

JFAC ep 7 Transcript

How do we build more just cities?

[00:00:00] **audio clip:** So let me add to the complexity of the situation we find ourselves in. Uh, at the same time that we're solving for climate change, we're gonna be building cities for 3 billion people. That's a doubling of the urban environment. If we don't get that right, I'm not sure all the climate solutions in the world will save mankind because so much depends on how we shape our cities. Not just environmental impacts, but our social wellbeing, economic vitality, and our sense of community and connectedness. Fundamentally, the way we shape cities is a manifestation of the kind of humanity we bring to bear.

[00:00:46] **Ntombini Marrengane:** Fundamentally the way we shape cities is a manifestation of the kind of humanity we bring to bear". I feel that these words of Peter Calthorpe, a city planner and advocate for human-centred design of urban spaces, in a TedTalk from 2017, are worth repeating. Perhaps because they sum up the crux of why urban spaces, city planning and social justice need to go hand in hand.

[00:01:17] **Ntombini Marrengane:** Welcome, I am Ntombini Marrengane, host of season three of the Just for a Change podcast. If you've been following this series, you'll know that I have conversations with change-makers, from South Africa and further afield. It's probably safe to say that most South Africans, albeit to a greater or lesser extent, experience the failure of public infrastructure every day. Loadshedding, potholes and public safety to name a few.

[00:01:39] **Ntombini Marrengane:** Another example that comes to mind is the issue of public transport in our cities. Many people do not have a choice about taking public transport but it is often unreliable and unsafe. We cannot talk about the issue of urban spaces without acknowledging the legacy of apartheid and the fact that we live in its reality today.

[00:02:00] **Ntombini Marrengane:** Having common constitutional rights and national socio-economic rights has done little to close the spatial divide, amongst other things. The SA Cities Network 'State of South African Cities' report published in 2021 tracked everything from levels of poverty to economic development and access to basic services across the major cities in South Africa.

[00:02:24] **Ntombini Marrengane:** Two of South Africa's biggest cities and economic hubs, Johannesburg and Cape Town, both experienced significant population growth between 2011 - 2019. Yet in both cities, approximately 45% of people live on

less than R1 200 per month. Not only that but in South Africa's largest cities unemployment according to Stats SA ranges from 23% - 39.8%.

[00:02:51] **Ntombini Marrengane:** And then there is the reality that according to the World Bank Urban Population statistics also released in 2021 almost 70% of the population in South Africa lives in urban areas and cities. So not only are people moving to cities in greater numbers but we're also seeing an increase in the number of vulnerable households due to poverty and unemployment. This is a global reality too.

[00:03:14] **Ntombini Marrengane:** And so, as with many things right now, we're in a time where things need to change swiftly. The way that cities were built during what some would describe as the last big shift in society - the industrial revolution, is not good or viable now. Climate change and inclusion are just some aspects that were not part of these developments.

[00:03:36] **Ntombini Marrengane:** There is a vast and complex landscape of possibility ahead of us, where we will all hopefully dare to tread as we consider what the cities and urban spaces of our today and tomorrow could be. Joining me now to discuss this further is urban spaces expert and activist, Jodi Allemeier. Jodi is a co-founder of Open Streets, a citizen-led initiative that hopes to change the way we use, perceive and experience streets.

[00:04:03] **Ntombini Marrengane:** She also runs her own consultancy and helps urban development policymakers, practitioners, advocacy workers and civic groups improve their strategies, projects, know-how and institutional systems for better, more resilient outcomes. Jodi holds a BA in Social Work, Honour's in Public Administration and a Master's in Development Finance.

[00:04:27] **Ntombini Marrengane:** Thank you so much for joining me for this episode. Welcome, Jodi. It's a real privilege to have you share your story with us. Tell me a little bit more about how you ended up working in this sector.

