

As apartheid ended, architects and planners in Cape Town turned to public space to address legacies of inequality, through methods that reflected the new democracy's aspirations and limitations.

## Democracy, discourse, and design: Cape Town's (re)turn to public space

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In Cape Town, South Africa, the use and design of public space has shifted over the city's history. In its origins as a European settlement, public space was comprised of parade grounds and market squares, used for military control and commercial exchange. In the twentieth century, market squares were converted to car parks and streets widened to freeway scale, as tools of modernisation and the apartheid-driven desire to minimise spaces of public exchange. However, as apartheid came to an end at the end of the twentieth century, a cohort of University of Cape Town-based architects and urban designers – David Dewar, Lucien le Grange, Fabio Todeschini, and Roelof Uytenbogaardt – began to call for renewed public space programmes. This group championed public space as an architectural device capable of helping realise the newly democratic nation's aspirations for a vibrant public realm. They idealised public space as a feature that symbolises political values, supports public institutions, and facilitates practices such as informal economic exchange and transit interchange. In the years immediately surrounding apartheid's end, this discourse produced a shift: a public space turn that proposed a means for architecture to participate in the nation's new democracy.

The architects and urban designers who initiated this turn worked through two realms: writing and practice. Beginning in apartheid's waning days, scholars published material such as Dewar and Uytenbogaardt's *South African Cities: A Manifesto for Change*,<sup>1</sup> which called for a revitalisation of urban public space to redress the legacy of apartheid-era planning. Once apartheid officially came to an end, their work began more explicitly linking public space and democracy. Within a few years, planning documents for newly democratic Cape Town prioritised developing new, dignified public spaces in corners of the city intentionally neglected under apartheid. These priorities started to be realised in the Dignified Places Programme: an initiative begun in 1999 by the City of Cape Town's Urban Design Branch to construct small public spaces across the city. While the programme was

eventually discontinued, it established public space development as an acknowledged – and prioritised – terrain of action in the city.

The result was a possible new type of democratic architecture, which addressed very particular citizenship conditions. The public space turn took place in a specific, early post-apartheid moment: temporally it was the period immediately following South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, when apartheid officially came to an end. It was also a moment in which the primary concerns were articulating alternatives to apartheid, often through attention to the institutions and modes of governance that facilitated it. As Cape Town architects contemplated how to address colonialism and apartheid's spatial legacies, they identified public space as a locus of action. The notion that public space is significant, if not crucial, to democratic societies is not unique to South Africa. Setha Low has argued that 'to struggle relentlessly for the social and political availability of public space, can be seen as a precondition for any kind of democratic politics'.<sup>2</sup> In South Africa, democracy has materially meant a set of conditions, which are seemingly contradictory, in which aspirations for equality are articulated under conditions of economic constraint. Centuries of colonialism and apartheid cemented racialised economic inequalities, and the negotiations that facilitated apartheid's end failed to adequately address the structural basis of such inequalities.<sup>3</sup> As a result, in addition to the lack of material improvement to the lives of most South Africans, state budgets in the post-apartheid era for basic services such as housing and infrastructure have been severely restricted. The provision of services has been constitutionally dictated as a system of rights, but has also become a terrain of contestation. Democracy has unfolded as a struggle to materially realise the ambitious, progressive package of rights demanded in decades of anti-apartheid action and subsequently set out in the constitution.<sup>4</sup> Such conditions set up dualistic forms of citizenship, in which the ending of apartheid brought the 'formal citizenship' of political freedom without the 'substantive

citizenship' of full participation in the economy and life of the nation.<sup>5</sup> In other words,

*formal membership in the nation-state is increasingly neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for substantive citizenship. That it is not sufficient is obvious for many poor citizens who have formal membership in the state but who are excluded in fact or law from enjoying the rights of citizenship and participating effectively in its organization.*<sup>6</sup>

The turn to public space took place in the moment in which the contradictory duality of democracy and democratic citizenship were just beginning to be realised. The early proponents of public space in Cape Town focused their attention on facilitating everyday activities, namely trading and transportation. They engaged with terms such as dignity, which is a constitutionally codified right, through design practices that also recognised the scarcity that is produced through limited budgets. This early turn to public space was a declaration of the right to well-designed space for all residents and spaces in the city, as well as a means to address the challenging realities of post-apartheid life. Today, as frustration over inequality's intransigence boils over, the demands performed within and put upon public space may be changing. However, in order to understand the contemporary moment and the possibilities for architects' participation, we need to become familiar with the early post-apartheid public spatial turn.

