Apartheid: Past And Present In Cape Town, South Africa

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Preface

My first introduction to apartheid was as a naïve African child learning about Nelson Mandela as the epitome of leadership. As a budding architect confronting my Blackness in the 'white man's land' (UK), I ponder colonisation and how deeply entrenched it is in the makeup of societies. With an interest in politics, people and urbanism, South Africa provides a good framework to explore the spatial manifestation of racism through design and politics.

'Anti-Racism at SSoA: A Call to Action' was written by a group of students advocating for change in the operation of Sheffield School of Architecture. As a contributor reflecting on my personal experience, it was the first time I truly confronted the themes of racism, Islamophobia, and sexism and what these meant to me. My interest in inclusivity in architecture led to my study on the spatial implications of racism in South Africa. It is a study that presents design from a different perspective to the predominantly westernised version we are used to, as highlighted in the letter.

Other issues drawn upon from the 'Call to Action' letter include the disadvantages created by white hegemony in design and the exclusion of Black representation in key roles to enact positive change. Both documents call for anti-racism, with the special study accurately demonstrating the real life implications of racism in design. My article serves as a response, exemplifying the exact outcomes brought about when architecture and

design are not treated as holistic disciplines catering to the needs of all communities.

Conversations and academic writing about race have been minimised in SSoA. The article has therefore shown the significance of such discussions as many are unaware of how severely racism can covertly manifest through design. Finally, change can only be achieved through continuous discourse on such topics and increased representation as the 'Call to Action' writers have called for.

Introduction

Is colonialism truly a thing of the past? The common belief in the independence of African countries concluding the colonial epoch is one which South Africa heavily contests as a country whose colonial history is deeply embedded into the fabrics of its society. This essay points towards the existence of contemporary colonialism in South Africa, as imperialism rests a sustained reality on its marginalised communities.[1]

Within its 'settler-colonial cities,' for example Cape Town, the remaining legacies of colonisation are still spatially felt due to the implementation of an apartheid regime – a remorseless ramification of imperialist ideologies utilised as a social engineering tool to impose racial segregation.[2] David Harvey argues 'The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is […] one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.'[3] Reflecting on this within the given context, this essay will explore this often neglected right as a result of a capitalist and racist government whose ethics and morals come under heavy scrutiny.[4]

This essay interrogates the role of design in perpetuating patterns of spatial injustice despite a movement towards a more democratic era post-apartheid.[5] As the urban response to this question cannot be divorced from its larger political and economic implications, this essay goes through a historical study of colonisation and apartheid and analyses its remaining spatial and socio-economic repercussions in modern day Cape Town.

Colonisation – A Precedent for Apartheid

Introduction to the Cape

The history of European engagement in South Africa dates as far back as 1486. Portuguese explorers had discovered *Cabo Tormentoso* (meaning Cape of Storms, now modern-day Cape Town) and renamed it *Cabo da boa Esperanza* (Cape of Good Hope) in anticipation of future opportunities.[6]

1 Elliot Ross, 'The Past is Still Present: Why Colonialism Deserves Better Coverage', The Correspondent, 2019 <The past is still present: why colonialism deserves better coverage - The Correspondent> [accessed 7 April 2021].

2 Libby Porter and Oren Yiftachel, 'Urbanizing Settler-Colonial Studies: Introduction to the Special Issue', Settler Colonial Studies, 9.2 (2019), 177-186, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2017.1409394> (p. 177).

3 David Harvey, 'The Right to the City', New Left Review, 53 (2008), 23-40 <NLR 53, September–October 2008 (oclc.org)> (p. 23).

4 Lesley Naa Norle Lokko, (ed.), White Papers, Black Marks: Architecture, Race, Culture, (London: Athlone Press, 2000), p. 76.

5 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Apartheid', Britannica, 2020 <apartheid | Definition, Facts, Beginning, & End | Britannica> [accessed 19 December 2020].

6 Helena Liebenberg, 'Introduction to the Resolutions of the Council of Policy of Cape of Good Hope', Tanap, 1-57 <INLEIDING (tanap.net)> (p. 27).

