

in Potchefstroom

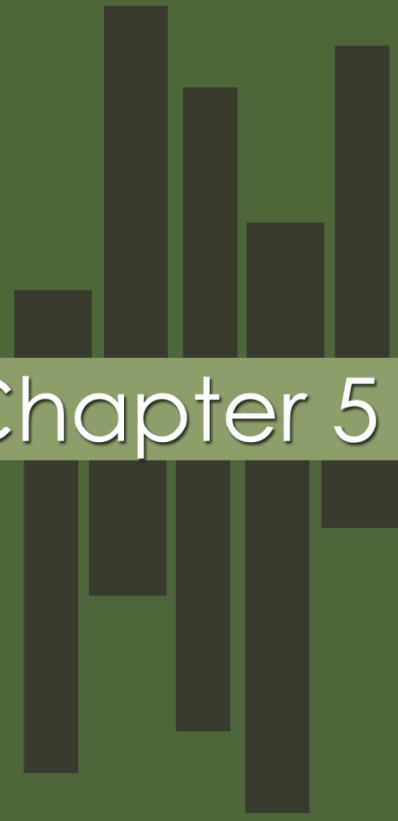
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Central Business District

Chapter 5 - Exploring social systems in the Potchefstroom Central Business District

5.1 Introduction

Cities are considered complex human social systems (Newman, 2010:1). Acknowledging urban social systems as building blocks in spatial environments helps to create social awareness, which in turn contributes to more sustainable urban environments. The literature study in the aforementioned chapters suggests that it is essential to acknowledge urban social systems in urban renewal initiatives. Research about social systems and their role in urban renewal is limited, especially in the South African context where inner cities continue to decline and urban renewal projects are implemented (Beavon, 2004:4). This chapter is a step towards understanding social systems in one of many South African central business areas where inner city decline and urban decay remain constant challenges (Reece, 2009:45; Donaldson & Du Plessis, 2013:296). This chapter primarily aims to understand the underlying social dynamics in an existing urban context by exploring the behaviour and interactions of social systems. The lessons learned from this study and the methods applied may provide valuable insight to serve as foundation for similar contexts elsewhere in South Africa.

5.2 Research Context

5.2.1 Location

The research was conducted in the Central Business Area of Potchefstroom, a medium sized city located in the North West Province of South Africa. Potchefstroom Central Business District is located in the centre of the built-up area of Potchefstroom, demarcated (figure 5-3) as follows:

- North: Retief Street
- South: Du Plooy street
- East: Govan Mbeki Avenue, with exception of the Mooi Rivier Mall on the Eastern boundary (See Figure 5-3)
- West: Dr Beyers Naude Street

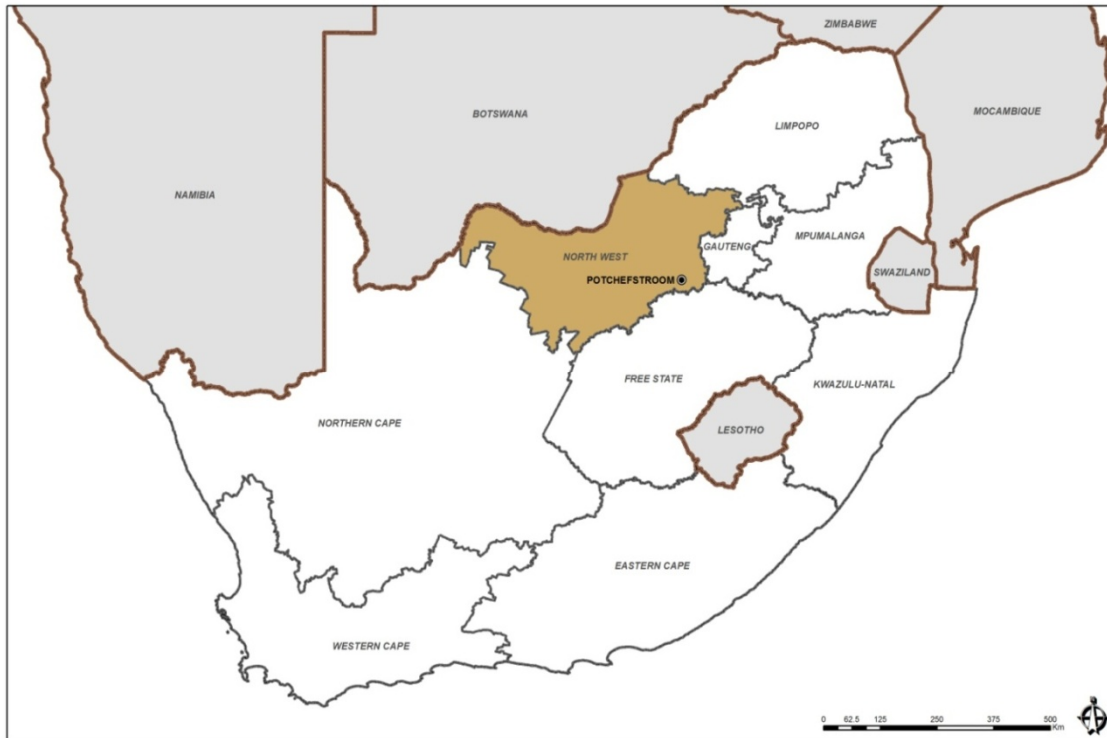


Figure 5-1 - Location of Potchefstroom in South Africa (Source: Compiled by GISCOE, 10 August 2012)



Figure 5-2 - Location of Potchefstroom in the North-West Province (Source: Compiled by GISCOE, 10 August 2012)

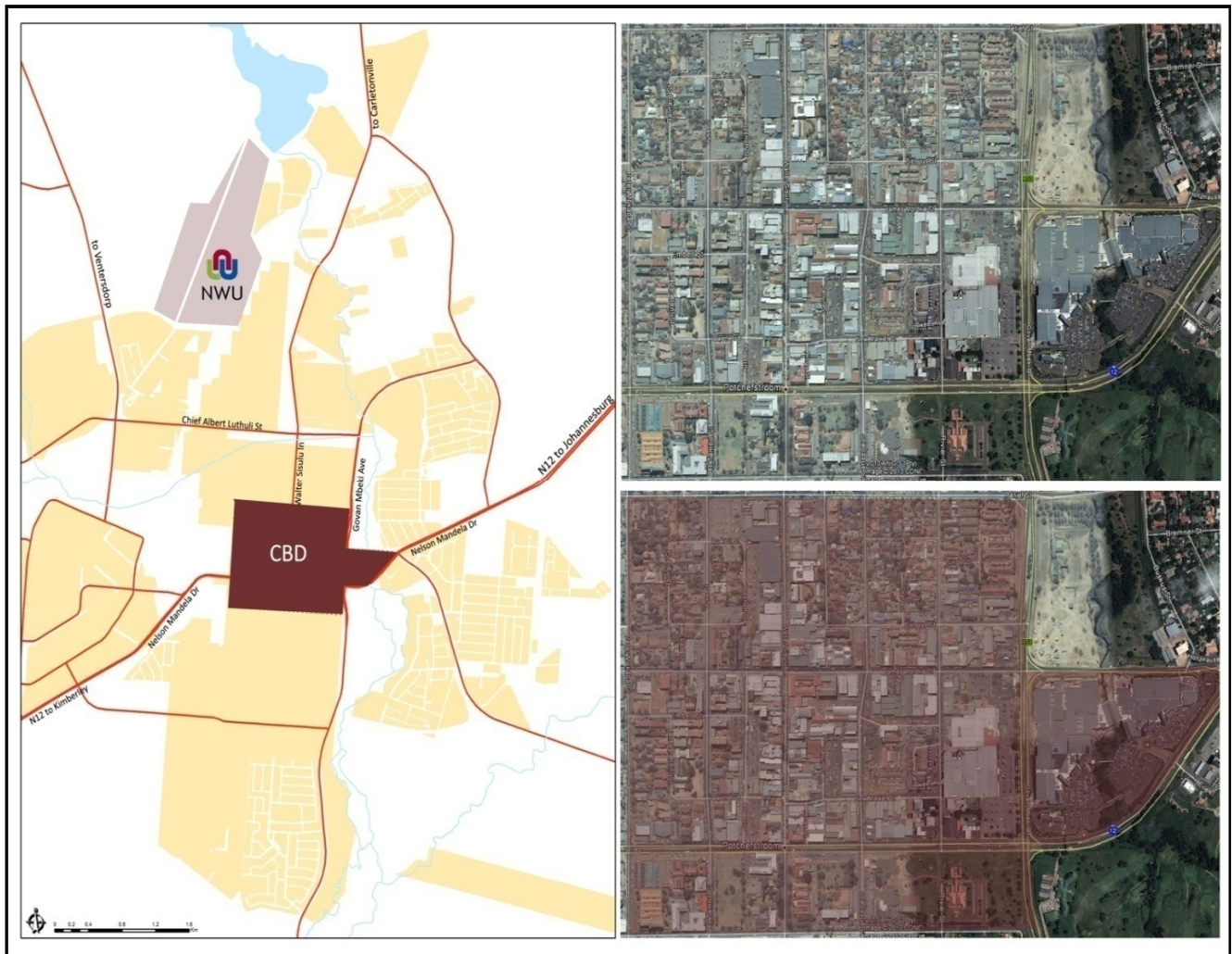


Figure 5-3 - Potchefstroom Central Business District (Source: Compiled by GISCOE, 10 August 2012)

5.2.2 Background of research context

According to the census executed in 2011, the North West Province has had a 14.9% increase in population, making it the second fastest growing province in the country (Statistics South Africa, 2012). In order to see if this increase could be subject to natural growth, the census done in 2011 included questions that indicates the cause of population changes, and this showed a surprising high in-flow of people into the North West province, along with the Mpumalanga and Gauteng provinces (Statistics South Africa, 2012). This brought the urbanisation rate in the province to around 33% (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Due to this increase in the province Potchefstroom has been identified as a primary regional node (South Africa, 2008) and one of six urban growth areas in the North West Province (South Africa, 2005). Economic development within Potchefstroom is considered important because of the interest placed in a growing urban environment (South Africa, 2006). Potchefstroom CBD was therefore earmarked for strategic interventions such as urban renewal initiatives (South Africa, 2006).

5.2.3 Motivation for research context

According to Statistics South Africa (2012) between the 2007 and 2011 census, the decentralisation of higher order commercial activity in urban centres countrywide has been as much as 29%. In Potchefstroom the decentralisation of the private sector away from the urban centre has been a problem for the past fifteen years, creating room for informal economic activity (South Africa, 2006). The Southern District Joint Development Forum (SDJDF), (2006) has identified Potchefstroom CBD as an area that experiences severe urban decay and further stated that decay in medium-sized cities such as Potchefstroom usually occur in fast and concentrated intervals. The study initiated by the SDJDF (referred to as the Potchefstroom Revitalisation Strategy) has up until now not been executed yet. As previously stated by Okaba and Nte (2008), urban decay in this context reflects a typical African area because of (1) an influx of the informal business sector; (2) the migration of higher order commercial activity; (3) esthetical decay and (4) social problems. The following figure illustrates the influx of the informal business sector and esthetical problems in the CBD of Potchefstroom.