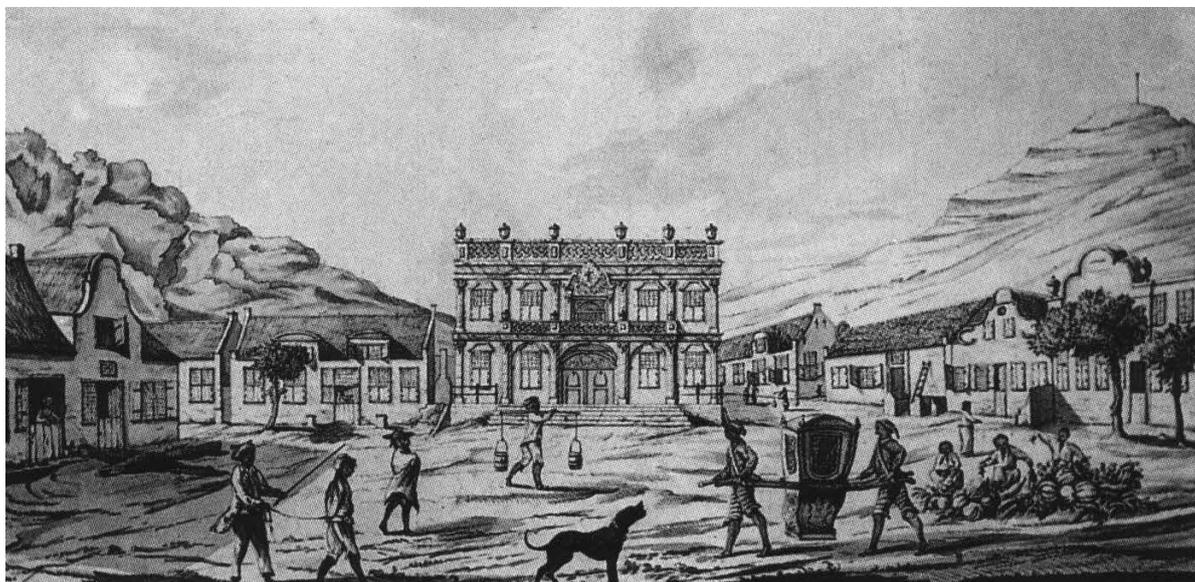
### Colonial origins

In order to understand the context of a post-apartheid turn to public space, it is necessary to see the historic role of public space in Cape Town, which was a dialectical reinforcing and contesting of the dominant political order. The Cape became the site of a town when the Dutch East India Company arrived in 1652 to establish a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope. They staked their claim on the land by constructing two spaces: a produce garden and

fort. As the refreshment station developed into a town, it was designed to 'facilitate' the Company's monopoly.<sup>7</sup> This worked through two intertwining programmes: commercial exchange and militarised control – of all indigenous and colonising inhabitants. Public spaces, used for trading and performing the dominant social order, served as key nodes in organising the city. First came the Company Gardens as the spatial and symbolic head of the town, with their location at the then-top of the settlement and their function of growing the crops used to refresh passing ships. Next a parade ground was built between the town and Company fort, where military performances communicated the Company's control. Then market squares proliferated, imprinting the public as an essential sphere of daily life, even if such public was far from democratic or egalitarian.<sup>8</sup>

The architectural backdrop to public life reiterated the European lineage of the town's dominant social group. For instance, the edges of Greenmarket Square, the town's first market square, were bound by works of European architecture reimagined for the Cape context. Within, Greenmarket Square was a hybrid space that brought together European notions of architecture and urbanism with local, racialised hierarchies of labour and exchange [1]. The market square helped facilitate the Dutch East India Company's control of the Cape, by hosting market trade, reproducing architectural languages of the metropole, and serving as a stage for performing social hierarchies. Yet, it was also a space of mixing, where groups ranging from European farmers, Company soldiers, imported slaves, and urbanised indigenous KhoiSan met and interacted.<sup>9</sup> Such performances were often moments of quiet contestation, where differing races could interact and the messiness of agrarian activity – which was the local economy's

1 Greenmarket Square in 1762, by Johannes Rach, 1764.



base – dirtied the town leaders’ desires for order.<sup>10</sup> The public who inhabited Cape Town’s first public spaces asserted themselves as neither neatly ordered nor subservient as the Company desired.

Britain took control over the Cape settlement in the early 1800s, and through the course of the nineteenth century, the city expanded around the slopes of Table Mountain.<sup>11</sup> The appearance of trams in the late nineteenth century enabled more well-off households to move out to new, leafy residential neighbourhoods along the sea or southeast of the city centre, between the Liesbeeck River and Table Mountain.<sup>12</sup> In the centre of the city, developing neighbourhoods, such as Districts Six and One (the latter now known as De Waterkant) were organised around vibrant streets and public squares [2]. For post-apartheid critical memory-work practitioners, the nineteenth century was Cape Town’s urbanist



2 Young boys playing in the street, District Six, by Jansje Wissema, 1970.

3 Aerial photo of Langa, Cape Town, 1980.

heyday.<sup>13</sup> Heterogenous groups conducted their social lives in the city’s streets and squares, bound by dense, relatively egalitarian (if eventually squalid) storefronts and row-houses. Public space, which two centuries earlier had been the site of quiet contestations, became an unequivocal space of liberalism and difference.

#### Aligning modernisation and separation

The city’s urban structure shifted, however, in the twentieth century. Modernisation, paired with racialised separation, reordered large swaths of the city. The city implemented racial policies that sought to separate ‘Native’ South Africans from whites or ‘Europeans’. Racial distinction had marked social practices in Cape Town since the first moments of European settlement. However, scholars argue that in relation to other South African cities, Cape Town was relatively mixed through the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Such heterogeneity came under threat beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, when a plague outbreak provided an opening for removing ‘natives’ from the centre of the city to single-race, encampment-like ‘locations’ on the city’s periphery. These, alongside interventions such as supposed slum clearances, formed the backbone of the municipal government’s early twentieth-century policies to rid the city of supposed disease and poverty, as decoy for eliminating spatial instances of racial difference.<sup>15</sup>

The first location, although conceived as temporary, led to the construction of the city’s first permanent (native) township, Langa.<sup>16</sup> Langa’s initial design was based on Garden City principles, with a central zone of civic and commercial space, surrounded by clusters of housing structured along lines of gendered and economic difference.<sup>17</sup> As it was realised, however, Langa was a dormitory settlement: a collection of barracks to house the native labour pool, in ways that maximised social control while providing only the most minimal services and public infrastructure.<sup>18</sup> As Langa



became overcrowded, new townships were built, replicating the native township model across the periphery of Cape Town.<sup>19</sup> When viewed alongside central Cape Town's early urban design, the native townships were distinctive in their lack of public spaces and institutions [3]. Instead, awkwardly shaped residual spaces were intentionally left around buildings, setting people and activities apart. Massive roadways were created between housing blocks, discouraging social interaction.<sup>20</sup> Such spaces became sites, simultaneously, of control and manufactured neglect. It thus became that to be displaced to the periphery of the city was not only an act of separation, but one that produced a greatly impoverished public realm.<sup>21</sup>