The Cape of Good Hope remained its name for centuries, and is found on the earliest maps of Cape Town. Its discovery paved the way for other European voyagers looking to expand commercial trade, principally the British and the Dutch who became the earliest European settlers in 1652.[7] This continuous interaction began the subtle process of "remaking" the existing landscape in their mould and erasing indigenous rights over the territory. A key example amongst others is the *Hoerikwaggo* (called Mountain in the Sea by the natives) renamed *Tafelberg* (Table Mountain), a name still used in modern day Cape Town.[8]

Indigenous People

The indigenous people consisted of two tribes: the Khoikhoi and the San (Khoisan), the earliest South Africans and original owners of the land. Their subsistent way of life was farming and hunting, engendering the Europeans' use of the derogatory term *Hottentot* (bushman) to refer to the native tribes.[9] The Khoisan people could first be traced along the western half of the Cape (currently Cape Town), later displaced by the invasion of the Dutch. Through the seizure of arable land, the Dutch created their own farms lending them the upper hand to subjugating the Khoisan people into toiling on land that was once theirs – exploration becomes exploitation.[10]

The *Natives Land Act* (1913) legalised the segregationist plans of the Union government (formed earlier in 1910). 8.9 million hectares of land (one eighth of South African land) was defined as 'native reserves' for four million Africans, while a mere 1.25 million Europeans exploited land seven times this size.[11] With three times as many "natives" in an area seven times smaller, the shocking disparity meant that for every twenty-one Africans in a hectare of land there was one European. The erasure in the coloniser's mind of the indigenous entitlement to their own spaces – the myth of 'empty land' alongside the use of cartography in the creation of colonies proved that both spoken and graphic language used to describe space and territories was key in the first stages of colonialism, creating the foundations for apartheid.[12]

Colonisation and Urbanism – City as a Space of Social Control

There is a profound relationship between a city's urban development and its nation's colonial past. By 1948, the National Party (founded by J. B. M. Hertzog) officially introduced apartheid, legalising racial segregation.[13] This was achieved through the amalgamation of well defined nationalist laws and design strategies by the Group Areas Board. South African cities became governed by 'grand' and 'petty' apartheid laws, which operated at macro and micro levels respectively, to divide the city into various

7 A.J. Christopher, The Atlas of Changing South Africa, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 9.

8 Gary Hartley and Tessa Coetzee, 'Table Mountain Has Graced Cape Town For Nearly A Quarter Of An Eon,' Cape Town Magazine, 2019 <Table Mountain Has Graced Cape Town With It's Beauty For Nearly A Quarter Of An Eon (capetownmagazine.com)> [accessed 17 April 2021]; 'Who Gave Table Mountain Its Name', News24, 2012 <Who gave Table Mountain its name? | News24> [accessed 17 April 2021].

9 Andrew Thompson, 'What to Know About the Khoisan, South Africa's First People', Culture Trip, 2018 <What to Know About the Khoisan, South Africa's First People (theculturetrip.com)> [accessed 15 February 2021]; Oxford Reference, 'Hottentot', in the Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable <Hottentot - Oxford Reference> [accessed 29 January 2020].

10 Christopher, p. 9.

11 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Native Lands Act', Britannica, <Native Lands Act | South Africa [1913] | Britannica> [accessed 16 February 2021].

12 South African History Online, 'The Empty Land Myth', South African History Online, 2019 <The Empty Land Myth | South African History Online (sahistory.org.za)> [accessed 18 April 2021].

13 South African History Online, 'National Party (NP)', South African History Online, 2020 <National Party (NP) | South African History Online (sahistory.org.za)> [accessed 28 December 2020]; Christopher, The Atlas of Changing South Africa, p. 46.

nation states and subsequently control the spatial operation of native communities.[14]

Grand Apartheid

The Population Registration Act (1950) was one of the first racially motivated laws that classified society into: White/European, Indian, Coloured, Black/Bantu/African.[15] Complementing this was the Group Areas Act which delineated the country into racial zones to control the acquisition and occupation of land.[16] Dr T. E. Donges (Minister of the Interior) described the Group Areas Act as 'one of the major measures designed to preserve white South Africa.'[17] A key question is what is a 'white' South Africa? All hands point back to colonialism.

