Exchange	50 Venice Biennale	51 UN-Habitat III	52 Bead Market Redevelopment	53 Mealie Cooks Facility	54 Public Lavatories Project	55 Know Your Rights' Training	56 Taxi Industry Workshop	
2015	42 Hearing Conservation Programme	43 Bovine Head Cookstoves	44 Local Area Plan	45 Non-Motorised Transport Policy	46 Nuisance Bylaws	47 Cape Town Violence Protection				
2014	32 Phephanathi Project	33 Kanyenathi Project	34 100 Resilient Cities Network	35 Makwicana Legal Case	36 Berea Station Mall	37 Informal Economy Budget Analysis	38 Tech & the Future of Work	39 Lime & Impepho Market Upgrades	40 UIA Congress	41 Johannesburg Consultation
2013	26 Ergonomics Project	27 Recycling Facility	28 Social Work with Recyclers	29 Denis Hurley Centre	30 Eye Testing	31 Mealie Cooks Analysis				
2012	21 IEMS Research	22 Health Screenings	23 Urban Training Course	24 AfriSam-SAIA Commended Award	25 Mayor's Award for Excellence					
2011	15 Herb Market Upgrading	16 Curriculum Development	17 Smithsonian Exhibit	18 Exposure Dialogues	19 COP17 in Durban	20 Drivers of Change Award				
2010	9 Legal Advocacy: Barrow-Operators	10 Legal Advocacy: Storage	11 Legal Advocacy: Mealie Cooks	12 Legal Advocacy: Recyclers	13 First Markets of Warwick Tours	14 First Aid Training				
2009	4 Early Morning Market Advocacy	5 Law Programme Starts	6 Informal Recycling Project	7 Markets of Warwick Project	8 Global Economic Crisis Research					
2008	1 AeT FOUNDED	2 Inclusive Cities Project	3 Working in Warwick Book							

LEGEND:

-  urban design
-  urban intelligence
-  urban education
-  urban advocacy

Refer to Appendix: AeT10 Milestones and Glossary

6. Conclusion



Entrance to Berea Station, 2019. Photo: Dennis Gilbert

“I would like to see this place as a place that has been developed in a way that covers everybody. From the citizens, the visitors to the city and us who are working here and cover businesses who are investing in this place in a way that we all work together to keep this area clean. Because it has good history to us, we are the ones who know how it was when we first arrived and how it is now and how it should be.”

Khulomu Mkhize (aka Khabazela),
trader leader in Brook Street,
February 2019



Khuloomu Mkhize. **Photo: Kristine Rod**

Richard tells a story of a woman who participated in a Markets of Warwick tour several years ago, asking questions regarding the marks on the pavement demarcating the sanctioned trading spaces. “You mean,” she realized “that these lines allow someone to trade here.” She then bent toward the ground and reverently stroked the painted lines with her fingers. This was an ‘aha’ moment for Richard. “I realized that we take these things hugely for granted – that a bit of paint on the ground can totally change someone’s life”. This exemplifies what is important about the AeT point of view: sanctioned inclusion leads to lasting change when inclusive planning truly meets the needs of end users. Take the example of a city sidewalk over-crowded with traders. Some observers might resolve to somehow reduce the size of the crowd, while others – like Patric or Richard – might resolve to make the sidewalk bigger.

The curious observer wants to determine why the traders are in that location despite potential hazards or increased competition. Patric reminds us that the traders purpose is not to cause problems, but “to make a living. They are trying to feed their families.” This is, after all, what urban citizens need to be able to do, and it is in the city’s best interest to promote their prosperity. AeT will continue – in their deep and patient way – to nurture positive change (in all of its iterations) for a sector of workers among the poorest and most marginalized in the city. In short: to make sure that everyone has a seat at the table.



Co-founders, Richard Dobson and Patric Ndlovu. Photo: Toni Ottanelli-Gale

Reflecting back on the years that Patric and I have been working alongside informal workers in the City, they feature as a unique privilege. Unique in that the greater part of what is recognized to have been achieved is despite our efforts. Patric's skilful facilitation created the opportunities to intervene with design interventions that only became a reality because of the participation of informal workers. This has created the notable distinction that Warwick Junction has sustained its presence for street vendors and market traders for almost 25 years – arguably two generations. This accolade is theirs; despite the frustration of punitive and ambivalent administration by the City, transformation has emerged. This urban environment that now has sufficient, embedded, place-making inertia, will hopefully propagate similar city districts and embolden a wider community of informal workers to solidify their presence in public spaces. To have shared the prospect of this being realized with the wider AeT team, all of whom have equally contributed over the years, has been truly wonderful.

Richard Dobson



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