In parallel with the construction of single-race townships, modernist, technocratic projects reimagined the city as 'modern' by removing racially heterogeneous streets, public squares, and Victorian row housing. Prior to the apartheid-era demolition of District Six, the most significant of these interventions was the Duncan Docks and Foreshore, which remains one of the city's largest urban planning undertakings. A major swath of Table Bay at the foot of the town centre was reclaimed to serve as an extension of the central business district (the Foreshore), while a port was dredged (the Duncan Docks) deep enough to accommodate modern ships. The Duncan Docks and Foreshore were scaled for high-speed automobiles and trans-ocean liners, which uncomfortably juxtaposed Cape Town's historic, finer-scale planning for carts, pedestrians, and trams. The Foreshore resembles Brasilia, with extremely large blocks, inhabited by singular and flat office towers, separated by extremely wide roadways.<sup>22</sup> While public spaces were incorporated into the design, they primarily were located on the medians of thruways or as massive setbacks in front of buildings.

Additionally, the Foreshore was spatially bound by a set of raised freeways, which cut through the city's older neighbourhoods of District Six, Walmer Estate and Woodstock before sweeping between the Foreshore and Duncan Docks to cut the city off from the sea. These were part of a whole set of urban transformations which applied the logic of the automobile, which was increasingly present by the middle of the twentieth century, usurping the tram as the dominant mode of transportation and regional-scale ordering device. Freeways changed Cape Town's scale of travel, streets, and streetscapes. The city's older urban design, based on the scale of the pedestrian and wagon, shifted to one of the automobile, with broadened streets, the conversion of market squares to car parking lots, and the introduction of raised freeways that bifurcated neighbourhoods.

The interlocking tropes of modernisation and separation were intensified after 1948, when apartheid was instituted under the newly elected Afrikaner National Party. Apartheid, a regime of racialised separation, worked intensively through space. Space at all scales, from single pedestrian

paths to the regions of the nation, was divided along racial lines. The early twentieth-century practice of replacing public space in the centre of the city with space for cars, and omitting public space from the design of new townships on the city's periphery was continued under apartheid, albeit for explicitly racialised purpose. Apartheid's goals of separating and differentiating races worked in opposition to the ways in which public space traditionally engenders the mixing of different social groups.<sup>23</sup> Even under the controlling governance of the Dutch East India Company, public spaces in Cape Town were places of possible encounter between categories of difference: whether racial-, gender-, or class-based. Under apartheid, the public served by architecture and planning was increasingly understood only through its need for efficient movement, or as an object of state control.

### Public space discourses

The shift over the twentieth century away from public space reflected a coming together of techno-rationalist planning and racially driven governmentality. By the 1970s, the interdependency of the two tropes became clear to some of Cape Town's leading academic architects, planners, and urban designers. These figures – based in the University of Cape Town cohort mentioned above – began to use their academic and professional practices to voice critiques of the urban morphology of the apartheid landscape: articulating that public space was *the* realm – in addition to housing – through which to address apartheid's conjoined social and spatial legacy.

The post-apartheid turning towards public space can best be understood through two pieces of writing, which stand in for the larger consensus to (re)vitalise public space in Cape Town. The writings are significant, individually and together, for multiple reasons: first, they provide a clear articulation of ideological positions, which can be seen as the epistemological underpinnings of the policies and programmes that followed. Second, the two pieces frame their arguments through different lenses and address different sets of problems, but yet come to a similar conclusion: that to overcome the conjoined legacy of apartheid and twentieth-century planning, Cape Town needs a vibrant public space programme.

The first of these positions comes from the 1991 text *South African Cities: A Manifesto for Change*, written by two of the University of Cape Town's most prominent urban design and planning professors: Dave Dewar and Roelof Uytenbogaardt.<sup>24</sup> The book took the South African city as its 'problem space'.<sup>25</sup> This framing is significant as it explicitly shifts focus away from apartheid, towards the morphology of South African cities as they developed over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>26</sup> The book particularly addressed the sprawl that became typical of South African cities, as the automobile came to dominate planning concerns. Dewar and Uytenbogaardt proposed that planners of South

African cities should turn their attention to European urban models such as Venice, Italy. They celebrated such cities for their 'hierarchically-differentiated, but equitable, system of access, and thus opportunity'.<sup>27</sup> These models provided a counterpoint to the monotony, privatisation, and inequality that had come to characterise South African cities. They are organised at the scale of the pedestrian, and provide a rich array of spatial and social experiences for their inhabitants.