'The white man has no magic in himself which makes him superior.'[18]

The Group Areas Act was 'an instrument of racial domination' where Bantu communities were pushed towards the peripheries in the native reserves.[19] With a deeper intent to control Africans – who as the largest population group were a threat to white supremacy, a 'divide and rule' system was employed to establish ethno-linguistic distinctions.[20] Unsurprisingly, this led to the forced removals of families already living in the newly proclaimed white areas.[21]

The aim was to achieve the 'model apartheid city' informed by the Hoyt Sector Model.[22] The group areas were divided according to socio-economic class. Surrounding the financial hub were the middle to high income white group areas and opposite the railway tracks were the lower income white group, who, supposedly due to their subsidiary status, were made to live closer to the other groups. The buffer zones were thirty metre wide man-made barriers to restrict movement and contact between population groups. A large industrial zone and road further distanced Africans, leaving access to the Central Business District (CBD) solely for employment.[23]

The city centres were specifically integrated into the white areas to uphold this concept of racial purity, thereby limiting Black business opportunities and social progression.[24] By 1960, Cape Town had conformed to this discriminatory model, with urban development remaining in the inner city. Subsequent maps of the city specifically highlight this development whilst excluding the native areas, suggesting they belong to the homelands and no longer to inner Cape Town.

14 Angela Thompsell, 'Grand Apartheid in South Africa', ThoughtCo., 2019 <Grand Apartheid in South Africa (thoughtco. com)> [accessed 7 November 2020].

15 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'The National Party and Apartheid', Britannica, <https://www.britannica. com/place/South-Africa/The-National- Party-and-apartheid#ref480731> [accessed 15 January 2021].

16 Patricia Johnson-Castle, 'The Group Areas Act of 1950', South African History Online, 2021, <The Group Areas Act of 1950 | South African History Online (sahistory. org.za)> [accessed 2 February 2021].

17 Christopher, p. 103.

18 The Heart of Apartheid, dir. by. Hugh Burnett (BBC One, 1968) <BBC iPlayer - Tuesday Documentary - The Heart of Apartheid> [accessed 7 December 2020].

19 Wilmot G James, 'Group Areas and the Nature of Apartheid', South African Sociological Review, 5.1 (1992), 41-57 <http://www.jstor. org/stable/44461355/> (p. 41).

20 Christopher, p. 69.

21 Christopher, p. 112.

22 Christopher, p. 103.

23 Christopher, p. 103.

24 Christopher, p. 83.

Figure 1. Digital Photograph, Apartheid - A Crime Against Humanity, United Nations Photo (1 January 1985). Creative Commons CCBY

Figure 2. Digital photograph, Apartheid Signs, (1982). (Photo: by permission Eric Miller, 9 January 2022)

25 Burnett.

26 South African History Online, 'Pass Laws in South Africa 1800-1994', South African History Online, 2019 <Pass laws in South Africa 1800-1994 | South African History Online (sahistory.org.za)> [accessed 31 January 2021].

27 Robert E. Park, On Social Control and Collective Behaviour (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) p. 3.

28 Burnett.

29 Christopher, p. 142.

30 Anonymous and Evan V. Symon, '5 Realities of Being A Mixed-Race Child When That's Illegal', Cracked, 2016 <5 Realities Of Being A Mixed-Race Child When That's Illegal | Cracked.com> [accessed 19 March 2021].

