



CITIES, SPACE AND POWER

EDITED BY AMIRA OSMAN

The Built Environment in Emerging Economies (BEinEE):
Cities, Space and Transformation
Volume 1

**CITIES,
SPACE
AND POWER**



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The Built Environment in Emerging Economies (BEinEE):
Cities, Space and Transformation
Volume 1

CITIES, SPACE AND POWER

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Amira Osman



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Research Justification

The scholarly purpose of this manuscript is to provide a resource for academics and researchers looking into cities, space and power in emerging economies. It also takes into consideration the relationship between emerging economies and developing contexts and lessons that may be shared between them. This book presents a unique perspective and aims to highlight issues not addressed much in writing on the built environment. Based on substantiation and references to numerous other sources and authors, alternative theoretical frameworks for the study of the built environment are developed. This is a very relevant contribution at this time - especially as cities will most probably go through transformations in the post-COVID-19 era. Our first line of defence against this public health crisis will be in areas of poverty, with people who have generally been excluded and urban practices that have been undocumented or labelled as informal. The main thesis of the manuscript is that space and power are strongly linked in cities. Researchers are challenged to develop new theoretical frameworks and alternative approaches to teaching and practice to help achieve balance in these power dynamics. The book serves as a declaration of authenticity. The research results prevalent in the book are original and while the authors consult widely across disciplines, the themes are firmly rooted in the built environment fields - with a focus on the architectural discipline. Methodologies used are mostly deductive and this is applied differently between the chapters. The authors base their approaches on a postmodern understanding of reality as being complex and multi-layered. They use this understanding to construct new knowledge frameworks. They premise their research on relativist concepts and present new frameworks based on previous knowledge by analysing data in a systematic manner. A minor portion of one chapter has been based on a reworking of sections of a PhD thesis, with clear in-text citations. The new content is remarkably different from the original text and is fully aligned with the purpose of the book as a whole. What is used from the thesis has not been published before. This book represents a scholarly discourse. It is a book written by scholars for scholars. While it will have resonance for others, this book will be most useful for those in the academic fields in the built environment disciplines.

Amira Osman, Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, Tshwane University of Technology, Tshwane, South Africa

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Abbreviations, Figures and Tables Appearing in the Text and Notes

List of Abbreviations

AAP	Architects Against Apartheid
ALS	Architectural Learning Site
BEinEE	Built Environment in Emerging Economies
BLM	Black Lives Matter
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CBE	Council for the Built Environment
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
EEMCC	Maria Carolina Campos State School
FMF	Fees Must Fall
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IBGE	Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
IDHM	Municipal Human Development Index
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
PPP	Public-private Partnership
PULP	Pretoria University Law Press
SACAP	South African Council for the Architectural Profession
SAIA	South African Institute of Architects
SHIFT	Social Housing Focus Trust
UCT	University of Cape Town
UFMG	Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
US	United States
USA	United States of America

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Preface

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■ Thinking about cities in the age of COVID-19

As we completed the text of the first book in this book series, the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) crisis gripped the world and life as we know it changed. This has unsettled us in a major way – yet it makes our work on cities, space and transformation even more profound and necessary. We may have amended something here or there, or given the work a slightly different focus – but the issues covered around inequity and lack of access to opportunity is without a doubt key to the debates around the virus. Let me explain why.

We must admit, there has been a lack of foresight on our part as built environment professionals! How did the majority of us miss the warnings that this pandemic was coming? Especially as the relationship between disease and planning, throughout history, is well-known and documented. While COVID-19 is not as deadly as other viruses, it transmits more easily and comes at a time when the interconnectedness of the world has meant its spread has been fast and destructive. Will this crisis lead to a change in movement patterns nationally and globally at a time when arguments were made to demolish borders and allow for more fluid relationships between countries? Will this crisis perhaps lead to new understandings of nationality and citizenship? It is a crisis that will no doubt have a great impact at neighbourhood, city, national and global levels.

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As an architect, in my work and writing and in designing for unknown futures, I have emphasised that our design decisions need to be developed with a view towards supporting the resilience strategies of communities. This, I have claimed, can be achieved by developing new financial and legal tools to achieve spatial equity and access to opportunity and applying advanced tools and mechanisms to manage stability and change, the formal and the informal, the unexpected and the unknown in the built environment. Resilience can also be considered as the availability of sufficient infrastructure, a diverse economy, good governance and cohesive communities. I have often argued that one way to increase the resilience of communities, and reduce vulnerability, is to distribute control in the built environment and involve everyone in decision-making. I have also argued that equal access, opportunity and spatial justice is a condition for increasing resilience.

This crisis has hit us hard at a time when none of these conditions for resilience have been achieved. How do we address this under the circumstances and how do we map a way forward for our cities that takes this experience into account? How can we imagine solutions that we have not considered before, as we now realise that old and existing solutions will fall short; an entire system has been disrupted and new systems will need to prioritise people's well-being and public health. There is, of course, the possibility that things will go back to how they were after this shock; we need to be alert to this possibility and actively try to motivate for change.

We have long been concerned about spatial segregation and its implications, believing that cities need to be considered as whole eco-systems and not as fragmented pockets of wealth and poverty. We are now confronted with a situation where destinies are even more intertwined – a collapse in health or economic systems will affect everyone, irrespective of class or income. I have argued that sustainability, resilience and equity should be seen as synonymous and must go hand in hand. The lockdown has exposed persistent spatial, economic and social inequalities

and the stark discrepancies globally, and specifically in South Africa, where historical and spatial realities have further exacerbated the situation. This dysfunction is an opportunity to implement change.

It is impossible for many to follow the most important requirements for reducing the chances for infection, specifically isolation and frequent hand washing; the former is difficult because of overcrowding in poor areas and informal settlements and the latter is difficult because of the costs it adds to the expenses of already struggling families.

These vulnerabilities indicate that the first line of defence in the fight against the virus should be in the contexts of extreme urban poverty and overcrowding – contexts that at many times go underserved, unrecognised and undocumented. How can we increase the resilience of people living in these kinds of urban conditions? Resilience under these conditions will mean devising strategies to help communities cope with the socio-economic changes that will inevitably happen because of the virus, the shutdowns and the life changes that will happen at community and family levels. Other vulnerabilities because of natural disasters and climate change will continue – placing many urban populations in precarious situations.

Public space and high densities that allow for small businesses to flourish are considered as key aspects of urban contexts. Can urban spatial values of density, connectivity and gathering survive the current crisis that demands isolation and lower density? How can new economic opportunities be created in this kind of environment? And how can government systems be restructured to facilitate the income-generating activities of a large segment of the population which they have previously criminalised or had an ambiguous relationship with? And how can space be restructured to achieve these aims?

It is also important to note that public transport poses real risks to public health. The vision for cities and neighbourhoods that support activities by foot, bicycle and other means of

micro-mobility may only be achieved through higher densities; small and micro business initiatives cannot thrive in current conditions of low density and sprawl.

We need to harness design to control the spread of the disease. In the absence of a treatment, changes in behaviour and spatial measures are the only things we have control over as we confront this pandemic. As built environment professionals, we need to go back to our drawing boards and re-imagine a future that we feel very unprepared for.

The values and concepts presented in this book are crucial in mapping a future for our cities that reduces vulnerability, that is more egalitarian and that ensures that communities will never again find themselves in such precariousness when faced by disease or other forms of disaster. Our work on cities is more important today than it ever was.

■ **The impact of disease on cities, space and power**

The relationship between disease and planning, throughout history, is well-known and documented. Indeed, Klaus (2020) claims that ‘disease shapes cities’ and that the COVID-19 is an opportunity to study the relationship between design and public health. In 2003, Rose and Novas already wrote about ‘biological citizenship’, a ‘...new kind of citizenship...’ (Rose & Novas 2004:439) and others speculate about the emerging ‘...need to control the flow of certain kinds of biological circulations across bodies in space and time’ (Lancione & Simone 2020:n.p.).

Urban areas are diverse and a differentiated approach is needed when designing for infectious disease (Forsyth 2020). Harnessing design to control the spread of an epidemic and the concept of ‘quarantine’ are not new concepts; indeed, in the absence of a treatment, changes in behaviour and spatial measures seem to be the only things that we can employ in the next few months (Budds 2020).

While this is an opportunity to recalibrate and rethink our lives, there is, of course, the possibility that things will go back to how they were after this shock (Bliss 2020); we need to be alert to this possibility and actively try to motivate for change (Florida 2020). The crisis has brought to light the differences in the capacity to deal with ‘distress, disruptions and economic shocks’ (Valodia & Francis 2020). This systemic dysfunction is an opportunity to implement fundamental change, as suggested by Harding (2020). In 1991, Dewar and Uytendogaardt (1991) claimed that positive urban environments work for both the rich and the poor in their manifesto for South African cities; we now know how true this is. While we need systemic change in policies, funding models, spatial planning, we also need cohesive communities where people check up on each other (Bliss 2020).

The interconnectedness of health and climate has been powerfully argued even before this current crisis broke out (Dhaliwal 2019). And it is now evident how the connection between services, infrastructure and planning is more pronounced when dealing with infectious disease. In Karachi, it is estimated that an eight-person household would need an extra 2.8 cubic metres of water for hand washing – costing around US\$7.5 per month (Karachi Urban Lab 2020). This is a heavy expense in a country where the average income is US\$112.5 (CEIC n.d.). Valodia and Francis (2020) explain how the poorest households in South Africa (about 18 million of the population) have on average five members and a monthly income of US\$136; much of this income will be lost because of the shutdown. The authors compare this to the wealthier segments of the population (about 7 million people) having on average two people per home with a monthly income of about US\$1993. The shutdown means that these wealthier households will continue to earn an income and many will save money during this time (Valodia & Francis 2020).

As we reconceptualise the idea of ‘cities’ in the age of a major pandemic, we have had to think deeper about the arguments we have previously held about density and public space, what is still

valid and what arguments we need to re-formulate. While we are even asking the question: are pandemics ‘anti-urban’? (Kimmelman 2020), we are also becoming aware that there is a difference between density and overcrowding. We are also realising that there is more to community and social interaction beyond physical space. Lockdowns have ‘...forced people to create a new type of public space’ with citizens finding ways to connect across space from balconies (Rosmarin 2020:n.p.) as well as via online platforms. The idea of ‘space’ has once again been upended.

Space and power are strongly related and with recent changes in global dynamics, power structures are also being upended and reconfigured. There are still many unknowns. The connection between densities and infection is still under investigation. Per capita infection rates still need to be considered and comparisons between cities, countries and continents will start to emerge. There is, as yet, no evidence that density, as population numbers per physical area, is directly related to the rate of infection. Yet, it is the places where people are confined to small, crowded indoor spaces which seem to be the problem; this is also the case where confinement and physical distance is an impossibility because of shared facilities and very small personal space.

As we transition into this new era, we must remember that cities offer great opportunities; people move to cities for many reasons. People who move into cities are ambitious, determined and motivated. They are seeking to improve their lives and livelihoods. High density and compact urban configurations indicate more opportunities for small businesses and micro-economic activities. The negativity that arises regarding densification needs to be systematically and scientifically addressed. High densities and compact urban configurations are also important in reducing environmental stress and the extent and costs of infrastructure and services. So as some calls emerge for de-densification, these factors must be considered in order to

ensure that a more balanced and viable approach emerges which considers the long-term implications.

As new data emerge, and as maps of infection rates, resilience, political and economic robustness, geospatial patterns, it is suspected that COVID-19 will strongly highlight anomalies globally, regionally and locally. COVID-19 will also probably lead to a re-ordering of the power structures in cities and societies as well as globally.

This book is an important contribution in debates around cities, space and power. However, in the age of COVID-19, much more work needs to be done in this regard.

■ Introduction

The dynamics of cities and urbanisation is complex; even more so in emerging economies and when addressing issues of space and transformation. Burdett (2015) states that, while most large cities of Europe and parts of North America were already at their current size in 1950 and may be described as ‘mature’ cities, Latin America, the west coast of the United States of America (USA), Japan and some Asian cities have different patterns of growth and it was only in the era before the 1990s that they considerably evolved in terms of size and population. The author (Burdett 2015) explains that most future global urban growth will happen in Sub-Saharan Africa, India, China and Asia and proceeds to outline these differences, stating that:

[D]elhi [*is*] growing at 79 people/hour, Shanghai at 53 and Mumbai at 51; Latin American cities like Mexico City, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro slowing to 22, 18 and 10... Hong Kong’s highly controlled and efficient planning regime leads to a relatively low projection of 4 people/hour... (n.p.)

There is great concern about the damage that cities and urbanisation inflicts on the environment; it has also been argued that (Heathcote 2011):

[7]he biggest cities are in fact the greenest. Their density, the close proximity in which people live and the minimal amount of land they occupy... makes for a far smaller carbon footprint... Mumbai is probably the greenest big city there is – slums like the million-strong Dharavi use minimal land, energy and water. (n.p.)

As we grapple with the scale of urbanisation, and the fact that cities will grow even more in the future, we need to better understand and respond to this complexity: ‘As economic and environmental crises deepen, there is a growing recognition that many aspects of our lives need to be reinvented’ (Forum for the Future et al. n.d.). It is hoped that this book contributes to this ‘re-invention’ of cities and urbanisation in uncertain times.

‘Emerging economies’ is a description that has come to define countries characterised by rapidly increasing economic growth and industrialisation and they are seen to be gaining prominence in a global market. While it could be perceived as problematic in some ways, or some would argue that it is outdated, it is a useful term that helps us group a particular category of countries that face similar challenges and socio-economic conditions, allowing us to benefit from comparative analysis and to learn from shared experiences. It also helps distinguish between these countries and so-called developing nations, where the latter tend to rely predominantly on agriculture with limited infrastructure development; noting that developing nations have been known to transform into emerging economies by a shift in focus to other sectors such as energy and telecommunications. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa have come to be known as the BRICS countries, an acronym that is sometimes used to replace ‘emerging economies’. If more developing countries transition into being emerging economies, this will broaden the category to include more than just five countries.

The belief that emerging economies will ‘converge’ with the developed economies has not always proven true according to Wheatley (2019). It needs to be considered if this anticipated convergence is indeed a beneficial or desirable condition?

Perhaps countries considered to have emerging economies may define an alternative future which is not based on the economic systems and social structures on which the so-called developed world is premised? Perhaps this grouping is an opportunity to reconceptualise our lifestyles and how countries relate to each other and to the earth? The assumption that people in emerging economies would reach levels of consumption similar to those in the developed economies is unrealistic, undesirable and simply impossible considering limited global resources.

The relationship between the types of economies and the impact on built environment issues is important to consider. Terminology, and the historical and contemporary implications thereof, are important, as are the implied power relationships between countries and continents: the 'global south' and the 'west' being two such terms. These distinctions no doubt assist in achieving a deeper understanding of the challenges of the built environment within economic realities of increased incomes and growth – albeit, in most cases, uneven and highly unequal growth. Indeed, what is needed in these contexts is a re-imagination of how growth may be aligned with conceptualising built environments that are more equitable, more beautiful and more functional – as well as human settlements, residential and productive, that are mixed, integrated, sustainable and that increase peoples' opportunities, offering a better chance at improving lives and livelihoods. Finding the connection between the built environment and economic development implies an approach to interpreting the built environment through understanding what is imbedded in local systems of (social and monetary) transaction, education, production, skills, making and crafting. Various authors have already started to introduce concepts, never before used in built environment debates, such as integrity, inclusivity, harmony, respect, mutuality, positive reciprocity, fellowship, responsibility, humility and non-attachment (Hes & Du Plessis 2014). Some have motivated for the adoption of living lightly on earth or degrowth, rather than

place emphasis on growth, believing that 'The environmental crisis is a failure of human trusteeship' (Al Jayyousi 2015).

We hope that this book series helps reconceptualise this expectation of what countries of emerging economies are, and how they may evolve with specific reference to the built environment. This is especially important because of the lacunae in data across the globe and untested bias in interpretations on space, cities and the built environment. Urban practices have been dismissed or undocumented in some cases, while value has been attributed to selective practices as opposed to others. In 1990, Rapoport had already compared the situation of sub-Saharan Africa with the rest of world: '...it proved almost impossible to obtain data, in spite of major effort... the situation in many traditional settlements of sub-Saharan Africa is a puzzling anomaly and needs investigation' (Rapoport 1990:456-457). The study of society and space has traditionally been biased to particular interpretations, employing techniques that render some people, spaces and practices invisible or undervalued. As an example, this is seen in some assumptions that social change adheres to a set of rules that is applicable to all societies, anywhere. Western social evolutionary theory makes some assumptions about social complexity, spatial segmentation, central authority and their influence on built form (Kent 1990:129, 167; Donley-Reid 1990:115). Yet, the Western assumptions of how built environment and space evolves and changes over time are not always global or accurate; fluctuation from periods of elaborate segmentation to relative simplicity and lack of elitism, from increased or decreased complexity and diverse responses to economic situations, religious and political influences are rarely uniform (Osman 2004).

This means that we need a shift in focus in redressing prejudice in writing, academia and debate in the built environment disciplines which can start to tackle the prejudice evident in how we document, teach and practice (Arevena 2016):

[R]eporting from the Front at the Venice Biennale, which has traditionally been restricted and dealt with issues of traditional concern to architects, the curator was able to identify problems that every citizen can not only understand but actually have a say in: immigration, water, land capacity, waste, etc. This generated an immediate, positive response from people who don't normally get involved with architecture - across both the developed and developing worlds. (n.p.)

The curator, Alejandro Arevena argued that 'It's time to rethink the entire role and language of architecture' (Arevena 2016):

[W]e want to understand what design tools are needed to subvert the forces that privilege individual gain over collective benefit; to highlight cases that resist reductionism and oversimplification, and to not give up on architecture's mission to penetrate the mystery of the human condition. (n.p.)

This 'mystery' of the state of the built environment in 'other' countries needs to be addressed through meaningful contributions to critical debates, and promote thinking on and alternative strategies on space, built form, housing, human settlements, physical and social infrastructure and all social, cultural, financial, policy, design, technical, procurement, delivery and management issues that relate to the built environment. This demystification of the built environment may be achieved by introducing more voices, more contexts and more experiences in the built environment debates. This approach subscribes to alternative approaches to development and professionalism and a belief that innovation occurs at the interface between the different professions, implying an exploration into multi- and inter- disciplinary expertise; this ensures engagement with the complexity of these issues while also encouraging discipline-specific explorations. In exploring the interface between the various built environment professions, and towards the enhancement of the role of the built environment professions in the achievement of innovation and progress, thinking needs to be aligned with global agendas for cities and construction and planning.

Yet, despite the call for the introduction of other voices and other disciplines, the built environment professions remain largely untransformed and disengaged from issues of spatial transformation.

The 'The Built Environment in Emerging Economies' book series offers a platform for marginalised contexts, issues and voices and aims to address issues of who dominates conversations and publications in the fields of architecture, the built environment and engineering; in its aim to contribute towards balancing these imbalances in our professions, the book series will start off by presenting a position on cities and power in its first edition. The connection between the BUILT ENVIRONMENT and the ECONOMY is brought to the fore, while the focus on EMERGENT ECONOMIES hopes to contribute towards a conversation between similar socio-economic contexts in general, and the global south in particular.

■ Overview by the editor

There are definite overlaps between the interests of the authors of this first edition of the book despite each handling the theme from different viewpoints, and based on vastly different experiences. The mix of disciplines and interests of the authors (architecture, planning, governance, political and legal history, philosophy, religious and constitutional law) makes for an exciting project with diverse perspectives. The authors have similar beliefs, values and concerns, yet use different terminologies and frames of reference in addressing the issue of cities, power and spatial transformation.

Toffa practised as an architect in Johannesburg and Cape Town. He worked for the Social Housing Focus Trust (SHIFT) and is currently an academic with broad research interests; he is involved with UJ STAND, based at the University of Johannesburg, which studies scholarship and pedagogy and they are about to

issue a book about socio-economic and historical realities of South Africa and the implications for teaching (Gray et al. 2019). His interests lie in issues beyond what architects normally concern themselves with in practice – therefore understanding things more broadly and at a societal level. Toffa looks at history and epistemology and the things that underpin the way that we teach and practice; he believes that there are philosophies and presumptions that never get spoken about and are never interrogated – yet they are important.

Toffa interrogates ‘the reproductions of racial-ised thinking and practice’ in South African university spaces, and specifically within architectural learning sites; he asks that we demolish the ‘Mandela-mythology’ and confront out discomfort. Toffa challenges the notion of ‘spatial transformation’ as merely another ‘authored discourse’ which he believes is another way of avoiding uncomfortable socio-political analysis of the built environment disciplines and can therefore be considered a ‘limited discourse’.

All the authors offer, in one form or the other, what Morado Nascimento has termed a ‘criticism of the contemporary production of urban space and cities’. Morado Nascimento is Professor at the School of Architecture (Graduate and Post-Graduate Program), Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Belo Horizonte in Brazil. She is coordinator of the PRAXIS-EA or UFMG research group and has a Post-Doctorate in Geography (UFMG), a PhD in Information Science (UFMG) and a Master in Architecture (York University, England). Morado Nascimento elaborates how the ‘design and urban planning fields form the language game – a fragmented and binary game which is contaminated by power relations’. She also suggests that it is through the decrypting the ‘reading’ (as opposing to ‘diagnosing’) of the city, that exclusion may be reversed. To achieve this, the ‘reading’ must be carried out through the eyes of those who occupy the city and not the ‘gaze’ of professionals and authorities.

A democratic society is the main concern of the Sanín-Restrepo's theory of encryption, achieved through the unearthing of what is buried beneath the urban liberal simulacra of legality and human rights. He states that the 'elite arranges the world through an organisation of qualifications and hierarchies in order to access it' thus, in the process, denying access to others. Sanín-Restrepo is Professor of legal and political theory and teaches in several institutions across Latin America. He is the author of *Decolonizing Democracy: Power in a Solid State*, and editor of *Decrypting Power*, both published by Rowman and Littlefield (Sanín-Restrepo 2016, 2020).

Osman writes about how citizens, and their urban practices, are labelled illegitimate, informal, outside of the law – leading to exclusionary policies and people being denied access to opportunities. Osman is a Sudanese or South African Professor of Architecture at the Tshwane University of Technology and currently holds the position of DST or NRF or SACN SARCHi Chair in Spatial Transformation (positive change in the built environment), a South African Research Chair initiative. She has degrees in Architecture from the University of Khartoum in Sudan (BSc 1988 and MSc 1996) and a diploma in housing from the Institute for Housing Studies in Rotterdam (IHS 1992) and a PhD in Architecture from the University of Pretoria (2004). She also currently serves as a joint coordinator for the international CIB W104 Open Building Implementation network.

Osman sets out to help resolve issues of marginalisation evident in our academic and professional settings, arguing that how to we document and interpret the built environment – and how we then conceptualise solutions – can be done through a 'gaze' that acknowledges 'other' practices, people and places previously side-lined or rendered invisible. Morado Nascimento writes about how these exclusionary systems can be dismantled to allow more access and opportunity. Sanín-Restrepo describes it beautifully as the city being the essential site of emancipation. Morado Nascimento references the work of Sanín-Restrepo when

she states that ‘we do not expect a consensus among those who suffer exclusion with those who, to some extent, benefit from it’.

With regards to Osman’s declaration that ‘we hear you’ and the focus on the unheard, marginalised and excluded: what are the risks of this being labelled ‘false inclusion’ and a ‘fantasy of totality’ as cautioned by Sanín-Restrepo? What are the risks of a ‘diagnosis’ through an external ‘gaze’ as cautioned by Morado Nascimento? How can we achieve the call by Sanín-Restrepo for ‘the potentiality of the hidden people to become a people (a full functional political subject)?’. Through what theories may this be understood, and through what mechanisms may it be achieved? How can ‘the denial of the world through encryption’ (Sanín-Restrepo) be dismantled through decryption? Morado Nascimento, in line, laments the persistent ‘logic of “poor people in poor areas”’ and the perpetuation of exclusion.