[00:04:37] **Jodi Allemeier:** Uh, thank you so much for having me. Um, my journey into urban development is a bit of an odd one. I started off as a social worker, um, but very quickly realized that a lot of the day-to-day challenges and crises and social issues that my clients were facing were as a result of the urban [00:05:00] context that they were living in, uh, being displaced from economic opportunities.

[00:05:05] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, being primary amongst them and also the quality of the urban environment, the housing conditions and, and things like that. Um, I was invited to comment from a social worker's perspective on the, uh, plans for the N2 gateway housing development and many other social workers commented that

these plans were going to perpetuate a lot of the, uh, social issues that we were seeing in terms of, in particular social issues such as gangsterism and crime.

[00:05:34] **Jodi Allemeier:** Uh, unfortunately, those comments weren't really taken into consideration and the design went ahead and we still see a lot of similar designs being used in housing programs today. But that sort of sparked my interest in thinking more broadly about some of the systemic issues that we were looking at.

[00:05:50] **Jodi Allemeier:** And I sort of took a pivot, uh, into, uh, urban development, uh, consulting and, and have had various career trajectories from then. They talk [00:06:00] about a ladder and a map of a career. Mine's definitely a map. I've, I've kind of worked on the problem from various different perspectives over the years.

[00:06:08] **Ntombini Marrengane:** Can you help us with a basic understanding of what urban development entails?

[00:06:14] **Jodi Allemeier:** So, you know, I think this is definitely something that will be answered differently from different perspectives. If you're a property developer, you're gonna talk about it being about new commercial and residential buildings and, uh, the sort of regeneration of existing spaces or new, or new, uh, zones. Um, others who might be looking at it, uh, from a sort of an engineering perspective, will talk about building new infrastructure, roads, big bridges, public transport, uh, things like that to keep up with the growth of, of cities and, and urban spaces.

[00:06:46] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, others might talk about addressing, uh, sort of social issues or ecological sustainability, uh, to sort of maintain the overall health and wellbeing of an urban system and an urban systems' perspective. [00:07:00] So it is quite a complex, uh, sort of field that brings together all of these different perspectives and these sort of layers of, of inputs into the urban system.

[00:07:11] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, and it's typically driven by a range of different factors, including how fast the population of a particular place might be growing, how the economy is performing, what the social and cultural trends is, as well as the strength of the different act actors in that space. So how strong are the local authorities are to plan and guide, uh, how, how the inputs into that urban system are managed, um, and, and perform against a particular long-term strategy or plan, uh, and how the resources are sort of governed and, and shared. Um, or if they're not that strong, uh, a lot of the results of urban development might be driven more by market forces or informal forces.

[00:07:59] **Jodi Allemeier:** So [00:08:00] yeah, it's a, a sort of a combination of all of these inputs and then the strength of these different actors is really, will inform how that all comes together.

[00:08:09] **Ntombini Marrengane:** I think what you're, what you're giving us insight to is that cities really are complex systems and that there are so many stakeholders involved and so many different issues that need to be managed and responded to all at the same time. Um, by a range of actors as you've mentioned. What are some of the biggest issues facing city planners and governments in the so-called developing world today? And perhaps you can outline how these are shifting or growing as we move further into the 21st century.

[00:08:42] **Jodi Allemeier:** So, you know, obviously what's long been spoken about is this concept of rapid urbanization, that our cities are growing really, really fast. Populations are moving to urban centres in search of improved livelihoods. And so to keep up with that growth, uh, you have [00:09:00] to introduce new infrastructure and new housing and new public spaces and services, um, at quite a fast pace.

[00:09:06] **Jodi Allemeier:** And do you have the underlying economy budgets, um, governance and institutional capacity to deliver all of that? And often the answer to that latter part of that question is no, you, you lack either the institutional capacity, the budgets, the governance structures, or, or three of those. Um, and so the result of that will be some failure, uh, either represented through informality, uh, through inequality, um, through sort of very distorted markets, uh, you know, unaffordable housing and things like that.