Petty Apartheid

'What annoys us is the petty apartheid that is being practiced everywhere, that I can't use a passenger lift in any building which is marked European because I am Indian.'[25]

The Pass Laws Act (1952) was pivotal to the oppression of Black participation in the city, legally requiring Africans over the age of 16 to carry passbooks granting entry into CBDs for a specific amount of time.[26]

Robert Park argues that the city is

man's most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in … But, if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly … in making the city man has remade himself.[27]

Through the making of the city that one belongs to one can reshape oneself – an experience granted only to the whites (Fig 1). Using this argument, if a man is forced to the outskirts and compelled to live a life he did not choose, then that man has no control of the city and is unable to reshape himself, and thus subjected to a "low-class life". As one of many oppressed voices expressed: 'As a Black man I have come to realise that the animals have better freedom than the Black people of this country.'[28]

The Separate Amenities Act (1953) ensured the racially distinguished use of facilities and entrances to public buildings.[29] Grander hospitality was awarded to the whites through articulations. For instance, the ornamented keystone and the arch accentuate the entrance through a greater sense of height and hence importance (Fig 2). Whilst there is similarity in the widths, one must note that 'whites' denotes one population group whereas 'non-whites' represents three. This demonstrates architecture as a divisive tool.

Racial separation extended past spatial relations into intimate and sexual relations through the Ban on Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Act (1957) to prevent the staining of "white purity" in human form. Multiracial families were shunned, and mixed-race children forced to classify under the racial group of their ethnic parent and live within the 'coloureds' reserves.[30]

'Buried here are the silent non-white bones of those of us on the wrong side of the colour line in life, still separated from the white man in death.'[31]

Finally, after a life of humiliation and struggle, apartheid followed the Black man in death, 'the heart of apartheid.'[32] Whites were rewarded with well-preserved cemeteries with decorative tombstones surrounded by

31 Burnett.

32 Burnett.

33 Simon's Town Historical Society,
    'The History of Simon's Town',
    Simonstown.com, [n.d]. <Simons
    Town |> [accessed 16 April 2021].

34 Diana Saverin, 'Cape Town's Death
    Industry: 'If You're Buried Here, It's
    As If They Threw You Away', The
    Guardian, 2015, <Cape Town's death
    industry: 'If you're buried here, it's as
    if they threw you away' | Cities | The
    Guardian> [accessed 13 April 2021].

35 Elizabeth Rebekah Trail, 'The
    Spatial Form of Post Apartheid Cape
    Town', (unpublished Master's thesis,
    University of Tennessee, 2006) p. 2.

36 World Population Review, 'Cape
    Town Population 2021', World
    Population Review, 2021 <Cape Town
    Population 2021 (Demographics,
    Maps, Graphs)(worldpopulationreview.
    com)> [accessed 1 April 2021].

37 Trail, 'The Spatial Form of Post
    Apartheid Cape Town', p. 2.

38 Jason Beaubien, 'The Country With The
    World's Worst Inequality Is...', NPR,
    2018 <https://www.npr.org/sections/
    goatsandsoda/2018/04/02/598864666/
    the-country-with-the-worlds-worst-
    inequality-is#:~:text=%22The%20
    country%20was%20very%20
    unequal,in%20charge%20
    of%20southern%20Africa>
    [accessed 13 April 2021].

39 Oliver Wainwright, 'Apartheid Ended 20
    years ago, so why is Cape Town still "a

Figure 3. Digital photograph, Imizamo Yethu Township, Cape Town, RSA, (Photo: by Serena Tang, 18 December 2015), Creative Commons CCBY

attractive scenery, in the white proclaimed areas such as Simon's Town.[33] In contrast is the Khayelitsha township graveyard characterised by unadorned wooden crosses as headstones against the disagreeable row of shacks in the backdrop. It is commonly understood that 'if you're buried here, it's as if they threw you away.'[34]

Contemporary Colonialism – Apartheid in Present-Day Cape Town

The overturn of apartheid in 1994 was to many the revolutionary end of a heavily oppressive regime. However, many years after, it is apparent that this is untrue – apartheid still lingers.[35] To use the Population Registration Act delineation, the coastal city is home to 4.4 million of whom 15.7% are white, 38.6% Black, 42.4% coloured, 1.4% Asian and 1.9% other.[36] Cape Town's unique landscape, characterised by mountainous land and its proximity to the sea, make it a suitable tourist destination.[37] While the city generates economic growth, it is still located in the most unequal country where the top 1% own 70.9% of the nation's wealth as the bottom 60% collectively control only 7% of the country's assets.[38] This inequality is argued to be 'permanently carved into the city's urban form.'[39]

With the African National Congress inheriting years of damage from the preceding government, a few political strategies were adopted, most of which were unsuccessful. A notable policy was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) subsidy housing as a response to the post-apartheid housing crisis to provide better quality housing in the townships.[40] The RDP houses were erected on top of destroyed shacks, adhering to the existing urban grain.[41] The main issue with the scheme and possibly the reason for its failure was the government's rush to provide a quick solution to a prolonged problem.