The turn to such models was not simply nostalgia for romantic European landscapes. Rather, Dewar, and Uytendogaardt read such cities as embodiments of the 'humanism' that they believed should guide architects and planners. Humanism was the concept that Dewar and Uytendogaardt used to position themselves in regards to the social role of built environment professionals. As Dewar expressed to me in an interview, they explicitly chose to not address apartheid in their work, arguably to avoid government censure, as well as because they genuinely believed in humanism as a universal principle.<sup>28</sup> Rather than critique apartheid, they argued for values such as equity and integration that were intentionally absent from the (apartheid) South African city. They proposed city planning that was focused on inhabitants, rather than cars or the facilitation of political systems. They translated humanism into prioritising the public's experience in the city, which they conceptualised as universal, thus strategically and politically downplaying racialised difference among members of the South African public. They framed public space as a 'natural' realm to develop, as a means of addressing the ills of the South African city.<sup>29</sup>

The second piece of writing that advocated for public space came a few years later, in 1994. The passing of only three years was significant: by 1994 apartheid had come to an official end, with South Africa's first-ever democratic elections in April of that year. As apartheid came to a close, it became feasible to expand Dewar and Uytendogaardt's critiques to overtly link apartheid and the morphology of the twentieth-century South African city. Lucien le Grange, another of Cape Town's prominent architects and academics, drew these together in an article calling for 'reconstructing' public space as a way of moving past apartheid's urban legacy.<sup>30</sup> In the article, le Grange argued that building public space was deeply connected to building political democracy. He held that South Africa's colonial and apartheid regimes marginalised public life as political strategies, and that part of the process of reconstructing the nation, socially and politically, was to nurture spatialised public life. To do so required the development of spaces rich with diverse pedestrian activity, as seen in the sort of streets idealised by Jane Jacobs.<sup>31</sup> He argued for a multi-scaled approach to inserting public spaces onto Cape Town's urban fabric; these should range from outdoor-room scaled building forecourts and public squares, up to metropolitan scaled parks.

### Post-apartheid public space praxis

Together, these two pieces of writing express the thinking in the architectural academy that underpinned Cape Town's public space turn. The second part of that turn, which followed the laying out of ideas in print, was developing programmes to create public spaces in Cape Town. The movement to build public space in the post-apartheid period can be dated to 1997, when Dave Dewar was hired by the City of Cape Town to lead the development of the Municipal Spatial Development Framework. The MuniSDF, as the document came to be known, laid out a framework for state and private developers to develop space across the city. It argued that the quality of life for the majority of Capetonians was very poor, often because of a lack of spatial planning that promoted the interests of all residents:

*The quality of the urban public spatial environment is poor almost everywhere. This is the case even though many people spend considerable time in these spaces because of overcrowding in their individual dwellings. Spaces are not contained or enclosed. Buildings are essentially isolated events in space.*<sup>32</sup>

Through somewhat politically neutered terms, the MuniSDF argued that politically induced inequality produced spatialised legacies. The MuniSDF was distinct in the South African post-apartheid urban literature for identifying public open space as a key area of action, when most other contemporary studies focused on the more material spheres of housing or transportation. While it was never adopted as a binding plan, the MuniSDF found purchase in an initiative led by Barbara Southworth, one of Dewar and Uytendogaardt's students. In 1997, Southworth came to work for the City of Cape Town as an urban designer. She helped incrementally establish an Urban Design division in the city government, and in 1999, began to implement the urban visions of the MuniSDF through a programme of building modest but 'dignified' public spaces across Cape Town.

The Dignified Places Programme, as the programme was most commonly known (it went through numerous name changes over its history), was a city-wide intervention carried out as urban acupuncture. In essence, it identified an array of sites across the city that could be spatially and socially uplifted with the creation of new – or improvement of existing – public spaces. The programme operationalised an inherent belief in the role of architecture and urban design in social upliftment, and even more specifically in the centrality of public space in the making of democracy. It began slowly, focusing on a few sites and using funds that were cobbled together from various sources and budgets.<sup>33</sup> However, over nine years the programme completed approximately seventy projects, with a budget of over R100 million.<sup>34</sup>

### Designing democracy through dignity

While a few of its sites were located in areas racially designated as 'white' under apartheid, the programme predominantly focused on degraded



4 Left: Cape Town central business district, May 2013. Right: Khayelitsha, a township on Cape Town's periphery, June 2013.

areas in townships on the city's periphery, where the effects of Cape Town's apartheid-inflected, techno-rationalist planning were felt most extremely. The programme explicitly set out to realise the MuniSDF goal to create a 'city where people have pride in their neighbourhoods, mainly because the public spaces – the streets, the squares and parks – are pleasant and dignified'.<sup>35</sup> In this, the Dignified Places Programme was deployed as a response to the problems identified in the MuniSDF, where township spaces were represented as residual, inhospitable, and characterised as not 'people-friendly places'.<sup>36</sup> The response was to design public spaces to include amenities residents could use for income generation, and illustrate that 'high-quality' public spaces were not limited to privileged corners of the city. It sought to improve people's lives *and* the image of the places in which they live.<sup>37</sup>

At its core, the programme operationalised a belief in the potential of architectural design to foster equality and address issues of economic opportunity and access to resources. Dignity and materially improved lives were the programme's intertwined, primary objectives. For both the Urban Design Branch and Dewar, dignity was an emotive attribute of urban life that should be experienced universally, and not denied to those who are poor, black, and living on the city's margins. This was enshrined in the South African Constitution, which declares that 'Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected'.<sup>38</sup> Dewar and the Urban Design Branch took note of the difference between the neglected residual spaces that surrounded buildings across Cape Town's townships and the lush, manicured landscapes in the centre of Cape Town and its wealthy (white) suburbs [4]. They used dignity as the register for the persistent inequality that marked human lives and spatial environments, during and after apartheid. To produce what they interpreted as dignity, the Urban Design Branch developed a form-based approach – rather than one grounded in policy – that used architectural designs to help generate economic opportunity and access to resources.

The embrace of form and privileging of visual and aesthetic realms distinguished the Dignified

Places Programme from contemporary planning initiatives.<sup>39</sup> The programme's authors imagined a landscape in which well-maintained public spaces that provided space for gathering, leisure, and income generation stitched together a city where all residents have access to housing, education, health care, jobs, and cultural activities. They envisioned varied forms of public space: market squares, transit interchanges, gathering spaces, and recreational parks. These would in turn serve a variety of functions: they would connect different activities and institutions. They would provide spaces for leisure, relaxation, and gathering. They could support private lives and interior activities by providing overflow, outdoor space. And they would provide spaces and opportunities for income-generating activity.