As ‘the hidden people transit within diverse geographies of power (nation state, globality, the urban)’ as stated by Sanín-Restrepo, it becomes evident that citizenship, belonging and identity are no longer determined by geographical location – the diaspora play a significant role in the making and interpretation of space as emphasised by Osman, herself a member of this global community and claiming a dual identity. Sanín-Restrepo says: ‘In the world of artificial intelligence and transnational financial capital, the urban is both a spiralling material cultural setup and a virtual intensity that is almost impossible to quantify’. Osman reflects on the diaspora, virtual and physical space and the state – explaining that generations who are physically disconnected from their home countries, are still able to forge new identities which do not rely on a geographical location; thus bringing to light concepts of belonging and identity and how these could be interpreted in physical and virtual spatial terms.

All the authors are concerned with the question of how to achieve authenticity in representation when it comes to cities and their inhabitants. Sanín-Restrepo (2020) asks:

[H]ow can 'ontological precision' be achieved in attempts to interpret and understand the 'city'? And can it be achieved? What is the most precise system of representation of the city? The most accurate? (n.p.)

Should it be viewed through a legal lens? A political lens? A social or geographical lens? He proceeds: 'We must... let the urban create its own configuration, for it is before all, an open-ended intense system of signification'. By using the theory of the 'encryption of power', Sanín-Restrepo argues that 'the relation between the fundamental collective power, the fundamental collective right and the fundamental denial of the world' comes into operation.

Osman's ecosystemic interpretative framework is based on a 'phenomenology of place' achieved through a deep understanding of the milieu in which 'the urban' is conceived and produced. Clues towards understanding both physical and virtual space are believed to be found in values, ideas and words where artefacts become more than just 'things', space, materials or objects, but also intangible reactions to context, history (time), geography (space) understood through social belief systems, rituals, religion, politics and culture; the 'urban centre' and the 'city' are interpreted accordingly. Osman believes that clues about cities and space may be found in many 'places' and across disciplines – and the identification of the recurring themes in literature, songs, poetry, sayings and local beliefs and texts, are some tools to assist in understanding a context in a deep way. By the ecosystemically-based identification of recurring themes, it is possible to start formulating a picture for a context that offers a better knowledge of how it came to be, and what meanings it may hold for the people that built it, who constantly transform it and that inhabit it. Osman visits and re-visits concepts of society, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class, race and their impact on our understanding of cities, throughout her chapter, giving examples from her original and adopted home.

Morado Nascimento states that contexts: 'cannot be perceived from the universal perspective expressed in categories created

from the reductionist or generic points of view of organs or institutions responsible for urban planning'. To achieve alternative readings of cities, Morado Nascimento and her research team have conducted a series of community workshops where they deliberately distanced themselves from so-called 'academic language'. Narratives and maps were thus constructed towards revealing 'the complexity of the urban dynamics encrypted by current categories, indices and indicators and to present another approach of analysis based on the narratives of the Other'.

Through changing the language game, Morado Nascimento argues, it is possible for city residents to claim 'political authority', this being an important concept in countries that have massive wealth disparities and disadvantage such as South Africa and Brazil – the two countries that appear to be 'competing' for the notorious title of being home to the most unequal societies in the world. Toffa makes reference to 'consumption inequality in South Africa [which] was officially rated "the highest in the world"' and wealth inequality even higher and growing' and Morado Nascimento (2020) explains:

[A]t the present time, in terms of income distribution, the average income *per capita* of the 20% households with higher incomes (R\$4,499.15) is 18.3 times higher than the average income of the 20% with lower incomes (R\$243,60). (n.p.)

Both authors refer to, what Toffa says is are 'interconnecting strands [that] converge to produce and reproduce social conditions and tensions', focusing on issues of race and with Morado Nascimento giving an overview of these strands, touching on forms of exclusion, housing conditions, access restriction, race and gender, the history of slavery and its contemporary consequences. Indeed, Toffa emphasises that these sets of data are highly racialised, with the worst affect group being the black population as well as those in rural areas. He concludes that 'poverty remains overwhelming racial, educational, gendered and spatial' and continue to 'put it in more architectural terms, space most typically is classist and racist, while also displaying gender and educational discrimination'. In South Africa, post

1994, the idealistic idea of the 'Rainbow Nation' led to academics not knowing how to talk about race and avoid it when they write academic papers – should one say black, poor, rural? Academic writing has not confronted this topic, and that is what Toffa hopes to contribute through his chapter.

Toffa (2020) states:

[W]hat is therefore required of the disciplines is not to shy away from race discretely, but rather to interrogate the ways in which these modalities and hence their cognitive underpinnings are sustained and reproduced in other forms, and to develop ethical and imaginative counter strategies. (n.p.)

Toffa argues that architecture cannot shy away from some engagement with race theory, as he believes architecture is already implicated 'whether this fact is acknowledged or not'. He writes that race – as a central component to understanding contemporary social and cultural life – should not be considered 'irrelevant or ... an unnecessary deviation from that discipline's or area's main object of study', and as such, a 'distinction between race theory and non-race theory ... is a false and unhelpful abstraction'. He argues that new integrative forms of knowledge are required for the discipline to be able to respond to new questions.

In a constant competition for space and power, and once the public becomes aware of the impact of city plans on their lives and livelihoods, conflict and protests break out – this has been evident in African cities and across the world. Osman states that policies are perceived as either enabling or restrictive; they could be used to facilitate innovation – or stifle it – and plans may impact on access to public space and opportunity. These conflicts, many times triggered by spatial issues, follow in the example of the occupy movement and Tahrir square protests and they are supported by virtual networks. Such conflicts, the result of urban policies that are often aligned with 'big capital', demand that the field of architecture respond to the socio-political phenomena that causes them.

Osman explains that the production of space has been largely undemocratic and focused on developers with money and government while the citizens that occupy space in cities are oftentimes excluded from decision-making about the very space they inhabit. What is valued and monetised impacts ‘small players’ who find their economic practices, being constantly undermined, targeted and attacked. Women are subjected to this more than others and backward cultural beliefs see public space being perceived as the rightful domain of males. This becomes a point of contention as women try to claim space in cities to maintain their livelihood efforts. It is not just a question of making access to land impossible, but also controlling all of the other issues that limit access to opportunity. This relates to the topic that Morado Nascimento presents: encryption and decryption and making the city more accessible. Morado Nascimento further unpacks this by explaining how ‘the State associated itself with the owners of capital’ and how vulnerability of those excluded from the market is a result of the fact that they ‘are unable to engage adequately in the rationality of government and the market, that is, [they are] unable to absorb the risks’.

While Osman focusses on protest action as related to cities and space in African and other contexts globally, Toffa focusses on relatively recent protest action specifically at South African universities. South Africa is unofficially dubbed ‘the protest capital of the world’. Toffa (2020) describes the:

[E]xtension of [...] ‘historically black’ struggles into ‘historically white’ universities [*which*] took many by surprise. It suggested that for many a Foucauldian heterotopia had come to exist in higher education and the academic disciplines... the protests of students, workers and supporting academics challenged multiple and interrelated structures of domination and discrimination simultaneously... The agenda of multiple but interrelated issues would become a hallmark of the protests, popularised at the time by the word ‘intersectionality’. (n.p.)

However, Toffa focusses on the reluctance of the architectural academic sites to become involved in these debates related to the protests as an indication that this was contrary to the manner

in which the profession liked to portray itself: that is as being 'relevant' and in touch with the socio-economic realities of the country. 'Black Studio' at Wits and 'The Open Classroom' at University of Cape Town (UCT) both emerged as student-led initiatives at architecture departments which aimed at addressing the decolonial struggles and issues which surfaced with the university protests in 2015–2016.

Toffa believes that the protests offered legitimacy to 'other' voices and this became evident in some of the texts that were published at that time... he presents an argument that the once-taboo topics that were addressed during the time of protest present an 'unstable and false dichotomy' as transformation within the profession calls for much deeper reflection and engagement.

Toffa uses specific tools to understand cities; he looks at fiction writing as a possible tool and tries to unpack the built environment beyond material and economic conditions and through bringing issues of race and agency that are not discussed as often, or as openly, as the material and economic conditions. We do not speak about it. In order to address the systematic dehumanisation and systematic tools used in universities, similar to legal and governmental levels, disciplines need to 'learn other tools and other ways of speaking' argues Toffa. To do this, he explains, we cannot focus on having immediate solutions as they tend to be reproductive. We need to rather understand the underlying principles they are premised on, and then produce alternative systems. Toffa acknowledges that what he is trying to do is still embedded in western norms as, he states, we are western-centric in our sensibilities, in our sources, in what we value, the hierarchies that we create and even in our solutions. Osman also makes this admission, even though she sets out to create an alternative interpretative framework relevant to contexts she knows, many of the resources consulted are western resources or authors.

The built environment professions, similar to other professions are overwhelmingly white. So while Toffa (2020) tries to move past the race:

[7]he ‘paradox of race’ ensures that even when you try and move beyond it by giving people more opportunities – such as positive discrimination and Black Economic Empowerment BEE – you are at the same time reinforcing a colonial categorisation which you can never get past. (n.p.)

And for Osman, trying to create alternative theoretical frameworks for the built environment, more relevant for ‘other’ contexts, finds herself immersed in the disciplinary constraints which she has been trained in. Toffa explains that we entrench the very things we are trying to challenge, unable to get out of western categorisation, norms and colonial inventions.

Toffa states that to develop new tools and other ways of speaking, we need to do two things: critique and build something new at the same time. By critiquing, historicising and understanding the system as it is operating, we are then able to build knowledge(s) from the global south, cosmologies and indigenous knowledge systems from traditional African, South American, Chinese and Asian contexts and make them speak to our contemporary challenges. Having said that, various theories are introduced by the authors to address the complex topics being addressed. Osman touches on concepts of the subaltern, the feminist and the postcolonial and Sanín-Restrepo unpacks Lefebvre’s idea of ‘heterotopia’ and ‘liminality’ where other ways of seeing, doing, interpreting are made possible.

With her background in Sudan, Osman explores the relationship between cities in developing and emerging economies. The race issue in Sudan is complex and nuanced while there is a lot of tension in a postcolonial context between what is produced locally and what comes to from elsewhere and these tensions are evident in academia and reflected in practice. The most evident tension is around gender and the historical male dominance in

the built environment professions. The issue of identity is key in Sudan; with the Sudanese Revolution in 2018–2019 there were strong calls for Sudan to dissociate itself from the Arab world and connect more strongly with Africa.

Osman argues that there is much that is ‘seen’ and evident, yet also much that is hidden and invisible in our cities and that the built environment can be interpreted in terms of systems of negotiation, transaction, territory, ownership and deal-making – as well as how this negotiation is facilitated (or hindered) by the spatial and structural qualities of the area. She believes that conventional decision-making processes in the built environment mean that those who hold power continue to have more access and agency than those who are stripped of the right to make decisions about their environments. Morado Nascimento also strongly links the concepts of wealth redistribution and decision-making processes.

Osman’s concern with the ‘individual’ and the ‘collective’ is mirrored by Morado Nascimento’s reflections on how the individual ‘agent’, and all the forces that shape the ‘agent’ are ‘inserted within a collective history’. Morado Nascimento relies on two theories: Pierre Bourdieu’s (1989, 2009) *theory of practical action* and Sanín-Restrepo’s (2016, 2020) *theory of encryption of power*. Osman borrows from diverse sources, deliberately crossing between disciplines in attempting to interpret and offer guidelines for an alternative practice in cities that is more equitable and inclusionary. Yet, Morado Nascimento (2020) contends that:

[A]ccess to the right to housing and to the city is impossible insofar as the decision-making processes are carried out in forums, bodies, instruments and channels that have rules, protocols, rites, norms, processes and visible acts, but are in no way intelligible or democratic. (n.p.)

What is implied by the term the ‘hidden people’ in Sanín-Restrepo’s essay is referred to as the ‘unheard, marginalised and excluded’ in Osman’s essay. Sanín-Restrepo declares that the

hidden people refute any kind of totality (as a way of counting who is included); it is about intensity (infinite difference becoming from itself, the opening into the marginalised). According to Sanín-Restrepo, difference, and thus authentic existence, has always been in the side of the marginalised and that oppression has been a sheer 'simulacrum'; the author cautions against 'false inclusion', explaining that the problem of oppression cannot be overstepped or ignored, nor can the resultant dimensions of our reality in racial, national, colonial and urban terms. Sanín-Restrepo states that core of the theory of encryption builds a strong ethical and ontological constitution of the marginalised as the 'hidden people'.

All four authors contend with the issue of inclusive urbanism and, in one way or the other, attempt to address an ecosystem of policy, actors and legal frameworks that could be considered to combat the reproduction of disadvantage and exclusion. The economic and institutional logic that has led to disposition and dehumanising of populations is therefore interrogated, unpacked, exposed – and in the process alternatives are suggested in terms of practice and policies.

Decrypting the city: The global process of urbanisation as the core of capitalism, coloniality and the destruction of democratic politics of our times

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■ Introduction: Theory of encryption of power between the city and the urban

The purpose of the chapter is to position the ‘theory of encryption of power’ as a hinge between the city and the concept of the urban in order to prove that ‘urbanisation’ is the fundamental force field of the political as noted over the last 200 years. The relation between urbanisation, on one hand, and capital expansion and the systematic destruction of democracy, on the other, is not accidental or secondary, but primordial and constitutive. We cannot understand power and its makings without understanding the process of urbanisation. Here, the concept of absorption of surplus value plays a key role. Insofar, it will be shown why ‘decrypting’ the urban is the most urgent and necessary task of any theoretical apparatus whose main concern is not only to give a sufficient account of power and its (social, economic, political and cultural) ramifications, but to attain the very possibility of a democratic society. In a last move, a composition of the agency of the subject that is ontologically proper to our thesis of urbanisation will be described and put into motion. We propose that this new subject is the ‘hidden people’ and its agency is the ‘decryption of power’.

Once I accepted the challenge to apply the theory of encryption of power to the urban (the city as a built-in environment), I was overcome with the realisation that I was way out of my safe space, that I had no grounded expertise in the topic. Of all my theoretical work, none was centrally devoted to the city. I have not completely overcome this feeling but now it drives me somewhere else, to another ground of my intellectual environment where my consciousness is more sharply aware of the need to build bridges in and out of this apparent citadel called encryption of power.

Before we define encryption rigorously below, let us think of it initially as the organised and concealed violence designed to neutralise, if not destroy democracy in its own name and thus to simulate the true dimensions of the world.

As I activated my intellectual memory and combed through the theory of encryption to extract its most relevant features something hit me like lightning; I had always thought from the angle of the city and through the city. As Monsieur Jourdain stated: ‘I’ve been speaking in the prose of the urban without knowing it’. Not that my theories embraced the city as a direct object, but that every object it had embraced was permeated and defined by the urban. Everything my theory pierced through was, ‘a state of the urban’. In other words, the urban was a central, though misty, defining element of all the compounds of the theory. No element of the theory could be disconnected from the urban. Insofar, the main conceptual artefacts of the theory such as ‘simulacrum’, ‘the hidden people’, ‘radical democracy’ and the very core composition of the meaning of encryption of power could not breathe outside the waters of the urban, they were signed and limited by it. What was left to determine was the degree of intensity through which the urban determined the theory of encryption and vice versa. It is not that I am exposing a dichotomy of the theory, as if the theory would starve of oxygen in other arbitrarily defined places such as the nation state, the suburban or the rural but that these latter categories cannot be understood (pictured or imagined) outside the urban either, they have become an unavoidable aspect of urbanisation. Moreover, be it in the materiality of the urban as a decision-making centre and thus as the place of exclusion and exploitation watered down to the utmost political utopia of equality or as the dark hands that pull the ropes of the dialectic between the town and country creating a suburban monster; the city is at the forefront of the fashioning of the central political categories of our time.

■ Hypothesis: Decrypting the urban towards a democratic society

At this point we are forced into a clarification of a hypothesis that we will develop throughout the article. Beyond conventionalities,¹

1. See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/densurb/Defintion_of%20Urban.pdf.

there is a defining difference between the city and the urban. Or, better yet, between the city and the process of urbanisation and urbanisation as the condition of capital. The city is a geographical organisation, a material entity delimited juridically, an administrative limit in space that engulfs a society within a political habitat. The urban is not a defined object but an all-encompassing tendency, a dispositional category, a countermovement from the nation state and the primordial tactic of capital and coloniality that defines the world in the approximately last 200 years as it becomes the very condition of capital. Our thesis is that the process of urbanisation is not a collateral effect of the thriving of capitalism and coloniality to encrypt politics denying democracy, but it rather is its axiomatic compound. Hence, as it will become clear, it is the 'global urbanisation process' which any theoretical apparatus, whose main concern is the possibility of a democratic society, must target in order to unearth what is buried below the urban liberal simulacra of legality and human rights.

What is the essential relation between politics and the urban? Is it like the relation of air and whirlwind? Just like the air that is not 'in' the whirlwind, but the whirlwind is a state of the air; so, are politics and the process of urbanisation essentially becoming one! How far down the road may we advance a thesis that everything that is political is essentially urban? Not too far, if we do not contour what we mean by one and the other term, and if we do not dislodge the proper meanings of the categories that press their mutual limits such as the nation state, capitalism, potestas, coloniality, network and delimitations of uses and values. Without delimiting this previous and fundamental question we could be left with a vexing and contradictory image of the urban and thus we will begin to paranoidly perceive it in everything that we touch upon.

I therefore propose a simple order. In the first part of this article, I breakdown the meaning of encryption of power. I will then target the relationality of the theory with the urban as a matter of politics and democracy in order to assess if the best possibilities for a democratic society lay in the tenets of the

urban or if, on the contrary, the urban design of our globalised world is built precisely to avert democracy. I will thus address the root of it all, is the urban the quintessential form of encryption of power? As we have made clear, there is a pressing matter for the success of our project, delimiting the urban as our object of study. To accomplish the latter, I will evaluate and use what I call ‘Lefebvre hypothesis’². The hypothesis, rejuvenated recently by David Harvey, states that to fully understand the dimensions of our contemporary global political, economic and social order we must do so through the ebullitions of capital as a staple of the urban. That is, the urban and capitalism not only tick at the same rhythm but the latter is incomprehensible without the former. The urban is the heart of capital; and the political (encompassing also the social and the economical) is incomprehensible in lack of this relation. Once the object is delimited properly, I will progress to apply the theory of encryption of power to the urban and hypothesise not only how to decrypt power in the urban, but how a decrypted city would be like and what it would mean to a global political system. The main focus of the aforementioned is to construct a solid concept of the subjectivity that is produced by the urbanisation process. I will thus describe the composition and the agency of the subject that is ontologically proper to our thesis of urbanisation as the core of the political. We will then arrive at another theoretical relay; the urban is the pressed knot of any political meaning of our day. Hence, the principle is to establish if decrypting the urban would lead to a domino effect of decryption of the nation state and of the global thereof.

■ Definition of encryption²

In its most simple textual definition, encryption is the hiding of a message in plain sight. The encrypted text presents itself before our eyes through an ordinary medium, an objectivity which is open and malleable. Yet, we cannot decode the meanings of the

2. For a complete account see Sanín-Restrepo (2016, 2018).

symbols that are inscribed in it as they are abstruse and elude our understanding (Sanín-Restrepo 2018). The message is intended to be understood (decrypted) by someone else who possesses either the same knowledge of the encryptor, or at least holds the codes to decrypt the message. In architectural terms, the crypt conceals a dead body while being a site of reverence to it. The body becomes sublimed in stone as a representation of a soul that is elusive as it is itself only a representation of a cadaver that lays hidden. The body is a nonfunctional object, a no-object ('present at hand' in Heidegger's terminology³) that gets enshrined through an artifact that stands in its place as a symbol (a 'ready-to-hand'). The crypt is always void of content other than being a chain of representations that ends in a pulp quasi-object, a division of life and death. 'Dust to dust' gets inflated into a temple and solidified in a representation of archetypes. The body does not speak, the crypt speaks for it; the crypt represents the libidinal link of adoration. Representation, adoration and hiddenness mark the architectural appraisal of the crypt.

The theory of the encryption of power fully engages and traverses these categories; they are, to say the least, the etymological cornerstone of the theory. However, the theory finds something deeper and more permanent. When the 'theory of encryption of power' takes its footing as a conceptual weapon appropriate to political philosophy and spreads as a form of understanding the phenomena of power in our contemporary world crisis; it unveils something unique. The orders of globalisation through the hegemony of capitalism based on coloniality exist as a whole because they produce a specific form of power; a form of power that has only existed within these networks, within this history. And here is the bottom line, the said form of power is encryption. These forms of domination exist only because they encrypt. The theory of encryption of power is thus not (only) a strategy or a tool to approximate and clarify the entanglements of power in our times, but rather, it unveils the

3. See Heidegger (2001).

essence of power (as domination) of our time. Power as *potestas* (as domination) depends uniquely in its capacity to encrypt itself and the world it defines as a stringent and unchangeable totality.

■ Elements of the encryption of power

That what we see, that what we think, build and destroy in time and space; that way we live, love, suffer, struggle, prevail, fade and die and live again; be it material or immaterial, made out of intensity or extensity, virtuality or reality, in short everything that can exist and communicate its difference, we call *the world*. It is a world only when it is made up of all the differences that can produce and communicate difference. Insofar, power is either the exercise of immanent difference or its privation. When power is nested in the privation of difference it is actually domination. A primordial denial of power, a false construct of existence and its potentialities we name *potestas* (Sanín-Restrepo 2016). Any and every denial of difference is thus a denial of the world. This denial produces a simulacrum of the world. Politics is the world that is alive, swarmed and bustling in the conflict bearing all the differences that produce difference. It is not that the question of difference is one of the relevant question of politics, but rather, politics only exists as the question for difference. Difference is always contingent⁴ and dialectical. Any quilting point of it in necessity⁵ is its primal disavowal. Consequently, politics does not raise the question of 'what is the world necessarily made out of', for this could be the question of science or theology, but rather, 'what can the world become through the contingency that is proper to difference'.

4. As Negri states, 'Contingency is the future, it is the indefinite that human praxis as *potentia* integrates into the positive infinity' (Negri 2003:103).

5. As we have clarified before 'Change can be contingent or necessary, or it can be possible or impossible. Contingent refers to what can happen without it being necessary that it happens. Necessary refers to that for which it is impossible not to happen. Impossible is that which cannot, under any circumstance happen' (Sanín-Restrepo 2016:85).

We have established the range of our question, at least a conceptual blueprint of it. We should now be concerned with the 'how's' of potestas and the essentiality of encryption in its most intimate and perplexing operations. What is the key to grasp? That potestas works through a primary violence, that of establishing qualifications or conditions (racial, national, economic, gender based) to belong to the political world. What does it mean? It means that whenever there is a transcendental demand of a certain qualification to belong to the world, we are before the world of potestas (Sanín-Restrepo 2018:xvii). The world of potestas comprises the denial of difference. Said impositions are garnered through a direct submission of difference to hidden transcendental models of unity and identity that control and police the world of difference. Potestas is the negation of power (as difference) through the stratification of the conditions to exercise it. Wherever we are before qualifications in order to belong, we are before hierarchical institutions (private clubs and such) but not before politics, and certainly not democracy. Democracy is the utter lack of qualifications in order to belong to the body politic (Sanín-Restrepo 2016:100). In potestas, and the imposition of models that condition difference, things can only be different between themselves when they are first identical to the model (Sanín-Restrepo 2018:xiv). This is the heart of encryption, but we are yet to establish how encryption is meticulously injected in the bloodstream of politics (Sanín-Restrepo 2016).