While the houses were indeed upgrades from the typical shack (Fig 3), one must note that speed does not make quality, and a house does not make a home. The uniformity and what the residents dubbed a "matchbox" appearance, did not necessarily make the houses aesthetically pleasing nor desirable for living in.[42]

Hout Bay and Imizamo Yethu – 'A Tale Of Two Cities'

As the early apartheid model had intended, the townships are still "out of sight and out of mind". However, Imizamo Yethu differs as it is not an apartheid era township and is closest to the CBD.[43]

'Architectural apartheid is violence!'[44]

paradise for the few"?,' The Guardian, 2014 < Apartheid ended 20 years ago, so why is Cape Town still 'a paradise for the few'? | Cities | The Guardian> [accessed 22 February 2021].

40   Clive K. Corder, 'The Reconstruction and Development Programme: Success or Failure>', Social Indicators Research, 41.1 (1997), 183-203, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27522262> (p. 185).

41   Steven Robins, 'Informal Settlements Can Be Better Planned', Ground Up, 2020 <Informal settlements can be better planned | GroundUp> [accessed 6 April 2021].

42   Andrew Skuse and Thomas Cousins, 'Spaces of Resistance: Informal Settlement, Communication and Community Organisation in a Cape Town Township', Urban Studies, 44 (2007), 979-995, <http://dx.doi.org/Spaces of Resistance: Informal Settlement, Communication and Community Orga...: EBSCOhost (oclc.org)> (p. 981); Robins, 'Informal Settlements Can Be Better Planned' <Informal settlements can be better planned | GroundUp>.

43   Wendy E. Harte, Iraphne R.W. Childs and Peter A. Hastings, 'Imizamo Yethu: a Case Study of Community Resilience to Fire Hazard in an Informal Settlement Cape Town, South Africa', Geographical Research, 47.2 (2009), 142-154, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-5871.2008.00561.x> (p. 144).

44   Not in My Neighbourhood, dir. by. Kurt Orderson (Azania Rising Productions, 2017).
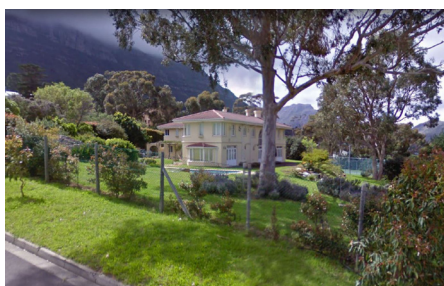

Figure 4. Google Streetview of 5 Saddlers Close, Hout Bay, Cape Town, Digital image, Google

Imizamo Yethu's physical proximity to the white suburb Hout Bay is juxtaposed with its vast distance from the accompanying wealth. A compelling picture of spatial apartheid is evident. Hout Bay (left) is characterised largely by sporadically situated houses nestled deep within the greenery. On the right barricaded by a foliage of trees is Imizamo Yethu composed of narrow roads between repeated units of RDP housing (south) and metal roof shacks (north). Imizamo Yethu's formation in 1991 during a time of political change when the apartheid laws were repealed, begs the question with why was its design largely informed by the township model of a regime from which the country was loosening its shackles?[45] Had a new model been devised to match the existing context, perhaps the current injustice would not persist as shown.

Imizamo Yethu is arid, with barely any potential for planting as compared to the green Hout Bay. The location of Hout Bay at the mouth of the Atlantic Ocean allows stimulating views and access to beaches whereas the black community, completely landlocked by the affluence of Hout Bay have restricted views out. On one side they are met with the towering presence of the Table Mountain and on the next, poking out of the greenery is a constant reminder of their inferiority to the white man and to the system – the city's past becomes its present.