[00:09:44] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, and the next sort of step from that will be some representation of crisis. Uh, things like, uh, crime, very extreme vulnerability to other shocks like climate [00:10:00] change, um, impacting on different communities differently. Some are more insulated and protected from that than others. Um, and, uh, you know, obviously we've seen now with floods in, in Durban, what that looks like, uh, with, with the pandemic, how different communities were impacted. Um, and that can, that can all seem very overwhelming, and very doom and gloom at the same time. We do have a lot of new energy introduced into our cities recently. Um, With a lot of, uh, ability to collaborate, introduce through digital tools, a lot of ability to plan and understand and analyze what's happening in our city through access to much more information and data than we ever had before.

[00:10:46] **Jodi Allemeier:** And if you have in place just the most fundamental basics of governance, there is the potential to mobilize and get community input into the plans. One of the most fundamental things that if you have those things in [00:11:00] place, that then needs to be brought in is obviously the capital to actually provide for the infrastructure, services and housing that's needed to keep up with growth.

[00:11:09] **Jodi Allemeier:** So it's all very well knowing what's needed and knowing where it's needed and having the community input into what's needed, but um, to then actually be able to provide for that. And, and that's where you know, there are

now more and more innovative financing models available, long-term financing models available and more changes to municipal finance structures to actually say we need to have more autonomy at the city level to plan our city's revenue structures and access debt at a local level and things like that to be able to actually address these challenges.

[00:11:44] **Ntombini Marrengane:** Can I ask you to just take a step back, I think what you've laid out is, is, is quite comprehensive. Um, and some of the material needs in cities in the developing world are pretty standard, right? So infrastructure, uh, storm and [00:12:00] water, um, electricity, safe sources of water, but the governance arrangements in these cities can vary widely and there seems to be a temptation to just wanna have one lens to look at this very complicated picture. To what extent does context play a role in the types of challenges that city planners and city governments may face?

[00:12:25] **Jodi Allemeier:** No, absolutely. It's very different in different contexts. Um, I, I mean, I think in South African cities, obviously, we are facing a very, very big change at the moment where we've got coalition governments, for example, coming on board, and this is a whole new set of capabilities and skills that needs to be learned in terms of negotiating what is the plan and the vision for the cities.

[00:12:49] **Jodi Allemeier:** How are we going to stick to a steady plan and vision even while they might be changes happening within coalitions? What is the role then between the administration and the political [00:13:00] layer to be able to continue to deliver services while we adapt to a new political model? Um, so that's, you know, that's really quite a big shift that's happening in our metropolitan context in South Africa at the moment.

[00:13:14] **Jodi Allemeier:** In other contexts, I know you've got cities in the world where there isn't even a mayor, for example. So this concept of an executive mayor is held very important in South Africa, but there are other cities where there either is only a ceremonial mayor or there isn't a mayor at all, and the administration plays a much stronger role and the importance of a, of a capable administration and a capable, um, municipal technical, uh, skill is, is held most important and there's a much more central authority from a central government, for example, that sits in place.

[00:13:45] **Jodi Allemeier:** What are the policies? What are the plans? What are the, what are the procedural guidelines and things like that? In South Africa, our municipalities actually own and manage and implement a large number of assets, um, and are responsible for a large number [00:14:00] of services at a municipal level. There's actually relatively little that they're not fully in charge of.

[00:14:05] **Jodi Allemeier:** There are parts of the transport system that they're not fully in charge of. Some aspects of housing that they struggle with because there are conditions on the grants and how they can implement, uh, the grants. And then they've got what they called, uh, sort of so-called unfunded mandates around social infrastructure like libraries and clinics and things like that.

[00:14:25] **Jodi Allemeier:** But they still deliver those services so, local municipalities in South Africa are actually relatively empowered and responsible for a large number of services in comparison to other models that we would look to in other parts of the world. So their governance capabilities actually need to be really, really strong and need to have a strong line of sight to a long-term future, a long-term, uh, management model, and a long-term relationship with the constituents that they're accountable to.