In order to shape a complete picture of encryption we need to penetrate into language (the bloodstream of politics). Encryption, as the intentional way of hiding or mystifying the meanings of a symbolic system is a characteristic of any language; that is what allows every language to be rich, elastic, creative and resilient and this is not a fact the theory of encryption disputes (Sanín-Restrepo 2018). Nevertheless, we are before a completely diverse kind of phenomena when we come face-to-face with the 'encryption of power'. So, what is exactly the relation between encryption, language and power that the theory bundles up? In

the encryption of power, we are before three constituting elements. First, a primordial prohibition to access the programming and uses of language (as the first common difference). Second, the said prohibition is accomplished through permanent qualifications and conditions for the exercise of power and therefore a rigid stratification for the belonging of any possible world (Sanín-Restrepo 2018). Thirdly, this is the coagulating element of power in our time, once it prohibits and qualifies, encryption hides and through concealment it transforms the meanings and bearings of politics. Thus, the third operation as a conclusion of the first two, creates a simulated dimension, not only of reality, a simulacrum of democracy, but also of conflict and 'the people' as constituent power. All of these elements are integral components of what the encrypted system proclaims to be, and what it fundamentally excludes. We are thus thrust into a world where a simulated totality of 'the people' stands in the place of a people who are hidden and excluded from politics (Sanín-Restrepo 2018). We are presented a meaning of human rights that are narrowed down to a specific form of a national citizen excluding a great majority from its detailed meaning. Finally, what the encryption of power inhibits is the possibility of communicating meanings that are not defined in advance by a transcendent model, where the political lexicon is hierarchised, and the possibility of its engagement is predetermined and reserved for a few that hold the codes of its uses (Sanín-Restrepo 2016:11). Where there is encryption of language there is hierarchy of beings and objects in the world. Henceforth, reality becomes what the expert at hand (encryptor) predicts reality as (Sanín-Restrepo 2018:xv). As we have held before, what encryption 'guarantees is an absolute hierarchical social and political control over the areas of conflict that are debatable and the empirical and normative bases that can arise in any discourse' (Sanín-Restrepo 2018:xviii). That is why, for the encryption of language, it is fundamental to create the idea of a totality that is previous and superior to any interaction that may emerge. The totality holds within it the design of parts that are integral to it, creating simultaneously the mechanism to calculate every emergence of

possible relations. The fundamental totality of the axis of modernity, capitalism and coloniality is a subject, 'the people'. Encryption is thus the negation of democracy (the order of difference) from the impossibility of politics through the alienation of language that makes the world exist (Sanín-Restrepo 2016:43).

What would 'decryption of power' entail? The fundamental rejection of politics as any finality established by invisible and untouchable models run by elites working on their behalf (or for a smaller unit) through a simulated totality. Hence, the only ontological and therefore ethical condition of politics is that there are absolutely no conditions or qualifications beyond difference to decide what politics means (Sanín-Restrepo 2016:44-45). Because politics can only be considered when every being that makes a difference is considered as the condition of its existence, *with no further qualification*, then it follows that we cannot even name politics when its meaning is not available to be created by all (Sanín-Restrepo 2016:105).

In a decrypted world of democracy no one can anticipate what language (and its ingredients) may do and create and how it may reckon with veracity. Nevertheless, we must be aware that potestas is always a movement to conquer the organisation of language and thus of the objects and their claimant, as well as the meaning involved in every relation. Thus, the first thing to confront is always the simulacra potestas creates. Potestas moves to rule over the nervous system of language, to direct its flows and overshadow difference. The ultimate aim of potestas is to turn every relation into a hierarchical realm, and in doing so to cut off the nervous terminals of difference producing difference through language. For example, capitalism does not need to create new hierarchies, it simply absorbs and reboots old ones through commodification. Think for example how the classic relation teacher-student (master-disciple) is reversed, multiplied and disseminated in many directions as the relation of salesman and client, informatic centre and costumer, indoctrinator and killing machines; the relation itself becomes a vivid unit of production of capital.

Encryption is meant to have an effect (and affect power) but not always sense – it sometimes is destined to create a reaction of disarray, as the encryptor holds grip on the intended meaning until the subject of encryption is subdued into the paralysing webs of language. As we have explained before, encryption intends a reaction of the sort ‘I know what it says, but what does it mean?’ (Sanín-Restrepo 2018:xviii).

■ Elites and encryption

The nucleus of encryption is a dense, compact and hierarchical organisation of every idiom in a cluster of codes, ruled by an elite body of experts. This elite arranges the world through an organisation of qualifications and hierarchies in order to access it. They organise the ethical and aesthetical meaning and sensibility of subjectivity from head to toe. The rise of a technically oriented form of rule of law by experts that extends its tentacles to every kind of knowledge, specifically political economy, is the heart of the system of encryption. The system then conforms to the ideas about encryption as a form of settling definitions and leaving the decision of any debatable term to experts who are not connected in any way to democratic accountability. Such a deed is harvested through the encryption of every code of reality and each of its representations. This elite of experts do their bidding in esoteric and unintelligible languages and claim to hold the solutions to the crises of the world. What they truly hold is the capacity to produce, mystify and conceal crises which they themselves produced. Encryption, through spectacle or fear is the monger that sells the illness and its perpetuation in the form of a remedy. When we come to terms with a supposed reality all we can fathom is a noise, a fury that can only be appeased by the same elite that created it in the first place. Encryption is not the cover of an atrophic system, one that runs on some kind of obscene moral fuel. Rather, encryption ensures the frictionless sway of the system, it secures that unprecedented scales of dispossession, exclusion and exploitation are all executed silently in the name of democracy and human rights.

This is the world of ascending forms of communication that trap the internal as well as the external energies of humanity within an impenetrable crypt. The main point is that the system regurgitates its own encryption. The release of language, knowledge and human energies is up for ransom. Not only is the use of the correct forms of language necessary, but most importantly, that we buy into the very forms of systems of reception, ordering and hierarchisation of language that encryption creates (Sanín-Restrepo 2018). It would make no sense if the circle would not come full round. We have to buy back the language we create as a commodity and in adoration to it. Therefore, what we create as a horizontal ‘social brain’,⁶ including all forms of art and knowledge, are confiscated and held for ransom by the encrypted system. What we create as a robust and endless commonality is sold back to us as slender forms of life, massive forms of the law and impossible images of desire.

If language, which is the first common form of communication is encrypted, what would decryption entail? Certainly not to descend upon a secret chamber to unveil the true meaning of language as if it lay there in a pure uncontaminated state. There is no central design of language, or a DNA informatic sequence that we must untangle and in doing so we recover an original language (Sanín-Restrepo 2018). Thinking of decryption in this manner is simply thinking of encryption in another. We liberate the capacity to use language through its revolutionary practice. As we have stated before (Sanín-Restrepo 2018):

Decryption is not about honing out the true meaning out of a proposition controlled by a given context, but finding out how that given context, that ‘language game’, was built through a primordial exclusion of difference. (p. xx)

6. Marx only names the ‘social brain’ once in the *Grundrisse* but it is a fundamental concept in his work. We cannot develop the idea here fully. It suffices to say that for Marx, the social brain is the accumulation of all human knowledge in the capitalist system of machines, as well as the element that turns fixed capital into the heart of the system. For Marx, liberating the social brain from capitalist control is equivalent to overthrowing the capitalist monopoly on knowledge (See Marx [1857] 2015) (For clarifications in the topic see Virno 2004).

Hence, decryption is fixed in liberating the production of language, in clearing hierarchies for its programming and abolishing qualifications for its use. The philosophical bones of decryption are laid out to bring flesh to politics as the place where meaning is yet to be decided, and where there is no final decision upon any final meaning.

■ A decrypted delimitation of the city and the urban

The delimitation of the city and the urban plays a crucial role if we are to use its theoretical skeleton to create a whole habitat of political meaning. As Harvey explains ‘The term “city” has an iconic and symbolic history that is deeply embedded in the pursuit of political meanings’ (Harvey 2012:xvi). The Geek *Polis* as the mythological fulcrum of politics is a ghost that drags its chains and dreams to our convoluted times leaving traces here and there. It is still the object of desire and imposition, but hardly a solid reference point for the histories it howls out from its past. Our modern urban concept is a pivot between hard structures such as the nation state and globalisation and vanishing points such as the citizen, the people and the market. Is there something peculiar in the urban that can bring a unifying meaning to all these densities? We believe there is. The urban is the mechanism of production and the very threshold of the major political shifts of the last 200 or so years. Without a compounded meaning of the urban all these complexities would wither away in their own unintelligible compositions.

As Araujo (2018) explains:

Perhaps the city is the most effective cartography to understand the deep transformations that the processes of globalization bring about. During all these years the social, political, legal and economic relations in the urban spaces became much more complex and less and less dependent on the sovereign political power of nation states. (p. 528; author’s translation)⁷

7. The original is in Spanish.

In the world of artificial intelligence and transnational financial capital, the urban is both a spiralling material cultural setup and a virtual intensity that is almost impossible to quantify. The material wealth that a city like London creates is buttressed in immaterial relations that cause wave shocks in the entirety of the global system. A computer click of a middle of the ladder investment banker deciding on the market trends in 'The City' of London can send thousands of people, living on the other side of the world, into forced migration, destroying biomes and pushing its life to the brink of extinction. Think of these statistical nuggets: based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Sao Paulo's economy is bigger than the economy of the whole country of Argentina.⁸ If it was a nation, Tokyo's economy would rank as the 15th largest economy in the world,⁹ being bigger than 47 of the states in the United States.¹⁰ By 2100 Lagos, Nigeria, is expected to harbour a greater population than Great Britain.¹¹

Old fashioned land grabbing, oppression, colonisation and cutthroat industrial processes were guided by the hand of the nation state and created the urban phenomenon as a collateral effect. Nevertheless, financialisation, high-risk investment schemes, coloniality (as opposed to colonialism¹²) and exploitation depend

8. See [https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2019/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=22&pr.y=2&sy=2018&ey=2024&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=213&s=NGDPD%2CPPPGD%2CNGDPDPC%2CPPPPC%2CLP&grp=0&a=.](https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2019/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=22&pr.y=2&sy=2018&ey=2024&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=213&s=NGDPD%2CPPPGD%2CNGDPDPC%2CPPPPC%2CLP&grp=0&a=)

9. See [https://www.citylab.com/life/2017/03/the-economic-power-of-global-cities-compared-to-nations/519294/.](https://www.citylab.com/life/2017/03/the-economic-power-of-global-cities-compared-to-nations/519294/)

10. See http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/economia/pibmunicipios/2011/default_pdf.shtm.

11. See <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/mar/19/urban-explosion-kinshasa-el-alto-growth-mexico-city-bangalore-lagos>.

12. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes the latter an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and the production of knowledge well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breath coloniality all the time and every day (see Maldonado-Torres 2007:243).

and thrive on processes of urbanisation. In other words, although the urban is a historical creation of colonialism and the nation state, it now creates a self-propelled world, an autonomous realm of political and economic reality. Our contemporary cities are at the same time sweatshops, slums, sanctuaries, amusement parks, condensed social brains, factories and decision-making centres that are gentrified and gentrify the world. The city is a manifold entity and as such it demands a manifold theory to harness it.

In bygone times we could regard the city more as a place of oppression while dispossession took place elsewhere. But now oppression must be transformed, not only into dispossession but exploitation. The city is not only the place to accomplish this transformation but the place from where it is organised and directed. In the alliance of capitalist market and the law of the nation state, the city has become a decision-making apparatus of its own. The end game is that the city also becomes a factory of ideology. The city, as the place for financialisation, securitisation, casino capitalism and heinous gentrification has an ideological umbilical cord with capital dispossession and its policing, entrusted typically to the nation state. Insofar, claims, demands and outright revolutionary struggle get encrypted and disarmed as the city turns to the simulacrum of spectacle or the violence of the concentration camp in order to contain them and wrap them up in encrypted impenetrable forms. The city has thus become the centre for depoliticisation.

All the aforementioned beg the question: What is the most precise system of representation of the city? The most accurate? A legal-like satellite picture lets us see the grey area, but it deprives us of detail and intricacy. A political model invested in administration is arid when considering the outwards complexity that the city produces. A 3D model (social or geographical) that tries to capture every small fluctuation supposes a transcendent decision of what counts, and this, as we saw is the root of encryption.¹³ We must then let the urban create its own

13. For a similar conclusion regarding horizontal systems of representation see Bruno Latour's oeuvre, specifically (Latour 2016).

configuration, for it is before all, an open-ended intense system of signification. The delimitation of the urban we propose is then based on the encryption of power. Our choice is not arbitrary, it seeped naturally, as it is in the urban where the relation between the fundamental collective power, the fundamental collective right and the fundamental denial of the world comes to its full operativity.

A brief history of the city¹⁴ demonstrates that the neoliberal city, beginning in urbanisation in the liberal industrial city, tends to one thing alone, the encryption of the people, through the depolarisation of every possible relation. The urban today, as a cumulus of *sans papiers*, streams of migration, frontiers of exclusion and exclusion etc. shows us that capitalist growth is equivalent to savage urbanisation. It shows us that the planet is becoming a slum with inequality rates never recorded before.¹⁵ All resources, be it natural or technological are created (named, branded, commodified) and sold within the urban landscape. They are all politically defined in and by the city.

Here we are met with the taxing question of the simulacrum. The city today is a social brain that accumulates and consumes the commons. Even though it may be proved that the commons do not diminish by use; on the contrary, they become more fertile and productive in commonalities (Hardt & Negri 2009; Ostrom 2012), the city is the place where this truth is encrypted.

Harvey (2012) suggests a main question:

Is the city (or a system of cities) merely a passive site (or pre-existing network) – the place of appearance-where deeper currents of political struggle are expressed? (...) Or is there something about the urban process and the urban experience, the qualities of daily urban life-under capitalism that, in itself, has the potential to ground anti-capitalist struggles? (pp. 117, 120)

14. See Rolnik (2019), Araujo (2018), and Harvey (2012) for sharp and concrete accounts of this particular history.

15. See <https://www.oxfam.org/en/even-it/5-shocking-facts-about-extreme-global-inequality-and-how-even-it-davos>.

The answer, from our decrypting perspective is that decryption is the means, as a dialectic of difference, to supersede the simulacrum of democratic liberalism that lives and breathes through the urban.

■ Lefebvre's hypothesis

What I have called Lefebvre's (2000) hypothesis, updated by David Harvey, can be delimited as following:

Since the rise of empires and colonization the nation state has been the epicenter of every normative status. As we have just remarked the product of the clockwork of nation states has created the urban as a novel and powerful place of power. It is not that the nation state has lost its violent glitter, but that globalization depends evermore of urban concentrations in order to carry out its foul designs. It is in between the nation state and the city where the working class is fractured and dispersed within the political fabric. It is where democracy is disenfranchised as the urban presents the possibility of gathering large populations in want and need and submit them to the iron rules of the capitalist market. In Lefebvre's words 'the proletariat, itself divided into strata, partial groups, various tendencies, according to industrial sectors and local and national traditions'. (p. 74)

The urban is the melting pot of every political contradiction. In no other place (virtual or extensive) than the urban is the contradiction between the possibility of an equalitarian society and the thrust of private property so acute. As put by Lefebvre, 'It is around the resolution of this crucial problem that we should mobilise, while urbanisation continues to extend worldwide' (Lefebvre 2000:211). Or, more recently, in the words of Rolnik (2019):

In the last 250 years of the history of the social relationship between humanity and the territory, a specific form of use and right over land - the individual private property - became hegemonic. (p. 150)

Lefebvre's definition of the city as a 'projection of society on the ground' (Lefebvre 2000:109), involves the fact that whatever geographies we are to choose, the urban is where the social, as a

whole, gets inscribed within cultural codes and modes of production. The relation reaches its boiling point as we recognise that there is no more effective and brutal way to achieve capital accumulation than through urbanisation. This is a defining factor to establish the urban as the very limit of the political. In Harvey's words: 'Urbanization, ... has been a key means for the absorption of capital and labor surpluses throughout capitalism's history' (Harvey 2012:42).

The relation of the urban and capitalism has left the accidental far behind and has reached a state of true symbiosis. Capitalism requires the perpetual creation of surplus value (Harvey 2012):

[B]ut to produce surplus value capitalists have to produce a surplus product. This means that capitalism is perpetually producing the surplus product that urbanization requires. The reverse relation also holds. Capitalism needs urbanization to absorb the surplus products it perpetually produces. (p. 5)

Since the emergence of enormous industrial cities in Europe and the United States of America in the late 19th century, the need to expand the urban is germane to the process of surplus exploitation. As Harvey sharply observes: 'The reproduction of capital passes through processes of urbanization in myriad ways. But the urbanization of capital presupposes the capacity of capitalist class powers to dominate the urban process' (Harvey 2012:66). We are thus before the fundamental inner connection between capitalism and urbanisation.¹⁶ Nevertheless, we will supplement this hypothesis with encryption, reading the city as the zero-sum game of the simulated democracy that capitalism has effectively created.

16. In the words of David Harvey: 'Contemporaneously with the latter period, the bonuses on Wall Street and the earnings in the mortgage-initiating industry were soaring, with unheard-of profit rates from pure financial manipulations, particularly those associated with the securitization of high-cost but risky mortgages. The inference is that, by various hidden channels, massive transfers of wealth from the poor to the rich were occurring, beyond those since documented in the plainly shady and often illegal practices of mortgage companies like Countrywide, through financial manipulations in housing markets' (Harvey 2012:54).

The permanent symbiotic feedback between the city and capital imposes the need to regard the city as a new mega-factory. The city emerges not as 'fixed capital' that crops assets but a new kind of production engine that creates every social, normative and aesthetic relation through the primal hunger of the market to create surplus value. This is the fundamental form of encryption. Every creation of regions of dispossession, of zones of leisure, of locust style tourism and heavy-duty investment in the arts and therefore, every sensibility they create, obey the single thrive of surplus creation and absorption. In order to achieve this, the city must be utterly encrypted. That is, hierarchies must be strictly maintained, democracy must be simulated and difference annihilated in its own name. Nevertheless, if encryption is the fundamental condition to keeping surplus value as the heart of capitalism, then decryption is the key for every anti-capitalist struggle towards a democratic and thus egalitarian society. The city is not simply a place favoured for dispossession, but the perfect site for it; if this is so, then it is also the site of resistance and revolution.

■ **The suburban beast or how everything is urban**

Every geography of power is pinned down to reality by the thrust of urbanisation. As we remarked before, urbanisation is the global tendency of capital that defines every element of power in our times. Hence, the suburban as well as the melancholia for the rural and the moral fantasy of the small town are all drawn into the forcefield of the urban and are defined by its hand. The construction of a thick suburban web in the United States responded to the need to clear the passage for more aggressive and at the same time self-sustained appropriation of surplus value and rent monopolisation. Harvey (2012) comments:

Suburbanization (alongside militarization) thus played a critical role in helping to absorb the surplus in the post-war years (... and as Binyamin Appelbaum (writes), Americans recover from recessions by building more homes and filling them with things. (pp. 9, 50)

Suburbanisation is yet one more, poisoned gift of the United States to the world. From the hills of Bogotá, the swamplands in the Paraná River, to the highlands in Nairobi, the suburban devouring machine mows down nature, displaces millions of people as it builds the gated arcadia for capital accumulation producing fathomless economic gaps in the human fabric. Surplus value found in suburbanisation the most dynamic form of circling down the economy with ideology while recycling its own productivity. The suburb is the perfect way to marry roads, widespread construction, fossil fuel dependency and a completely domesticated political subject. The modern suburb is a monumental sponge built to absorb surplus value and to create every condition for exploitation and encryption of power.

The design of space of the burbs has one fundamental objective, to encrypt social relations and depoliticise any potentiality of agency. The shopping mall not only replaces the church but every single political conflictual space. It is the temple of ecstasy, and bewilderment. As an aesthetic place, it dulls the senses, as imagination is transplanted and represented in the shopping window. Order, the ambitioned order of rationality and social cleansing hovers in the apparent logic of the planning, in the delicate geometrical forms that occlude difference, while trying to fool death and its mistresses.

The suburban monster is urbanisation at its higher degree of encryption. The American pastoral is renewed once and again in a memoryless loop of ideology and consumption. The suburbs have no centre, it is all dispersed and made to disperse, to tantalise and anesthetise. There are no public squares or coffee shops where people share ideas, bemoan life and plot revolts. It is the space of the alienated individual and only of disconnected individuals. Everything in the burbs is in transit, fleeting and melting away in endless parking lots. It is the shrine of private property that will be defended tooth and nail against the decay of the city. Swarms of migrants are acceptable, as long as they are out of the picture, as long as they always wear their nametags visibly. As long as their head is down polishing and keeping alive

this massive infrastructure. To maintain the system running at full steam, coloniality outsources wars and depredation elsewhere. When the system goes up in flames it is reconstructed sucking the life out of the precariat. As Harvey observes, the exploitation 'of their labor and the dispossession of their meager assets constitutes a perpetual drain upon their capacity to sustain minimally adequate conditions of social reproduction' (Harvey 2012:57). This is the cycle of life of capital. When capitalism saturates a given space it climbs over the same space and redefines the bodies, breaking them up into packages of information and exchange value, gentrification, debt peonage etc. The suburban heart beats healthy as long as the rest of the urbanisation process depends on extracting the life out the hidden people. As Lefebvre states 'moreover, the city, as workshop, allows the concentration over a limited space of the means of production: tools, raw materials, labour' (Lefebvre 2000:69).

The suburb is deeply connected to Judeo-Christianism. It behests the ideology of the promise land, of making it, of deserving it, of buying a piece of sub-prime mortgage heaven. It is also where the mediation between the religious tension of pure vernacular dreams of the country and the immorality of the sin-cities of industrialisation are solved in a lukewarm ideology of survival through the merit of private property. The latter accomplishes the miracle of defending whiteness and masculinity without ever engaging in true political conflict. The burbs show the direct indivisible line between ideology, exploitation and surplus absorption in one swift encrypting movement. Glutton consumerism in the burbs requires that what is produced must be produced cheaply (favourably in outsourced sweatshops) in places where the stench of misery cannot reach the suburban idleness. The burbs are thus not only lines of distribution and production, but ideological lines as well. In literature, from Alice Sebold, John Updike, John Cheever, William Inge to JG Ballard, in cinema Sofia Coppola and David Lynch and in music especially 'grunge' music, all captured the brutish duality of the suburbs, its

dividing waters of alienation and indifference, of violence and concealment. Underneath the harmony of the picket fences and the green lawns that smell like god's armpit there hides a paralysing ennui, a beast of mediocrity prying on imagination and discontent. In the froth of wellness, a parasitical economy of destruction, lying and greed is brewed. In the Rockwellian portrait of the shiny family there lurks the degeneration of every soul, the celebration of war and death abroad.

■ **The hidden people as the political agent of the urban**

What were solid relationships in colonialism, such as master and slave, man and woman, state and citizen, metropolis and colony; became ineradicably intricate and manifold relations in the urban polity. Henceforth, if something structural has been transformed into something highly movable we must seek a new theoretical niche to explain it. Insofar, we must ask, is there a common denominator in the urbanisation processes that run across Sao Paulo, Mumbai or NYC and the ways they configure global capital and the political? We propose that the common denominator, through which we can solve the urban enigma, is the encryption of power. The urban remains evasive when we try to capture its relationship with highly movable political subjects such as migrants. But if we connect all these steadfast networks with the concept of encryption, we do not only stabilise the image, but move decidedly forth into a theory of the urban that is politically sound.