The population density of Imizamo Yethu is significantly greater than that of Hout Bay, illustrating the spatial injustice that is apartheid in concentrating a similar population in an outstandingly smaller area of land. It is worth bearing in mind that true population data is rarely extracted for shanty towns due to their informality, therefore the real figures may suggest an even greater disparity.[46]

The township is characterised by abject poverty as people live in 'precarious conditions' in self-made shacks typically of sizes two to four metres wide by three to five metres long, built with corrugated steel, wood, plastic and whatever else found in the vicinity.[47] These materials are mostly unfit for building use after being destroyed by fires which the community is frequently subjected.[48] Excess belongings are placed on the roofs due to a lack of space but also as a means of ensuring stability during strong winds, unfortunately adding to the disfigurement of the township. These issues, alongside the limited access to basic amenities, expose the locals to environmental hazards and high health risks as demonstrated in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic where social distancing is made impossible in the cramped townships.[49]

In comparison, Hout Bay's contemporary houses (Fig 4) are offered full protection against the elements with a brick/concrete masonry and pantile roof systems. A great sense of arrival is afforded to such buildings whose entrances cater for outdoor areas and defensible space adorned with gardens and trees, as opposed to Imizamo Yethu shacks whose fight

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for space prohibits such detailing. Other luxuries enjoyed by Hout Bay residents include large back gardens, sport pitches and pools – a very active function of apartheid forbidding Blacks the basic living necessities whilst awarding whites a luxurious life.

The socioeconomic contrast between the two neighbourhoods may also encourage a continuing "master-servant" relationship as the racially inferior search for employment in the white suburb. This argument is further supplemented through street views where Black workers are seen toiling in Hout Bay. This legacy prolongs the ghettoisation of Black neighbourhoods – there is no opportunity to move out of the townships as people are geographically constrained and no incentive from the white population to change this.

Although spatial apartheid has predominantly sustained the grand apartheid legacies as discussed, there is a case for the more obscure manifestation of petty apartheid. The physical exclusion of Black participation in everyday life has now become intangible where the positive correlation between Blackness, poverty and periphery living, assuredly bans Black people from upward social mobility and hence their full participation in society – a 'growing unrest' that will continue to 'put pressure on the government.'[50]

Social Responsibility of Designers

Dr Mpho Matsipa, describing the origins of apartheid says the 'city planners are white' and the inner city was understood to be (quoting Herzog) the 'white man's land in barbaric territory'.[51] The majority of academics who discuss township experiences and future improvements are again, predominantly white.[52] While racism may not presently be a prevailing factor, their social class exempts them from experiencing the bitter life in townships; and by extension should disbar them from being the sole planners.

A housing backlog in Cape Town has forced Black communities to take to the streets protesting for the release of unused government-owned land within the CBD to provide housing for up to 67,000 households – the history of Black struggle/activism repositions itself in society.[53] This housing opportunity could reduce the need for travel and improve the economic prospects of the community; hence the need for Capetonian designers to also use their platform and strengthen the advocacy for change. Cape Town's Development Action Group (DAG) was founded to enact change by questioning the constitutional mandate's hold against cities to create equal opportunities for all citizens and through urban regeneration strategies including the creation of continued links between

45 Orderson.

46 Charles Kahanji, Richard S. Walls and Antonio Cicione, 'Fire Spread Analysis for the 2017 Imizamo Yethu Informal Settlement Conflagration in South Africa', International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 39 (2019), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2019.101146> (p. 2).

47 Eric Toussaint, 'From the BRICS Countries to the Townships: Racial and Social Segregation Continues', MR Online, 2019 <From the BRICS countries to the townships: racial and social segregation continues | MR Online> [accessed 5 April 2021]; Kahanji and others, 'Fire Spread Analysis for the 2017 Imizamo Yethu Informal Settlement Conflagration in South Africa', p. 2.