[00:14:55] **Ntombini Marrengane:** I think what you've just described really adds texture and [00:15:00] understanding to the fact that you actually can't look at the urban through just one lens. Um, even though the physical and capital needs of cities tend to be the same, as you've rightly pointed out, the conditions can be wildly different. And just turning to South Africa, now, you've already mentioned the coalition governments, which have thrown us into a whole new phase of our democratic process. But can you speak a little bit about what happens on the ground when it comes to urban and city development in South African cities today?

[00:15:33] **Jodi Allemeier:** I think when we think about South Africa, we must recognize that we have come quite a long way and they, and they were good gains to be had in access to basic services. So we did make some good strides and access to water, electricity, and very basic services and some good housing programs that will run out that. We just reached the basic minimum in terms of, uh, a measure of a roof over our head. But in terms of continuing to [00:16:00] progress and continue to sort of strive for excellence, we, we slowed down and part of the reason why we slowed down was the inability of these programs to adapt to feedback on, on their performance and to adapt to new market conditions.

[00:16:13] **Jodi Allemeier:** So an example of that would be in the housing program. With a lot of feedback around the inability of housing grants to deliver housing products that were well suited to the needs of tenants or recipients that, uh, could be well located, that could accommodate mixed-use, mixed tenure, mixed-income housing.

[00:16:35] **Jodi Allemeier:** And that feedback has been on the policy table for, you know, well over a decade, and yet the structure of the housing grants has remained the same for both social housing and uh, uh, sort of so-called RDP housing. And similar sorts of things have happened in the transportation space. There's been a lot

of dialogue and sort of failure to launch on, uh, programs around, uh, how do we better integrate [00:17:00] or hack into the formal system? Um, uh, what should we be doing to decentralize or devolve the management of role rail to metros? Uh, and so there's, there just hasn't been, I think a sense of like real aspiration for, uh, taking big strides in our metros.

[00:17:18] **Jodi Allemeier:** We've kind of been like ticking along on delivery. Um, and that's at the base case. In the last three to four years, I think we've been sliding backwards. Um, and a, a lot of the sliding backwards has been due to, uh, corruption and, and poor governance.

[00:17:35] **Ntombini Marrengane:** You mentioned that there were, um, well-designed policies and plans, um, developed quite some time ago which looked at addressing the needs of a range of income groups for decent shelter and access to basic services. But there hasn't been the appetite to actually continue to retool and improve those plans. [00:18:00] Um, why do you think that we are facing such a barrier and how can we start to reconceive the idea of social and inclusive housing initiatives in our cities?

[00:18:14] **Jodi Allemeier:** I think a part of it is, is just the distance between where some of these policies and programs are run and where they're implemented. So, you know, setting housing and transport policy and designing the grant structures and the rules for how that should be run at a national level can make sense in terms of that is where the ANC sits and they want to drive a national agenda and they want to drive their policy agenda. Um, and they want equity across all cities in terms of how this is implemented. But it is very, very far from the ground. Um, so to provide feedback from projects and from communities and from NGOs that are active in this space all the way up to a [00:19:00] national level, um, is quite difficult.

[00:19:02] **Jodi Allemeier:** And so you get lots of layers of sort of organized groups and, uh, it becomes quite academic by the time it gets to the top. And you get these policy conferences and things like that, that are, that are engaging and it becomes quite a slow process of engagement. Um, and, and thinking and as I say, can become quite academic.

[00:19:22] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, and it becomes this tension between developing the most perfect normative, uh, policy versus testing and iterating and trialling things on the ground at a local level and seeing what can be done. Um, and I think there is quite a lot of appetite at the ground level to try things out and test things, but there isn't the legislative framework to allow for that.