Let us then analyse the political subject and agency that are proper to the urban under the firm guidance of the theory of encryption of power. Let us take our queue at how class struggle must be redefined from within the urban. It is in the urban where the new knot of politics rests; it is the knot that holds and balances the nation state and the capitalist market together. The said knot is what gives fluidity to the market and conceals the forms of oppression of liberalism. Insofar, untying (decrypting) the knot

that holds it all together we will liberate politics as the question for the world through the production of differences.

Perceiving the novelty of the urban and the need to restructure agency, David Harvey insists we focus of the city and the precariat instead of the factory and the proletariat (Harvey 2012:136¹⁷).

As Harvey (2012) comments on Lefebvre's thesis:

In invoking the 'working class' as the agent of revolutionary change throughout his text, Lefebvre was tacitly suggesting that the revolutionary working class was constituted out of urban rather than exclusively factory workers. This, as he observed, is a very different kind of class formation-fragmented and divided, multiple in its aims and needs, more often itinerant, disorganized and fluid rather than solidly implanted. (p. XIII)

We take both Lefebvre's and Harvey's preoccupation that something completely new arises out of the urban, something that forces every theory to reconceptualise agency and structure. As we are proving, the proletariat is a rigid subjectivity that has been long left behind by the capacity of a system to create and encrypt new versatile relations of power. These new relations have piecemeal altered every form of production of political and social subjectivities.

In order to reveal the true nature of the encryption of power that the urban propels, we need a new construction of subjectivities and agency. We propose that this new subject is the 'hidden people' and its agency is the 'decryption of power'. Let us then describe what is meant as the 'hidden people' a core of the theory of encryption of power.

The word 'people' is ambivalent, highly volatile and the nucleus of political meaning of our time. Modern liberalism as well as the networks of global dispossession are unthinkable without it. It is

17. As he develops his idea further 'The so-called "precariat" has displaced the traditional "proletariat": How such disparate groups may become self-organized into a revolutionary force is the big political problem. And part of the task is to understand the origins and nature of their cries and demands' (Harvey 2012:XIV).

because there is a central concept of a people as the holders of sovereignty on whose will and dignity all legitimacy rests, that every milligram of power is exercised in our times of coloniality. The people are the fundamental 'simulacrum' of power and democracy that allows that every act of carnage be invisible to our tools of sight and recording of history while, at the same time, it guarantees that they be executed in its name. Every violence against a people is exercised in the name of the people. Giorgio Agamben (1998:221) warns us of its double nature, created and exploited by Western modernity. On the one hand, the people exist as a 'totality' that refers to compact and finalised political bodies, the complete integration of free and sovereign citizens, the proverbial 'we the people'. Nevertheless, this apparent uniform totality is split in the middle. The totality of the people is the transmission belt that allows the differentiation of free citizens (French white nationals, for example) and 'lower' forms of peoples (black and brown, feminine migrants, for example). Thus, any totality of the people is truly a synecdoche. A slim and regulated part of humans take the place of an infinite entity in order to encrypt it. Opposed to the simulated totality that partake in the feast of liberal rights and constitutions we find the beings that do not count, the marginalised and condemned, the naked life, Agamben's *Homo Sacer* or Ranciere 'the part of nowhere' (Agamben 1998; Ranciere 2001). Now, at the crosshairs of this apparent ambivalence is the fact that the people as a totality can only exist and unfold, *if and only if*, it maintains that other zone of the people, hid and permanently submitted to death. Being the unrepresentable excess of the liberal democracies, 'the hidden people have to be falsely included to give consistency to the fantasy of totality' (Sanín-Restrepo 2016:44). The hidden people are therefore, both the exclusion of the system and its symbolisation.

The urban is then at a triple crossroad. First it is the site of the constitution of citizenship (Araujo 2018; Balibar 2014). Second it is the machine that pulverises the people into atomic and uncommunicable particles, pitting the national proletariat against

the migrant, for example. And, finally it is the locus of the constitution of dead labour and civility; in other words, the locus of the simulacrum of democracy. Insofar, its political subject, the hidden people, is a monstrous being (quasi citizen, quasi people, quasi proletariat) that moves in and out of the entrails of the legality and aesthetics of the city.

Connecting the complexity of the urban to encryption of power and the hidden people does not only accrue a tactical advantage, it is much more than this, the advantage is ontological precision. Let us summarise. There is only world when the world is the product of every being that produces difference. Power as potestas is the denial of the world through encryption. What potestas encrypts is the potentiality of the hidden people to become a people (a full functional political subject). Capitalist domination depends fully on the urban as the perfect space to extract and absorb surplus value. The latter unites capitalism and politics in one compact zone of meaning that creates a completely novel political realm and hence a new political subjectivity. Consequently, the urban is the hard-pressed knot, the very core of the encryption of politics. Although the hidden people transit within diverse geographies of power (nation state, globality, the urban) we are proving that the tight knot of encryption lies specifically in the urban. Hereafter, the composition of the hidden people encompasses the complexity of this new political subject, giving it meaning and directionality. We could only be before a real world of difference when every entity that produces difference accounts for the world. Hence, only when the hidden people erase the false totality of the simulacrum of the totality of the people could we talk about a world. In this sense, the systematic extraction of surplus value from the hidden people is nothing but encryption, nothing but a simulacrum of the political. Decrypting this situation would produce a world where only difference counts as the world. When the urban, as the perfect site of encryption, is decrypted through the hidden people, the world becomes possible for politics again. The decryption of the urban as the core of the political creates an expansive wave that

shocks the very fabric of capital and the nation state as the irretrievable loci of potestas.

Furthermore, decryption is the opening up of contingency. Contingency is the possibility of the new from a space that power as potestas cannot anticipate. Here we turn to Lefebvre's idea of 'heterotopia', as Harvey (2012) explains:

Heterotopia (...) delineates liminal social spaces of possibility where 'something different' is not only possible, but foundational for the defining of revolutionary trajectories. Lefebvre's theory of a revolutionary movement is the other way round: the spontaneous coming together in a moment of 'irruption'; when disparate heterotopic groups suddenly see, if only for a fleeting moment, the possibilities of collective action to create something radically different. (p. XVII)

Paraphrasing Wittgenstein,¹⁸ when our subject is the hidden people and our agency is decryption, we are able to condense a whole cloud of scattered and apparently contradictory subjects into a cloud of agency. The diffuse urban subject, broken up in verbs, nouns and adjectives come together in the hidden people. Migrants, the precariat, city workers, resistance, the disaffected, domestication of gender relations, racial struggles and the lot, fit into the hidden people. Furthermore, the hidden people give all these baseline struggles political meaning and ontological unity. There is no hierarchy among them, but interconnecting, transversal and functional synergies in resistance and in a common struggle for democracy.

The math is very simple, if capitalism subdues and determines every relation of difference and of production, then it is absolutely logical that everyone immersed in it, is a potential part of the hidden people (capitalism works around some stable tenets but shuffles them around: race, gender, nationality etc.). The concept

18. In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein writes 'A whole cloud of philosophy condensed into a drop of grammar' (Wittgenstein 1986:223).

of the hidden people creates a political actor with all the power to engage and create connections with other parts of the excluded and exploited. It franchises the proletariat? and the lumpen proletariat in one organisation of political fluidity, without losing footing as a power to transform reality into something utterly different, always becoming within the possibility of being anew.

Learning to speak? Of transformation, race and the colonialities of architecture

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■ Introduction: Architecture's (post) colonial politics

Consider how difficult it is to tell the truth about oneself – the unpleasant truth; to admit that one is petty, vain, mean, frustrated, tortured, unfaithful, and unsuccessful. The nineteenth-century writers never told that kind of truth, and that is why so much of the

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nineteenth-century writing is worthless; why, for all their genius, Dickens and Thackeray seem so often to write about dolls and puppets, not about full-grown men and women; why they are forced to evade the main themes and make do with diversions instead. If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people. As the nineteenth century wore on, the writers knew that they were crippling themselves, diminishing their material, falsifying their object. (Woolf 1966:177)

‘Politics’, recalled Schlapobersky, Chipkin and Paine (1994:17), went the barrage of interruptions and cries when architecture’s complicity with apartheid was confronted by a proposed resolution by the Architects Against Apartheid (AAP) at a Special General Meeting convened by the Transvaal Provincial Institute in Johannesburg in 1986. Many decades later still, for whatever reasons, such efforts to dissociate a discipline and its agents from being directly implicated in the social field in which they exist have not abated. Some writers have begun shedding more light on how deeply and inseparably imbricated the built environment disciplines have been, and remain, in their long historical construction as colonial, imperial and ‘western’-centric formations. While some employ traditional disciplinary tools like physical space and form in their analysis (e.g. Peters 2004), others attempt to extend the analysis to employ critical tools from other disciplines (e.g. Demissie 2004; Hickel 2014; Toffa 2019). I would contend that, for a variety of reasons, the depth and breadth of this embeddedness, far from being ‘old hat’ to ‘leave in the past’ and ‘move on’ from, still remains thinly engaged and poorly understood within built environment disciplines at large. Consequently, they remain open to being endlessly perpetuated in old forms or adapted into new ones. Hence, I attempt in this chapter to chart a map of key aspects of architectural discourse in South Africa, some of the forces that shape and reproduce them, as well as some of the consequences thereof. This is undertaken – I must stress – *not* as a historical exercise, but as an explication of *contemporary* architectural thought, praxis and social and institutional structures.

Contemporary narratives of South African history typically tell of a story of struggle toward ‘freedom’, ‘liberation’ and ‘democracy’.¹ Its pivot point is usually the first democratic elections that took place in 1994, famously ushering in a government of national unity between the major political parties under President Nelson Mandela. However, as a formal breaking with the era of colonial, imperial and minority rule, this was a relatively late phenomenon from both a global and continental perspective, as most ‘independent’ nation states already formed across the African continent decades earlier. As both the oldest and last significant colonial and imperial player on the continent, up to the very last decade of the 20th century (with apartheid considered a form of late colonialism), one might expect that this has inevitably and deeply shaped its disciplinary formations in the built environment. However, it would not be the difficult work of confronting and reforming these structures that would be the focus of postcolonial disciplinary attention. Rather, the euphoria that surrounded the 1994 election and the liberal multicultural politics and discursive formations of the Mandela era, as well as the avoidance of virtually all topics of discomfort which these discourses allowed for, would become the foundations of virtually all subsequent disciplinary self-definition. Such discourses have remained foundational premises within the built environment, even though before long they soon became increasingly discredited as ‘rainbowism’² in society at large.

As particular historically and socially located configurations of thought, praxis and institution, how then could we speak of the built environment as disciplines in South Africa, not only in the

1. See for example Nelson Mandela’s autobiography entitled *Long Walk to Freedom*, first published in 1994. See also for example the account of South Africa’s history in the *Official Guide to South Africa 2018/19* (ed. Mngadi 2019), available on the official website for government communications.

2. The ‘Rainbow Nation’ was a term famously coined in 1994 by Archbishop Desmond Tutu along with President Nelson Mandela to describe a unified, multicultural, ‘post’-apartheid South Africa. Less than a decade later, it would increasingly begin to be referred to by critics as ‘rainbowism’.

context of three and a half centuries of colonialism-apartheid, but also in the context of the subsequent emergence of the post-‘rainbow’ since the establishment of liberal, non-racial³ democracy? What kinds of terms of reference should we use to describe this current reality? Are the dominant disciplinary discourses (still) adequate? How have they been constructed and to what ends do they function (or malfunction)? Is change (still) necessary? For architecture, many answers to such questions still hinge on the iconic 1991-Mandela (1994) nexus as a pivot, and presume dramatic changes either side of it. However, the answers to such questions are not as simple as such a simple overarching framework might suggest.

Acute patterns of inequality in South Africa, along with many other interconnecting social strands such as race, converge to produce and reproduce social conditions and tensions. From sport to schools and retail outlets, such tensions are evident in virtually every sphere of South African society and ever-present in the public media space where they often provoke widespread, mixed and emotive reactions. Yet whatever the scale of the latest controversy or national talking point, architecture often appears largely to remain silent. For example, despite provocatively invoking both land and race (the very bread and butter of a notion of ‘post’-apartheid space), this was still the case when United States (US) President Donald Trump posted on Twitter in 2018 that his government would study ‘the large scale killing of farmers’ in South Africa and its government’s ‘seizing land from white farmers’, claims which the South African government immediately rejected as false and divisive (Ellyatt 2018). Even closer to home for built environment disciplines, when in 2015–2016 nationwide student-worker protests⁴ arrived quite literally at the doorstep of Architectural Learning Sites (ALSs)

3. ‘Non-racialism’ is listed as one of the ‘Founding Provisions’ of the Constitution of South Africa (1996:3).

4. The protests were named variously at different points over 2015 and 2016 in relation to some of the key issues being addressed, but especially as ‘Fees Must Fall’ (FMF).

(i.e. Schools of Architecture), all eight ALSs in South Africa were largely silent in taking a public position or response to the social tsunami that had engulfed it, the entire nation and even beyond.

Conspicuous silences, such as those toward the Fees Must Fall (FMF) protests as one prominent example, would suggest that architecture does not align intimately with the social pulse of its society (or perhaps is at least exceptionally slow to). But I would contend that this would be a misreading of architecture's (post) colonial politics. Like the positive disciplinary responses to the Rainbow Nation-rainbowism that emerged in the 1990s, its responses to the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged in 2020 showed that it is by no means averse to crises and prevalent societal discourses and debates. The discipline's attentiveness to the pandemic and enthusiastic attempts toward developing disciplinary responses to it was evident for example in the South African Institute of Architects' (SAIA) highly active official Facebook page, where from late March 2020 and continuing for months thereafter almost every one among copious posts were directly or indirectly engaged with aspects of the crisis.

Coinciding with the COVID-19 crisis, however, Black Lives Matter (BLM)⁵ protests also emerged in cities across the world after the death of George Floyd at the hands of the police on 25 May 2020 in Minneapolis, USA. Concurrent protests also took place in South African cities, along with official statements of solidarity and support by the South African government (Chothia 2020; Isilow 2020). The BLM-related protests in South Africa directly linked the death of Floyd with unlawful and excessive use of force by police in South Africa, and in particular with the death of Collins Khosa (among others), a resident of Alexandra in Johannesburg who died after being allegedly assaulted by soldiers at his home for purportedly breaking COVID-19 lockdown

5. Black Lives Matter (BLM), an activist movement campaigning against violence and systemic racism towards people racialized-as-black, emerged in the USA in 2013–2014 and quickly gained international attention. The death of Floyd in 2020, a bouncer at a restaurant who lost his job when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, brought the BLM movement back to international attention.

regulations that were in place at the time (Brown 2020; Kesa 2020). Unlike concerned and creative attempts at disciplinary responses to COVID-19, here however there were no such attempts at all. Even amidst round-the-clock COVID-19 related coverage in South Africa, as well as widespread local and international coverage of the BLM movement, architecture fell doubly silent.

Why are the above observations significant? The enthusiasm with which rainbowism and COVID-19 were taken up by the architectural discipline, vis a vis its deafening silence in regard to FMF and BLM, suggests that architecture's apparently confusing oscillations between a fully engaged politics and a fully disengaged politics is not one that is haphazard, but rather is one that is highly selective, deliberate and politicised.⁶ While fully embracing topics such as multiculturalism, health or the environment on the one hand, architecture's Janus-faced politics on the other hand also simultaneously appears to embody and beget an acute reluctance to engage with questions of race, racialised experience and virtually all topics and events that recall, implicate and locate colonialism and apartheid in present disciplinary and professional structures rather than in 'the past' – a notion upon which virtually all (post)colonial disciplinary discourse and structures are premised. This unnamed but nonetheless very deliberate politics is inflected in virtually all discourses and debates. It helps to shape the frames through which the world, society and 'others' are seen or not seen, and these help to generate a scheme of codifications, of the terms and the proper order representation, of what can and cannot be spoken, and of the ways in which they should be spoken. Moreover, in naturalising dominant forms of representation and exclusions as 'disciplinary', it is a politics that is fundamentally controlled

6. In purely 'disciplinary' terms, it should be noted that rainbowism and COVID-19 have neither more nor less to do with the architectural discipline necessarily compared to FMF or BLM. The politics of engagement or disengagement here is entirely determined by the nature of the politics and not by the definition of the discipline.

and conditioned by relations of power. Thus, the disciplines emerge as historically inflected, constructed or contingent modes of thought and praxes and not as zones of pure ‘disciplinary’ knowledges. As such, in every moment the past lives inside the present and, as one can therefore expect, is continually being projected into the future.

On the one hand, the near complete avoidance of topics like race in architecture may be partly understandable, if it is to avoid deepening its social meaning-making and potential for divisiveness. On the other hand, as a discursive strategy, the delimitations, exclusions, scarcity or neglect of certain kinds of themes in the public sphere and scholarship (race, transformation, etc.) suggests a lack of a sufficiently complex understanding of the nature of these problems and the mechanisms through which they continue to be reproduced, and how the disciplines may themselves even be implicated in their reproduction. In charting a map of aspects of architectural discourse in South Africa in this chapter, including the taboo of race, I still do not wish to give any undue life to race as an apartheid or colonial ‘science’ or ‘fact’, or to racist categorisations. As Stuart Hall argued, race was not ‘a question of pigmentation’ but ‘a historical category, a political category, a cultural category’ (Hall, cited in Alexander 2018:1038). In recognition of this contingency of race and ethnicity, terminology is used in the chapter to point to the historical and/or current processes of racialisation of such groups rather than their ‘givenness’. Hence *racialised-as-black* is used to refer to racialised, non-dominant groups (including African, Coloured and Indian racialised groups),⁷ and a more familiar academic usage of scare quotes is used to refer to racialised, dominant groups as ‘*white*’. The intention here is, on the one hand, to decentre the near-mythic centrality and meanings ascribed to racialised groups during the centuries of colonialism and apartheid, particularly in regard to their more dehumanising

7. This usage of terminology corresponds with Lawrence Blum and Neville Alexander’s usage, of ‘racialized’ identities (Blum 2015).

iterations, without an erasure of the need for justice in a context still characterised by severe racial inequality on the other hand.⁸

Beginning with the overarching post-apartheid discourse of 'transformation', the chapter follows the discourses that characterise the built environment and particularly architecture in the 'new' (i.e. post-1994) South Africa.

■ Is transformation moving at a 'slow rate'?

The explosion will not happen today. It is too soon . . . or too late.

I do not come with timeless truths.

My consciousness is not illuminated with ultimate radiances.

Nevertheless, in complete composure, I think it would be good if certain things were said.

(...) No one has asked me for it. (Fanon [1952] 1986:1)

These were the words with which Frantz Fanon opened his historic 1952 text, *Black Skin, White Masks*. During a period of revolutionary change, Fanon painted a scene of incongruous and contradictory temporality that Hook (2013:7) described as encapsulating 'the much- halted progression ... this overlap of

8. Although it may seem to many South Africans that racial(ized) identities are entirely negative and even oppressive in character, there are acts of self-identification of racialized groups with these terms which should be acknowledged, as well as the common socio-historical experiences groups so-named may share as a source of meaningful affiliation and belonging, and also the possibility for collective struggle against injustice that these can offer (such Black Consciousness in South Africa, or Blackness and Black Power in the United States, etc.). Hence, as long as racial injustice prevails, there cannot be a total erasure of its racial markers either. Indeed, as Blum (2015:44) warns: 'If the race-blind strands of non-racialism come to dominate the egalitarian ones, the South African people will become disabled from facing up to the severe racial injustices still plaguing their society, and disadvantaged racialised groups will be discouraged from organising around racial identities to improve their condition in the interests of justice'.

anticipation and delay'. In the South African context, given the general reticence and inertia within the mainstream of the built environment and design professions toward the 'post'-apartheid project of 'transformation' – generally understood as a project of racial equity to redress the racial inequalities of apartheid-colonialism – simultaneous with its urgency, Fanon's image of change as a 'much-halted progression' might be similarly appropriate. Even during the euphoria that accompanied the first democratic elections of 1994 after centuries of European colonial domination, some keenly aware of the architectural status quo offered more sombre diagnoses. For example, based on their experience of the unwillingness of the majority of architects in the Transvaal region to challenge apartheid dogma just a few years prior, a cohort of architects formerly part of AAP foresaw that architecture as a profession would adapt to the new democratic political climate and client market only to the minimum extent that it would be opportunistically worthwhile for it to do so (Schlapobersky et al. 1994:17-18).

In the wake of the formal demise of apartheid, the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) was established in 2001 as a government umbrella body attached to the Department of Public Works. Specifically, the CBE was mandated 'to provide leadership on transformation within the built environment professions and the sector at large', and is responsible more generally for advising the professional councils of the built environment professions⁹ on needs of state and playing the role of public protector. As an overarching regulator, the CBE's definition of transformation is significant. It primarily defines three aspects to 'holistic transformation': the need for 'quantitative' change, the need for 'qualitative' change and change that is sustainable over time. Quantitatively, it means (CBE 2019):

9. These are architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, project and construction management, property valuation and quantity surveying.

[A] strong focus on registration numbers and an urgent priority to drastically increase the representation of previously¹⁰ disadvantaged groups among the professions; specifically focused on black individuals and attaining equal representation as per the country's demographics. (n.p.)

Qualitatively, the definition includes the 'development of new knowledge ... towards the developmental objectives of the country ... to be supported by substantial changes in design and application of policy' (CBE 2019). The third aspect, sustainability, includes (CBE 2019):

[A] specific focus on the entire skills-pipeline in order to streamline the process of becoming a registered professional and to ensure a continuous supply of quality driven and aptly skilled individuals. (n.p.)

Transformation for the built environment according to the CBE rubric is thus largely limited to regulating the built environment professions within a framework of national training and developmental prerogatives, the essence of which is a project of 'economic emancipation' (Arnoldi 2019).

The above rubrics of transformation has relied on the quantitative monitoring of 'race' as an indicator of redress in the 'post'-apartheid period. This has revealed the alarming - in racial terms - 'slow rate of transformation' (as it is often uncritically described) within the architectural profession. In 2009, the proportion of registered professional architects in South Africa

10. The designation applied to groups or individuals in 'post'-apartheid South Africa since the mid-1990s as being 'previously' disadvantaged (i.e. during the apartheid era) in order to identify current disadvantage (in the 'post'-apartheid period) is a paradoxical one. While formal legal discrimination ended, in material, educational, financial and spatial terms much disadvantage evidently continues. Consider for example the experience of one student in the recent Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) cross-university survey: 'I will make an example of Law. Other races, like Indians, for an Indian to study law there must be somebody who has studied Law at home or they have a relative who is practicing or who is at a law firm for them to secure a job. We as Black or the historically disadvantaged and still disadvantaged, we come here with only dreams' (Swartz et al. 2017:58).

from ‘previously’ disadvantaged communities¹¹ stood as low as 16% (the remaining 84% classified as ‘White’) (SACAP 2010), although constituting over 90% of the population of the country. Almost a decade later, the figures confirmed a pattern of ‘much-halted progression’, where by 2016 there was even a slight regression in the figure, at 15% (Sebe 2017).¹² With virtually no change in the demographic makeup of professional architects (as opposed to other registration categories¹³), the racial structure of the South African architectural profession resembles that of the UK, where ‘fewer than one in every 10 architects is black, Asian or minority-ethnic’, and in the United States 1.5% of architects were African-American in 2008 although comprising 12%–13% of the population (Messner 2017; Murray 2018). South Africa’s location in Africa rather than Europe or North America should make the similarities between them still more alarming. All of this, as Messner (2017) notes, ‘should precipitate crisis-level response’, although in the mainstream of the South African built environment – like other westernised contexts – it has not.