48 Toussaint.

49 Harte, 'Imizamo Yethu: A Case Study of Community Resilience to Fire Hazard in an Informal Settlement Cape Town, South Africa', p. 143; Astrid R.N. Haas and Victoria Delbridge, Africa's High Density Urban Settlements: Cut The Red Tape and Slash the Cost of Housing, The Conversation, 2020 <https://theconversation.com/africas-high-density-urban-settlements-cut-the-red-tape-and-slash-the-cost-of-housing-142577> [accessed 14 April 2021].

50 Trail, 'The Spatial Form of Post Apartheid Cape Town', p. iii.

51 Not in My Neighbourhood, Orderson.

52 Lesley Naa Norle Lokko, 'A Minor Majority', Architectural Research Quarterly, 21.4, (2017) 387-392 < http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1359135518000076> (p. 70).

53 Ameline R. Turpin, 'Cape Town Has Huge Tracts of SANDF Land Lying Unused, Enough For 67,000 Households', Daily Maverick, 2020 <Cape Town has huge tracts of SANDF land lying unused, e... (dailymaverick.co.za)> [accessed 18 February 2021].

54 Development Action Group, DAG, n.d <What drives us | Development Action Group (dag.org.za)> [accessed 29 October 2021].

55 Carin Smith, fin24, 2018, <7 ways to 'decolonise' urban planning in SA – academic | Fin24 (news24.com)> [accessed 18 October 2021].

56 Smith.

57 Asanda Ngoasheng, 'Debunking the Apartheid Spatial Grid: Developing a Socially Just Architecture Curriculum at a University of Technology', Journal of Asian and African Studies, 56.1 (2021), 135-149 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909620946856> (pp. 135-137).

58 Adam Andani, 'Alternative Approaches to Community Participation Beyond Formal Structures: Evidence from Langa Within the Municipality of Cape Town', Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance, 20 (2017), 83-97 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/cjlg.v020.6084> (p.85).

59 Rebecca A. Hillyer, 'Planning for Inclusion in a South African Town: A Case Study of Informal Trading in Stellenbosch Municipality' (unpublished Master's thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2018) p.16; Philipp Horn, and others, 'Towards Citywide Participatory Planning: Emerging Community-led Practices in Three African Cities', Global Development Institute, (2018), pp. 2-32 <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3225770> (pp.18-19).

60 Hillyer, p. 19.

61 Hillyer.

62 Mellon Educate, Mellon Educate, n.d <Education Charity Projects in Africa - Mellon Educate> [accessed 26 October 2021].

63 Educate.

communities and government, and policies to keep land prices sensitive to marginalised citizens. [54]

Whilst public movements attempt to address the need for transformational change in the built environment, education is a department in which there are still severe setbacks, owing to the lack of material founded on improved access to universities.[55] The ability for education to create opportunities for Black students in spatial disciplines is one that should not be overlooked as this could mould generations of practitioners with a sensitivity towards excluded citizens.

One must realise, however, that all efforts to be inclusive of disenfranchised students will be rendered useless if there is no decolonisation of the existing pedagogy. There is still an overreliance on westernised planning principles, which have little to no place in the local context and a lack of situated knowledge inevitably leads to an inability to address deep-rooted issues.[56] It has been argued that most South African universities are reluctant to address socio-economic issues in planning, which is self-contradictory as town planning is never achieved in a vacuum, and its cities' urban grain make it even more necessary to shift the teaching of history and planning to achieve greater realism by recognising and implementing African planning concepts.[57]

Other means of enacting change is through participatory planning, a concept which has grown to be associated with negative connotations in South Africa.[58] Despite inclusive planning becoming a component of planning legislation to create a new 'institutional attitude towards town planning,' Cape Town is still home to many tried and failed government initiatives, such as the RDP subsidy housing; the common factor being the forfeiture of inclusive planning methods for rapid delivery of housing.[59]

Government commitment to participatory planning is argued to be 'tokenistic' with no political will to see this through.[60] Ultimately, while this objective has failed on a governmental level, the absence of community trust towards the state has also grown, forcing them to turn to foreigners for help.[61]

The Niall Mellon Foundation Trust (now Mellon Educate) was founded in Ireland in 2002 for the purpose of improving communities and their spaces, and now provides 175,000 homes in South Africa's townships.[62] The trust first visited Imizamo Yethu in 2002 when the first set of volunteers arrived to construct twenty-five homes. This scheme included the community in all phases of the building process whilst providing permanent employment (hence a steady source of income) for 'more than 2,000 people from the local townships' and training where necessary.[63] Such opportunities are exactly what is needed in the townships and where government intervention fails. Through this, younger children become

exposed to spatial work, although formal education would prove more successful longer term.