The last point acknowledges the post-apartheid condition of very high unemployment and desperate poverty for most township residents. One of the intended outcomes of apartheid was limiting the economic opportunities for black South Africans, particularly in cities. This was particularly true in Cape Town where black – or 'native' South Africans were subject to a double bind. Nationally, influx restriction legislation – the 'Pass Laws' – restricted Native peoples' movement to and residence in urban areas to periods of time when formally employed.<sup>40</sup> However, the Western Cape Province additionally instituted a Colored Labour Preference policy, which required that so-called coloured (mixed race) people be given preference for jobs before Natives.<sup>41</sup> This, alongside the rapid rate of urban migration, resulted in very high rates of unemployment, pushing most black South Africans into employment (and residence) in the informal sector.<sup>42</sup> Reliance upon the informal sector to meet the formal sector's incapacity has continued, and arguably intensified, since apartheid ended.<sup>43</sup> The limited access to the formal economy is an example of post-apartheid democracy's

limitations upon substantive citizenship: while all South Africans were granted formal citizenship – such as voting rights – when apartheid ended, substantive citizenship is predicated upon ability to claim material membership in the nation. The MuniSDF sought to address this limiting condition, first by helping expand access to employment opportunities by providing spatial infrastructure for transit linkages across the city that make it easier for people to get to places of work. Second, it sought to provide infrastructure for spaces in which informal economic activity could take place. The Dignified Places Programme particularly took up the second point, by architecturally supporting informal trading. Through such design work, the Dignified Places Programme offers possibilities for how architecture, as a profession, may assist in addressing economic conditions. A space that illustrates the methods the programme executed is the Philippi Public Transit Interchange.

### 'Democratic' designs

The Philippi Public Transit Interchange (2000) was one of the earliest sites developed as part of the Dignified Places Programme [5]. It helped establish the formal language and design methods that the programme emulated thereafter, and illustrates how the Dignified Places Programme approached its project of bringing dignity and economic opportunity.

Philippi is a township on the city's inner periphery that provides a lens into Cape Town's history of informal settlement making, where construction and governance have been sites of complex, often violent processes.<sup>44</sup> Philippi's residential areas have been predominantly produced through a pattern in which informal settlements grow and expand, in between areas of new, state-constructed formal housing. The complex interplay of settlement construction,

which brings with it tribalised politics concerning existing and newcomer residents, has produced a situation of continual flux.<sup>45</sup> Philippi's 'ad hoc' spatial development speaks to its characterisation as an area that exemplifies the challenges faced in the post-apartheid era. Even today, decades after apartheid's ending, residents experience deep poverty and unemployment, crime and violence, disarray of social support infrastructure, and inadequate housing.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to hosting such a concentration of the social and spatial legacies of apartheid, Philippi is also home to one of Cape Town's busiest train stations. When the national rail authority revealed plans to upgrade the station in the late 1990s, the Dignified Places Programme developed a pilot scheme, anchored at the train station, which incrementally addressed a swath of Philippi. The scheme used one street, Emms Drive, which connects various modes of transit, housing, and emerging public places to illustrate how the city could be upgraded through attention to the public realm. The scheme produced a set of public spaces, from a market square at the intersection of Lansdowne Road and Emms Drive, to a forecourt to the Philippi Community Hall, and down to the Philippi Public Transit Interchange, which serves as the forecourt to the Philippi train station.

The interchange was initially conceived by the rail authority as simply a landscaping project, in which the space in front of the station would be paved, and a taxi rank built to allow train riders an easy shift to localised modes of transit. However, the architects commissioned by Southworth to design the space petitioned to significantly expand this scope, reimagining the role of the site in its

5 The Philippi Public Transit Interchange, 2012.





6 The Philippi Public Transit Interchange ticketing building for long-distance buses, 2012.

broader social and spatial context. The design team, architects Du Toit and Perrin in Association, began the project by ‘slipping on to the site’ (as they expressed to me in an interview).<sup>47</sup> By this, they mean the actual act of unobtrusively spending time at the site, observing the activities and spatial arrangements already in place in the forecourt area. I also take the phrase to mean that they began by not imposing their views on to the site, but by letting themselves become enveloped and thus informed by the site. As they quickly learned, the area was already busy with activity and was loosely spatially structured. A number of informal traders were operating on the site, some out of appropriated shipping containers, others out of makeshift stalls. Large numbers of people passed across the site each day, either to the station or the pedestrian bridge over to southern Philippi. Du Toit and Perrin proceeded to more empirically understand the site by conducting rigorous studies, mapping out different types of activities, and conducting interviews and surveys with the space’s users.<sup>48</sup> These exercises led to a proposal to expand the project brief to include constructing buildings to house the trading and transit activities already taking place on the site.

Their completed design is an assembly of simple, rugged buildings, with mono-pitch roofs and quotidian building materials painted bright colours [6]. The buildings are located in almost exactly the same places that the informal traders had operated.