[00:19:52] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, You would be breaking rules of National Treasury or you'd be breaking rules associated with the grant, or you'd be breaking a policy and

you, you know, [00:20:00] you'd, you'd risk having to send money back to National Treasury or, or get a bad audited outcome if you did that. So you have to comply with, uh, with all sorts of regulations and, and guidelines.

[00:20:15] **Jodi Allemeier:** So we, yeah, I think we haven't, we haven't created the environment to try out lots of things. We've created an environment where we have to somehow design the perfect program and then implement it nationally. Um, and. And, and we're just stuck in, in realms of debate about what that is. Um, instead of, instead of allowing people to try things out where we have tried things out, it's largely been driven, uh, by, you know, NGOs or foreign groups coming in with, with donor funding and trying out, and then it's on an incredibly small scale. It's a pilot. Um, and again, it gets fed up through the sort of academic policy network for example but doesn't get, uh, yeah, it doesn't get, [00:21:00] uh, sort of adopted in any, any large scale to be replicated out.

[00:21:04] **Ntombini Marrengane:** Talk to me about shared public spaces. Um, that's a large part of your work with Open Streets. We'd like to learn more about why they're important, why we need to create more, and especially why they need to be made safe for everyone.

[00:21:19] **Jodi Allemeier:** Public spaces are, are sort of my, my soft spot. Um, I think a lot of people think of a public space as, as, you know, a park with a fence around it and you go there with your child to sort of sit on the swing or you went there as a teenager to get away from the family house or something like that. Um, but really they, they are sort of every space that you're ever in, when you're not, uh, in a private building. So they are, um, the street spaces, they're the taxi ranks, they are the civic centers, the libraries, the clinics. All of those are public spaces. Um, and [00:22:00] you know, they are so important to contributing to our sense of community, um, which can be positive or negative.

[00:22:09] **Jodi Allemeier:** So if they are not well looked after, well designed, um, and well programmed, uh, they can contribute to a person feeling excluded. Um, having lots of negative connotations with the broader society and community that they live in, um, and have very negative memories, uh, for the rest of their life. Whereas if they are well designed, uh, maintained and well programmed it's the opposite.

[00:22:38] **Jodi Allemeier:** The person has a very strong attachment to the broader society that they're living in and has lots of good memories that they will continue to go back on, that propel them in all sorts of ways, um, in their family life, in their business life, in their community life. Very practically, if you have a public space and you are mugged [00:23:00] in that public space, you don't want to go back there.

[00:23:03] **Jodi Allemeier:** You're scared of going back there. You will change your behaviour next time you're there with your child in terms of how you teach your child to behave in that space. Whereas if in that same public space or another public space, you felt free and safe to like learn how to ride a bicycle, um, that's a very positive memory.

[00:23:24] **Jodi Allemeier:** You know, you'll always want to go back there and share photos of that place and want to bring your child there when you do have a child again, and maybe teach your child how to ride a bike there and things like that. So those are completely two opposite experiences and they have long-term lasting impacts in terms of how people engage with the community around them, and also how we feel that we belong.

[00:23:48] **Jodi Allemeier:** And you know what our right is to sort of show up in society and uh, and show up in public space. My involvement with Open Streets was I was one of several co-founders of [00:24:00] Open Streets. We were a group of people who realized that streets were the biggest network of public open spaces and that they reached every community in Cape Town.

[00:24:11] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, so not every community has the same amount of parks or swimming pools or libraries or clinics or halls, but every community has streets and while they are predominantly used for cars, they can be made available for other users by closing them off on specific days or a specific time of the day, or coordinating off portions of them, or just redesigning them in such a way that pedestrians have greater access to them.

[00:24:40] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, and so by celebrating this asset that we have, um, you can use streets in a way that, uh, changes how people perceive them and changes what people can use them for, for leisure, for physical activity, for developing new skills, for teaching [00:25:00] children how to do things and playing games, um, for getting together to, uh, do cultural events or religious events.