Although NGOs may alleviate the pain suffered by communities, there is a real concern about entrusting foreigners to rid the city of its segregationist past. An unnamed volunteer for Mellon Educate has disclosed that after work some volunteers engage in antisocial behaviour as a result of irresponsible drinking. The argument is that if the charity work continues, other exchanges between foreigners and locals are fine, regardless of their form, thereby presenting an issue of ethics and morals.[64]

There is also regret in foreigners recognising that they are the best option for the people of townships:

And so, as a nation, we have our drunken and disorderly moments and our lapses of judgement, but overall, we are the greatest of all hopes for the people of the informal settlement around the rubbish-strewn side streets of the corrugated iron township in the scorching African sun.[65]

This comes as a devastating blow to the government, leaving it to the hands of outsiders to correct a long-seated issue, which ironically, was initiated by outsiders. It therefore begs the question as to whether the country has truly healed from its white saviour complex.

Conclusion

When politics is married to design, the outcome is stronger, whether for the benefit or detriment of the city's population. The tool of colonial design has been exploited to create the Cape Town many know today, from the use of cartography to exclude indigenous representation on maps, fuelling the removal of native presence from the coloniser's mind to the creation of the 'model apartheid city' – a dystopia still causing pain and suffering after so many years. Finally, design is utilised in townships to create an authoritarian urban pattern to control the marginalised.[66]

'Eventually you become groomed to a specific way of thinking which people term as the "township way of thinking" because your horizons shrink.'[67]

It is therefore clear that independence, in its sincerest form, has not been achieved in South Africa. The majority still lack the freedom to establish themselves in their cities of birth, thereby failing to reshape their cities and themselves. Evidence also shows that successful campaigning, NGOs' participatory processes and passing of democratic laws do not grapple with the root of the issue. Education needs to be thoroughly enhanced to be inclusive of marginalized students and the histories that built the cities. As argued by Lesley Lokko, the often-mentioned topic of 'diversity

64 Alison O'riordan, Independent.ie, 2009 <The untold darker side of charity work in South Africa - Independent. ie> [accessed 27 October 2021].

65 O'riordan, Independent.ie, 2009.

66 Trail, 'The Spatial Form of Post Apartheid Cape Town', p. 11.

67 The Heart of Apartheid, Burnett.

68 Lesley Lokko, The Architect's Newspaper, 2021 <Lesley Lokko discusses race, academia, and the

and inclusion' in the sphere of the built environment is one that everyone simply pays 'lip service' with no real determination to follow it through.[68] Whilst it is understood that diversity in its truest form would take years to achieve in the education and profession of spatial disciplines, the effects of ignoring this paradigm shift have already been seen and felt in South Africa – and is thus something that can no longer be ignored by governments, designers and all other spatial agents.

As professionals in the built environment, our duty is to the people; to foster a way of thinking where design is only adopted as an instrument towards the improvement of life and not the opposite. South Africa must therefore re-weave design and politics into one, to take an active stance in sterilising its cities of a sinful past and faithfully progress its movement towards the democratic era it deeply yearns for.

Biography

Aisha Sillah is a recent BA Architecture graduate from the University of Sheffield, Sheffield School of Architecture where she has developed an interest in the social aspects of design. Her keenness to positively transform spaces has been inspired by her work within the university community, particularly her strong advocacy for diversity and inclusion within architecture and SSoA. Aisha has an ever-growing passion for the intersection of politics, cities and people and the role of designers in managing this relationship. She looks forward to the opportunity to learn and grow whilst demonstrating this passion in her new role as an Architectural Assistant at Adjaye Associates.