11. Architectural professionals are registered with the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP). SACAP adopted the already widely-used classification of ‘previously disadvantaged’ groups into its lexicon in 2016 (in addition to the racial classifications inherited from the colonial-apartheid era), and as the acronym ‘PDIs’ (‘Previously Disadvantaged Individuals’) additionally by 2017.

12. Figures from 2012 to 2016 are drawn from a presentation by SAIA’s Executive Manager for Transformation, Penelope Sebe, at a joint GIFA and SAIA transformation workshop held in Johannesburg in October 2017 (Sebe 2017). Demographic statistics are otherwise obtainable from SACAP Annual Reports available on the SACAP website.

13. After *The Architectural Professions Act* of 2000 was passed, in addition to Professional Architect (PrArch) SACAP also registered categories for Professional Architectural Draughtsperson (PAD), Professional Architectural Technologist (PAT), and Professional Senior Architectural Technologist (PSAT), as well as a Candidate category for each of the above. Registration categories with higher qualification requirements nonetheless still contains increasingly smaller representation from ‘previously’ disadvantaged communities, with Professional Senior Architectural Technologist (28%) and especially Professional Architect (15%) containing disproportionately small representation relative to the other categories. Professional Architect also represents the largest of the eight categories, at 37% of all cumulative registrations in 2017–2018 (SACAP 2018), and as the highest qualification category also significantly determines the shape and tone of the broader field

The wide gap between the premises, goals and sense of urgency for transformation on the one hand, particularly at the governmental level, and the persistence of normative realities in the professional and disciplinary space over two decades after the formal demise of apartheid on the other hand, in recent years led representatives of government bodies and professional organisations to state ever more boldly and plainly the case for transformation. For example, the president of the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP 2017) would state that 'the lack of representation within the profession is not just apparent, it is very real'.

Furthermore (SACAP 2015):

[W]e have a new focus and direction: transformation. Transformation will be the overarching focus across all pillars of the profession. Transformation will ensure that the demographic representation in the profession aligns with that of the Country. (...) This objective underpins all of the activities of SACAP. (pp. 4-5)

Subsequent presidents of SACAP would also indicate a growing awareness that transformation was in fact fraught at many levels and hence needed broader collaborations: 'to SACAP, transformation is not seen as a pinned standalone activity, but rather a pertinent agenda that is placed indelibly to all our mandates and committees thereof' (SACAP 2018:7, 20). In 2018, transformation would eventually be listed as the first of SACAP's five core programs.¹⁴

14. The program was envisaged to 'increase demographic representation of historically disadvantage groups and that of women in the Architectural Profession' in order to 'transform the profession and architecture in society (through collaboration)'. In 2018 SACAP's transformation plan consisted of three main components: RPL, WiASA and NASF: 'Its RPL [Recognition of Prior Learning] programme is Council's key transformation strategy, which will significantly change the complexion of the Architectural Profession landscape and aims to increase the representation of PDIs [Previously Disadvantaged Individuals] by race and gender on the register. Other transformational programmes include Women in Architecture South Africa (WiASA) and the National Architectural Student Forum (NASF), which actively addresses decolonisation of education calls. SACAP's established RPL policy gave rise this year to the development and announcement of the online RPL self-assessment platform' (SACAP 2018:18, 20).

Similar to SACAP's bolder stance and a growing understanding of the need for more cross-cutting, integrated approaches, from the leadership of the SAIA a similar approach was unfolding. The most recent presidents of SAIA would state (Ngonyama 2013):

Let me categorically state that the transformation issue must cut across all our activities as an Institute, and that my entire Presidential Agenda will directly or indirectly revolve around it. (p. 5)

Also (Mpahlwa 2019):

We believe that the transformation agenda cannot only be limited to the activity of the SAIA Transformation Committee [*first formed in 2017*] but will need to be entrenched across all the structures of the Institute. (p. 6)

The bolder stance from the leadership of professional and representative bodies over recent years, however, should not be misunderstood, for it was proportional only to the sense of frustration or even failure of the transformation and developmental imperatives which were meant to define a 'post'-apartheid era. As the CBE stated (Mathe 2018):

It is a concern ... that the efforts of the built environment community into transformation initiatives in the last two to three years is not yielding the desired outcomes ... One can conclude that unless there is urgent intervention, the status quo will remain ... It is therefore imperative that radical and innovative transformation initiatives are initiated and supported. (pp. 2-4)

Furthermore (CBE 2019):

The chaos of potential resistance and differing opinion ... can easily turn a desire for bold, reformative change into a rag-tag collection of discrete, ad-hoc initiatives. (n.p.)

The president of SAIA would also state (Ngonyama 2015):

The biggest criticism which continues to haunt our organisation and our leadership is the lack of demographic and gender representation. (...) Unless we deal with this challenge head on, history will judge us as having failed these important sectors of our society ... (p. 7)

Despite such acknowledgement, the case is also far from straightforward, for the very factors within the architectural status quo that have ‘haunted’ transformational change (as SAIA president Sindile Ngonyama put it) likewise will also likely implicate any new initiatives. As SAIA’s Executive Manager for Transformation explained: ‘The word “transformation” in South Africa is generally not easily embraced ... and it is normally accompanied with the fear of the unknown’ (Sebe 2015). A refocus on transformation may at the same time therefore also produce its exact opposite, such as counter-efforts to reassure existing stakeholders that the status quo is in fact *not* in danger of any significant change. For example, SAIA’s transformation plan, as explained in its 2015 public communications,¹⁵ portrayed precisely such a self-awareness and self-moderation as well as extreme sensitivity toward causing discomfort to its existing membership base. Almost all the key points highlighted in the proposal – ‘benefits for all especially our members’, ‘equity and equal opportunity’, ‘invest in our members’, ‘skill and experience be retained and enhanced’, ‘improve benefits to practices’, ‘values and standards are maintained’, ‘benefit-packed initiatives’ (Sebe 2015; SAIA 2015:43) – were almost entirely directed toward the existing registered architect base and – in a deep irony – to effectively assure the maintenance of a status quo. A (post)colonial-apartheid mode of transformation is thus always ‘doubled’, advanced and crippled at the same time.

■ Authorship

With minor professional representation by those ‘previously’ disadvantaged, by extension the academic or scholarship space could not be exempt from this question of representation, although it rarely – if ever – is inclined to acknowledge the nature of this social reality. For example, at 448 pages, showcasing 115 selected built projects over 15 years, and 37 text contributors representing invited writers and academics from across the

15. See, for example, SAIA’s 2015 Annual Report and Newsletter of June 2015.

country, *10+ Years 100+ Buildings – Architecture in a democratic South Africa* (ed. Joubert 2009) was the most significant compendium of contemporary South African architecture published to date. Yet out of its 37 invited contributors, only three contributors (i.e. 8%) were not ‘white’ (one of whom was the SACAP president, contributing an obligatory foreword). Moreover, of the 115 built projects showcased in the volume, approximately only seven projects (i.e. 6%) were led by an architect who was not ‘white’ (and hence able to exert any substantial influence on the project).

Such extremes within the demographic breakdown of *selected* projects and *invited* authors and ‘voices’ reveal something of the skewed normalities, colonialities and cognitive dissonances within the architectural status quo. The total practical detachment from such concerns is all the more bewildering given that multiculturalism and diversity occupy and are celebrated as central themes in the publication and in South African architecture in general. Such abstractions and cognitive dissonance with what is in effect a normalised condition of coloniality is further evident in that neither the authors nor those who have appraised the award-winning publication even noticed such extreme distortions or found them in any way problematic.

It suffices to say that other publications on South African architecture fare little better. For example, similar observations were made in an important peer review of South African built environment journals conducted by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) in 2018. In almost a century of the journal’s existence, it also represented the first independent peer review of *Architecture SA*, the journal of SAIA. Among several recommendations to ‘seriously consider implementing’, the review panel identified that (ASSAf 2018):

[T]he predominance of a few individuals neither reflects nor affirms the diversity of this transforming context. (...) There is a need for an open, transparent call so that contributions better represent diverse demographics. (...) Urgent improvement in the ... diversity of perspectives is required. (pp. 24–26)

Publications apart, the hegemonic condition of constituents and authorship is also reflected – and hence perpetuated – in other fora, such as the numerous boards and committees that make up the voluntary architectural institute (SAIA), which likewise are largely (and usually entirely) ‘white’ (Sebe 2017). As facts of demographics these observations are beyond dispute, even



Source: (a & b) Photographs taken by Tariq Toffa, in Johannesburg, date unspecified, published with permission from Tariq Toffa.

FIGURE 2.1: (a & b) Histories of entangled intimacies and subjectivities, conditioned by power: A classical Greek plaster cast (left), and a (false) representation of Jan van Riebeeck, the first Dutch ‘Commander of the Cape’ colony from 1652 to 1662 (right), each in African-inspired fashion, Johannesburg.

though some may find them alarming given their relative scarcity in scholarship and taboo in public discourse. What requires much greater expanding upon, however, are their vast and little-appreciated implications, some of which are addressed in the remainder of the chapter.

White-writing

When a house has been alarmed, it becomes explosive. It must be armed and disarmed several times a day. When it is armed, by the touching of keys upon a pad, it emits a whine that sends the occupants rushing out, banging the door behind them. There are no leisurely departures: there is no time for second thoughts, for taking a scarf from the hook behind the door, for checking that the answering machine is on, for a final look in the mirror on the way through the hallway. There are no savoured home-comings either: you do not unwind into such a house, kicking off your shoes, breathing the familiar air. Every departure is precipitate, every arrival is a scraping-in.

In an alarmed house, you awake in the small hours to find the room unnaturally light. The keys on the touch pad are aglow with a luminous, clinical green, like a night light for a child who's afraid of the dark.

- Opening passages from Ivan Vladislavic's (2006:11) novel *Portrait with Keys: Joburg & what-what*.

On weekdays, I was locked in my sister's room so that the Madam wouldn't see me. She was at home most of the time: painting her nails, having tea with friends, or lying in the sun by the swimming pool. The swimming pool was very nearby the room, which is why I had to keep very quiet. My sister felt bad about locking me in there, but she had no alternative. I couldn't even play the radio, so she brought me books, old magazines and newspapers from the white people. I just read every single thing I came across: Fair Lady, Woman's Weekly, anything. But then my sister thought I was reading too much.

'What kind of wife will you make if you can't even make baby clothes, or knit yourself a jersey? I suppose you will marry an educated man like yourself, who won't mind going to bed with a book and an empty stomach.'

- Opening passages from Gcina Mhlophe's (1987:2) short story 'The Toilet'.

Both the above works were based on their author's personal archive of everyday life in Johannesburg. Vladislavic described a home as a place never free of anxiety for the middle-class and the rich, and the lengths of protective measures that constitute their normality. In contrast, Mhlophe's narrative suggests a very different kind of precarity, whereby the transience imposed on racialised-as-black bodies and lives by apartheid-colonialism necessitated finding refuge in unexpected places (a public toilet in Mhlophe's tale), and within such constraints crafting out a sense of belonging, safety and identity. Such distinctly dissimilar narratives are indicative of intrinsic connections between authorship and discourse. While both stories were set in affluent, suburban Johannesburg, they described society and space through their author's own positionality and relationality within it. This presents social limitations while also enabling other kinds of disciplinary opportunities. For example, the city writing of 'white' middle-class writers of the 'post'-apartheid city, such as Vladislavic or Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt (2013) as some recent examples, suggests not only a reading of the city from the author's positionality but also an unknowable social world beyond it. Yet the very limitations of such city writing appear to have fuelled a much celebrated poetic, lyrical, anecdotal and idiosyncratic literary mode or genre, as preferred literary devices to grasp at a city beyond reach.

Similar to novel African city genres, mainstream 'Africa' novels across the continent can also similarly display their own forms of authorial, discursive and literary patterns. Brett Davidson, whose work focuses on the media and changing long-held social narratives, observed how the genre is often represented by 'white expats' (Davidson 2010):

[/]f you happen to be at JKIA [*Jomo Kenyatta international Airport, Nairobi*] and want something to read, aside from the business books and Christian books and pulp fiction, pretty much all that's left is a story of some European writer's African childhood. (...) So where are all the stories by Africans still living in Africa? (n.p.)

The celebrated artwork of William Kentridge is another example of the dilemma of authorship and 'white writing' (Coetzee 1988). Kentridge's charcoal-drawn tales of capitalism (Smith 2019):

[B]ecame part of the aesthetic of the introspection that many middle-class white South Africans underwent amid the spectacular and rapid changes of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The works were produced from a definite and clear viewpoint that reflected Kentridge's own status as a white, privileged, educated, Jewish South African who grew up in Houghton, went to school at King Edward School and studied at Wits University in Johannesburg. (p. 12)

While such perspectives in Kentridge's (cited in Smith 2019) artwork allowed for resonance with many in South Africa and beyond, it may be by the artist's own admission also a cause of limitations:

The other thing, which is shocking, is that you think you're doing something new now and then you look back and see that you used the same image 30 years ago ... So the lack of moving on is one of the things that's evident... . (p. 12)

The above examples (amongst countless others) suggest that the question of 'representation', which the official rubrics of transformation bring to the fore, run far deeper than merely numerical quotas or 'inclusion' within an existing status quo. If disciplinary fields have long been predominated by 'white' constituents, then by extension white-writing has also profoundly shaped their normative outlooks, approaches, discourses and silences. Moreover, the adaptive tools and tropes (such as white-writing genres) developed from within the authorial centre to negotiate such limitations, rather than being seen as internal to hegemonic processes come to represent the avant-garde of disciplinary knowledge. Thus the transformational imperative of 'representation' points not merely to numerical 'inclusion', but

profoundly implicates the very authorship and making of what constitutes the status quo, and they cannot be discussed independently of each other. Representation must therefore be understood as different to authorship: representation implies an artificial introduction or political intrusion into an existing status quo without significant alteration to it (and also implies the association of the former with poor quality and the latter with 'excellence'), while authorship is an essential and constituent component of the discourse it 'represents'.

Like literature and art, architecture has been an integral part of the body of creative and discursive production of 'post'-apartheid white-writing, which over a quarter of a century since the formal demise of apartheid has produced a particular range of themes that have established and embedded the normative terms, questions and range of architectural discourse. Even while these are periodically revised, supplemented or updated, they usually remain within a relatively narrow field of monophonic authorial inputs (as observed by ASSAf's 2018 peer review of South African built environment journals for example). Since such a narrow field of input - like the architectural profession at large - in many respects represents the numerical, demographic and socio-economic inversion of its society,¹⁶ discursively it must similarly be regarded as skewed or at best profoundly limiting.

Many examples could be enumerated that typify such inversions (demographic, socio-economic or discursive). For example, University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) academic Sechaba Maape (2011:8) explained of his Masters and PhD work at Wits, which explored the relationships between people, myth, place, art and ritual: 'My Thesis has been a Blessing from my ancestors, and their voices have resonated from the past through the stories told by my family, friends and community members ...' Yet Maape (2011) would open his Master's thesis with a poem

16. University of Cape Town academic Francis Carter in 2004 would similarly comment on 'this complete inversion' in the UCT architectural student body relative to national demographics (Carter 2004:7).

that, in its content and tone, alluded to some of the epistemic, cultural and pedagogic conflicts encountered in his studies:

Spook spook in my town, who were you? when were you? why can I not see you?

Spook spook, are you my Grandmother?

are you my uncle, do you know me?

Oh no, silly me - this is not true, spooks don't exist!

that's what my teachers taught me. (p. 5)

Evaluating Wits architecture students in 2014, Cape Town-based architect Mokena Makeka (cited in Janse van Rensburg 2015) would provide a similar critique on the representational, discursive and pedagogic limitations embedded in the architectural status quo:

Wits as a liberal institution was practicing a kind of internal dishonesty where people spoke in support of transformation, but did not really support it by going through the discomfort of engaging with difference ... [7]here is no one who really intellectually engages with the issues the students are raising enough to help them, and so the student who did the 'yard' project in Soweto did not really resolve it because he did not receive the right kind of guidance, and someone like Sechaba [*Maape*] is still on the same topic as in first year because he has not been able to complete his inquiry. Staff do not need to know about these cultural issues - if they admit their ignorance and set up a rigorous framework of inquiry to co-learn with ... students, this can help the student to get there, but it takes this kind of integrity. We like to talk as if we have arrived instead of being honest about not knowing. (p. 611)

The taboo and distinct absence of discussion around such topics of authorial hegemony and its effects in the public sphere should not be taken for absence in reality. On the contrary, such experiences are felt and observable not only by racialised-as-black academics (such as Maape or Mokena cited above), but it should not be underestimated that they are shared equally and widely by students as well. For example, in the Human Sciences

Research Council (HSRC) cross-university report of student experience completed in 2017,¹⁷ students explicitly identified and linked racialised privilege to both representation and curricula content. The report identified that ‘most Black students ... felt that they are far removed from the curriculum content, which they claim does not reflect their lived experiences’ and that ‘most students regardless of population group agreed that the curriculum esteems Eurocentric and Western knowledge’ (Swartz et al. 2017:63). Such observations, especially after the student-worker protests of 2015 and 2016, should no longer be cause for any surprise, and many academics would recognise the need for some form of curriculum change as described by the students. However, what is significant in the report is that students perceived something much more in this than merely supplementing some ‘African’ content by existing academic staff (Swartz et al. 2017):

Students and lecturers alike bring their histories into classrooms and respond to certain historical/contextual, and pedagogical approaches that are distinct to their lived experiences. (...) Black students believe that Black lecturers bring different perspectives to their learning (...) [7]he students voiced that increasing the number of Black professors and thought leaders was key to infusing a decolonial curriculum. (...) The majority of students felt that even in situations where the content and literature on Africa is available, it is written by White scholars. The students were not only critiquing the knowledge, but also were implicating Black academics as silent participants in the knowledge production process. (pp. 62–65)

Thus, the report showed that students recognised and linked ‘representation’ with hegemony in authorship and discourse, including ‘African’ discourse, and that the development of

17. The ‘Executive Summary’ of the HSRC report states: ‘Beginning in 2013 ... the REE [Race, Education and Emancipation] study included a total of 80 participants across eight universities over five years. The sample comprised of 74 Black students (66 African students, including three students from elsewhere on the African continent, 6 Coloured students and 2 Indian students) and 6 White students. While we were most eager to hear accounts from Black students, we wanted to include a demographically representative sample of White students in order to highlight some key differences in the student experience due to racial privilege. However, this study remains an account of what it is like to study while Black in a South African university’ (Swartz et al. 2017:7).

diversified content must correlate with diversified authorship. Other examples of post-protest (i.e. 2015–2016) student critique were evident in Nontokozi Tshabalala’s 2017 documentary film *BLAK Voices of FADA*, which documented the similar experiences of racialised-as-black students in the design disciplines (including architecture) at the University of Johannesburg. One Fine Art student for example, Zinhleizintombizaka Zwane, described precisely how authorial social inversion tangibly impacted the research process (Tshabalala 2017):

There is not enough ‘truthful’ work about Black art; or just Black people in the art, because even then ... if I am going to write an essay about George Pemba, who was a ‘township artist’ ... it means nothing if I am going to cite a White author who wrote about Black people from his own perspective. (...) [S]omehow everything just gets squeezed down into ‘Township Art’ and that is it. That is the only kind of art in itself that can represent Black art in South Africa. And that in itself, in terms of art history, is problematic. (...) Before I write about Black work and Black artists, I have to find out what was written about them – deconstruct that; find out what is the truth – rewrite that; before it is official enough (for me) to put in my own thesis. That complex in itself is problematic. (n.p.)

The HSRC report also showed that students were not oblivious to practices of ‘false inclusion’, but were keenly aware of assimilation of racialised-as-black academics into an existing status quo as ‘silent participants’ or otherwise being too marginal to make any substantive change.¹⁸ The critiques by racialised-as-black academics, practitioners and students, such as those cited here individually and in larger studies, in the architectural setting and across other fields, show clear resonance with each other.¹⁹

18. For these reasons I have preferred the use of the term white-writing to ‘western’-writing in this chapter. Although the terms relate and overlap, the usage is context specific. In a (South) African context, the former tangibly implicates the local reality of the ‘here and now’, while the latter is suggestive of a distant Euro-American geographical space that local authors need only relate to in abstract ways without the need for any local acts of transformation in representation and authorship.

19. They also reflect my own experience as a young UCT architecture student as well, and my observations later as an educator.

They are indicative that architecture holds no unique claims to disciplinary exceptionalism or transformation,²⁰ but is fully a part of the post-apartheid-colonial tensions and contestations around power and resources that characterise education and the disciplines at large.

In the decades since the formal ending of apartheid-colonialism, the narrow field of architectural authorship has produced a range of interests, approaches and tools, some of the key constellations of which are discussed below.

■ The discourse of appropriate South African architecture

One of the earliest modes of 'post'-apartheid white-writing in architectural discourse, with a longevity that began around the early 1990s and would continue through the decades since, was the argument for the creation of an appropriate, national or uniquely South African architecture. In 1995 for example, Ivor Prinsloo called for a 'South African synthesis' of local pre-colonial with colonial traditions, 'towards relevant, inclusive, life-enhancing and timeless architecture, serving the new South Africa; at once popular and profound' (Prinsloo 2017). Indicative of its longevity, over two decades later in 2017 Gerald Steyn – as just one illustrative example – would state the sentiment similarly: 'Although discussions around architecture with a unique South African identity started before 1994, we've made little progress (...) in order to imagine a more appropriate national architecture'. In 2009, the authors of the major compendium *10+ Years 100+ Buildings* would also take

20. Progress in representational transformation in the built environment in fact compares poorly to other sectors, such as the financial sector (Arnoldi 2019). Within the built environment itself, architectural professionals especially fall significantly behind other built environment practitioners in terms of representational transformation. According to registration data from the various built environment professional councils in 2016, 'previously' disadvantaged groups for all categories of engineering stands at 46%, project and construction management at 48% and quantity surveying at 54%, compared to 31% for all architectural registration categories (SACAP 2017:39; SAICE 2017).

this up as a central theme, arguing that ‘an appropriate architecture ... cannot be a single South African architecture – only region-specific expression’ (Fisher 2009:24). The call would be echoed by other contributors in the publication, calling for a ‘modern regionalist’, ‘Critical Regionalism’, ‘regional diversity’, etc. (ed. Joubert 2009:12; Peters 2009:397; Raman 2009:14; Theron 2009:354).

In the context of the argument in this chapter, what is significant about these proposals to imagine an appropriate South African architecture, and its sustained longevity (to say nothing of whether the search for a genuine ‘South African architecture’ is even possible in the totally globalised world of today), is that they all remained confined, largely or entirely, to the small, inverted social field of ‘white’ authorship; and hence how ‘appropriate’ or ‘inclusive’ such expansive national scripts truly were or are remains fundamentally questionable. Reflecting on the early formation of this script, then Johannesburg-based architect and academic Noero (2002) would recall his own position in the closing years of the apartheid era, that:

[7]here was a speculation in the universities at that time, schools of architecture, about ... the development of an appropriate South African architecture. And we were utterly opposed to that idea because we felt until liberation it would be impossible to even speculate about what might constitute a South African culture, because we could only start to really help to construct that with liberation and real democracy. And it would be a process that would grow from the bottom-up in response to people. And it would be a patient search and it would take maybe generations. (n.p.)

The fact that monophonic discourse around appropriateness and authenticity in South African architecture remained almost intact over decades in itself is suggestive of deep, unarticulated authorial anxieties, and decades later, still without a broader authorial constituent of ‘people’ over ‘generations’ remains a widespread abstraction, but, arguably, an elusive practice.