The site was conceived as architecture used to formalise and better support the existing life of the public space. The project consists of two sheds for meat vendors, which are culturally celebrated, commonly seen features in rural and urban South Africa; a small building to house ticket sales for long-distance buses, which travel between Cape Town and the Eastern Cape from which many black residents hail; two buildings that consisted of bays to rent to traders and a desperately needed ablution facility; a covered area for parking taxis; and a public square with benches and trees.<sup>49</sup>

Both the Dignified Places Programme and Philippi Interchange illustrate how architects and administrators understood (post-apartheid) public spaces as sites that required public access *and* an awareness of the users’ and owners’ limited economic means. The Philippi Interchange’s design attempted to produce durability and easy maintenance, within very limited budgets. Du Toit and Perrin worked within these constraints by purposing simple, functional features in architecturally expressive, multifunctional ways. For example, the meat vending sheds are open to the air on the front and sides, with the upper rear wall built with perforated block to support ventilation and cast interesting shadows. The trading bays use the mono pitch of the roof to house lofts that can be used for storage or sleeping. The modularity of the bays allows traders to rent out single or multiple adjacent bays, depending on the scale and success of their business. The front façade of the trading bay buildings was designed with a flat fascia for the traders to paint, which allowed the inhabitants to claim the architecture for themselves and served



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7 Storefronts at the Philippi Public Transit Interchange, 2013.

8 The Philippi Public Transit Interchange, 2012.

as a low-cost way to make the architecture more expressive [7]. Low walls and benches located in front of the trading bays and across the public square were designed to multi-functionally display traders' goods and serve as seating [8]. Through these features the design relies upon the users' contribution – whether as inhabitants that bring to life empty benches, or as the painters of colourful fascia signs – and provides a backdrop to support users' activities.<sup>50</sup>

### Between aspiration and limitation

The post-apartheid public space turn was, at its heart, an attempt to serve publics that include informal vendors and residents struggling to survive. In the Philippi case, the architects' strategy for deploying their professional skills to improve everyday lives was to develop a 'kit of parts' type of architecture that addresses the provisionality of township dwellers' lives.<sup>51</sup> It is an approach that attempts to straddle a line between formal practices – such as architecture – and informality, which is prevalent across Cape Town's peripheries. These design practices, as seen in Du Toit and Perrin's mappings of Philippi, are aware of what AbdouMaliq Simone calls the 'conjunction of heterogeneous activities brought to bear on and elaborated through flexibly configured landscapes'.<sup>52</sup> As Edgar Pieterse explains, the (post-apartheid) city 'is the consequence of hybrid economic practices that fundamentally depend on the capacity of actors and institutions finding ways to continuously strike agreements on accomplishing things together'.<sup>53</sup> The Philippi Public Transit Interchange is one embodiment of such a landscape, through what I think of as 'representational architecture'. I base this concept upon Henri Lefebvre's 'representations of space', which as Simone explains, 'act to "pin down" inseparable connections between places, people, actions and things'.<sup>54</sup> Representational architecture configures building materials into architectural elements and spatial arrangements that seek to serve as host to flexibility. Such architecture is designed so a multitude of users can purpose it as needed: for displaying goods to be sold, or for waiting or gathering. These uses speak to an understanding of the need for flexibility; they also represent an idea of flexibility in their abstract formal quality.<sup>55</sup>

The design of the interchange additionally attempted to address the limited budgets available to the City's Urban Design Branch to design, construct, and maintain DPP projects, and in the limited means of the site's users. This speaks to one of the most regrettable aspects of the post-apartheid project: that resolving economic asymmetries and bringing material improvement to most South Africans' lives has proved to be one of the most elusive aspects of the transition from apartheid to democracy. I read the situation, as translated into conceptions of what is architecturally possible, as an issue of 'scarcity'. Goodman, Till, and Iossifova state that scarcity

*more than describes an empirical account of natural and human resources; as soon as the term enters economic or political discourse, it takes on ideological forms – it naturalizes and obscures the social and political aspects of resource allocation.*<sup>56</sup>

This understanding of scarcity invokes the post-apartheid context, in which the limited resources available for redistributive projects is a product of the apartheid-ending concessions.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the struggle to universally achieve substantive citizenship has been a product of scarcity. The design of the Philippi Public Transit Interchange addresses these iterations of scarcity in its architectural language, and in the range of activities it attempts to support.

The design of the Interchange emerged from the premise that the site's users included a broad swath of constituencies. 'Public' in this project was understood by the architects and administrators as a racialised, gendered populace, which included residents of all ages, commuters, informal traders, and budding and established entrepreneurs. The design attempted to welcome and support all these categories of users of public space through architecture. For example, the architects addressed the particularly gendered violence that plagues Philippi (and similar spaces in Cape Town) by providing lighting, sight lines across the site, and securable ablution facilities. They sought to create a scale and quality of space that was civic, as opposed to domestic. This was done through architectural and urban infrastructure that could support a host of activities, such as widened sidewalks, generous paths, and previously mentioned numerous low walls and benches [9]. While such amenities are normative in urban designs across Europe and the Americas, they were not in Cape Town at the time. Through the Philippi Interchange and Dignified Places Programme, they now are recognised – most notably by City officials – as essential urban design components.<sup>58</sup>

### Coda: public space in the contemporary post-apartheid condition

By 2010, the Dignified Places Programme wound down as an initiative, in large part because it was fraught by the unavailability of funds for the operation and maintenance of the sites it built.<sup>59</sup> Today, public space practices in Cape Town are focused upon different sets of issues than in democracy's early days.

Cape Town's most significant public space creation programme in recent years has been Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU). VPUU has been a highly celebrated initiative, developed (initially) in partnership between the City of Cape Town, the German Development Bank and local communities, which situates public space as one of the key terrains through which to prevent violence.<sup>60</sup> Formally, there are some commonalities between the spaces created by VPUU and the Dignified Places Programme [10]. However, the programmes differ in their process of site selection and design, and the epistemological



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9 The Philippi Public Transit Interchange plaza and Philippi Pedestrian Skyway (ACG and KMH Architects in Association, 1997–2009), 2013.