Figure 5-4 – The typical African urban centre (Potchefstroom) (Source: Photograph taken by researcher, 10 April 2012)

Marais and Ntema (2013:86) argue that the influx of the informal business sector within the urban centre could be viewed from two perspectives: (1) the African perspective according to which this type of influx is very positive for the urban centre; and (2) the Western perspective according to which it is seen as the reason for urban decay. According to McKeever (2006:79) the existence of the informal business sector in South Africa is inevitable, therefore a new perspective is needed that incorporates both views identified by Marais and Ntema (2013:86). Newman (2010:45) suggests that the understanding of the social dynamics could help the understanding of these phenomena. Geyer (2004:804) argues that the influx of the informal

business sector could be harmful for the central business district since, from a western perspective there is a need to formalise the sector, and this could destroy it. Having said this, the importance of intervention is being over stated. Furthermore, it has been suggested that incorporation of the social aspects of the area and not just the economic and physical aspects could benefit a renewal programme (South Africa, 2006). Furthermore, the Mission statement of the Tlokwe Municipality emphasises the need for social understanding within an economic sphere as this enjoys a high priority in the development choices made (South Africa, 2006). This study supports this goal on local level and therefore aims to take a step towards understanding and proactively incorporating social urban systems when decisions about Potchefstroom's CBD are made in future. This background contributed to the motivation for this study context as a suitable context for exploring social systems.

5.3 Research design

5.3.1 A qualitative research approach as point of departure

There is no single, accepted way of doing qualitative research. Ritchie and Lewis (2004:1) explain that a qualitative study depends on a range of factors such as beliefs about the nature of the social world and what can be known about it (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired (epistemology), the purpose or purposes and goals of the research, the characteristics of the research and the position and environment of the researchers themselves (Ritchie & Lewis, 2004:1). They furthermore explain the term qualitative research as an overarching category, covering a wide range of approaches and methods found within different research disciplines (Richie & Lewis, 2004:2). This study is situated within a post-modern view of the social world and is based on the belief that knowledge is generated through a mutual understanding between the researcher and the researched. A qualitative research approach was therefore chosen as the orientation for this study.

Despite various views of qualitative research, a number of writers have attempted to capture the essence of qualitative research. Richie and Lewis' (2004:2) definition was chosen as a guideline for this research in which qualitative research is described as:

"... a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos."

According to Harry Wolcott (2001:15) qualitative research is a scientific research method used in various abstract research environments such as studying the patterns of animals and humans. It is motivated as scientific because it shares the following scientific characteristics:

- seeks answers to a question;
- systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question;
- collects evidence;
- produces findings that were not determined in advance; and
- produces findings that are applicable to other situations.

Additionally, it seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population which it involves, as in the case of this study.

5.3.2 A qualitative approach as appropriate for this study

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2002:133) a study that contributes to a human, social aspect of town planning, does not focus on physical quantitative aspects but is rather qualitative in nature. An exploration of social systems aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of these phenomena in its context is therefore more likely to be approached from a qualitative perspective.

Both Wolcott (2001:12) and Forrester (1969:21) regard the strength of qualitative research as the ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a certain issue. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socio-economic status, gender roles, social systems, ethnicity, and religion, even when the role of these elements may not be readily apparent in the research material (Wolcott, 2001:16). Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations (Wolcott, 2001:15). According to Ritchie and Lewis (2004:2) qualitative research therefore provides information about the “human” side of a matter. As this study is focused on interactions between human groups, a qualitative research approach seems more suitable to explore and create an understanding of the phenomena at study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2004: 2).

Qualitative research uses many forms of inquiry, such as ethnography, the methodological framework chosen for this research.

5.3.3 Methodological framework: Ethnographic research

Ethnography is a highly useful methodology for addressing a range of research questions within the social sphere of research (Reeves et al., 2008:2). It can in particular generate rich detailed accounts of social behaviour and the relationship between certain identified groups (Wolcott, 2001:13). This is the reason why it was chosen as the overarching methodology for this study.

5.3.3.1 Definition of ethnographic research

Ethnography is the study of social interactions, behaviours and perceptions that occur within group, teams, organisations, and communities (Reeves et al., 2008:2). Reeves et al. (2008:1) state that the central aim of ethnography is to provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as into the their environment, including things such as sights and sounds of the location they inhabit, through the collection of detailed observations and interviews (Wolcott, 2001:15). The task of ethnographers is to document the culture, the perspectives and practices of the people in particular settings (Wolcott, 2001:14). Leedy and Ormrod (2002:134) state that group related dynamics are also seen as ethnographic research.

5.3.3.2 Characteristics of ethnographic research

The following key features of ethnographic research situate this particular research clearly within this research method as an appropriate choice for this study.

Table 5-1 – Key features of ethnographic research

Ethnographic research
• Explores the nature of a particular social phenomenon, rather than the setting.
• A tendency to work with “unstructured data” that has not been coded at the point of data collection.
• Investigation of one case or a small number of cases in detail.
• Analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions; the product of this analysis primarily takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations.

(Source: adapted from Reeves et al., 2008)

5.3.3.3 Motivation for research methodology

This particular study is ethnographic in nature because it aims to capture and explore the nature of the social phenomenon in the physical setting. The focus lies not with the physical CBD or study area, but with the people in the area. The data that was captured can be identified as unstructured data that still needs coding, giving the ideal setting for reflecting on the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2002:133). Detailed exploration of each case is important as each case could identify a very important analysis that needs explicit interpretation. The key features in ethnographic research gives guidelines on how to scientifically understand and interpret data (Reeves et al., 2008:1). As the qualitative ethnographic research forms the design for understanding the role of the social systems within the urban environment, there are particular research methods that support this research tradition.

5.3.4 Research methods

Various qualitative methods for data collection are appropriate for this type of research. According to Wolcott (2001:21) the most common of these methods are observations, interviews and focus groups. Observation and interviews were chosen to collect data in this case as these methods are suited for obtaining the specific type of in-depth data and findings needed (Leedy & Ormrod, 2002:133).

5.3.4.1 Observations

Maree (2007:83) defines observations as the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. Authors such as Maree (2007:84) and Creswell (2007:36) consider observations as primarily useful to enable the researcher to gain deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon being observed. That is why researchers use senses such as seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting and intuition collectively to gather data (Maree, 2007:84). Observations are essential data gathering techniques as it holds the possibility of providing the researcher with an insider perspective of the group dynamics and behaviours in different settings (Maree, 2007:84; Creswell, 2007:37). In this case of this research, an etic view (view from the outside) was chosen for observations in the study area (Leedy & Ormrod, 2002:135).

Observations are appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviours in their normal and usual contexts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2002:134). In this case social systems are explored within the area that is the natural context in which these systems operate on a daily basis (Wolcott, 2001:21). In the context of this research, the observations of social systems were done in the natural environment where no extraneous interference occurs. The researcher made the observations as a non-participant observer. Wolcott (2001:21) highlights that it is ideal for collecting primary data of social behaviour. Using non-participant observations implies (1) observing the actual behaviour without interference, which is much more reliable and gives a good description of the behaviour; (2) that the research setting is difficult to participate in; and finally (3) this was the best manner for observing patterns in an objective manner.

5.3.4.1.1 Aim of observations

The aim of any observation is to collect rich descriptive data on the phenomenon being studied and to saturate the data. Within this study the main objective of using observations were in order to identify the urban social systems present within the CBD. A secondary aim was to observe the interaction between the identified groups and their physical environment as a non-participant observer.

5.3.4.1.2 Procedure

- **Participant profile and sampling**

The observations included individuals and groups that used the Central Business District. As social systems could not be identified in advance, this stage assisted the researcher in the identification of the systems that operate in this context in order to know what to observe (Maree, 2007:84). Steps followed during the observations included (1) distinguishing regular from irregular activities; (2) looking for variation to view the role players in their entirety from a variety of viewpoints; (3) looking for the negative cases or exceptions; and, when behaviours exemplify the theoretical purposes for the observation, (4) seeking similar opportunities for observation and (5) planning systematic observations of those behaviours. (Wolcott. 2001:13). Over time events may change with the seasons, for example, so persistent observation of the role players that have already been observed may be necessary (Maree, 2007:84; Creswell, 2007:37). The study started out by identifying the different social systems present within the study area. It then turned from identifying to exploring the interaction and dynamics between these groups by spending time in the context as a non-participant observer.

- **Data capturing**

In order to keep observations as scientific and as objective as possible the recording of the data was supported by the following tools suggested by Maree (2007: 85):

Anecdotal records: short descriptions were made of basic actions observed, capturing key phrases or words. Maree (2007:85) identifies this as the key initial phase or step of taking notes of observation; (See Annexure 1)

Running records: a more detailed, continuous (sequential) account was noted of what was observed. The focus was not only on the actions, but also the situation, and descriptions were made of actions in the context in which it occurred; (See Annexure 1)

Structured observations: These refer to predetermined categories of behaviour that researchers identify and would like to observe. These categories are often distilled from the literature and are developed into checklists or rating systems to record and score predetermined actions or behaviours (Maree, 2007:85). The following two tables give an outline of the structured categories used for the observations. Also refer to Annexure 2 for an example of the structured observations used from the perspectives of cultural relativism as discussed in Chapter 3).

Table 5-2 – Ethnocentrism versus Cultural Relativism

<i>Ethnocentrism</i>	<i>Cultural Relativism</i>
Ethnocentrism as a belief of social systems holds the view that the values of a specific group (e.g. race) are regarded as superior to others. Therefore the need to understand other groups (e.g. other cultural groups) and acknowledge them is seen as irrelevant (Rachels, 1999)	Cultural Relativism: Cultural relativism (Herskovits, 1973; & Rachels, 1999) as a belief of social systems holds the view that values (which eventually shapes beliefs and norms of behaviour for collective life) are relative to the cultural ambiance from where they arise.
Exclusive	Inclusive
This is observed in the way in which different systems keep to themselves; not allowing the interference of another social system. This also enhances the idea of territoriality.	This is observed in the way the different systems communicate, especially observing the physical body language of each individual.
Closed-Minded	Open-Minded
Closed-mindedness can be observed in the way the systems interact towards different systems, especially towards systems not usually present in the area.	Open-mindedness suggests the inclusion of different systems and settings for the benefit of the system present, therefore using systems for greater ideals.
Culturally Insensitive	Culturally sensitive
This can be observed when different systems are not very sensitive towards each other. Lack of oral interaction with each other and body language helps with the identification.	This can be observed based on how certain systems engage with each other from different backgrounds. There is a certain way in which to view the area, determined by culture.