[00:25:07] **Jodi Allemeier:** And so Open Streets was really about that mission. And, uh, we advocated for different policies around how communities could get access to these streets by minimizing the barriers to using them for events and put on these open streets days as, uh, sort of examples of what that, what that could look like.

[00:25:26] **Ntombini Marrengane:** You've shared with us the vision behind starting open streets. Can you tell us a little bit more about the journey - your interaction with policymakers and officials and communities as you started to introduce this idea?

[00:25:39] **Jodi Allemeier:** The experiences with communities was uniformly the same. Anytime we did an open streets day, the response was, can you come back again

next week? And in fact, we still get, uh, people kind of saying, when is it happening again? You know, why has it stopped? When is it happening? Uh, people just loved it and, [00:26:00] and wanted more of it. And, you know, some people have, uh, we developed a toolkit on how to put on open street days and, you know, some communities carry on, carry on with it and, and get going.

[00:26:11] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, unfortunately, it does have costs involved. And that that's part of why the engagement with the city was so important is because the costs are, are related to, uh, policies that they have around how streets are used and the event management aspects and, and things like that. And that is a barrier to, uh, community self-organizing.

[00:26:33] **Jodi Allemeier:** And putting them on themselves. And that was a large part of our engagement with the city, was how do we rethink these policies, um, and create changes to the policies or sort of new tools and, and processes, um, that are fit for purpose for different communities or different hierarchies of streets and things like that?

[00:26:54] **Jodi Allemeier:** Those engagements, you know, they were led by the team that were full-time employed by Open Streets. I was a board [00:27:00] member and that team was, uh, uh, very tenacious and um, and uh, spent huge amounts of hours and time engaging with officials to try and understand. The different reasons that were safety-driven as much as revenue-driven and otherwise.

[00:27:15] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, and, you know, some officials were very supportive and, and backed the idea. Um, others, uh, I think just didn't see it as, as much as a priority as other, uh, social concerns or safety concerns or mobility concerns. Um, and so we went through lots of cycles of, uh, feeling like the door was open and then feeling like the door was shut again.

[00:27:38] **Jodi Allemeier:** Right now, the city has an approach of putting on more economically focused, uh, street-based days. So they are more in support of open streets days that are, are linked to economic activity. Um, so days that happen, in streets where there are lots of [00:28:00] businesses. So that's why you've seen these events on Bree Street and Seapoint Main Road and areas like that, cause there obviously will be a large benefit to the businesses along those roads.

[00:28:10] **Jodi Allemeier:** Uh, having a higher turnover on those days. And obviously, you can get, uh, uh, support, uh, in, in producing the days, uh, from those businesses as well. And the city puts those events on themselves through their events department, which obviously then helps for them to, uh, also learn themselves around the complexity of putting on the event and the associated costs and, um, and resources that are needed and also what is necessary and, and maybe not

from, from their policy perspective. So I think it is a positive step in terms of their own, uh, learning journey as well.

[00:28:45] **Ntombini Marrengane:** And what has been the city's approach to extending open streets, this initiative to low-income areas where perhaps there aren't businesses on a high [00:29:00] street that will benefit from the street being closed off?

[00:29:04] **Jodi Allemeier:** Yeah, there's been, I mean, open streets put on days in, in Langa and Mitchell's plane, and there have been other similar events put on by like ChildSafe and, and other organizations with an interest in, in mobility or, or street safety issues. Um, in Khayelitsha and other areas, smaller events focused on, uh, you know, games for children and things like that.

[00:29:26] **Jodi Allemeier:** And the city is always involved in that. They have to be, um, in terms of just providing the permissions for the street to be closed to cars and things like that for, for the day. And they're always very supportive. They will send their own teams out to participate in the day in, in various ways. Uh, either their arts and culture department or their transport department, uh, will be involved in some capacity, but, They don't have an internal unit that is, you know, focused on rolling this out.

[00:29:53] **Jodi Allemeier:** And I think that that would be, I mean, you know, if I had a dream kind of thing, it would be, it would be nice to see [00:30:00] some, a team set up that was like a placemaking team that had, as one of their projects, open streets days and rolling them out, uh, more widely and regularly.

[00:30:12] **Ntombini Marrengane:** It sounds like you're really passionate about creating more human-centred cities. Um, and included in that is creating walkable neighbourhoods connected by public transport. Now, that sounds like a dream, but to be honest, it also feels somewhat unattainable in South Africa. What are some of the biggest challenges to this possible reality and what can be done to move us closer to it? How do you hold the tension of the reality of many South Africans and the imagined best practices of urban development?

[00:30:41] **Jodi Allemeier:** Again, I think it is, it comes down to how we view these processes and whether we see them as extra things that require a separate budget or if we make them a part of things that we are doing anyway and as a part of the design criteria. Um, Cape Town right now has got a [00:31:00] huge budget to redo all of the sewage infrastructure, um, in Cape Town. Um and a lot of that is in lower-income communities. Uh, for a, long time we didn't upgrade our sewage networks. Um, there are lots of reasons for that. Uh, you know, we only use

development contributions to upgrade infrastructure in certain areas and other areas were left behind.

[00:31:25] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, you know, lots of different factors that went into that. But now that is being rectified and the sewage infrastructure is going to be redone. That means that all of the streets that sewage pipes run under are going to be dug up so that sewage pipes can be relayed. Now, instead of saying that's one project and then, you know, in five years' time, we have to beg for budgets somewhere else to redesign the streets and add wider pavements for pedestrians to walk on.

[00:31:58] **Jodi Allemeier:** It should be part of the same [00:32:00] project. We are going to resurface the street anyway to redesign the street because, in those communities, people are walking. Those are the neighbourhoods where people walk every day, where people walk to the taxi rank at five o'clock in the morning, and where people walk to school every day.

[00:32:16] **Jodi Allemeier:** So it should be one project to relay the sewage infrastructure and redesign the nature of the street on top when you're relaying it. So it, I think it really, it's not so much about seeing it as, oh, we have to do so much more. It is about, when are we in this community doing something. What else can we do as part of the same project that improves the community based on what we know about the behaviours of this community? Anyway, this is a community where people walk. How do we make it better now that we hear spending money anyway?

[00:32:48] **Ntombini Marrengane:** It sounds like you've really thought about creatively grasping the opportunity as it presents itself which is something that it seems policymakers struggle with a bit at [00:33:00] times. How, how do you see good urban planning helping us to mitigate climate risk in our local context? And do you have any examples to share with us?

[00:33:09] **Jodi Allemeier:** Climate risks are also social risks. People will be impacted differently even within, you know, a particular city, people will be impacted differently in terms of, whether or not their neighbourhood has trees to help cool it down. Uh, whether or not their neighbourhood has adequate stormwater infrastructure that's regularly cleaned, uh, versus another neighbourhood.

[00:33:34] **Ntombini Marrengane:** I was gonna say whether or not your neighbourhood is located next to the mountain and you have the opportunity to access clean water.

[00:33:39] **Jodi Allemeier:** Exactly. Exactly. Um, you know, rivers that will flood or sea that will rise. Being able, whether you will, you know, be able to go into a building

that's got air conditioning in a heat wave, uh, whether there'll be energy for that heat wave, for that air-con, you know, there's just so many factors.

[00:33:59] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, [00:34:00] and, and to sort of just sit back and say, well, we'll deal with that when it comes is, is not, uh, it's just not a viable option. Um, and yet a lot of role players still think that, uh, doing anything to help mitigate, um, climate change is, is not a priority that it's, it's, it's sort of an added cost and it, it, um, somebody else must do it.

[00:34:30] **Jodi Allemeier:** Um, and, and so the focus is on, we will adapt when the crisis comes. Adapting when the crisis comes is gonna be hugely, hugely expensive. So I think we have to plan to adapt when the crisis comes. But the crisis is already here, you know, in many ways. Exactly. Yeah. Um, but we also should be doing, doing the mitigation.

[00:34:52] **Jodi Allemeier:** So the mitigation is obviously about changing the way in which, uh, we do our mobility. Um, [00:35:00] getting people not only into electric vehicles, but our vehicles into, into public transport, um, or walking, having more compact neighbourhoods so people have to travel fewer distances, having more, uh, green buildings and, and things like that.

[00:35:15] **Jodi Allemeier:** Green infrastructure such as parks and green roofs and the better stormwater systems, all of that sort of thing. And the challenge with this is that often the city and many cities, I mean the metros in South Africa are quite good at this. They have climate action plans and their climate action plans are not bad by a global standard.

[00:35:37] **Jodi Allemeier:** You know, they're well regarded, they're very comprehensive. They cover all of the key attributes. Their challenge when it comes to implementation is. A lot of the implementation sits outside of the municipal system. It sits with the household or it sits with the, uh, private company, and so, [00:36:00] Some things, the cost is for the municipality.

[00:36:03] **Jodi Allemeier:** The municipality must build new infrastructure or it must change the way it operates a specific set of the fleet, or it operates its own buildings and things like that. And it can start to do that. And in some instances, they are starting to do that. In other places, it needs to incentivize and create the economic incentive for households and businesses to change the way they do things.

[00:36:28] **Jodi Allemeier:** And that's where we struggle is because our municipalities are not, um, are not really used to creating economic incentives for households and businesses to change what they do.

[00:36:39] **Ntombini Marrengane:** What do you wish citizens of Cape Town knew, um, about their role in creating a more livable city?

[00:36:48] **Jodi Allemeier:** I think people often think all of the solutions are about continuing to improve the downtowns, the city centers, the well-located areas, but I [00:37:00] really think we need to pay a lot more attention to improving lower-income neighborhoods and, and investing in those neighborhoods so that the urban realm in those neighborhoods is brought up to a much better standard.

[00:37:14] **Jodi Allemeier:** That you no longer can, can feel such a big difference between those areas. Yes, we need well-located, affordable housing in established well-located areas, but we also need to make everywhere else feel like a well-located area by introducing good quality urban design to those areas, by introducing good quality public spaces to those areas, by rezoning the streets that are sort of naturally emerging as high streets through informality to be business streets and investing in bringing businesses, uh, to those areas so that, yeah, so that we, no longer have such an obvious sense of here is a place and here is a place that doesn't quite feel like a place, but [00:38:00] yet people live here.

[00:38:02] **Ntombini Marrengane:** I think that's very insightful. Jodi, thank you for sharing your insights with us today. It's been a real privilege to have you on the podcast and as a guest, this is a topic that, um, it's very important, uh, to me personally and I think to all the city dwellers.

[00:38:18] **Ntombini Marrengane:** So thank you very much for your time. This conversation with Jodi has given me a lot to think about. Sometimes it's difficult to imagine a different reality when the current situation seems so incredibly far removed from that. I'm realising though that there are already some incredible initiatives and people leading us into the future and the question that I'm left with is how can we shape cities in a way that is more just and inclusive?

[00:38:46] **Ntombini Marrengane:** Cities that don't only serve the minority but take into consideration that equality and access will ultimately make a better life for us all. Thank you for tuning in to season 3 of the Just for a change podcast, powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. If you're interested in hearing more conversations with change-makers, then make sure you subscribe to this podcast so that you don't miss any of our upcoming episodes!

[00:39:14] **Ntombini Marrengane:** If you've enjoyed this content, I'd also like to invite you to rate and review it wherever you listen to your podcasts and feel free to share it with your friends, family and colleagues. Let's stay inspired and keep changing the way we're changing the world.