■ The discourse of (post)apartheid postmodernisms

Similar to the long authorial continuity of notions of 'relevance' and 'appropriateness', South African architectural discourse is also significantly shaped by other much older continuities that predate the iconic democratic elections of 1994. Another such preoccupation was postmodernism, a predominant theme in the South African architectural scene during late-apartheid in the 1980s and 1990s (and in certain respects still continues). Noero (1994) argued that locally there were deeper meanings within the sway and valency of the postmodern style during this period than simply reflecting international trends:

[P]ostmodernism as broadly defined in its South African context has been a sign of the rootlessness and uncertainty of the South African spirit, as expressed in architecture; because in South Africa even more so than Europe it was a trivialisation of culture, in that in South Africa it could not be a search back into the history that would connect past and present, assuming that at its best postmodernism did that. It doesn't reflect our history in South Africa but certainly reflects our uncertainty. (...) This is an architecture that is hollow at its core, because it has no context whatsoever – whether social, political, aesthetic or other. (n.p.)

In this reading, South African postmodernism was little more than a veneer concealing a social chaos, and holding sway during a tumultuous period precisely because of its allusions to historical context and stability, a context that paradoxically in architectural practice was precisely absent. The uncritical multiplicity of works produced within this South African strand of postmodernity led Prinsloo (2017) to observe that by 1994 'South African preoccupations ... represent almost every critical position imaginable'.

For architecture, the advent of democracy in 1994 appeared to breathe new life and uses onto older postmodern templates. After a protracted era of overt 'white' supremacy, the post-1994 political project of multiculturalism – a nation 'united in our diversity' as the new South African Constitution (1996) put it –

would present postmodern approaches with a basis for new utility. In architecture education, one of the sites where a postmodern continuum was most evident was in the introduction of individual final year thesis design projects to provide scope for 'multicultural' subjectivity (as well as a 'pre-thesis' research component to help inform it). The 'pre-thesis or thesis' post-graduate curricula model has since become normative across South African ALSs (i.e. architecture schools).

Although usually self-defined as an altogether 'new' platform for diversity, inclusivity and individual subjectivity after an era of 'white' homogeneity, in historical context the postmodern thesis model could better be regarded as a more sophisticated post-1994 updating of a much older intellectual lineage (not unlike postmodernisms have since also seen more refinement aesthetically and stylistically in South Africa). Understood as a lineage rather than a 'new' pedagogy, it is questionable whether it is able to genuinely develop alterity or 'an-other way' (Mignolo 2007:465) to 'white' or 'western' frameworks and theoretical space (out of which it emerged and to which it remains wedded). Moreover, thesis projects also typically tend to reflect the ethos, outlooks and frameworks of their particular architecture schools and its leading figures as much as any diverse or individual subjectivity. Ambitious, counter-normative or 'radical' projects that seek to venture too far beyond this exceed the range of the discourse and its intellectual lineage and design tools, and the limits of the 'known' within the model, and so oftentimes fail in their material architectural realisation (as alluded to by Maape and Makeka among others).

Generally, the inability to enable authentic expression and the development of an associated design, intellectual and visual culture which speaks *with* (rather than *to*) the majority society, the most marginalised, the non-'west', and racialised-as-black subjectivities, becomes most pronounced in final thesis projects (rather than originating there) where it is expected to have reached maturity. To be sure, the failures of the 'new' approach in producing mature architectural realisations of an individual

inquiry are sometimes acknowledged, and could be attributed to a range of factors: too much postmodern cultural theory, too little architecture-specific theory, too little teaching of tectonics, the inhibitive remnants of older teaching models, or general time, coordination and management issues, etc. While some of these may be legitimate concerns in their own right, noticeably failure is *never* attributed to a lack of transformation. The rewriting of older lineages as altogether ‘new’ democratic arrivals rather than continuums, serves only to sustain pedagogic models that appear to have long since reached their limits and obfuscates the need for genuine authorial transformation and agency.

Without any significant authorial transformation, the primary responsibility to bring alterity to the academic project has therefore been transferred upon the student, and it is in the paradoxical and ethically awkward mobilisation of their very experience of otherness and alienation that the academic project can ultimately lay claim to ‘relevance’ or innovation. This not only absolves those most responsible, but the over-reliance on students considerably overburdens those who must struggle to find resolution in the precise structural irresolution of their curricula framework (and who often are already overburdened with difficulties of access and resources). The ‘rootlessness and uncertainty’ (as Noero put it) of ‘white’ experience during late-apartheid, expressed in architecture through postmodern frameworks, thus finds itself unwittingly and ‘democratically’ transferred onto students as valid and relevant democratic models.

■ **The discourses of outward emphasis-inward neglect – Excellence, spatial transformation, ‘northern’ theory, design tools (and other cognitive dissonances)**

It should be reasonably clear from the discussion so far that there remains a lack of self-critique of the nature of architectural thinking, practice and agency on a fundamental level, which

remains intrinsically connected to and imbricated in enduring colonialities. Architect and academic Peters (2004) reached a similar conclusion, and one he viewed as ‘obvious’:

Following the first democratic elections (1994) a constitutional provision was passed which compelled the country to confront its past. The Promotion of National Unity and National Reconciliation Bill (1995) was signed into law to establish the truth and lay the basis for genuine reconciliation by granting amnesty to those who make full disclosure of gross human rights abuses committed between 1 March 1960 and 20 May 1994. After almost three years of hearings the report was released in 1998 in which virtually all the elements of society such as the church, business and the media felt the lash of the commission’s displeasure. Interestingly, the architectural profession did not come forward. (...) Despite the gross application of apartheid ideology to architecture, *the profession has obviously not understood its role in the ignoble past, let alone that collusion may have distorted its moral and ethical basis.* (pp. 545–546; [*author’s added emphasis*])

Peters perceived – like AAP over a decade earlier – that it was not only about ‘historical’ acts committed ‘in the past’, but that this may implicate even the very basis of disciplinary thinking which it is yet to appreciate or come to terms with, even in the present. Extending this insight, Wits-based Political Studies scholar Hudson (2019) argued that:

[B]efore 1994, whites were conscious of themselves as ‘white’, even if unconscious of the mechanism producing this effect of subjectivity. After 1994, they are still unconscious of their symbolic construction but now they are also unconscious of being ‘white’ because their dominant identity is as ‘citizen’. [...]

The critique ... has political implications in that what it argues is that colonialism is not the by-product and vanishing effect of the past, but unconsciously structures the present... ²¹ (pp. 164, 167)

21. This critique runs counter to ‘the inertia theory of the reproduction of colonial inequality in South Africa. On this colonial inequality in the present is an effect of colonial inequality in the past ... and survives without the intervention of colonialism in the present’ (Hudson 2019:167). Hudson rejects the inertia theory.

For architecture and the built environment with predominantly 'white' constituents and authorship, one of the consequences of this lack of self-awareness or introspection (or historical accountability) is disciplinary thinking and practice that is entirely 'outward' focused. Take as one example the architectural definitions of transformation during the early 'post'-apartheid years as understood by the 'Corobrick Architectural Student Award 1999' judging panel (Corobrick Architectural Student Award 2000):

Quite clearly, all universities are, without fail, dealing with the issue of transformation in our society and, in particular, how this transformation is going to influence architecture. Transformation in South Africa must be about people; it is about how people change from a rural environment to an urban one; how they change from being temporary residents to permanent ones; how to effect a change from unemployment to employed; how they change from being unskilled to skilled; and how they adapt from involvement in pastoral economy to an urban economy. (p. 11)

It is clear that transformation was understood here solely as a socio-economic and developmental project; that is, it was 'outward' focused. Conversely, it was completely silent on any sense or need for 'inward' disciplinary reform or representational and authorial transformation. This tone, now normative and well-established - of acknowledged 'outward' socio-economic imperatives without taking stock of the multifarious 'inward' colonial constructions of the discipline - would already be laid well before 1994. For example, following the announcement in February 1990 of the political reforms that marked the beginning of the negotiated transition from apartheid to constitutional democracy, the president of the Institute of South African Architects published a letter in the Institute's journal charting the way forward for the discipline (Ritchie 1990):

The major areas of obligation to be addressed by our profession are in the fields of housing, health and education for all South Africans. (...) Our Institute has consistently rejected any consideration other than professional ability as a criterion for membership ... and has always been open to all sectors of the population. (...) In striving for

excellence I suggest that we ... re-affirm our constitutional aims and objectives. (p. 45)

Two patterns were already evident in this 'new' trajectory: the 'outward' focus toward national developmental goals on the one hand, and on the other hand the complete lack of awareness of the discipline's entanglement with apartheid-colonialism and its consequences, evident for example in the denial of the fact that barely a single racialised-as-black graduate emerged from South African architectural schools (Schlapobersky et al. 1994:17). In anticipation of the formal demise of apartheid, the discipline need therefore only 're-affirm' rather than reform itself according to the institute's president (Ritchie 1990:45). Yet this mode of thought and practice is questionable even on its own terms, because it is scarcely possible for untransformed nations to be developed ones (i.e. broadly as opposed to unequally) (Fikeni 2019) and, as South African architect and urban designer Marianne de Klerk (2017:52) observed, architects still 'largely stand outside the endeavour to provide mass housing, planning initiatives to change the structure of our cities and the upgrade of informal settlements' – once the purported *raison d'être* of a 'post'-apartheid-colonial architecture.

Other definitions and trajectories for architecture formed before 1994 also still resonate through 'new' or 'post'-apartheid-colonial contemporary discourses. For example, the singularity and monopolisation of terms and definitions of architectural criteria dissociated from colonial constructions, often termed 'excellence' (as employed by the Institute's president in 1990 for example), still remains the primary discourse for measuring quality in architecture (i.e. 'awards of excellence', etc.).

Even the notion of 'spatial transformation' that would later emerge, probably one of the more pertinent developments in 'post'-apartheid-colonial discourse in the built environment, still extends this pattern of outward emphasis-inward neglect. As a major, controlling discursive term, its visibility in the public sphere serves to further highlight – in precisely inverse proportions – the

corresponding lack of public discourse on disciplinary reform and agency. Even on its own terms as well, the discourse of spatial transformation cannot be oblivious to this, for the very terms and forms of what a notion of spatial transformation might even entail are implicated. For example, if the notion of spatial transformation relates to the lived experiences of millions of people within the country, at both macro and micro scales (because space is inseparable from social and cultural practices), then the continuation of narrow fields of authorship and intellectual lineages for its definition and articulation are wholly inadequate. ‘The physical structure of the city and actual spatial logic of the city are not the same thing’, as Wits-based architecture and urbanism scholar Matsipa (2018:n.p.) put it, ‘so how do you bridge that?’.

One consequence of the gap between the lived and the disciplinary has been a crystallisation of a particular range of spatial or design tools and techniques as ‘representations’ of otherness, that ‘stand in for’ (rather than emerging from) ‘other/ed’ social worlds. In design projects these often take the form of quick-fix and repetitive design tools, such as informal trading and markets, or informal configurations of space and form.²² Not unlike design, in theory similar processes are discernible, where the lack of introspection and authorial transformation is evident in the recourse to ‘subversive’ spatial theory from the global North (Lefebvre, Soja, De Certeau, Foucault, etc.), which in the South African context can ‘stand in for’ and ‘represent’ inversions or subversions of colonialities and oppressive systems rather than their reality. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2016:10), for example, argued precisely for ‘the need for creating a distance in relation to Western-centric political imagination and critical theory’ because ‘the Western-centric critical tradition ... fails to account for the forms of struggle, social actors, and grammars of liberation’.

22. The pattern was already observable two decades ago when the judging panel for the ‘Corobrick Architectural Student Award 1999’ observed in design projects the attitude ‘that views economic freedom of the previously disadvantaged as being attained through informal, temporary markets’ (Corobrick 2000:11).

■ The discourses of distance

Similar to particular kinds of arguments or design rubrics, as mentioned above, another notable mode of 'post'-apartheid white-writing has also been simply but profoundly through language itself. This relates not only to language medium bias (i.e. English or Afrikaans as the language of instruction at South African universities),²³ but also specifically to the acts of naming-framing, and the lexicon of South African architecture. The act of naming-framing is one of the most explicit ways through which a privileged authorial agency and power is reflected, for naming both identifies a perceived subject for particular interest and frames the terms through which it is known. For example, an important term in art and architectural discourse in the immediate 'post'-apartheid years was the notion of 'grey' areas of the city and 'grey' identities.²⁴ As one example indicative of its use as a major conceptual term, *Grey Areas* was also the title of a 1999 anthology of writing on race and representation in art after apartheid, edited by Candice Breitz and Brenda Atkinson. While mobilised in the 'post'-apartheid years, earlier 'grey areas' originally referred to racially unclassifiable areas during apartheid, and a source of anxiety for many as Peffer (2009) explained:

One public concern at the time was the rise of the so-called grey areas, places in cities that were not officially zoned for either exclusive white or black residence. Some worried that government would eventually initiate forced removals of black families from these parts of the city, as it had in Sophiatown and District Six. Others saw this as an official encroachment upon former 'white' areas of the city and the death knell for urban apartheid. (p. 35)

The continued currency of the term well into the 'post'-apartheid era was therefore indicative of its continued association with a transgressive act, and one still firmly rooted in the conceptual

23. For example, English remains the lingua franca in South Africa although 49% of the population struggles to understand it (Steyn 2005:128).

24. As a student, this conceptual term was also part of my own education at UCT in 2001 and 2002.

universe of apartheid-colonial (racial) othering, both spatially and conceptually. While the notion of ‘becoming grey’ has since fallen from use, in architecture it has given way to a wide lexicon of authorial acts of naming–framing, which similarly carry continuities from earlier colonial symbolic frames of meaning. These include ‘the everyday’, ‘the community’, ‘the informal’, ‘the context’, to name just a few; all of which have come to be established as the normative and natural terms of architectural discourse and so are used uncritically and ubiquitously. None of these of course are derogatory, as names for social actors, practices or places (being less overtly racist than ‘grey’) and neither do these originate in South Africa; however, what is significant is that in their South African contexts they usually remain the names of otherness, named from an unacknowledged (‘white’ or ‘western’) centre simply seen as ‘normal’. Thus whether real or perceived, ‘the everyday’ in this schema is really an ‘other’ everyday, ‘the community’ is really an ‘other’ community, ‘the context’ is really an ‘other’ context, etc. While this is never expressed quite so plainly, it is soon understood by architecture students that ‘the everyday’ of ‘the community’ is never ‘about planters and cappuccinos ... of the monocultural illuminati’, as Murray (2018) put it, but usually the racialised-as-black poor; and ‘the informal’ never about Uber taxis, ‘neighbourhood’ markets of gourmet foods or the annual local *kersmark* [Christmas market], but namings reserved for an ‘other’ minibus variety and the trading spaces of ‘others’.²⁵ Such terms can often stand for the lumped-together multifarious and heterogeneous phenomena of unfamiliar, ‘other/ed’ social worlds. A 2007 report by the World Bank on informality for example affirmed this very point, that ‘we

25. None of this should be surprising, since concepts like ‘informality’, defined as a sector or economy distinct from another ‘formal’, dominant, capitalist mainstream, was already classically dualist at inception (as opposed to understanding these as overlapping conditions or as varying poles of a continuum). Attributed originally to British anthropologist Keith Hart who introduced the model into development studies in 1971, ‘informality’ would come to mean different things to different people but almost always imbued with a negative value judgement and associated with bad things (Perry et al. 2007:21; Worsley 1984:210–212).

are exploring several distinct phenomena as we attempt to describe one ungainly composite “informality” (Perry et al. 2007:21). And, as Richard Dyer (cited in Steyn 2005) put it:

Looking with such passion and single-mindedness at non-dominant groups has had the effect of reproducing the sense of the oddness, differentness, exceptionality of these groups, the feeling that they are departures from the norm. Meanwhile the norm has carried on as if it is the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human. (pp. 120–121)²⁶

What the argument here highlights is that the very act of identifying a perceived subject for particular interest, and naming–framing it for disciplinary uses, not only implicates a centred authorship (i.e. the power to name) but often is in itself an (unconscious) recognition of authorial and disciplinary estrangement from its object of study. For example, the much sought after publishable image of designers in the act of doing ‘community engagement’ (i.e. sitting around on plastic chairs with ‘the community’, pointing to maps, etc.) is an (unconscious) acknowledgment of this distance.

The notion of ‘landscape’, a central theme for the authors of *10+ Years 100+ Buildings* for example, is another discourse of distance. Like the term itself is suggestive of spectator or authorial distance from the object of study (i.e. the suffix ‘scape’ posits the positioning of a particular view of the territory), in the South African context the concept has typically entailed the authorial emptying of the land of political meaning and lived experience largely in favour of foregrounding apolitical, poetic and metaphorical readings of a natural landscape, which drives architectural form as architectural representations of nature.

26. This shift, since the 1990s, from the ways in which the centre constructs the margins (i.e. ‘racism’) to the ways in which the centre constructs itself (‘whiteness studies’), is seen as a critical move in race studies (with parallels in feminist studies). According to Melissa Steyn: ‘... as a consequence of the economic and political advantage gained during and subsequent to European colonial expansion ... [w]hiteness is the shared social space in which the psychological, cultural, political, and economic dimensions of this privileged positionality are normalised, and rendered unremarkable’ (Steyn 2005:120).

This view of landscape, as suggested in the seminal work of William J.T. Mitchell (1994), is a social practice that helps to construct the very reality it represents: authorial social distance is extended into a reading of the land, returning back to its author in tangible architectural forms. While this has become intertwined with the discourse of an 'appropriate' 'post'-colonial-apartheid South African architecture authentically rooted in 'the land', arguably it is one characterised and constructed through historical, social and cultural distance, not closeness.²⁷

Namings-framings are thus often indicators not of closeness but of distance, between author and subject. It is otherwise inconceivable that an 'everyday' seen as normal and unremarkable should be named as such at all; it is an 'other' everyday that qualifies for special identification precisely because of its perceived strangeness from that 'norm'. Similar is the case of a 'democratic' architectural landscape (the subtitle for *10+ Years 100+ Buildings*), which by definition centres people, could paradoxically be envisioned as a landscape without (or preceding) people, only 'nature'.

Even when such namings-framings of 'othernesses' come to be used in a well-intentioned manner, such as exhorting the importance of considering the 'everyday' or the 'informal' for

27. Following broader postmodern trends, notions of landscape have in recent decades moved away from the traditional genre of landscape (as popularised in paintings during the late 18th and 19th centuries and its and pure formal visuality), in favour of psychological, ideological or socio-political readings (ed. Mitchell 1994:1). This enlarged notion and reading of landscape has taken particular forms in varying contexts. In Euro-American contexts, it was often the ecological dimensions of landscape which were foregrounded in spatial-related disciplines (i.e. 'landscape urbanism' or 'ecological urbanism'), while in the South African context it has been primarily the poetic function of 'nature' in whose service the notion of landscape was mobilised for architecture. Across scale and typology as well as scholarship, South African architecture abounds with mimetic and naturalistic metaphors, where hills, trees, clouds and rocks, etc., are all mobilised for architectural form. However, what such discourses around landscape typically neglect is the politics and authorship of landscape. This was in fact one of the foundational premises upon which contemporary critiques of traditional notions of landscape were based, as represented by Mitchell (1994) for example. For Mitchell, landscape was ultimately about power; the power to construe, construct, survey and define the *scape* of the land.

design or other disciplinary considerations, they cannot escape reaffirming and reproducing their *a priori* or originary strangeness, and so they continue to serve as signifiers for what they are not (i.e. 'western', 'normal', 'modern'). As Ngwenya (2018) explained:

In a Foucauldian sense this double act – representation on the one hand but *prior* production of the subject on the other – means that what was at stake is not representation but purposeful and synergic reproduction of objects of colonial power in a regulatory system. Thus, the representation of African people in colonial discourses ... should be understood largely as reproduction of colonial subjects ... (p. 59)

These disciplinary normalisations and codifications all conceal their authorship as social practices entangled in the historical (post)colonial present.

■ The discourses that silence

That silence ... will tell you a great many things. Not all of them, of course, you would want to hear.

(Matar 2019:n.p.)

As I have argued, a discipline names–frames and hence 'speaks'. Formed through economic, institutional and cultural power, this speaking voice privileges and centres as naturalised terms those of certain social actors, and embodies its historical perspective, positionality and experiences. One consequence of colonial and 'white' disciplinary positionality therefore, not only numerically but also symbolically as I have argued, are other voices and experiences which are not naturalised in the discipline in the same ways but rather are naturalised as 'other'. Unlike 'western' contexts where 'speaking' voices came to represent those of the majority (even if gained by Europe's settlers through colonisation), in the South African disciplinary and educational context the situation was reversed, where settlers would remain a small (though dominant) minority as the South African university gazed 'west'-ward. As such, as Dladla (2017) explained, the South

African university 'had an unnatural existence of being deliberately ignorant of the space and experience within the place which it existed':

The school and university as they currently exist in South Africa were founded by the European settler ... keen to inculcate the cultural dominance of English into the new colony ... and towards that end drew on various models of British universities ... in teaching and examining procedures as well as curricula; even 'the very architecture of the seating in lecture rooms' was borrowed from Glasgow and Aberdeen... . (pp. 209-210)

Similarly authorship remained structurally confined to 'white' constituents, with a disenfranchised African majority largely entering the professional disciplines discreetly in numbers only after 1994.²⁸ Thus, alongside the continuities in exclusions and marginalisations (economic, institutional, cultural, etc.) in disciplinary and educational contexts,²⁹ the discursive and symbolic dimensions similarly still speak of older colonial schema as well, where (post) colonial subjects learn to know and see themselves through the knowledges and viewpoint of others. As art theorist Nsele (2016) argued:

In the colonial schema it is the African-derived subject that knowledge is exercised against. The black subject becomes knowable and unknowable only through European categories of knowledge... . (pp. 99-100)

28. During apartheid-colonialism, the *Bantu Education Act* of 1953 was a key driver in ensuring that racialized-as-black education would remain dire and directed toward semi-skilled work. In 1959, the *Extension of Universities Act* was passed barring admission of racialized-as-blacks in English-speaking, 'non-racial' universities and allowing for the establishment of racially and linguistically segregated universities (Naidoo 2013:26). As one consequence, the first racialized-as-black woman to graduate from a South African architecture school would only occur as late as 1995 (News 1995:5).

29. Steyn notes that power is not necessarily determined or reflected numerically: 'What has happened in South Africa is ... [w]hites have lost political power. They largely maintain economic power, and because Western cultures are held in esteem as the believed key to internationalism, they still hold cultural power' (Steyn 2005:122).