10 VPUU 'Active Box', 2009, in the Harare area of Khayelitsha, 2013.

conceptualisation of what each programme is tackling and trying to achieve. VPUU is premised upon deep engagement with each community with which it partners, and public space is only one of a host of interventions staged within each community. The programme's premise is the need for holistic actions to address the multivalent struggles within communities suffering from violence, poverty, and lack of job opportunities and resources. This approach reflects a developing understanding of what substantive citizenship means under post-apartheid democracy. In other words, in VPUU, public space design has shifted away from singularly addressing how free market forces preclude substantive citizenship, as was done under the Dignified Places Programme. Income generation remains a feature in VPUU's designs, in spaces designed for small-sale entrepreneurs to produce and sell goods. However, these features are just one of a host of spatial features, in a programme in which public space design is one piece in a constellation of interventions.<sup>61</sup>

Beyond VPUU, public space discourses have shifted beyond arguing for public space as an entity. While the City of Cape Town's Urban Design Branch continues to develop new public spaces, public space has also come to serve as a terrain through which social movements increasingly argue that the post-apartheid's entrenched inequalities are a product of both economic policies and yet-decolonised paradigms.<sup>62</sup> For example, in 2012, Rondebosch Commons – a colonial-era public field, in an apartheid-designated 'white' area – was the site of a set of protests concerning exactly whom has access to the space, for which purposes. The participants were protesting the denial of a permit to hold a 'People's Summit for Land, Jobs and Housing' on the Commons. The subsequent Occupy-type protest pointed out that leisure activities primarily enjoyed by the wealthy and middle

class were considered by the government to be more valid uses of public space than hosting the discussion of how to provide exactly the resources which have been so elusive for the majority of South Africans since apartheid's ending.<sup>63</sup> Other protests stage art actions in the city's public spaces. For example, the group Tokolos Stencil interjects stenciled texts and images across Cape Town, which draw attention to how the city operates in the interests of capital.<sup>64</sup> While these protests reflect current frustration with the lack of transformation materially occurring since apartheid's end, as Zayd Minty argues, they also fit into a long Cape Town lineage of public art as a form of resistance to dominating paradigms.<sup>65</sup>

The increasing concerns over violence and lack of racialised equality, playing out in public space, show the challenges facing the contemporary city. In light of these, it is useful to recall how architects helped instigate the initial post-apartheid public space turn. The late-apartheid humanist turn in architectural thought in Cape Town opened a conceptual space, claiming public space as a key terrain in remaking the city in ways capable of addressing the spatial legacies of modernist planning. It is important to recognise that the early post-apartheid public space turn was grounded, normatively, in space and economic opportunity rather than in political action. The architects that led the turn charted a way in which architectural devices such as low walls and trading bays could structure public space and provide a terrain upon which public life could be led. They claimed a method for architects and architecture to engage post-apartheid democracy's dualistic citizenship. Their legacy has established public space as an unquestioned terrain of action in the city.

However, their legacy also leaves the question: is another round of architectural innovation needed to address today's challenging post-apartheid project?

## Notes

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2. Setha M. Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*, 1st edn (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).
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4. Gillian Patricia Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis: Nationalism, Populism, Hegemony* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013).
5. James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
6. James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, 'Cities and Citizenship', *Public Culture*, 8 (1996), 187–204 (p. 190).
7. Christian Ernsten, 'Following the Ancestors', in *Movement Cape Town*, ed. by Zahira Asmal (Cape Town: THE CITY, 2015), pp. 12–19 (p. 14).
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9. Nigel Worden, E. Van Heyningen, and Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town: The Making of a City: An Illustrated Social History* (Claremont, South Africa: David Philip Publishers, 1998).
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 44–5.
11. Dutch power diminished globally during the eighteenth century, and the Dutch East India Company dissolved at the end of the century. After a period of jousting among Britain, France, and Germany, Britain gained definitive control over the Cape in 1814. See: Worden, Van