(Source: Adapted from Rosado, 1994)

Table 5-3 – Different perspectives of cultural relativism

	Definition	Practical observing
<i>Conflict perspective</i>	Perspective that holds the view that society's structure is determined by individuals acquiring space and resources to satisfy own needs.	This can be observed from the use and manipulation of the urban space for individual needs, but not necessarily for the needs of the civil society.
<i>Idealist perspective</i>	This perspective holds that society attempts to believe that	This can be observed in the way certain systems react to

	human uniqueness attaches meaning to actions that could be very sensitive.	the use of objects or another system.
Materialist perspective	This explains features of human social life in terms of practical material or the physical environment and the cultural system.	This can be observed from the reaction to the physical environment and objects, especially to a certain social system.
Structural functionalism	This perspective sees societies as complex systems of interrelated, inter-dependent parts where each part of society influences the others.	Within this perspective the interaction between certain systems were observed in order to see if certain systems influenced the others in ways of living.

(Source: Compiled from Lenski, 1974 and Sanderson, 1988)

Table 5-2 offers an exposition of two theories that have been identified as present within the behaviour of the selected participants and shows how these were identified. Table 5-3 was used as a follow-up behaviour list that creates categories or themes for the observed data. These two tables helped with the identification and analysis of the data.

The following guidelines were applied in capturing the data in a systematic, structured manner while observations were done:

- Accurate field notes: Recording of what is seen, heard and experienced as if for the first time;
- Writing up of field notes as observations are made;
- When recording data in a certain social area such as this study, both verbal and non-verbal behaviours were captured;
- Reflection on observation took place as soon as possible after the event and included what a situation appeared or seemed to be.

(Maree, 2007:86)

In this study the field notes also included photographs. The photographs helped with retrospection during the process of writing up of field notes. As the field notes were written up the anecdotal notes were followed up with the more structured running notes. The photos assisted with capturing the non-verbal behaviour. As the process continued the reflection on the

captured data started to gather more substance. This helped with the process of starting to explore the different social systems present in the CBD (Annexure 1, 2).

All together 48 hours were spent in the area observed over a period of 24 days. The following time frame was used to verify the observations over the identified time period. These intervals were used in order to capture rich data with regard to the interactions between different groups (social systems) and their environment.

Table 5-4 – Time Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
07:00-08:00						
08:00-09:00						
09:00-10:00						
10:00-11:00						
11:00-12:00						
12:00-13:00						
13:00-14:00						
14:00-15:00						
15:00-16:00						
16:00-17:00						
17:00-18:00						
18:00-19:00						

(Source: compiled by researcher)

- **Data analysis**

According to Roland et al. (2003:392) data analysis of observations refers to the level of agreement between sets of observational data. This is usually done by one observer, observing different times in the process (Roland et al., 2003:391). A reliability test (please refer to section 5.3.4 where trustworthiness is discussed) was done based on the collected data from different times. Since this data correlated, it gave the impression of consistency (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:138). Each observation was placed in a behavioural category in line with the theories that emerged from the literature review. The themes or categories were chosen by the most observed settings (Roland et al., 2003:391). Annexure 2 gives an example of how observations were categorised.

In-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories and perspectives, particularly when qualitative topics are being explored (Reeves et al., 2008:13).

Interviews were thus used as a follow-up technique in order to obtain insight with regard to the reason for behaviour.

5.3.4.2 Interviews

The type of interviews selected for this study was semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews. This type of interviews gives a set of talking points that enables the researcher to clarify and probe with follow-up questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). The researcher has to be attentive to the responses of the participant so that new lines and data could be identified in order to directly study and explore the phenomenon that emerges (Maree, 2007:93).

5.3.4.2.1 Aims of interviews

Interviews are two-way conversations in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data (Maree, 2007:87). They are best for learning about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant (Maree, 2007:87; Creswell, 2007:39). The main aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participant. The social reality and knowledge of the participants are central to this (Maree, 2007:86; Creswell, 2007:39). Therefore rich descriptive data is essential. In this case the interviews served two purposes (1) to obtain insight in the group dynamics and behaviours that were observed during the first phase of the research. and (2) to explore each participant's perception of their environment to serve as input for urban renewal.

5.3.4.2.2 Procedure

- **Participant profile and sampling**

Ritchie and Lewis (2004:77) describes sampling as a general social enquiry. Even though a study could involve small populations or groups, decisions should still be made about the choice of people, settings and actions. Sampling is required because the researcher cannot observe or record everything that occurs (Ritchie & Lewis, 2004:77).

A sampling strategy was considered in order to find the best qualified person for the information needed. The sampling strategy is important (Brinkman and Kvale, 2001:113) because it contributes to the creditability of a study. Usually the number of subjects could vary from ten to fifteen (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009:113). However, in this study the spectrum of subjects were determined by the level of data saturation reached. Data saturation is determined when new information makes little to no change to the data that has been gathered (Nixon & Wild, 2006:2).

Brinkmann and Kvale (2009:116) identify three types of qualitative sampling as set out in the table below:

Table 5-5- Types of qualitative sampling

Purposive sampling	Quota Sampling	Snowball sampling
Participants are narrowed down by exact criteria of behaviour	Sampling done by means of characteristics of the population.	Also known as chain referral sampling
Sample size: Interviews continue until theoretical saturation is reached.	A list of characteristics determines whom to use.	Participants with whom contact has already been made use their social networks to refer the researcher.
	It is more specific than purposive sampling.	Snowball sampling is often used to find and recruit "hidden populations", that is, groups not easily accessible to researchers through other sampling strategies.

(Source: Compiled from Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009:113).

A purposive sampling method was chosen for this study because of the random nature of the subjects. Purposive sampling gives a good indication of particular characteristics and features that enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes that the researcher chooses to study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2004:79). Therefore members of a sample were chosen with a purpose to represent the group or location. As there were different groups present within the CBD that were studied, stratified purposive sampling was done as described by Ritchie and Lewis (2004:79). Stratified purposive sampling can be described as a hybrid approach in which the aim is to select groups that display variations on a particular phenomenon; but this is also fairly homogeneous, so that the sub-groups can be compared (Ritchie & Lewis, 2004:77).

A total of 75 interviews were conducted amongst all three social systems identified during the observation phase. The profiles of the participants included 61% males and 39% females, with ages that vary between 27 and 56. All participants selected include individuals who are local inhabitants of Potchefstroom and use the CBD on a daily basis. The main languages used in the interview process were Setswana, isiXhosa and English. As Setswana and isiXhosa are closely related, only one interpreter was used during the interview process. The following guidelines formulated by Ritchie and Lewis (2004:79) were used to conduct interviews:

- The participant was approached in a non-violent and unthreatening way;
- An introduction was provided by the researcher, briefing the participant and inviting him or her to participate;

- Formal permission to be interviewed was obtained by signing the informed consent form;
- The researcher (and interpreter) asked the participant to suggest a place to sit within the area;
- As soon as the participant was comfortable and relaxed the interview started.

- **Data capturing**

The following guidelines from Maree (2007:89) were followed for capturing quality data during the interview:

- The participants were always aware of the aim of the interview, in order to gather relevant information;
- The aim of any interview is to collect rich descriptive data on the phenomenon being studied and to saturate the data. An interim data analysis was done to help the researcher to determine if this has been achieved;
- The questioning strategy is vitally important. Avoiding questions where the participant may answer “yes” or “no” were important, questions were kept clear and neutral. No leading questions were asked and the length of the interview was kept short so that the participant would not lose interest. As this was semi-structured interviews the number of questions or talking points was kept to a minimum. Probing and clarification were used for further discussion. As the discussion evolved, it was of great importance to get a clear view of the participant's understanding and perceptions;
- The types of question were just as important as the manner in which they were asked. It is of great importance to ask a variety of questions such as “experience” and “behavioural” questions, opinion and value questions, “feeling” questions, “knowledge” questions and sensory based questions;
- Good interviewers are good listeners who do not dominate the interview, but in some cases the researcher had to intervene and steer the interview. The researcher should never be judgemental and never criticise. He or she is only there to understand, not to judge. It was of great importance for the researcher to stay confident in his role as researcher and not to become counsellor or psychologist. In essence it was the participant's view and perceptions that the researcher valued most;
- Observing throughout the interview was also very important as the non-verbal communication could determine the answer needed;
- And finally, the transcription and coding of the interviews were of great importance.

Based on Maree's (2007:88) guidelines on successful interviewing, the following guiding points received special attention for the interviews within this specific study: the sampling, interim data

analysis, questioning strategy, formulation of the questions and observing non-verbal communication.

Questioning strategy: As this is only a semi-structured type of interview, the number of questions or talking points were kept to a minimum, and probing and clarification were used for further discussion. As the discussion evolved, it was of great importance to get a clear view of the participant's understanding and perceptions (Ritchie & Lewis, 2004:81). In this study a few talking points were identified that were used in discussion-like situations. The questions involved probing and clarification as explained by Wolcott (2001:36) and Ritchie and Lewis (2004:79). The hope is that this in the end benefited the in-depth qualitative nature of this study. As previously stated the study is of an exploring nature, therefore probing and clarification were essential.

Semi-structured interviews are very helpful when one has well-structured talking points with enough room for probing or searching deeper. Maree (2007:88-89) lists three probing strategies in order to verify what the person means during the interview stage. These three strategies are illustrated in the following figure:

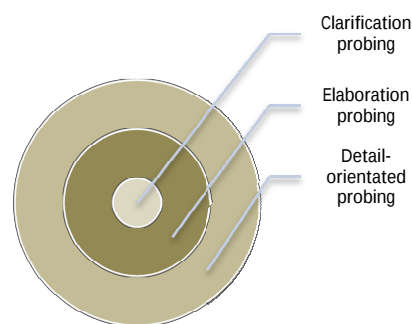


Figure 5-5- Three probing strategies (Source: Adapted from Maree, 2007)

Detail-orientated probes are aimed at confirming the “who”, “where” and “what” of the answer given by the participant. “Why”-type questions were not used as they could sometimes be perceived as threatening. Such probes can be explained as those questions asked to contextualise the particular participant's view. Questions asked as detail-oriented probing questions include the following:

- *“What is your main reason for coming here?”*
- *“What is your impression of the Taxis/Informal economic stalls/community?”*
- *“How often do you use the space?”*
- *“What do you use this area for the most?”*
- *“How do you rate this area overall?”*

Elaboration probes are designed to get the full picture and normally involve asking the participant to tell the researcher more about a certain answer they have given. Sensitivity is one of the most important factors to keep in mind researcher should never try to force answers from participants. Examples of questions asked as elaboration probes include the following:

- *“Why is (answer) the main reason for you coming here?”*
- *“Why do you get this particular impression of the Taxis/Informal economic stalls/community?”*
- *“Why do you use this space for (answer) purposes only?”*
- *“Why do you feel (answer) about this area?”*

Finally, clarification probes are used to check if the researcher accurately understands what has been said. Paraphrasing can and should be used by the researcher to confirm what has been said by the participant (Maree, 2007:89). Examples of clarification probes used in the interviews include the following:

- *“So the only reason for coming here is the transport?”*
- *“Does your impression always stay the same about the area?”*
- *“Do you feel threatened about the other people in the area?”*

These three probing strategies were used in order to evolve into a deeper conversation with the participants and to explore the core of what is under study.