For scholars like Nsele (2016:106), racialised-as-black subjectivity thus means ‘looking at oneself through the lens of others’. A commonly-held sense of alienation that this could entail for racialised-as-black subjects was affirmed by the HSRC report cited earlier (Swartz et al. 2017):

It is clear from the conversations with the students that ... Black students will continue to feel alienated from universities they have inherited because these universities are not transformed enough to reflect, affirm, and narrate African systems of knowledge and practice. (p. 65)

For the racialised-as-black subject, disciplinary knowledge thus typically entails speaking of itself through the tongues of others, and seeing itself through the eyes of others. One of the most obvious expressions of this is through the well-established developmental discourse for the African continent, long since embraced by the built environment disciplines in South Africa and globally. Made more poignant through extreme and racial forms of inequality in South Africa, such discursive lenses significantly affect the self-perceptions of students, as again identified by the HSRC report (Swartz et al. 2017):

The findings show that ... [t]he majority of the Black students identified themselves as being at the lower level of the socio-economic ladder. This means that they identify themselves as poor when compared to Indians, Coloureds and Whites. (pp. 50–51)

In other words and in the context of the built environment disciplines, racialised-as-black subjects are trained to see themselves in need of ‘development’ and as ‘developmental subjects’ (Matsipa 2018). But being educated to see through the names–frames of others means not only speaking through the tongues of others, but – in a deeper act of silencing – the relative inability to even articulate one’s own experiences and thoughts, through one’s own tongue as it were. For example, a 2003 study at the University of Cape Town’s Medical School identified an (Swartz et al. 2017):

[E]xplicit pattern emerging from the data, namely, that some students do have difficulty naming 'race' and experiences related to 'race' and furthermore, tend to downplay encounters with 'race' that are hurtful and/or reinforce racialised relations of power. (p. 50)

The HSRC report similarly identified that there are more disparate kinds of 'everydays' to those named as such within disciplinary conventions, which are experienced by the majority of students such as 'everyday racism', and which students did not have a 'language' with which to understand and articulate, and their education only exacerbated the problem (Swartz et al. 2017):

[S]tudents themselves do not always recognise (or were reluctant to speak of) the ways in which their student experience is racialised. They live and experience racism but they cannot always name it. (pp. 50–51)

Thus for (post)colonial subjects, language is often two-fold: the over-representation of language is proportional only to an absence of language, pervasive discourses proportional only to prevalent silencings and erasures. Yet discourses of distance and silence entail more than alienation only. Both lead to and produce compounded forms of contradictions and cognitive dissonances that ripple through disciplinary thinking and practice. Within the authorial centre, it can produce 'enormous emotional dissonance' (Steyn 2005:127). One of the most visible groups of discursive strategies employed to manage such a fraught centre positionality, in the arts as well as in the public sphere generally, is that of 'Africanness': Africa is loved for its landscape, climate and aesthetics (evident in architecture, art, fashion, etc.) and yet also so frequently derided for 'crime and violence, corruption, dropping standards, affirmative action, and Africans' ingratitude', etc. (Steyn 2005:131). Steyn (2005) noted the clear continuities between these present (post)colonial-apartheid discourses with an earlier colonialism:

The denigration of the African continent and its people, so central to, and well suited for, the colonial and imperial projects of the West, are still the stock-in-trade of 'White Talk'. ('Africa will fall further and

further behind. The gap between the haves and have-nots globally is just widening all the time. Then this idiot of a president talks about an African Renaissance. We should be differentiating ourselves from the rest of this basket case of Africa. See when Nelson Mandela dies how the Rand will plummet'. ...). (p. 131)

Like 'white' positionalities, racialised-as-black positionalities within this disciplinary field manifest in different but no less profoundly contradictory ways. Confronting itself as objects of study through a regime of lenses and categories defined by others, Nsele (2016:99-100) observed that 'the black spectator is faced with the image of his or her negation'. 'Evoking a Duboisian double consciousness', the racialised-as-black spectator is both outside the frame of meaning-making as an object of its studious gaze, and inside it as a participant - both 'within and without' (Nsele 2016:106).

A racialised-as-black subjectivity is also trained to see itself within (and without of) a particular notion of history and time. While normative categories such as 'the informal', 'the everyday' or 'the developmental' are - at least at the best of times - presented as conditions which are in flux, fluid, temporal or dynamic, etc., paradoxically they also remain seemingly timeless categories and eternal framing devices locked in (or outside of) time. The prospect of knowledge within such a schema is primarily for racialised-as-black subjectivities to confirm and offer the much-valued explanatory filling to the *a priori* fames or categories by which they have already been defined - the fames or categories themselves remain timeless and inescapably characterised by otherness. Effectively exiled from time and place, racialised-as-black subjectivity must exist and understand itself once again as both on the inside and outside, of the linear time of a colonial settler modernity defined by its purported progressiveness (Nsele 2016:98).

All these fraught inside-outside 'Duboisian' positionalities recall the seemingly contradictory transformation efforts within the architectural discipline which I discussed earlier in the chapter,

which define the status quo by both failure as well as excellence, advocating for both change and constancy, offering assurances and counter-assurances, for and against transformation – even within the same voices. In the built environment like all (post) colonial disciplines where such dynamics play out, its effect, even if not in intention, is a silent reproductive process and language of self-othering – that is not only by others (as is sometimes acknowledged) but through racialised-as-black subjectivities themselves. Such a (post)colonial field produces not singular but compounding alienations, silences, distances and dissonances. Here disciplinary knowledges and agency appear as social systems which produce and over-represent language only so far as they consume and silence it, they articulate the world only as far as they lay waste to any such articulation of it, they delineate frames and categories only while they devastate others.

The contorted field of intimacies between subjectivities that apartheid-colonialism sought to set apart are (re)produced not only in the realms of identity and knowledge, but are dynamics that also structure the social logic of space. For example, in her collection of poems *The History of Intimacy*, South African poet Gabeba Baderoon (2018) described something of the self-othering entanglements between histories, places and subjectivities:

When the Group Areas Act is abolished,
my mother aches to go back
to the street she was removed from
and it is we, grown attached
to the scar we call home, who say, No,
we don't want to live in a white area,
this time ceding it ourselves. (p. 67)

Similarly for university students, the HSRC report identified how (Swartz et al. 2017):

[S]tudents' experiences of discrimination ... culminated in a broader feeling of not having a sense of belonging and not being accepted as legitimate students ... and students observed self-imposed segregation on their campuses. (pp. 50–51)

Similarly invoking a contorted 'intimacy' alluded to by Baderoon, architecture theorist Bremner (2005) also observed in the South African landscape during apartheid a reproductive socio-spatial phenomena:

While black and white bodies were, in theory, assigned to certain localities, fixed in space, in point of fact, they were caught up in continuous circulatory migrations and asymmetrical intimacies. Black bodies were needed to nurse white children, to clean white homes, to labor in white industry, to work on white mines. White bodies policed, regulated, and administered black space. (p. 131)

Since the formal demise of apartheid, not only have many of these conditions of 'asymmetrical intimacies'³⁰ been maintained but they have multiplied and refracted in new spaces of 'inclusion' in the 'post'-apartheid era, from educational and professional spaces to the spaces of shopping and suburbia, where they continue to 'unconsciously structure the present' (Hudson 2019:167).

■ Conclusion

The South African architectural mainstream typically displays a thinly-stretched and often reductive emphasis on designed objects, with relatively marginal attention directed toward a deeper understanding of the social and cultural field out of which these emerge, the discourses upon which these are based and

30. The notion of histories of contorted or 'asymmetrical intimacies', which are multifariously entangled yet conditioned by relations of power (see Figure 2.1), resembles but differs from the notion of the 'hybrid' as it is often uncritically employed in design and creative fields.

the positionality of the authorship which shapes it. These are not mutually exclusive phenomena but are intrinsically and inseparably connected. Beyond the limited scope within the status quo, however, there is a distinct impatience within the built environment disciplines toward the intellectual work required to understand (post)apartheid-colonial conditions at a deeper level, how they remain multifariously imbricated, and hence how they may chart ‘an-other’ (Mignolo 2007:465) way. This is particularly the case when this work is not considered ‘disciplinary’ and does not overtly support a recognised process toward a design product. However, this normative praxis in a conservative discipline only makes for poorer understood solutions. As such, ‘stale solutions are produced time and again with the same limited impacts’, as De Klerk (2017:52) argued, while Matsipa (2018) asked: ‘How does the next generation of African architects imagine the future, or is it just a linear continuation of the present?’

One effect of the marginalisation of more critical scholarship in favour of a notion of design process and product is that both have suffered.³¹ Indeed, one irony in the dogma of ‘excellence’ which dissociates design practices from the social and discursive field of its history, formation and reproduction is that it so often produces mediocrity. This was attested to by ASSAf’s peer review of the *Architecture SA* journal, the principal ‘voice’ of the discipline. The review described South African architectural discourse as (ASSAf 2018):

[R]ather inward looking (...) There is no external stimulus to the South African context (...) - currently there is too much national ‘self-congratulation’. (...) The predominance of self-appraisal of buildings by architects is problematic as it potentially inhibits critical discourse. (pp. 22-25)

31. ‘Design research’, as an expanded design process which embeds research within it, is purportedly meant to bridge the research – design divide. While this deepens the design process, it is not capable by itself of engaging the scale and complexity of questions to the discipline at large, and neither was it intended to.

An effect of this dissociation, even if never articulated as such, is a fusing of coloniality with excellence, though as a body of discursive strategies and practices the discipline remains largely unconscious of the social and symbolic construction thereof. I have attempted in this chapter to offer a deeper engagement with some of the dynamics and taboos that currently cripple the discipline in these ways and affect the current state of inertia (as alluded to by Virginia Woolf in another context, quoted at the opening of this chapter). The intention here is not to denounce these modes of thinking and practice, but to reveal their contingency relative to authorship and the positionality of knowledge, to lived and historical experience, as well as to questions of power, interests, tastes and prejudices. I have also attempted to elaborate on how some of the key groups of discursive strategies currently employed within the built environment are implicated, named:

1. the discourse of appropriate South African architecture
2. the discourse of (post)apartheid postmodernisms
3. the discourses of outward emphasis-inward neglect
4. the discourses of distance
5. the discourses that silence.

For the 'westernised' university, all disciplines and postcolonial education at large, are implicated in the processes described in this chapter in their own particular and nuanced ways, and must learn how to meet and navigate them. To do so necessitates expanding the epistemic base, modalities and tools of what is considered 'disciplinary', for it is scarcely possible to transform or even critique a status quo while simultaneously guarding the maintenance of its borders, practices and presumptions. Generally, this expanded base must integrate and cultivate knowledges and praxis which are not centred in 'western'-centric frameworks and their disciplinary formations (i.e. 'localised', 'indigenised', 'Africanised', 'third-worldised', etc.). In the context of disciplinary reform, this expanded praxis does not imply an

idea of imported, codified borrowings from other disciplines which remain alien and peripheral to their new host discipline; rather they require new, integrated forms of knowledge.

Such expanded and integrating initiatives, however, are not abstractions, 'inclusions', or merely new arenas for commodified knowledge production. On the contrary, they exist in social context and within social systems. In the South African context, it means cultivating a thinking and practice which is not centred in 'white' positionality and discursive strategies (i.e. whiteness and white-writing). For architecture, it means that the early 'post'-apartheid rubrics of professional obligation to serve society through socio-economic and developmental imperatives (as described by the SAIA president in 1990 for example) is an incomplete project, for the professional disciplines are themselves a part of society and hence reflect and must address the same fissures as in the broader society.

The HSRC cross-university report of student experience again provides useful insights here. It described how 'the existential struggles which shape South African life that can no longer be limited to the individual and social sphere' but echo through 'the embedded structural inequalities in the university and in society' (Swartz et al. 2017:50). The racialisation of South African society, for example, took place not only in the world 'out there', but the report described plainly that 'students are racialised' and lived 'racialised experiences' within their higher education studies, as microcosms or extensions of society (Swartz et al. 2017:50, 52). Architecture too is not separate from broader society, though at times it can be guilty of remarkable exceptionalism. Rather, the (post)colonial entanglements of class, race, education, gender or space across the globe is part and parcel of architecture too, often reflected in almost every sphere of the architectural discipline from academic to professional spaces, from publications to institutions. University students understood this well, where (Swartz et al. 2017):

[7]he education system was noted as being influential to change or perpetuate race relations in the country.

The centering of the education system as being a source that enables current race relations, point to both an understanding by students of the power universities hold – but more deeply – the failure of universities in disrupting the cycles of inequality. (pp. 61–62)

Disciplinary spaces of education thus have a responsibility much broader than conventionally understood. New, integrated forms of theory are therefore necessary not only for disciplines to understand the (post)colonial societies in which they exist, but likewise to also understand themselves. This may assist them not only to be more capable of speaking to their society, but also to not continue reproducing the worst of it as falsely-conceived islands of excellence. Architecture like many other disciplines in the academy cannot remain resistant or indifferent to this because they are *already* implicated – whether this fact is acknowledged or not. What is therefore required of the disciplines is not to shy away from social fissures discretely and incoherently and consign them to a zone of taboos, but rather the reverse: to more deeply understand the ways in which these are sustained and reproduced in other (educational, professional and disciplinary) forms, and to develop ethical and imaginative counter strategies.

For example, race theorists like Pitcher (2011:200–202) argued that understanding contemporary social and cultural life should not be considered ‘irrelevant or ... an unnecessary deviation from that discipline’s or area’s main object of study’, and such a distinction ‘is a false and unhelpful abstraction’. Similarly, the HSRC report identified a need for ‘the use of intersecting theoretical concepts through which to design and analyse’ and recommended that ‘courses in African knowledges, South African history, and social inclusion (race, class, gender and sexuality) should be a key component of study for all incoming students’ (Swartz et al. 2017:7, 154).

Little of the above expansions and integrations is possible, however, if there is not a parallel process of developing human agency and authorship, as I have emphasised throughout

the chapter. In other words, ‘transformation’-agency on the one hand, and ‘decolonisation’-knowledge and praxis on the other, are intrinsically linked though frequently treated separately or as unrelated. Delinking ‘decolonisation’ from the process (already common academic practice after 2015) means abstraction or metaphorisation out of the social system it exists within and maintaining its dominant systems of power and authorship. Delinking ‘transformation’ can often mean little more than ‘colour by numbers’, or the numerical practices of false inclusion. Hence the twin process, decoupled, loses both imperatives.

Operationalised (as opposed to commodified or assimilated), such strategic processes (i.e. ‘transformation’ and ‘decolonisation’) unavoidably meet systems of power – and hence inevitable resistance – at virtually every level, though they do so in the context of justice. However, in essence it is much more than this. Fanon (among others) in 1961 already recognised in colonialism ‘a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity’ (Fanon 1963:250). This perhaps remains what is at stake, for it concerns the full humanity and full complexity of those whose lives have been – and continue to be, as I have argued throughout the chapter – delimited, devalued or negated through the frames and definitions of others; and as such consequently constricted from making fuller contributions (intellectual, spiritual, social, institutional, etc.) to the challenges and questions faced by their societies. Similarly, the HSRC report observed that ‘students and lecturers alike bring their histories into classrooms and respond to certain historical or contextual, and pedagogical approaches that are distinct to their lived experiences’ and if this is denied or delimited (i.e. through representation, authorship, etc.) then ‘all students are deprived of perspectives, understandings, and worldviews that diverse knowledge systems bring’ (Swartz et al. 2017:65). As Johannesburg’s ‘Education Conversations’ seminar in 2019 put it simply: ‘We teach who we are’ (Anne Baker quoted in Vorwerk 2019:29).

We hear you! The unheard, marginalised and excluded: Power and cities

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■ Introduction: Competition for space in cities

To achieve progress in cities, practices that reinforce injustice must be consistently and systematically targeted, exposed and dismantled. We cannot have progressive cities if we continue to

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keep silent about the ailments that harm society. This harm happens at all levels (from the home to institutional and political agencies) as well as at all levels and scales of spatial manifestation (again from the home, to the neighbourhood to the city level). Competition for a 'voice' happens at every sphere in cities. I write this chapter from the perspective of a Sudanese-South African and I draw experiences and examples from both contexts.

Several major events occurred during the conceptualising, drafting and development of this chapter. December 2018 saw the start of the Sudanese Revolution – an event that continued for many months and ultimately saw the overthrowing of a 30-year old military, Islamic dictatorship. As Sudan was celebrating the achievements of its revolution in September 2019, South African cities exploded with violence (mostly targeted at women and children), xenophobia and anger at the lack of 'service delivery', scarcity of jobs and apprehension at perceived job losses because of the so-called 'fourth industrial revolution'. Sudan and South Africa continue to be societies in crisis. As Sudan goes through a period of uneasy political change, geopolitical complexity and conflicts in its geographic peripheries, in South Africa much of the crisis is rooted in the inherent inequality and high levels of marginalisation; South African cities are highly divided cities. In March 2020, we faced another global crisis – the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many countries, and the world, to be in 'lockdown'. Indeed, this is a crisis that may have unimaginable impact on our lives and cities in the future. It is also a time when climate change and migration have been at the forefront of humanitarian concerns. In May 2020, global dynamics further changed with the explosion of the BLM movement triggered by the killing of George Floyd in the USA. All these factors will drastically change the manner in which cities operate and how cities relate to each other in a global context.

Writing from this context, this chapter aims to address the issue of voices that are marginalised in cities. The chapter exposes imbalances inherent in the debates around cities. It asks the

question: how do we resolve issues of marginalisation evident in our academic and professional settings – how do we adopt a professional ‘gaze’ that acknowledges ‘other’ practices, people and places previously side-lined or rendered invisible?

The first time that I used the phrase ‘We hear you!’ was when I addressed a session that I organised focusing on informal traders at a keynote panel debate at the UIA 2014 Durban, the International Union of Architects Congress hosted in Durban in 2014. As the General Reporter for the event, I made sure that the community leaders representing the traders were offered a key platform at the event. As curator for a number of international events over the years, I always aimed to make sure that diverse voices were included. But we did not always succeed in having their voices heard.

The chapter adopts a multidisciplinary, ecosystemic framework that introduces modes of inquiry into the built environment but that are not confined to the realm of the built environment disciplines. This has allowed a critique of these disciplines, and for me as an architect, allowed an exploration beyond the boundaries of conventional architectural writing and practice. In order to ‘unpack’ the topic of power in cities, this chapter therefore borrows and juxtaposes various concepts from different disciplines.

The chapter is based on a premise that there are ways in which to increase visibility, access and ways in which to include diverse voices in the making and evolution of cities. It first looks at how meaning is constructed in cities and the making of cities through theories of meaning-making in the built environment by looking at issues of language, culture, religion, rituals, gender, class and race. The chapter argues that there is much that is ‘seen’ and evident, yet also much that is hidden and invisible in cities and that the built environment can be interpreted in terms of systems of negotiation, transaction, territory, ownership and deal-making – as well as how this negotiation is facilitated (or hindered) by the spatial, physical and structural qualities of the city. The chapter presents the fact that space and built form – carefully considered – may facilitate and support socio-cultural

processes, and increased agency of the inhabitants and users (Osman 2015). Those that hold the power continue to have greater access and agency than those who are stripped of the right to make decisions about their environments. However, people continue to exert power and agency through other means such as protest.

Urban policy relates strongly to issues of power in cities. Cultural and financial capital determine, albeit questionably, who has rights to the city and who owns the city. Where and how money is invested in cities determines who benefits, as do government-sanctioned mega-developments, reflecting the interests of specific groups; flows of money determine who is served. These issues are considered in a global setting where globalisation and diasporic migration patterns generate similarities and comparisons across national borders. It is not only people who cross borders; flows of money, many times unofficially, increase agency and support communities otherwise unsupported by formal systems.

In order to expose injustices, as well as better articulate possible alternative practices, interventions and solutions, after the development of a theoretical argument and the construction of an interpretative ecosystemic framework, some examples are presented which arguably allow us to 'see the hidden' and 'listen to the unheard'.

■ Experience, narrative and method of analysis

'The future belongs to the most compelling story.' (Dellinger n.d.:n.p.)

[O]ur stories have an immense power to shape the world.' (Hjersted 2014:n.p.)

As an architect interested in cities and space, I am confronted again and again by the discipline's reluctance to engage with the political implications of its modes of operation – and its complicity in how space manifests as a result of design and technical decisions.

More and more, I come to the realisation that the decision not to engage with the political implications of our professional practice is indeed highly political whether we decide to acknowledge that or not.

I also have come to realise that other voices, other ways of doing and other ways of thinking have been systematically and violently silenced – I am gradually coming to the realisation that I myself have been complicit in this – having been well-versed in what is deemed professional, academic and what is accepted by my peers.

However, some years back I had managed to disengage myself somewhat from conventional methods of thinking and operation in the discipline by seeking new theories better suited to contexts I knew, originated from and inhabited. I actively set out to position architecture in an ecosystemic cultural realm that allows for it to be studied in relation to other artefacts and modes of expression (Osman 2004), yet much of what I write is still heavily reliant on European sources, modes of analysis and thinking. Can I claim to now be ‘emancipated’, and can I claim to have innovated more appropriate methods of thinking that emanate from my own African origins and realities? I think not yet; but I am on the way there. To do so, I have had to often venture beyond the boundaries of my own discipline.

One of my biggest dilemmas is without a doubt my language of communication and writing, as is the void I am often confronted with when trying to find voices, authors and texts written by non-western authors – especially in the architecture and built environment fields. Wa Thiong’o (1986) has used the term ‘subaltern’ to describe those who may be considered socially, politically and geographically ‘outside’ of the established hierarchy of power; he explains that established hegemony is further reinforced by the state, which tends to back dominant groups (Wa Thiong’o 1986:203). The architectural profession tends to align itself with the power, as do other professions. When considering the inherent ‘violence’ of academia and

professionalism, power dynamics are important to understand. These power dynamics dominate 'spaces of knowledge' as well as 'spaces of cities' which Crysler (2003) links to both the politics of space, as well as the politics of writing. Foucault also explains how objects, space, events and narratives can be recognised as real or serious - validating some and dismissing others - while 'professions' demand a certain authority which comes with the power granted to 'professionals' within certain disciplines and their associated 'discourse' (Foucault 1972:50-51).

What completely shook us as academics, and led us to question our conventional methods was no doubt the FMF movement in South Africa. We came to the realisation that, in order to achieve change, we need to start by decolonisation of both our spaces and our professional practice. Hendricks and Leibowitz (2016) write of the anxiety and 'unsettling' that accompanies the decolonisation project as people's identity is called into question. The authors address the issue of the '... silencing of the "Other" - particularly African scholars...'. (Hendricks & Leibowitz 2016:n.p.)

Yet with deeper investigation, it is realised that Africans have always produced knowledge about Africa - knowledge that is 'preferably unheard' or 'deliberately silenced' (Pailey 2016). As I reflected back across my career and years of training, I realised the many ways in which I had been conditioned to have a lack of confidence in my heritage and a lack of respect for the way in which 'my people' had done things. A new language of emancipation needs to be learnt (Suttner 2016). Amin Maalouf explains how our loss of self-respect has affected our emotions and self-image and is thus not only has local impact but global impact as well (Maalouf 2011:144) (though Maalouf speaks specifically of Arab populations, the implications are the same for many).

We need to rewrite history and to render 'visible' that which has been rendered 'invisible'. To do this, we must be willing to draw inspiration and learn from a wide pool of resources while

also unearthing knowledge that has been hidden and unacknowledged. To succeed in a western-focused academic context, we find that we need to adopt certain ways of thinking and to discard important knowledge from our own contexts – this is many times the only way to be accepted as ‘a professional academic...’ (De Waal 2016).

My 2004 PhD on space, place and meaning in northern riverain Sudan, attempted to construct a method of analysis better suited to contexts I know; even though I adapted western theories to achieve that, the examples and concerns are very much rooted in the context of Sudan. As an example, phenomenology is used as a tool to achieve a deep understanding of the milieu in which physical artefacts and space are conceived and implemented. To make this relevant to the African contexts under consideration, the concept of phenomenology is applied by broadening aspects under study to not only include tangible phenomena, but also the intangible. In this understanding, things and artefacts are considered not just as materials, objects or physical ‘things’ but are also seen as reactions to the context in which materials or objects are concretised based on intangible factors. In this way, an ‘artefact’ is extended to include the wisdom, values, ideas and words that led to its conception. Thus ‘artefact’ is interpreted in terms of history (time), geography (space) and cognition – three dimensions of analysis based on Crumley (2000:194 in Osman 2004).

Premised on the outcomes of my work in 2004, Figure 3.1 is the construction of a multidisciplinary or ecosystemic framework proposed for use in architectural and spatial interpretation, research and education where the relationships between intangible and tangible aspects of built culture are taken into account. This is done by incorporating the influence of social, political, cultural and religious factors on space and built form. Spheres of social interaction, beliefs (and corresponding ritual), social roles, duties all find a place in the framework, as do recurring themes in literature, songs, poetry, sayings and local beliefs and texts – aspects not usually included in architectural studies and texts. This method of interpretation offers tools to assist in

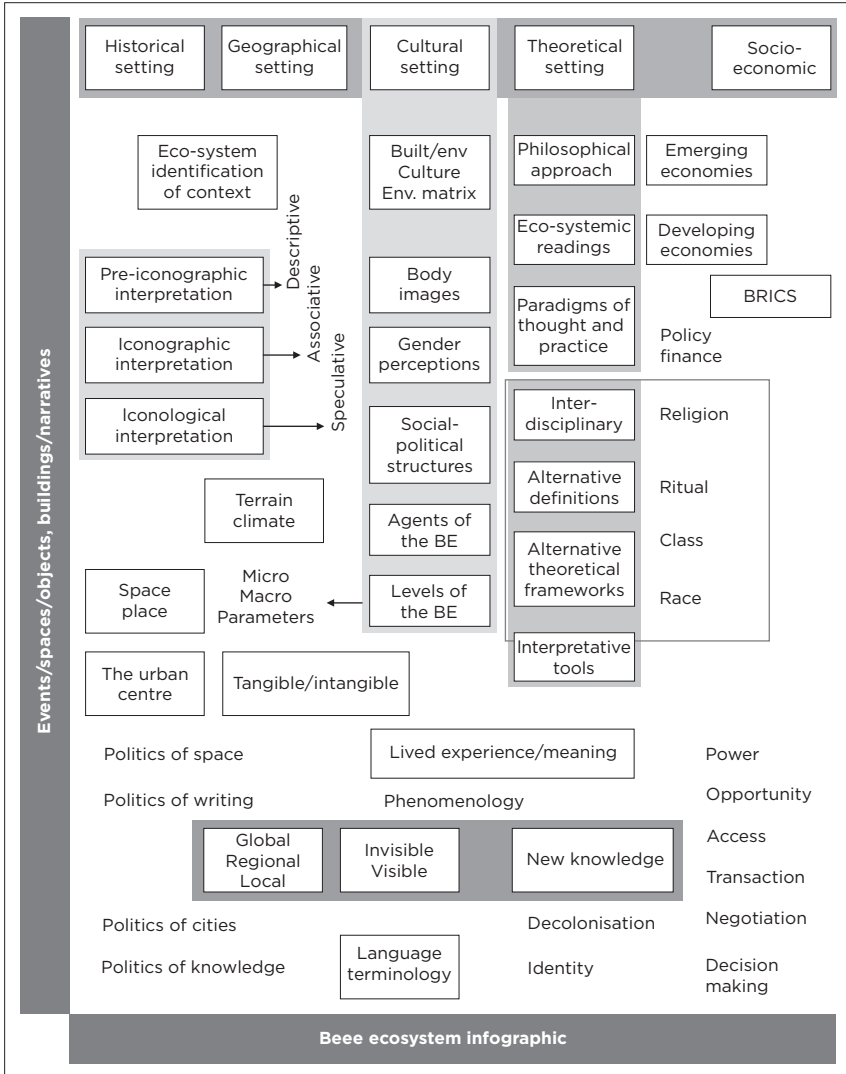


FIGURE 3.1: The construction of an ecosystemic, interpretative framework for the built environment in emerging economies. This is expanded and adapted from a diagram by the author produced in 2004.

understanding a context in a deep way. It then becomes possible to formulate an alternative picture or interpretation for diverse contexts about how they came to be, and what meanings they may hold for the people that build and inhabit them (Osman 2004). This understanding of built form and space-making of course has influence on our understanding of cities. The ‘urban centre’ is an important artefact; how it originates and develops can give valuable clues as to the attitudes of people to life and, ultimately, to how people inhabit space and the creation of place (Osman 2004). The physical form of the city and how people perceive it in their minds is a reflection of ‘the degree of homogeneity between environment and observer’ (Lynch 1981). Yet, the relationship between culture, identity and space can also be complex and sometimes contradictory (McMillan 2009:137). A surface reading of any context will be inadequate.

In aiming to understand the diverse structuring principles of the built environment, I also consider the relationship between the individual and the community – or collective – in decision-making. I interpret this in terms of decision-making at different levels of the built environment. My thinking is very much influenced by John Habraken – I find that this approach accommodates for the complex evolution of historical and vernacular contexts, beyond surface aesthetics and imagery and the limitations posed by institutional architecture – these aspects would otherwise go unrecognised. Habraken (1984) identifies lower-level configurations, at the scale of the individual and immediate space, and the relationship to the environment at neighbourhood and city scales:

[I]n general terms we can say that the higher level element is a ‘public’ element to those at the lower level. It serves as an ‘infrastructure’ to those attached to it. This relation, in which the higher level serves, in one way or another, the lower level is typical for form hierarchies in the real world. (p. 7)

Complex environmental contexts become a reflection of ‘... distributed design responsibilities and ... [a] necessary prerequisite for the emergence of complex environmental form’

(Habraken 1984:20). Acknowledgement of this complexity and multi-dimensionality is a very different approach to the interpretation of context only in terms of visual and morphological characteristics. This framework thus allows us to 'see' and consider what would otherwise be excluded and marginalised – it allows us to develop better tools to consider all city dwellers and include multiple voices in city making.

■ **A premise: Tools to include diverse voices in the evolution of cities**

The history of marginality can be understood if one considers how reality has been interpreted by various disciplines – many times serving specific agendas. Using the lens of Kuhn's 'paradigms' or Foucault's 'epistemes' offers an approach to the interpretation of history which explains the production of the 'present' (Foucault in Leach 1997:351). In South Africa, as in many places, geographical and spatial exclusion is political; Biko (1978:88) has written about 'Bantustans' ('independent or autonomous African "homelands"') in South Africa as the 'the greatest single fraud invented by white politicians' (Biko 1978:92). All space-making practices are indeed political in nature.

Spatial disadvantage has been politically manufactured and can, therefore, be politically addressed. The built environment professions tend to shy away from these debates, claiming that their roles are technocratic in nature, thus denying that technical and professional decision-making is never neutral and is indeed a reflection of a society's value systems and political inclinations. Space, knowledge and power are inseparable (Leach 1997:348). However, Foucault does say of architects that they do not have as much impact on other disciplines – and thus architecture cannot liberate or oppress: 'Liberty is a *practice*' (Foucault in Leach 1997:371). Foucault states that it is the '...engineers and builders of bridges, roads, viaducts, railways...' (Foucault in Leach 1997:371) who have the maximum influence on space (Foucault in

Leach 1997:371). This brings into question the relationship between architecture, planning and infrastructure – which I believe needs to be reconsidered and reformulated. By changing this relationship between the built environment disciplines and demolishing the silos that contain them, I believe the disciplines will be more effective in achieving spatial transformation and inclusivity.

While Stott (2013:n.p.) argues that architects are better equipped to ‘... mediate between new technology and the people it aims to serve...’, this could also be questioned as architects have also been previously implicated in grand gestures that have been disruptive and shown little sensitivity to people or context. As an example, Bofill (cited in Belogolovsky 2016) claims that:

[C]orbu [*reference to Le Corbusier*] was the one architect who killed the city. He had a total disregard for history. He hated the city. He wanted to divide the city, segregate it into zones for living, working, commerce, and so on. He thought of cities and buildings as machines. (n.p.)

Le Corbusier proceeded to have great influence on modernist cities and space-making in a process that Habraken (2004) has labelled as ‘regressive’ in that it failed to ‘acknowledge the complexity evident in older contexts in terms of multiple decision makers’ (Osman 2018) and articulation of the different levels of the built environment:

[W]hile the constraints on the various professions are acknowledged, the built environment professionals operating at different levels of the built environment can exert a level of power and influence people participation through the decisions taken at those different scales of intervention; regulations and material selection – what is promoted, accepted and regulated and what falls outside of regulation, which technology is used/valued, and for whom, how buildings and infrastructure are constructed and how specifications are drawn up are all tools that have strong implications for who gets included and who is excluded in the construction of cities from the larger scale to the scale of an individual project site. The critical relationship between technology and space-making is recognised, as is the need

to use technology and data in such a way that ‘...re-balance[s] our collective future... the curating of data is to achieve cross discipline and boundless thinking about our cities economic, social and environmental performance’ (rePLACE urban studio n.d.). (p. 68)

Thus, regulatory frameworks, technical decision-making, specifications become the tools through which historical disadvantage may be redressed.

■ **What is seen and what isn’t: Negotiation, transaction and deal-making (aka. engaging with the ‘mess’)**

[M]odification of settlement is a human act, however complex, accomplished for human motives, however obscure or ineffective ... Uncovering those motives gives us some first clues to the connections between values and environmental form. (Lynch 1981:n.p.)

[T]he urban poor are trapped in an informal and ‘illegal’ world – in slums that are not reflected on maps, where waste is not collected, where taxes are not paid and where public services are not provided. Officially, they do not exist. (UN Habitat 2003:6)

The built environment comes to be, and is sustained, through complex, and many times invisible, processes of transaction, negotiation and deal-making. Hamdi asks, when it comes to trying to understand human interventions in the built environment, that we engage with the ‘mess’ rather than try to sort it out (Hamdi 2004). If the scale of informality is at the level documented by Rogan and Skinner (2019), 3 million people work in the informal sector in South Africa; this means that much economic activity goes unrecognised and undocumented in our cities. As formal state systems fail and life becomes more difficult through increased restrictions to access opportunities, people come to rely on informal systems – this means that more than 60% of economic processes are considered ‘informal’ (ILO 2018).

Other authors have also advocated for: ‘... messy, informal, organic and bottom-up forms of innovation in hyperlocal contexts within the

city' (Stott 2013:n.p.). Having said that, Crylser (2003) exposes the limitations of the built environment disciplines in accurately reflecting these realities; in researching published, scholarly journals, on the built environment disciplines, it can be asked:

[W]hich spaces become visible and which become invisible? Which theories are included and which are excluded? Who speaks and who is silenced? Whose histories, cultures and geographies become important in the representations, and upon what terms? (n.p.)

Meaning in the built environment can be assembled from words, language, art, representation and memories; it refers to the significance attributed to artefacts and space by particular communities. We are trapped in trying to comprehend 'settlement' as an 'individual' rather than a 'collective' form of expression. The focus on the 'individual' has dominated practice in the built environment professions and is at odds with how vernacular settlements were built and developed in many places across the world. Indeed, it has been said that vernacular architecture is town planning or it is nothing (Turan 1990). Building monuments or building simply is not only linked to resources but it is also a reflection of belief systems and cultural norms (Osman & Musonda 2017):

Building dominant structures or understated structures relates to social understanding. Buildings that stand out as isolated objects are a different form of expression from buildings that merge with the surroundings and are not easily identifiable. All of these are not neutral configurations. They contain meaning and convey socially-understood messages. (p. 225)

The influence of economic and climatic factors on buildings and space is generally easier to observe when compared to cultural and social rituals and may have profound, yet not easy to see or understand, influence. Habraken believes that building is a social act and that 'the house', as compared to all other building forms, is where we find the manifestation of the shared values of a people (Habraken 1988:3). At the level of the house, we are also able to detect the power structures within a community (Osman 2004):

[A] crucial aspect of culture is no doubt power and leadership establishments. Power relations are important in designing and

maintaining a particular built environment. And in a two-way process, architecture plays an active role in structuring social hierarchies and creating power strategies. (pp. 142-143)

It is also important to understand that not all activities are deemed important enough to be documented and considered. There is a disconnect between the formal and informal, despite informal activities playing a more significant role in the shaping of cities and space, and this creates a schism in the manner in which we view the built environment. This schism generates competition and protest, with protesters sometimes presented in a very negative light, losing sight of very real and pertinent issues that they are trying to communicate (Duncan 2016). Disputes around city space are a global phenomenon. To demonstrate these processes, a few examples are presented here:

□ Example 1

The Istanbul, Gezi Park, which is located next to Takseem Square, became a site of spatial resistance – demonstrating the incredible impact that decisions around the built environment and planning can have on a ‘collective’ (Demir 2014:56) and how this resistance can be described as being very ‘urban’ in its nature (Demir 2014:1206). The ability of this ‘collective’ to organise and mobilise, as was also evident in the Occupy Movement, is testament to the power of virtual (Goyal & Des 2014:977). Cetin and Has (2014:52-55) explain the fact that conflicts around space in cities reflect neoliberal policies and that protest is a form of power that communities exert with the intention to re-configure the spatial economy; they also see the built environment professions as serving ‘an ideological war’ between the corporate sector and the general public. While this was a local situation, it had great resonance globally.

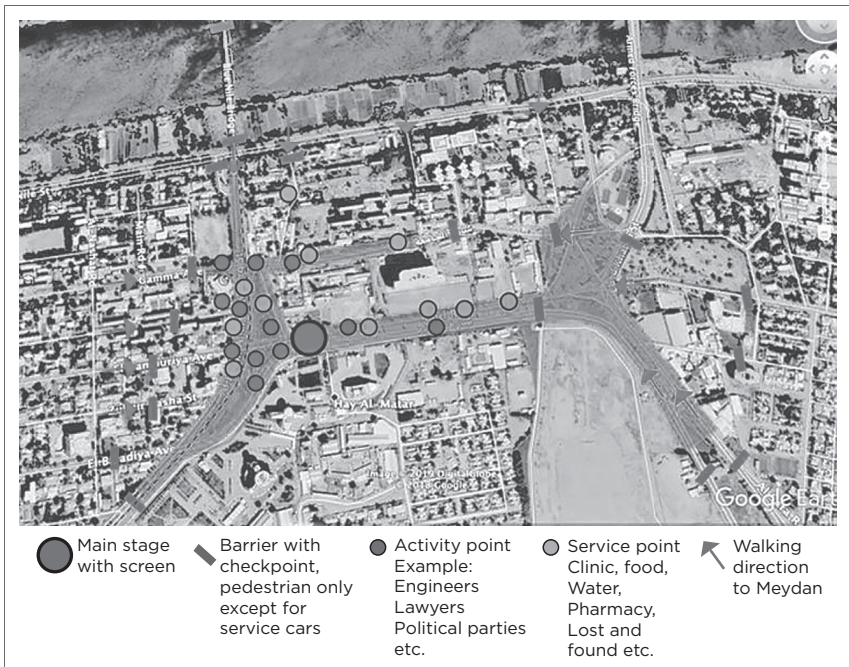
□ Example 2

More recently, the occupation of the spaces around the Sudanese Military Headquarters saw the creation of a ‘settlement’ which became a vibrant gathering space until it was brutally dispersed

on 03 June 2019. At the time, this occupation transformed the streets; some have said that this space [was] a microcosm of the future Sudan that the protesters envision (Osman & Abdelhamied 2019):

[A]ll of this echoes what research and history have repeatedly shown. Urban public spaces may be built to represent governments, but they are often appropriated by citizens and become sites of protest. (n.p.)

The idea of occupying space has been a very powerful metaphor for reclaiming lost power and making voices heard. Yet, the backlash by those in authority to this legitimate method of voicing dissent has often been met with extreme aggression – a demonstration of how much city authorities will go towards maintaining their power.



Source: Image formulated by Mohammed Abd Al Hameid, with the use of Google Earth (Google n.d.), published with permission from Mohammed Abd Al Hameid.

FIGURE 3.2: The site of the Khartoum sit-in superimposed on a Google Earth image.

□ Example 3

As further testimony to how decisions about the built environment led to protest, unrest erupted in Khartoum after rumours erupted stating that the Khartoum University was being sold off to private investors in 2016 (Osman & Abd Allah 2016). The secrecy around a newly developed plan for the capital city was the reason that triggered the protests. The new plan was seen to compromise free access to public space and to negatively impact the rivers, Tuti Island and the Mughran (the meeting place of the Niles) as the key identifying features of Khartoum. Many places that could be impacted by the plan are considered 'breathing spaces' for Khartoum's residents. The concern was, and still is, in what way will people's access to livelihood opportunities in those spaces be compromised (Osman & Abd Allah 2016):

[W]ill [*the plans*] ... further claim valuable land for the benefit of a few, 'pushing out' small business people and the thousands of people who benefit in various ways by having free access to the Nile banks? (n.p.)

State-sanctioned mega developments lead to displacement of people and the disruption of livelihoods; once communities become alert to this situation, anger and protests erupt. Citizens reinforce their rights, sometimes through virtual platforms, to city space through protest. Participation, and connection to 'imaginary communities through space', become the language adopted towards societal improvement (Lepofsky & Fraser 2003:129; Mohamed 2006:37).

□ Example 4

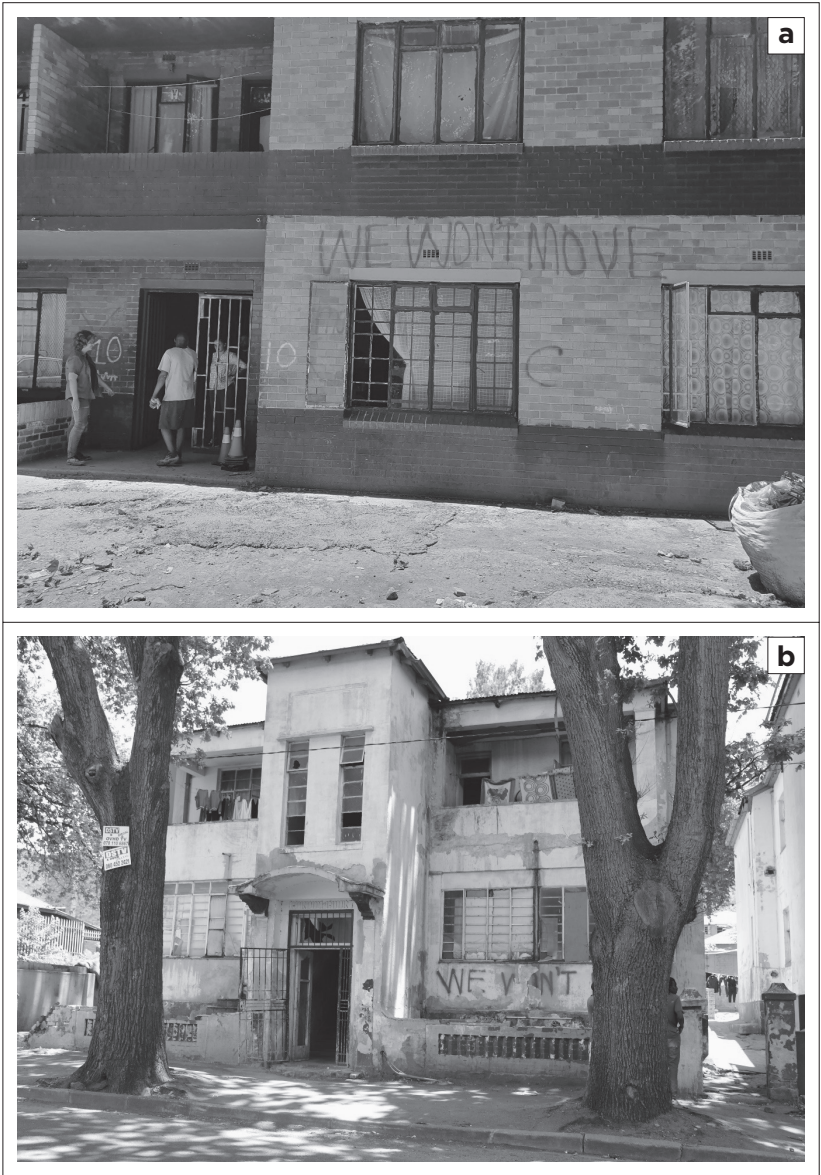
Warwick Junction is a transport node in Durban that sees half a million users on a typical day and has about 6000 informal traders; it has been argued that the financial capital in circulation at Warwick Junction is comparable to the capital flows of all of the city's centre and its shopping malls. Warwick Junction has a difficult relationship with the city (Mduli 2010). This ambiguous relationship means that no regular cleaning or maintenance is

implemented and there is a constant risk of displacement (IOL Business 2009). This is a scenario that happens often as a response to informal activities in the city: and services are withheld from communities. If the plan to construct a mall proceeds, this means that an intricate network of farmers, producers, transporters, traders would be disrupted – this is a threat to thousands of people who are not necessarily operating within the specific site but service it in one way or the other (IOL Properties 2013). The markets survived an, arguably, more hostile environment during Apartheid – it would be unfortunate if they are lost in the democratic era (Maharaj 2010).

[7]he system of developmentalism adopted by the post-apartheid government derives from the modern ideal that the state holds the power to transform society, and it is rooted in the state's overarching mandate to reduce poverty by accelerating economic growth. Yet this paradigm fails to recognise, value or make use of the many ways in which the city's most disenfranchised actors, who often fall outside of state registers, claim their spaces and voices. (Kotzen 2015:n.p.)

□ Example 5

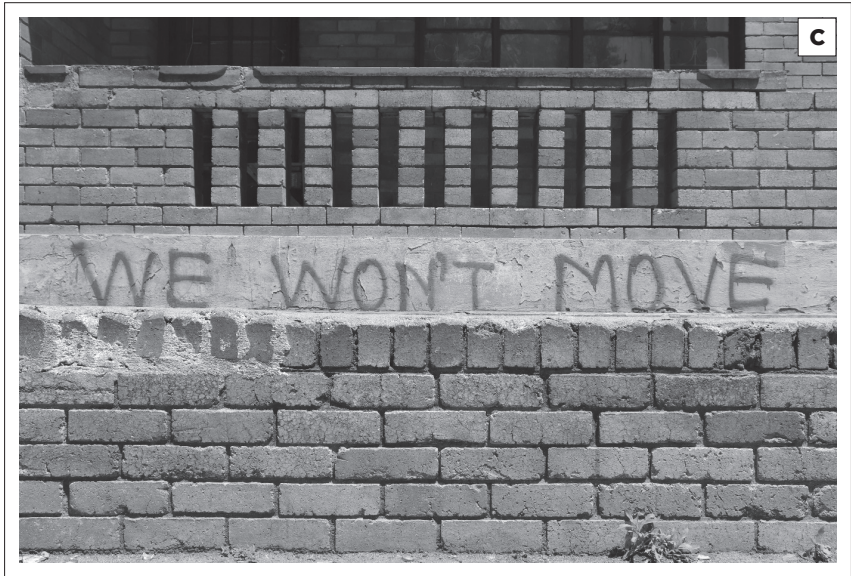
For the last few years, the University of Johannesburg and the Tshwane University of Technology in Gauteng, South Africa have partnered with a community in Bertrams, Johannesburg. The intention of the project is to support the community in 'improving their living conditions' (Bah, Faye & Geh 2018:221, 223, 226–227) in an informally-occupied, government-owned building. The existing inhabitants have lived in the building for a considerable number of years; the majority between 5 and 20 years. They have faced constant threats of eviction. With the support of several NGOs, the residents have been educated about their rights and they have taken great steps in ensuring a better life for themselves. The premises are communally-cleaned, and they have worked together to provide basic services and security. The researchers have documented the building and conducted major structural and health improvements – the response of the residents to these



Source: (a, b & c) Photographs taken by ItoI Agency of Engagement, 2019, Bertrams, Johannesburg, published with permission from ItoI Agency of Engagement.

FIGURE 3.3: (a, b & c) “We won’t leave”, a response to threats of evictions by the residents of an informally-occupied building in Bertrams, Johannesburg.

Figure 3.3 continues on the next page→



Source: (a, b & c) Photographs taken by Itoi Agency of Engagement, 2019, Bertrams, Johannesburg, published with permission from Itoi Agency of Engagement.

FIGURE 3.3 (Continues): (a, b & c) “We won’t leave”, a response to threats of evictions by the residents of an informally-occupied building in Bertrams, Johannesburg.

improvements is now also being documented. Skills audits, training and consultation workshops have been conducted.

The research teams are looking into further phased interventions to improve conditions in the building – perhaps ultimately transitioning into a functioning, safe ