

RESEARCH WORKSHOP  
SEMINAR SERIES 2025

# A multidisciplinary approach to the study of Urban Crisis: A focus on the City of Johannesburg

8 MAY

Time: 1-3pm

Venue: PARI OFFICES

Register to attend in person

AND ONLINE

<https://rebrand.ly/oj7ftbp>

## Acts on Decent and Insurgent Architectures

by THIRESHEN GOVENDER

We are in a state of urban free fall—an accelerating poly-crisis shaped by deep bureaucratic, social, and political entanglements that hinder meaningful change. Despite our expertise and resources, we continue to fail in imagining and building inclusive, prosperous African cities. The urban landscape is increasingly defined by unchecked informal networks, broad systemic failures and privatised growth that fortifies inequality. In this moment, we must move beyond naive optimism and instead engage with the urgency and complexity of our condition. As an architect and urbanist, I am interested in the role of design to materially and imaginatively provide for stabilisation and prosperity in volatile, resource-scarce contexts. South Africa's townships, with their raw, unregulated, and entrepreneurial dynamics, offer critical insight into how collapse and emergence coexist. These spaces present opportunities to rethink urbanity—not through distant ideals, but by confronting present realities and mobilising our creative, intellectual, and economic capacities for immediate, grounded transformation. There's a hunch, that the emergent languages and practices from the townships, critically framed, may provide a tangible and imaginative approach to thinking about the future of Johannesburg's urban spaces.

**THIRESHEN GOVENDER** is a Johannesburg-based architect, urbanist, and researcher, and the founder of UrbanWorks, a design-research studio focused on transformative infrastructures in post-traumatic urban contexts. His work—spanning authorship, international teaching, and research explores informal economies, speculative design, and the hidden forces shaping cities in crisis.

### DISCUSSANTS

**PAULO MOREIRA** is an architect and Centennial Postdoctoral Fellow at CUBES (Centre for Urbanism and Built Environment Studies) in the School of Architecture and Planning at Wits University.

**BONGANI XEZWI** was born and raised in Soweto. He is a national organiser for Budget Justice Coalition, with 22 years organising experience in mass-based democratic organisations. A trained researcher, he has conducted research with mine workers, reclaimers and working-class communities on a range of topics and has co-authored numerous publications.