Non-verbal communication: Observation was of utmost importance throughout the interview as the non-verbal communication could determine the answer needed (Maree, 2007:87). The research assistant also had a list in order to assess and observe non-verbal communication for especially body language. This helped with the classification of certain answers.

During the interviews Boyce and Neale (2006:2) suggests that tools should be identified in order to enhance the authenticity of the interviews. As a result the following tools were used:

- Voice recorder – Audible recorders help to catch the whole interview. This enables the researcher to double check the transcription that followed the interviews.
- Pen and paper – Making notes throughout the interviews on things such as body language etc. is very important.
- Questions or talking points – In these interviews talking points were helpful in guiding the interview in a certain direction.
- Consent form – the consent form was especially important for consent to record the participants' voices. An example of the consent form is available as an Appendix.

- Interpreter – The services of an interpreter was used for the interviews because of the language barrier present in this area. Most of the people in the area speak Setswana, so an interpreter was used in order to help put the subjects at ease.

(Boyce & Neale, 2006:2)

Following decisions regarding the type of interview and the formulation of questions, the recording of interview data is very important to ensure the authenticity of a qualitative study. The recording of an interview must be done in meticulous manner, as emphasised by Brinkman and Kvale (2009:23). According to Maree (2007:89) one way to record data is by writing the answers down, but this is time consuming and sometimes distracting. For this reason all interviews were tape recorded. Maree (2007:89) feels that using a combination of these two methods enhances the quality of the study. After completion of the interview phase of the study recordings of the study were used to reflect and explore the data. The interviews were transcribed and coded (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009:113 & Maree, 2007:89).

- ***Data analysis***

Maree (2007:100) reminds us that data analysis is of great importance in interpretive studies. Literature on qualitative data analysis documents a range of approaches, processes and procedures through which researchers extract some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation from the qualitative data collected from the people and situations that are researched (Maree, 2007:100). Qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing and iterative process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined, and not merely a number of successive steps (Maree, 2007:101).

The model underneath (figure 5-6) illustrates the framework used for the data analysis of the interviews. It includes three essential elements: noticing, collecting and reflecting. These elements are interlinked and cyclical.

Maree (2007:100) describes each of these points as understanding but logistical points. Noticing things are described as the process of recognising an interesting phenomenon. After noticing it, the research has to think about the actions observed or the people who have been interviewed before collecting new data. Once new data has been gathered, another thinking process ensues. Bates et al. (2008:13) suggest that in order to understand and verify the observations made from semi-structured interviews, the researcher should stay within the same timeframe for the other research methods since this increases the possibility of retrieving the same patterns by using a different research method.

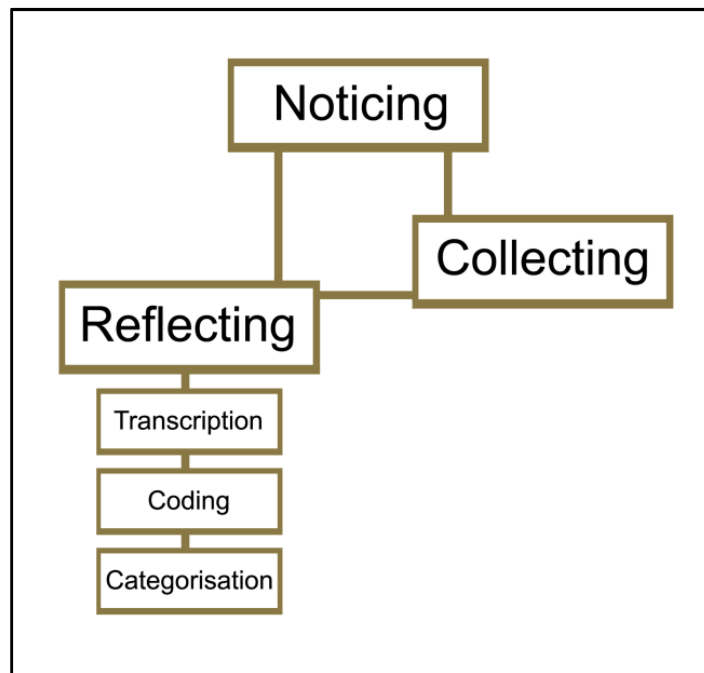


Figure 5-6 The data analysis process (Source: Adapted from Maree, 2007)

An interim data analysis was conducted to determine if rich descriptive data has been obtained regarding the phenomenon under study and to determine whether data saturation has been achieved (Bates et al., 2008:14). The study was paused after every third interview in order to reflect on the accumulated data. It was important to continue the study with consideration of newly generated data throughout the course of the research.

After the interviews were completed all audio recordings were transcribed. Although there is no universal format for transcriptions that would be adequate for all types of qualitative data collection approaches, settings, or theoretical frameworks, some practical considerations were kept in mind in the process of preparing transcripts (Mclellan et al., 2003: 64).

- *Preserve the morphologic naturalness of transcription:* In this study the word forms, the form of commentaries, and the use of punctuation and translation were kept as close as possible to speech presentation and consistent with what is typically acceptable.
- *Preserve the naturalness of the transcript structure:* The interviewer kept the text clearly structured.
- *The transcription rules are universal:* The transcriptions were suitable for both human and computer use.
- *The transcription rules should be complete:* The researcher did the transcriptions himself, since this meant that he could get a good overview of the study and keep in feel with it. The interpreter helped with the transcriptions.
- *The transcription rules should be independent:* Transcription standards were independent of transcribers, as well as understandable and applicable by researchers or third parties.

- *The transcription rules should be intellectually elegant:* Rules were limited in number, simple and easy to learn, but were used in order to understand the objectives of the study. (McLellan et al., 2003:64)

Transcriptions help researchers to systematically organise and then analyse textual data, regardless of the analytical techniques and tools used. They did not impose constraints on the data collected, but rather accommodated an iterative process. Further, transcriptions were generated systematically and consistently (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). Maree (2007:104) suggests the use of broad transcriptions in cases that include a translation stage (Boyce & Neale, 2006:2). This enhances the process with no interruption of the data. The process suggests that each paraphrase would be given a category, if another paraphrase matches the context of the previous it would be matched with the same value (Maree, 2007:104; Brinkman & Kvale, 2009).

Organising the data is very important. Qualitative data tends to be very lengthy and require intensive examination, understanding and reading, as described by Maree (2007:104). Qualitative research creates “Mountains of Words”. No matter how large or small the study, the qualitative methodology depends primarily on eliciting self-reports from subjects or observations made in the field that are transcribed into field notes. Even a small qualitative project easily generates thousands of words (Bruce et al., 2010:650). The researcher will need to carefully read through several screens of narrative or pages of print-out narratives, and try to figure out how to use this data in a report they may wish to develop. According to Bruce et al. (2010:670) a purely qualitative analysis identifies and examines certain themes that emerge from a careful reading of the data. Particularly useful quotes may be identified, copied, and used in the written report. This kind of analysis is especially useful in identifying contradictions between respondent reports and what might be obtained in quantitative analysis (Bruce et al., 2010:650). Therefore coding is essential.

Coding is a process of reducing the data into smaller groupings so they are more manageable and understandable. Coding helps the researcher to see relationships between categories and patterns of interaction (Bruce et al., 2010:650). Open coding was used (Maree, 2007:104) as this creates themes or categories that are assigned to given words or phrases. Open coding includes labelling concepts, and defining and developing categories based on their properties and dimensions (Maree, 2007:105). As this step could be employed alongside the transcriptions, initial phrases form the basics of the coding, from which initial categories are formulated (Bruce et al., 2010:651).

During the transcription phase one could already start to identify certain themes (Maree, 2007:111). The following points were used as a selection method for the codes:

- The codes should preserve the phrases and words of the transcribed data;

- The codes should preserve the events
- They should portray authentic viewpoints as they are given;
- They should suggest context and attributes.

Closely reviewing and coding data helped identifying certain patterns, themes, and relationships. As the themes created were kept broad, sub-themes were identified (Maree, 2004:101). The possibility may also occur that the created codes are too detailed and that an attempt to capture every possible idea becomes a challenge. In that case categories should be pulled together into broader ideas (Bruce et al., 2010:650). Coding is an essential step in data analysis to gain an understanding of the inquiry issue, how respondents perceived the matter under study, and the nature and types of relationships involved (Maree, 2007:104).

Categorisation took place by creating themes and sub-themes in order to identify the role of social systems. The initial themes identified were very broad, and therefore sub-themes were identified in order to enhance the outcomes of the study.

5.3.5 Trustworthiness

Both Wolcott (2001:12) and Forrester (1969:21) regard the strength of qualitative research as the ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a certain issue. Qualitative methods are effective in identifying vague factors, such as social norms, socio-economic status, gender roles, social systems, ethnicity, and religion. The role of these elements may not be readily apparent as part of the research matter (Bruce et al., 2010:649). Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations (Wolcott, 2001:15).

Observations may be very subjective in nature and not representative of a social area. Maree (2007:86) suggests that the researcher should constantly ask if the observation that was made was in fact what happened in order to reach more scientific, objective and accurate results. The researcher used member checking as a strategy (Maree, 2007:90, Creswell, 2007:39) to ensure trustworthiness of the data captured. Member checking refers to cross-checking the observations with participants to validate the findings (Creswell, 2007:40). This was done by taking the notes to some of the participants and running through the main findings with the participant. In this strategy the researcher constantly worked off informant feedback, therefore in this study external trustworthiness was checked by means of the constant repeating of experiences and behavioural patterns. The more one gets involved in the situation being observed, the higher the risk of getting too subjectively involved (Maree, 2007:86; Creswell, 2007:39). A balance of involvement should be reached in order to build the needed trust with participants even within the knowledge of follow-up interviews. Maree (2007:87) states that a

singular observation cannot provide the researcher with rich data, therefore the observations could run over an extended time period and that a research schedule and design is of great importance.

Triangulation was used to further enhance trustworthiness of the data. Ethnographers commonly triangulate (compare and contrast) interviews and observation methods to enhance the quality of the study (Reeves et al., 2008:2). This technique is important as what people say about their environment or behaviour can contradict their actual actions. Interviews enhanced the quality of the data captured and was used as the second phase of the data capturing in this particular study.

5.3.6 Research Ethics

Each participant was always aware of the aim of the interview in order to gather the correct information (Lambert, 2002:3). Informed consent forms were used to obtain participants' permission to conduct interviews. Consent for participation in this research was voluntary and only accepted if it was given without any direct or indirect coercion or inducement. Participation in this research was based on an informed decision after sufficient information about the study had been provided. Informed consent in this research was obtained by a written consent form for each participant (Annexure 3). If participants were unable to give written consent, oral consent in the presence of a witness was accepted (Lambert, 2002:2). After the completion of the transcriptions the audio recordings were destroyed as part of the ethical considerations during this type of research, keeping the participants anonymous (McLellan et al. 2003: 81; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009:92).

5.4 Findings

The findings are presented in two sections: firstly, the most prominent and relevant findings that emerged from the observations will be presented, and then the findings from the interviews. Both sections will be concluded with a discussion of the findings in terms of the relevant theory, while a final integrated discussion will follow with specific reference to the central focus of the study, namely to obtain insight into the role of social urban systems in the research context with regard to urban renewal.

As the observation phase aimed to capture patterns that emerged spontaneously from the interaction amongst groups of people (in this research identified as social systems) and between people and their physical setting, the findings are structured as follows: (1) a brief description of general observations of the physical setting is given, followed by (2) a description of the participants (identified as social systems) that are visible in the area, as well as descriptions of behaviour patterns and interaction between groups. Lastly (3) observations of interactions between participants and the physical setting will be presented.

5.4.1 Observations

The observations had two main focuses, (1) the physical environment as context and the (2) participant's role. The first focus of the researcher was to familiarise himself with the physical setting.

5.4.1.1 The physical environment as context for social systems

The setting of the observations was the CBD at specific conflict points. Conflict points (Maree, 2007:101) suggest specific points in the context where the most interaction takes place. The physical environment, especially the quality of the public environment, can be described as physically untidy due to the presence of litter, graffiti and sewage that are visible. Facilities such as public rest rooms are present, but water and sewerage leaks undermine the environmental quality. The same lack of maintenance is observable in the conditions of some of the buildings in the observation area.

Activities in the area start at 07:00 in the morning, when the area undergoes a complete transformation from a deserted urban space at night to a vibrant and lively area during business hours. This vibrancy is mainly due to the many temporary informal stalls and businesses that are constructed on a daily basis. Despite the lively atmosphere, the physical setting remains that of a decayed urban centre.

Formal businesses are characterised by security measures such as security fencing on building roofs, bars in front of windows and alarm systems. This suggests the perception of crime activity in the area. Close Circuit Television cameras (CCTV) can be observed, but they are not in a working condition and this suggests little involvement from the local government.

Lastly there is little to no greenery such as trees and shrubs' and the physical setting is characterised by hard spaces, hostile to enjoyment of human use due to the lack of natural shading and street furniture. Shade is artificially created by means of (sheds). Most areas are public areas with no private initiatives. Private initiatives are investment of private funds for the renewal of a physical setting. Although the physical setting can be considered a decayed urban environment, pedestrian movement is intense and the area is frequently used. This emphasises the importance of this area for social use, despite what seems to be a poorly maintained physical urban environment.

5.4.1.2 Observations about the participants

5.4.1.2.1 Identification of groups (social systems)

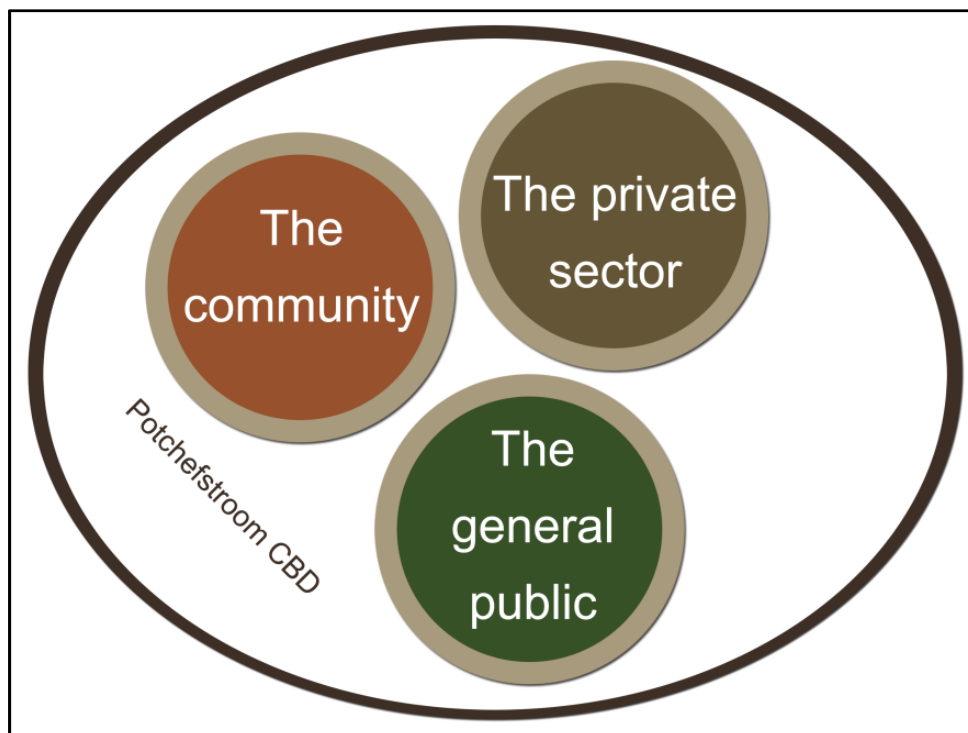
In terms of the people who daily interact in the Central Business District of Potchefstroom, three clusters of groups can be identified:

A **first cluster** comprises groups who interact in a predictable way and on a strict routine basis in the area. These groups all seem to have a vested interest in the area and are involved in economic activities and service delivery. The groups that are most prominent and visible include individuals that form part of formal and informal businesses (e.g. owners, managers and employees) and taxi drivers. This group is known as the private sector.

The **second cluster** consists of groups of people who do not seem to have a vested interest in the area in an economic sense, but interact daily within specific shared spaces such as the food stalls and the hair “stylist” stalls. These are groups of people that interact on a high level and stay visible in the area for a set timeframe. This cluster could prominently be observed as the group entering the area with the service provided (Taxis), moving around in the area from point to point and then after a certain time they leave the area. These groups all seem to fulfil a supportive role as can be seen from their distinct use of the area and vigorous interaction. These groups can be referred to as community groups.

A **third cluster** or group of people consists of what seems to be unrelated individuals who interact with the space on a regular basis as visible from the fact that when they arrive they seem to have a clear purpose and know exactly where they are heading. People enter the CBD with a purpose and the observed interaction is very little. This group of individuals is referred to as the general public.

Figure 5-7 Observed urban social systems



(Source: Compiled by researcher, 2013)

5.4.1.2.2 Interaction and behaviour of participants (social systems)

- **Social awareness**

The observation of the space and participants over time revealed the need for social awareness an overarching and important theme that underlies interaction and behaviour in the area. Social awareness or consciousness refers to the awareness of the people in the area the people around them and their hardships or joy (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009:113). Social awareness can generally be observed when people sit together eating, chatting or even protesting. In this particular space social awareness is portrayed by the following examples illustrated in figure 5-8.

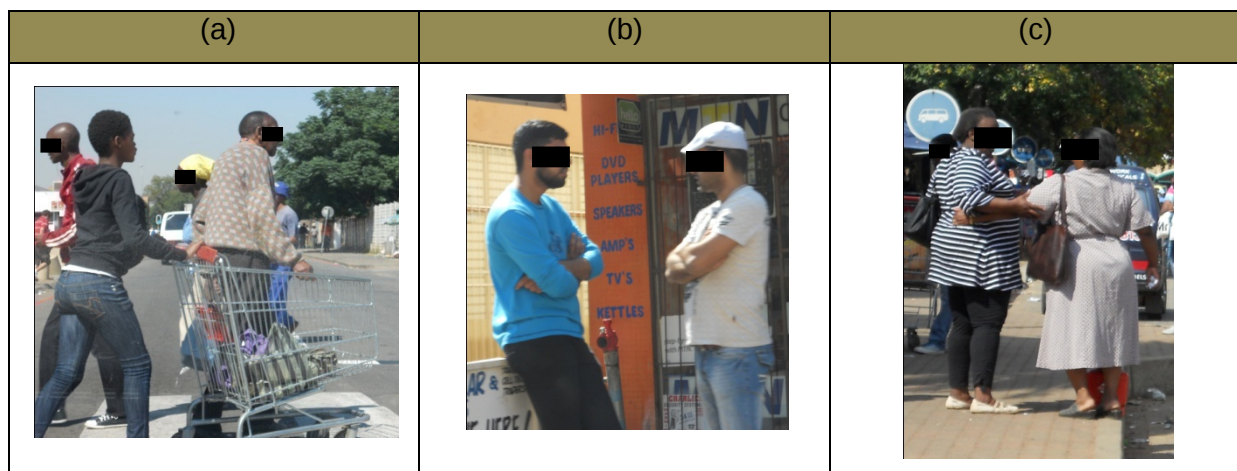


Figure 5-8 – Observing the need for social awareness (Source: Photographs taken by researcher, 16 April 2012)



Figure 5-9 Observing the need for social awareness (Source: Photographs taken by researcher, 16 April 2012)

(a) - Participants moving around in groups suggest interaction and social awareness in the community

(b) – A high level of interaction is present between the two male participants, within the context of their body language, they are discussing something sensitive and important.

(c) – In this figure the interaction can be seen prominently, one can observe that there is a definite friendship between the two female participants.

(d) – The interaction at any informal stall could be seen as social awareness, as group dynamics is seen as important.

(e) – In this picture one can see people from various backgrounds interact.

(f) – In this setting one can observe the interaction.

In figure 5-8 and figure 5-9 one cannot ignore the frequent occurrence of social interaction in the area. Economic activity cannot even take place without interaction between different social systems. Social awareness in this area is clearly visible and contributes to general behavioural patterns in the area. The social awareness or consciousness of the area contributes to understanding the interaction between certain social systems. One can consequently start to examine the role of each identified system. In the case of physical intervention in the form of urban renewal the interaction and presence of urban social systems could encourage sustainable urban environments.

- **Behaviour patterns**

Eight interactive collective behaviour patterns can be identified by grouping the themes observed in the setting. These behaviour patterns are captured in the following table (Table 5-6).

Table 5-6 Behavioural patterns

<i>Themes (actions) that emerged collectively from the observations</i>	<i>Behavioural patterns</i>	<i>Social system</i>		
		<i>Private Sector</i>	<i>Community groups</i>	<i>General Public</i>
Boasting	Pride			
Vigorous interaction	Intellectual stimulation			
Fights and brawling	Territoriality			
Trading	Non-competitiveness			
	Harmony			
Construction of own facilities Cleaning the area	Ownership			

Dancing	Social drive			
	Happiness			
Moving in and out of the area	Reservation			

(Source: Own synthesis)

Pride: While this is normally an inward pattern, in this case one can observe this pattern in the way the interaction between two groups took place. Smiling created a pleasant feeling between certain groups, creating the impression of pride of the product given or the physical environment. Pedestrians were also eagerly introduced and pulled into the stalls with confidence where vendors display their goods. This showed pride in the stalls present.

Intellectual stimulation: This was a very difficult pattern to observe. One can observe this from the manner in which people interact with each other, as well as from their body language. In one instance the researcher observed two participants speaking intensely with each other and starting to include other participants.

Territoriality: This was a relatively easy pattern to observe in the way certain fights were handled. A fight between two informal stall owners suggested that each one is very determined to use their own space for the stalls, and in this case the new stall owner took the space of the older stall owner. People are very set on using their frequent location for stalls and nobody should steel their locations.

Harmony: This was observed from the interaction between similar types of stalls that are situated next to the other, with no observable competitiveness. Some systems are harmonious, such as the relations between the private sector and the community. People socialise and eat together suggesting harmony.

Ownership: Ownership was observed along with pride, and this shows the possibility that certain systems cause people to attach certain feelings to an area. This can be observed from the physical adaptations people made to the environment. The informal stalls would constantly clean up around them, throwing litter in the dustbins and commenting on people littering. This showed a sense of responsibility towards the environment, showing ownership.

Social drive: People created areas for social interaction, and most of the people in the area create and use this space as a social area. The social drive of the area is created by people's need to gather at a certain point. There are certain points where people sit in circles and socialise. There is also the fact that people greet each other by name and take interest in each other's daily activities.

Happiness: This was relatively easy to observe, as happiness could be observed in the way people laugh and smile in the interaction pattern, often associated with dancing.

Reserved behaviour: This is also easily observed in the way people keep to themselves. Only one system could be observed behaving in this way. The general public were observed as being reserved as they usually only use the area for a specific need, but do not interact vigorously on their way.

Behavioural patterns and social interactions are therefore assured in the research context. These patterns, referred to as pro-social behaviour, imply positive interaction to the benefit of the social environment. The pro-social behaviour culminates in cultural relativism as something that is prominent in the area (see Table 5-7). This is depicted by an openness to accept one another, an inclusiveness and cultural sensitivity towards different groups. Other pro-social behaviour patterns include *kinship* that refers to positive behaviour to group orientated situations and *social awareness* that refers to a consciousness to the social atmosphere.

Table 5-7 Pro-social behaviour identified

<i>Behavioural patterns</i>	<i>Pro-Social behaviour identified</i>	<i>Social system</i>		
		<i>Private Sector</i>	<i>Community groups</i>	<i>General Public</i>
Boasting	Cultural relativism			
Vigorous interaction	Kinship, Cultural relativism			
Fights and brawling	Cultural relativism			
Trading	Social Awareness			
	Cultural relativism			
Construction of own facilities Cleaning the area	Cultural relativism			
Dancing	Social awareness			
Dancing	Cultural relativism			
Moving in and out of the area	Cultural relativism			

(Source: Own construction)

- **Interactions**

During the observation phase the interactions of the three observed systems contributed to the idea of cultural relativism, making interaction between these groups sensitive. Between each of these systems there seems to exist a different level of interaction that would be studied next.

System 1 and 2: Within the private sector group, there is the informal sector along with service delivery such as the Taxis. The behaviour of these two systems towards each other reflects a harmonious relationship; each system is co-dependent to the other. These two systems should not be ignored in any intervention programme in this area. As the community group is the system that makes use of the private sector, constant interaction is visible, making it the highest level of interaction.

System 1 and 3: Within the private sector group and the general public there is a more formal relationship. The general public always has a definite reason for visiting the area; therefore this people group would enter the area for business and interact in a formal manner in order to satisfy the direct need for the visit. One cannot ignore that there is a resistance towards the general public interacting with the private sector. The private sector is not eager or helpful at business. The most interaction observed in the area was between the formal businesses in the area and the general public. An example of this type of interaction was the access that the general public has to the formal businesses. The general public would approach the formal businesses and enter it without hesitation and leave directly after the transaction was done.

System 2 and 3: As the general public could be seen as the people visiting the area on a regular basis but who do not socialise in the area, the interaction between the community and the general public were observed as absent. The general public would only enter the area for a reason, the one participant for instance accessed the area with private transport and accessed one of the businesses (private sector) bought goods and left the area, with no other interaction. This was only one of several examples. This only confirms the existence of different systems and not all systems necessarily interact.

In figure 5-10 a summary of the levels of interaction (strength and frequency) observed between the social systems in the research context is graphically illustrated.

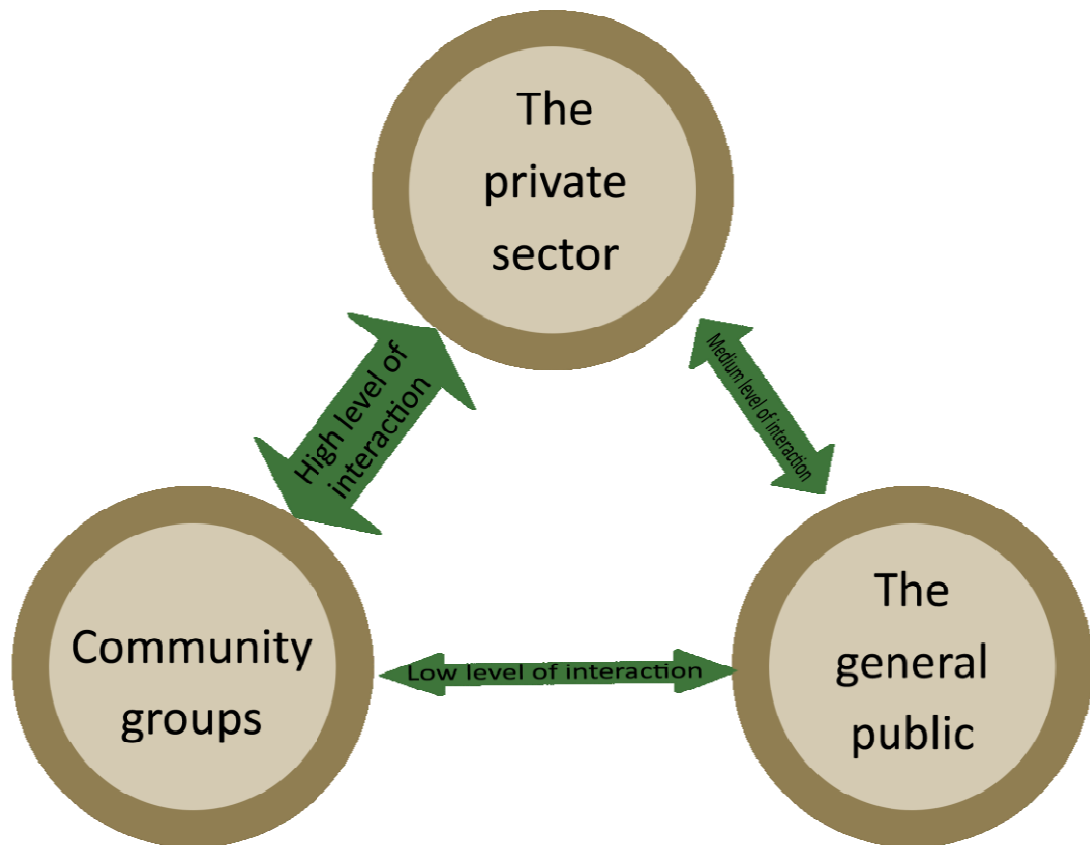


Figure 5-10 Interaction between social systems in Potchefstroom CBD (Source: Own compilation)

5.4.1.3 Discussion of observations

This study area reflects an intricate web of interacting smaller parts that transforms what at first glance seems to be neutral urban space into a vibrant place for people to socially interact and define themselves on a daily basis. The interacting parts are defined here as micro social systems that include the private sector, community groups and the general public. It is a micro example of what Mitchell and Newman (2006:2) refer to as “live flow systems” that make up society.

Sanderson (1988:110) and Sagae (2011:4) identify four theoretical perspectives that helped to identify the micro social systems (discussed in Chapter 3) in the study. These are (1) the idealist strategy, (2) the materialist strategy, (3) structural functionalism and (4) the conflict theory. These theories collectively manifested visibly in the area in the following way:

Table 5-8 Micro system theoretical perspectives in practice

	Practical observation	Observation findings
Conflict perspective	This can be observed by the use and manipulation of the urban space for individual needs, but not necessarily for the needs of the civil society.	The private sector, especially the informal business sector, manipulates the urban environment by building stalls with urban material such as pieces of trees in order to address own needs.
Idealist perspective	This can be observed in the way certain systems react to another system or by the use of objects.	The taxi drivers acted violently by screaming harshly towards the general public if they did not make use of the services of the Taxis.
Materialist perspective	This can be observed by the reaction to the physical environment and objects, especially with regard to a certain social system.	The community groups interacted vigorously with the physical urban environment. An example is that the community would sit around in the area in groups talking and thus use and interacting with the physical environment.
Structural functionalism	Within this perspective the interaction between certain systems are observed in order to see if certain systems influence the other in ways of doing.	The community groups were interacting with other systems, making it easy to see that the community would adapt certain behaviour from the general public. For example, a participant started to sweep the streets, adapting his behaviour because of the community groups cleaning up the streets.

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

As different social systems are active within the research context, the metabolism of social systems (Situngkir & Khanafiah, 2005:1), referred to as the link between simple and complex systems, is insightful with regard to the role that social systems play in the urban environment. This metabolism (or simple-complex systems link) in this context is expressed as energetic and synergetic and plays a prominent role in creating vitality of the area.

The observations indicate that social systems in the area are complex micro social systems (Cheng et al., 2008:2) because they expose a dynamic and cyclical network of inter and intra relationships that culminate in vigorous interaction amongst all three social systems. Pro-social behaviour patterns (behaviour that promotes good social relations) were observed, including cultural relativism (Rachels, 1999:6) and social awareness (Rosada, 1994:2). The particular

research context can be defined as a socially sensitive context, in which urban social system networks closely interact with one another, as well as with their environment (the physical setting and people in it). Any decision that implies physical change in this area without acknowledging these interactions may therefore impact on how these intricate networks operate.

Urban interventions often take the economic and physical factors of the urban environment into account, but do not include social factors (Lee & Chan, 2010:9). The observations noted in this research illustrate that urban social systems could actually be beneficial to the urban environment, as a vibrant social atmosphere can be conducive to a healthy economic environment (Lee & Chan, 2010:9), thus enhancing long term sustainability. These interactive social systems define the CBD of Potchefstroom and this can potentially benefit sustainable social urban centres. Urban renewal is an integrated process, and taking social systems into account in the planning process (Tsenkova, 2002:6) is essential because social systems (especially community groups and the private sector) are so interweaved with one other and with their environment that people cannot be separated from their physical environment (Tsenkova, 2002:6).

After the observations the interactions between social systems and between social systems and their physical environment needed further exploration as a full understanding of the role of urban social systems within the research context and urban renewal still remained vague after the observations. This was mainly due to the fact that observations could not provide reasons for social interactions, behaviours and perceptions with regard to social dynamics and physical aspects of the research. Findings from the interviews generally support and emphasise what was observed, but further assist in understanding the role of social systems in the physical environment.

5.4.2 Interviews

During the process of data analysis the main focus of the interviews was to capture the role of the three social systems in order to understand and interpret them in terms of urban renewal. After analysing 75 face-to-face, in-depth semi-structured interviews, conducted daily (Monday – Saturday) over a period of three weeks (after which data saturation was reached) the following themes and sub-themes emerged from the data analysis and are presented as the main findings of the interviews (refer to Annexure 4 for a detail example of an interview):

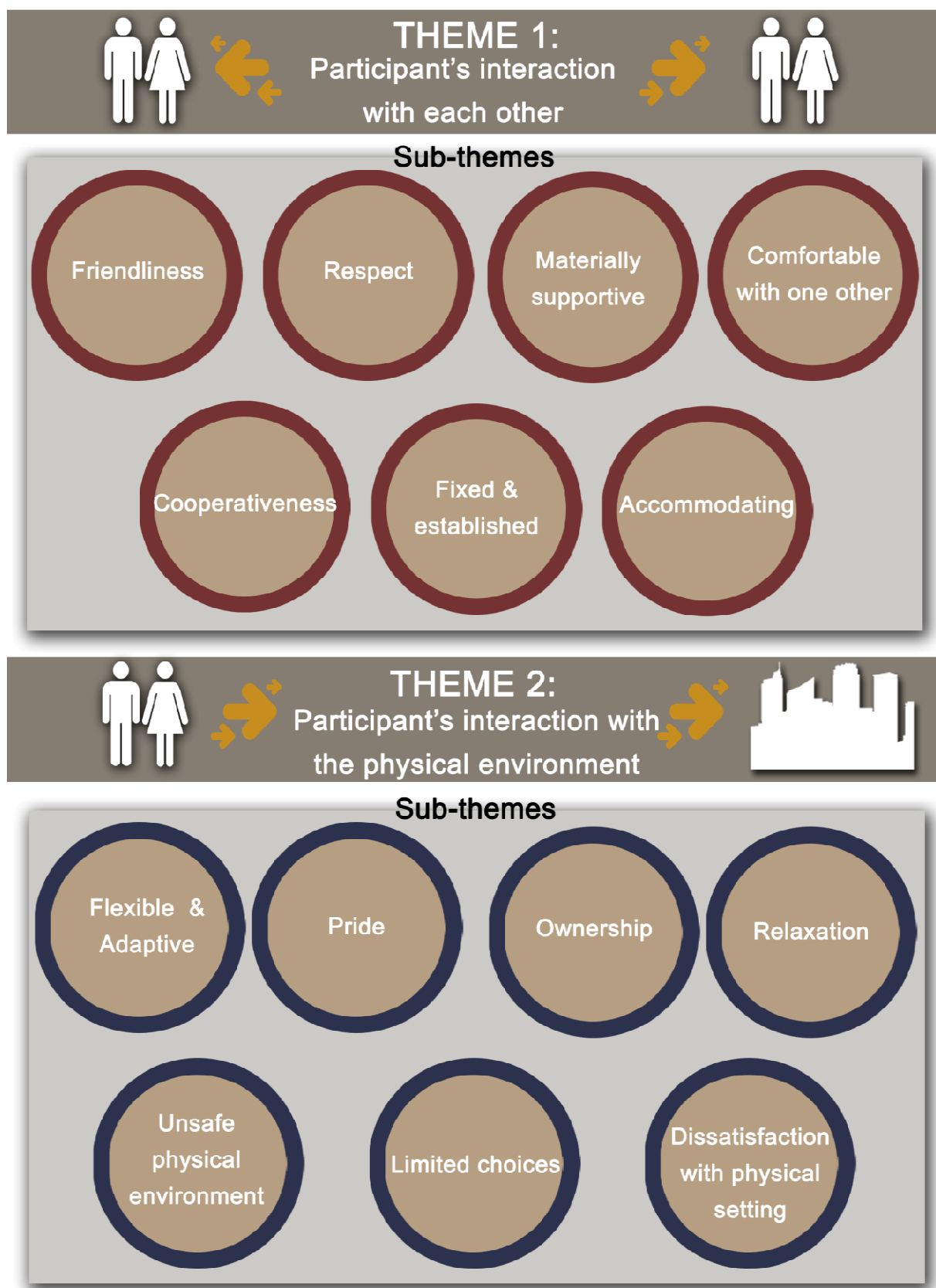


Figure 5-11 Themes and sub-themes identified (Source: Own Compilation)

Central theme 1: Participant's (social systems) interaction with one another

This theme emerged from the data as a prominent and central theme due to the strong interaction between the various participants on a continuous daily basis within the research context. The following sub-themes were identified from the content analysis of the transcriptions, which provided thick descriptions of how social systems experience their interaction with one another:

Sub-theme 1: Materially supportive

The social systems experience their relationship as “helping” and “supporting” with regard to material needs. One participant described this as follows: *“This one time I fell short of a few Rand for my taxi fare, and this one lady offered to give the fare that I needed.”* This was confirmed by another participant who said: *“I sometimes need some tape to strengthen my stalls roof and everyone is very keen on giving me some, in fact I have this one friend that gives me tape on a daily basis”*. This material support is perceived to have reciprocal benefits in future as stated by a participant who said: *“I like helping the other people in the rank (with a smile), because someday I am going to need some help.”*

Sub-theme 2: Friendliness

It seems that social systems interact with one another in a friendly manner in this area and conflict is limited. This was confirmed by a participant who stated: *“All the people are very friendly in the area; there is almost never any conflict in the area...”* while another participant supported this: *“We sometimes greet each other from a distance, we like yelling (smiling) for each other...”* Another participant exclaimed very fittingly: *“If you're not friendly here, you are not welcome here.”*

Sub-theme 3: Cooperativeness

Cooperativeness is expressed by the non-competitiveness that exists between participants involved in commercial activities. Non-competitiveness is defined as the inclusion of other social systems without the threat of self-losing or destruction (Bates et al., 2008:2). In this study area, the social systems perceive one another as uncompetitive and see this as conducive for sustaining the economic advantages of the area in future. A participant gave the following account of the uncompetitive attitude that reigns: *“When I can't help some people with fruits and vegetables, I always show them to my friends stall or even shop”*. This attitude enhances the economic relationships, as one participant stated: *“I always show people to other stalls because another time someone will show them here...”*.

Sub-theme 4: Comfortable with one another

Comfortableness with one another is visible from the open and easy communication that takes place amongst the social systems. One participant gave a description of this communication with the following remark: *"We sometimes sit and talk at our stalls and most of the time we lose track of time..."* Another participant stated that: *"Once you start speaking to the people in the rank, you will find them very interesting."* One participant explained: *"We scream at each other because it means that we feel secure and comfortable in the area and talking is the way to show it."*

Sub-theme 5: Accommodating

It seems that the different social systems, apart from being very accommodating to one another, are also open to accepting newcomers in the area. People of different backgrounds are welcomed and accommodated in a non-judgemental way. One participant emphasises this by saying: *"I am so happy to see different cultures coming to this area"*, while another supports this by stating: *"We are people from different backgrounds that come together here and communicate, and every person's reason for coming here is different but it makes no difference to us."* This shows a high level of awareness of different social systems, and emphasises participants' strong awareness of social interaction in the area. One participant stated: *"I am very happy and aware that the people here talk to each other and we are usually very aware of new comers in the area."*

Sub-theme 6: Fixed and established

The daily routines that participants engage in, consisting of predictable actions, activities and movement patterns, seem to give a strong sense of security and stability to participants in the area, and this developed over time. These relationships and interactions are fixed and established. One participant stated: *"We always do the same things here"* and later explained this by adding *"we like it because we always know what to get and where to go"*. Another participant said: *"...even the pattern that we walk in the area are the same on a daily basis, we like it because everything is as we like it."* This creates the idea that the area could be sensitive and volatile for interventions that impose change without acknowledging these routines that underlie the participants' feeling of security and stability.

Sub-theme 7: Respect

A general respect towards each other underpins the interaction between the different social systems. A participant emphasised this by saying: *"We like each other, there is a great spirit of respect towards us and this gives us the feeling to respect other"*. Another participant stated: *"I usually think everyone is okay, I have respect for everyone..."* The theme of respect was

prominent throughout the interviews and a fundamental characteristic of how participants interact.

A general feeling of emotional, material and social support seems to exist among the social systems present in this area as reflected by the friendly, cooperative and accommodating nature of the relationships that foster respect and create a comfortable, at-ease feeling towards one another in which open communication flourishes. At the same time these and especially the known established daily routines help to secure this community in how they perceive and interact with one another.

Central theme 2: Participant's interaction with the physical environment

A second central theme that was identified, also supported by the observations, was the strong interaction of participants with the physical environment. Specific sub-themes were identified from the content analysis in order to understand the role of urban social systems with regard to the physical environment.

Sub-Theme 1: Flexible and adaptive

Flexibility to adapt to the physical space develops as a direct consequence of the dissatisfaction with the support of the physical environment as conducive for the activities in the area, for examples for the activities of the informal traders. Participants learned to adapt the physical environment to their personal or communal needs. One participant stated that: *"...this area is not very nice to do business, so we usually put our own stalls as we like it."* Another participant stated that: *"I like the area, but I adapt the stalls as I like it, because the area is not very nice..."* because (as he/she explains later) *"...there are no facilities for the needs I have, in particular roofs for our stalls, so I bring my own plastic to cover my stall"*. This also applied to the communal needs. One participant stated: *"We like eating in the food yards we built for the people."* This confirmed this sub-theme, as most of the participants expressed comfort with adapting the area for their own or communal needs.

Sub-Theme 2: Ownership

Ownership was displayed towards the physical environment. Ownership can be defined as subjective possession taken by someone who does not have the legal right (Bates et al., 2008:2). Participants stated the following: *"...this is our place; we usually do as we wish"*. Another person stated that: *"I visit the area so much, that I sometimes feel like it's my home"*. This enhances the idea that some participants link certain subjective feelings towards the area, making the physical area part of their lives. Another participant reacted as follows: *"...the area is known and familiar, why do we want to change it?"* Ownership is widely experienced. One participant declared: *"I sometimes come in earlier to clean around my stall"*. I asked the

participant to elaborate and he/she stated: *"I do not want to make food in a dirty place and I like that other people like coming here."*

Sub-Theme 3: Pride

Pride is a positive phenomenon in this context because the participants take joy in being proud. This was expressed by participants that were keen to speak about the area and suggested to show the researcher and translator around the area. During one interview of the interviews a participant exclaimed: *"I am very proud of the area, because this area is the income for most of the people here..."* Pride seems to extend beyond the physical space to represents the actual livelihood for some of the people who interact here. One participant supported this by introducing the community in the area by saying: *"... the people here are proud of the area..."*

Sub-Theme 4: Unsafe physical environment

Another theme identified was the issue of safety and the dissatisfaction with regard to how the physical area supports the safety of the community. This concern was emphasised by means of three issues that were raised: (1) safety for children, (2) traffic, and (3) crime.

(1) Female participants raised the issue of unsafe spaces for children. One participant reacted passionately by saying: *"...my child fell the other day over a pipe that stuck out of the ground, and he broke his arm."* Another participant stated the problem as follows: *"I am always afraid of letting my children off the taxi alone..."*

(2) One participant raised the community's feeling of unsafety due to the absence of traffic regulation in the area: *"we never know where to walk and where to sit, the taxi's drive like animals..."* This creates an unsafe area as almost every pedestrian is closely in contact with traffic. Another participant stated the following: *"...the taxi do not look where they drive, I am afraid to walk over the road."* This made it clear that the community feels very unsafe in terms of the physical environment, because of the lack of infrastructure for pedestrians.

(3) Crime in the area has been found to be a problem, especially since the physical environment does not enhance optimal safety. One participant stated the following: *"... I never even walk alone here, because they will rob you..."* Another participant stated: *"I always have to put my handbag in a black garbage bag to hide it..."* This confirmed social problems such as crime. Probing was done, because CCTV cameras were spotted during the observation stage, and the reaction was as follows: *"...they put cameras in this rank, but it does not work anymore because the municipality does not fix it."*

Sub-Theme 5: Limited choices

The interaction with the study area is mostly seen as mandatory. The participants interact with the area because alternatives are limited due to transportation constraints and because it is where vendors find customers. This is supported by participants stating the following: *"...there is no other taxi rank coming from Ikageng in Potchefstroom"* and *"I always have to come here because it's where I do my shopping..."* or *"I get the most customers for my shop here in this area..."* and *"This is the only rank where the taxi association support us picking up passengers."* When listening to these answers one comes to understand that the participants do not really have a choice but to use this area.

Sub-Theme 6: Relaxation

Even though the area is seen as unsafe and used as a mere necessity, certain participants also stated that the area supports relaxation and social activities. One participant stated the following: *"I like making fire in this area to 'braai' with friends..."* Another two participants stated: *"...we usually like going to the food stalls and eating vetkoeks with friends"* and *"...after work I come here to relax and forget about the worries of the world..."* These answers clearly reveal that the urban environment is seen as conducive to social interaction.

Sub-Theme 7: Dissatisfaction with the physical environment

There is a definite dissatisfaction with the physical environment that is supported by statements with regard to maintenance of the area. A participant stated the following: *"I never use the toilets as it is always broken."* Another participant said: *"...the area around the toilets always smells, because the sewage flows through the rank."* This shows that the lack of proper infrastructure causes problems with health in the area. Dissatisfaction was noted as about the lack of physical infrastructural elements (shade, play spaces for children). One participant stated that: *"I always have to bring my umbrella for shade..."* The need for trees or sheds was emphasised with another participant stating: *"There are no trees, because they use it for fire, but we need trees..."* Mothers quickly stated that there are no play spaces for children. One participant stated: *"I do not like the area because there is no safe way for my children to play in the rank."* The dissatisfaction confirms the need for urban interventions such as urban renewal.

The interaction with the physical environment seems to be much less supportive than that of the social environment. This is reflected in the forced way in which participants have to adapt physical spaces and facilities to accommodate their needs and daily activities and the fact that little choice is provided in terms of alternative spaces to conduct daily activities, for example businesses. Positive interactions such as pride, ownership and relaxation seem to follow more from the fact that participants make the best of what they have available (and economic and social meanings implied) and the strong social dynamics than a positive relation with the

physical environment. This is emphasised by the general dissatisfaction with the physical environment in this context.

5.4.2.1 Discussion of interviews

The aims of the interviews were (1) to obtain insight into social dynamics and the reasons for behaviours observed during the first phase of the research; and (2) to explore participants' perception of the physical environment. These aims were pursued by exploring the research context through the participants' eyes. The findings of the observations supported the findings of the interviews in terms of the social sensitivity of the area as reflected in (1) participants' interaction with each other and (2) participants' interaction with the physical environment.

Positive pro-social behavioural patterns, as conceptualised by Zhang (2011:14), occur amongst all the urban social systems in the research context. The interactions that occur can be classified as complex social dynamics because of the group orientated environment in which these interactions take place (Situngkir & Khanafiah, 2005:1). The group orientated interaction forms the basis of this urban environment. As previously stated the interaction patterns or behaviour could be seen as the links between social systems.

Giddens (1989:256) suggests that complex social systems are understood through the structure that underlies it, which in turn is needed to understand their role. People's views or actions that collectively emerge as patterns of interactions (as suggested by the sub-themes from the data analysis) are referred to as "agencies" within urban systems. These "agencies" form the underlying structure of complex social systems. Therefore, patterns or "agencies" that drive the dynamics between social systems in the research context can be viewed as materially supportive; friendliness; cooperativeness; comfortableness; accommodativeness; fixed and established relations and respect. Although the analysis is done on a micro scale, Hobbs and Sagae (2011:11) emphasise the importance of analysing complex social systems at a micro scale in order to understand macro sociological patterns. Each of these "agencies" or patterns are therefore micro social systems within the macro social context (Hobbs & Sagae, 2011:4). The agents are seen as part of a macro social system, and therefore society plays an integrated role in creating a societal trend (idea of a specific macro sociological social system) identified within this role (Sanderson, 1988:126). The societal trend identified was that the social interaction between these different complex urban social systems is sensitive.

The sub-themes ("agencies"/patterns) represent what Newman (2010:15) discuss in terms of social dimensions that can either create cities of fear, or cities of hope. The interaction of the urban social systems in this research context with the physical environment presents a combination of Newman's (2010:15) two social dimensions. For cities to be more sustainable, cities of hope should be created. The "agencies" that underlie the physical structure of this specific research context include flexible and adoptive behaviour (due to unmet physical needs);

an unsafe physical environment; limited choices and a general dissatisfaction with the physical environment. These can be interpreted as fostering a spatial environment of fear. In contrast to this ownership; pride and a space that fosters relaxation are also implied by the physical structure and reflects a feeling of hope amongst social systems. This duality (refer to Table 5.8) in terms of the social dynamics is created by what on the one hand can be regarded as a positive contribution due to healthy social dynamics (e.g. cultural relativism), while on the other hand can be described as negative dynamics due to an unsupportive physical environment.

Table 5-9 Classified agencies within urban social dimensions

Agencies	Fear	Hope
Flexible and adoptive		
Ownership		
Pride		
Unsafe physical environment		
Limited choices		
Relaxation		
Dissatisfaction with the physical environment		

(Source: Researchers own synthesis)

These agencies were categorised within these two urban social dimensions according to Newman's (2010:15) criteria. Fear is characterised by the following points: panic; survival and a feeling of being threatened by everything. Hope is characterised by: focus on long term plans; co-operation and partnership and the possibility to see opportunities to improve the environment. According to Newman (2010:23) if the "hope" dimension is more than the "fear" dimension, the intervening of an urban renewal programme could be beneficial. For a community to portray hope within an urban environment shows a positive outlook on the area, which contributes to identity, this makes the social systems that are present ideal for participants of urban interventions. From this discussion it seems that urban renewal intervention is not only needed, but would benefit the people in the area, as well as the physical environment. However, such an intervention should be based on a thorough understanding of the different urban social systems.

5.4.4 Integrated discussion

As the observations and interviews support each other in this research, it is necessary to provide an integrated discussion on all the identified themes. As previously stated, the need for structure in urban social systems benefits the understanding. Therefore all themes could be seen as agencies within complex urban social systems.

Table 5-10 Agencies identified throughout the observations and interviews

	Agencies	Observations	Interviews
Identified during the observations	Pride		
	Intellectual stimulation		
	Territoriality		
	Non-competitiveness		
	Harmony		
	Ownership		
	Social drive		
	Happiness		
	Reserved		
Identified in the interviews	Respect		
	Materially supportive		
	Friendliness		
	Cooperativeness		
	Comfortable with one another		
	Accommodating		
	Fixed and established		
	Flexible and adoptive		
	Ownership		
	Pride		
	Unsafe physical environment		
	Limited choices		
	Relaxation		
	Dissatisfaction with physical environment		

(Source: Own construction)

In table 5-10 there are certain themes or agencies that could be identified from the observations and interviews. These themes were identified as pro-social behaviour. According to Sanderson (1988), this could then furthermore be explained as an environment that is culturally relative rather than ethnocentric (Lenski, 1974). Caleb and Rosada (1994:5) state that cultural relativism is the main theory that drives South African cities. Herskovits (1973:37) shows that within the relevance of cultural relativism, values and beliefs are shared over cultural or social borders. Within this spectrum one could observe certain values and roles throughout different social systems, and this is emphasised by the findings from the interviews. The observations and interviews could be placed within cultural relativism. According to Rosada's (1994:2) criteria it

seems that the urban centre of Potchefstroom is inclusive (contributes to every other social system); open-minded (social systems are very aware of the physical setting and adapt it to their personal needs) and finally socially sensitive (this states that any intervention should understand the social sensitivity of the urban setting).

During the research done the different social systems identified could be described as: complex urban social systems that include agencies that inform the interaction that takes place.

5.5 Conclusion

Social systems seem to be important in this research context as they create the underlying structural backbone of the physical environment in which positive relations and interactions are fostered through pro-social behaviour patterns. Interactions manifest as a dynamic and cyclical network of inter and intra relationships that culminate in vigorous social dynamics. This creates a vibrant and synergetic environment conducive to a socially and economically sustainable central business area. Newman's (2010:15) city of hope is primarily embedded in a satisfactory social environment in which cultural relativism is experienced, while a city of fear is embedded in a general dissatisfaction with the way in which the physical environment manifests. It suggests urban renewal interventions as essential for enhancing a sustainable future for the Central Business District of Potchefstroom. As planners play a primary role in urban renewal, the next chapter will formulate recommendations for planners on how to include urban social systems in urban renewal interventions, as well as suggestions for a more physically supportive environment.