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12. Vivian Bickford-Smith, 'The Origins and Early History of District Six to 1910', in *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present*, ed. by Shamil Jeppie and Crain Soudien (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990), pp. 35–43; Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town: The Making of a City*.
  13. Shamil Jeppie and Crain Soudien, *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present* (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990); Lucien Le Grange, *District Six: Heritage Impact Assessment* (2003); Lucien le Grange, 'Rebuilding District Six', in *City, Site, Museum: Reviewing Memory Practices at the District Six Museum*, ed. by Bonita Bennett and Chrischené Julius (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2008); Zayd Minty, 'District Six: Putting the Heart Back into Cape Town's Central City. Methodologies for Re-Imagining, Remembering, and Remaking', ed. by University of Cape Town Graduate School in Humanities Centre for African Studies (2006); Penny Pistorius, *Texture and Memory: The Urbanism of District Six*, 2nd edn (Cape Town: Sustainable Urban and Housing Development Research Unit, Department of Architectural Technology, Cape Technikon, 2002).
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  15. For the illustrative example of the clearance of Wells Square in District Six, see: Vivian Bickford-Smith, E. Van Heyningen, and Nigel Worden, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: An Illustrated Social History* (Claremont, South Africa: David Philip Publishers, 1999); Nicholas Coetzer, *Building Apartheid: On Architecture and Order in Imperial Cape Town*, Ashgate Studies in Architecture Series (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 163–75; Shamil Jeppie, 'Modern Housing for the District: The Canterbury and Bloemhof Flats', in *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*, ed. by Ciraj Rassool and Sandra Prosalendis (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2001), pp. 113–30; André Van Graan, 'Negotiating Modernism in Cape Town: 1918–1948: An Investigation into the Introduction, Contestation, Negotiation and Adaptation of Modernism in the Architecture of Cape Town' (University of Cape Town, 2011).
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  17. Sir Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Company, Limited, 1902).
  18. Coetzer, *Building Apartheid*, pp. 192–208.
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  20. Julian Cooke explicitly discusses the residual spaces designed into the landscape of migrant labour hostels in the unpublished memoir, 'For a Home, People Die'.
  21. Mamphela Ramphele, *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1993).
  22. Don Pinnock, 'Ideology and Urban Planning: Blueprints of a Garrison City', in *The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape*, ed. by Wilmot G. James and Mary Simons (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp. 150–68.
  23. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger, *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).
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  25. I borrow the term 'problem space' from Ananya Roy, as used in *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, ed. by Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong, 1st edn (Chichester, West Sussex and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).
  26. For a critical unpacking of this position, see: Lindsay Bremner, *Writing the City into Being: Essays on Johannesburg, 1998–2008* (Johannesburg: Fourthwall Books, 2010).
  27. Dewar and Uytendogaardt, *South African Cities*.
  28. Author's interview with Dave Dewar, July 2012.
  29. The critique of naturalising and universalising embedded in Dewar and Uytendogaardt's work can be found in Bremner, *Writing the City into Being*.
  30. Lucien Le Grange, 'Cape Town: Reconstructing Public Space', *Architecture South Africa*, September/October (1994), 23–7.
  31. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Modern Library 393 (New York: Modern Library, 1969).
  32. Planning and Development Directorate, *City of Cape Town Municipal Spatial Development Framework Draft* (Planning and Economic Development Cluster, City of Cape Town, August 1999), p. 8.
  33. For more details on programme budgets and administration, see: Urban Design Branch, *Creating a Dignified City for All: The City of Cape Town's Uluntu Plaza – Dignified Places Programme* (Cape Town: Planning and Environment, City of Cape Town, 2003).
  34. Barbara Southworth, 'Making Public Space in 21st Century Cape Town: An Idealistic Planning Construct or a Catalytic City Building Project?', in *Counter Currents: Experiments in Sustainability in the Cape Town Region*, ed. by E. A. Pieterse (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2010), p. 101.
  35. Planning and Development Directorate, p. 12.
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  38. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, chapter 2, section 10.
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46. *State/Society Synergy in Philippi, Cape Town*, ed. by Mercy Brown-Luthango (Cape Town: African Centre for Cities, 2015); Gita Goven, 'Kosovo Informal Settlement Upgrade: Sustainability towards Dignified Communities', in *Counter-Currents: Experiments in Sustainability in the Cape Town Region*, ed. by E. A. Pieterse (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2010), pp. 146–59.
47. Author's interview with Jacqui Perrin, March 2012.
48. For further, detailed discussion of the architects' community engagement, see: Anna Cowen, 'Making Vital Public Spaces in Areas of Great Need: The Spatial Design Disciplines at Work in Philippi, Cape Town' (unpublished MPhil. thesis, University of Cape Town, 2003).
49. The site is maintained and administered by the PRASA rail authority, which controls renting stalls, and providing security and maintenance for the site.
50. Nicholas Coetzer, in 'Architecture as Armature: Dignified Places in Post-Apartheid Cape Town' (2012) argues that this approach frames architecture as an armature.
51. Southworth has repeatedly referred to the Dignified Places Programme design approach as a 'kit of parts'. See, for example: Southworth, 'Making Public Space'.
52. AbdouMaliq Simone, 'People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg', *Public Culture*, 16:3 (2004), p. 409.
53. *Rogue Urbanism: Emergent African Cities*, ed. by Edgar Pieterse and AbdouMaliq Simone (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2013), p. 14.
54. Simone, 'People as Infrastructure', p. 409.
55. Whether or not the architectural design is successful in addressing the social conditions has not yet been studied in this research, and would be a useful subject of further study. For an example of potential ways to study project impacts, see: Iain Low, 'Space & Transformation: Reflections on the New WCED Schools Programme', in *Counter Currents: Experiments in Sustainability in the Cape Town Region*, ed. by E. A. Pieterse (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2010), pp. 202–15.
56. Jon Goodbun, Jeremy Till, and Deljana Iossifova, 'Themes of Scarcity', *Architectural Design*, 82:4 (2012), p. 9.
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59. The Philippi Public Transit Interchange is arguably one of the most successful Dignified Places Programme sites because its maintenance and operation is funded by the rail authority, as discussed in NM & Associates, *Quality Public Spaces: Programme Evaluation, Research and Survey of DPP/QPS Programme* (Cape Town: City of Cape Town, Urban Design Branch, August 2010), p. 98.
60. 'RSEP/VPUU Programme | Better Together' <<https://www.westerncape.gov.za/rsep-vpuu/>> [accessed 15 March 2020].
61. 'VPUU Manual: Preamble and Introduction', *VPUU* (blog) <<http://vpuu.org.za/success-story/vpuu-manual-preamble-introduction/>> [accessed 15 March 2020]; *Violence Prevention Through Urban Upgrading: A Manual for Safety as a Public Good* (Cape Town: VPUU, n.d.).
62. The Urban Design Branch currently exists as a division in the City's Urban Integration Department. See: <<http://www.capetown.gov.za/Departments/Urban%20Integration%20Department>> [accessed 15 March 2020].
63. Myriam Houssay-Holzschuch and Emma Thébault, 'Dis-Locating Public Space: Occupy Rondebosch Common, Cape Town', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 49:3 (2017), 555–71.
64. Nomusa Makhubu, 'Changing the City after Our Heart's Desire: Creative Protest in Cape Town', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 53:6 (2017), 686–99.
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