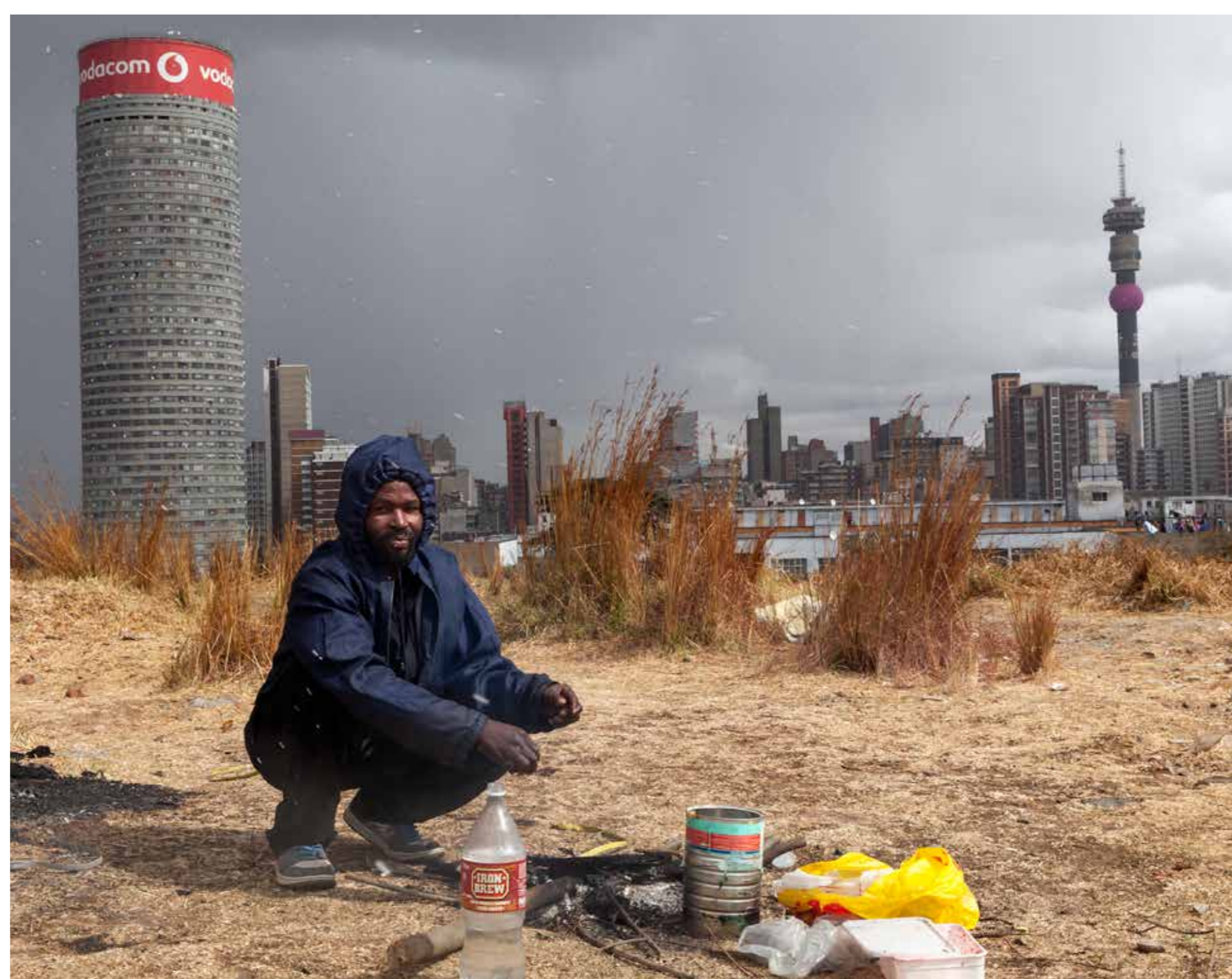


Housing for the poor is not affordable

Affordable housing for poor communities in Johannesburg’s CBD has become too pricey for residents.

Professor Nicolaas Kotze is an associate professor in urban geography at UNISA.

Kotze, N. & Carow, S. (2019). "Converting office blocks to affordable housing in the inner city of Johannesburg: social housing or a ruse for inclusive housing?" In Toshevska, B.A., Gorin, S., Markoski, B., Taleska, M., Iliev, D., Radevski, M., Ljakoska, M., Trajkova, H.D., Todorova, A., Zlatanovski, V. & Kitevski, G. New Trends in Geography, Proceedings of 70 Years Macedonian Geographical Society Symposium, Ohrid, North Macedonia, pp. 203-213.



Low-cost housing in Johannesburg has become unaffordable for the poor.

The central business district of Johannesburg went through a process of decline during the 1970s and 1980s, resulting in the flight of residents and businesses from the inner city. This void was filled by the poor, who occupied abandoned buildings - in many instances illegally. These derelict and abandoned

buildings soon became overcrowded and unsafe. Today, they are generally in violation of most of the local government by-laws and are perceived as an embarrassment - unwanted by the city.

To reverse this process, the City Improvement District (CID) Forum was introduced in Johannesburg. The

project was driven by urban planners and private developers, as well as local and national governmental bodies.

Several government-supported housing institutions have been structured to provide housing for the poor and to redevelop the derelict buildings in this area. If supported by the local or provincial government, a grant of R125 615 is available per housing unit for redevelopment in these zones.

“While this housing was initially aimed at households earning between R1 500 and R3 500, it quickly became unaffordable for the poorer inhabitants of the inner city,” say Professor Nico Kotze and Sanet Carow. “In many cases, the rent of the apartments has become almost as high as the units available on the private market - and it costs as much as the residents’ monthly income, putting it out of reach of the poor.”

The apartments in some of these converted office blocks are as small as eighteen square metres, and only communal bathrooms are available. The rent for these very small apartments is R1 880 per month.



THE ART OF RESEARCH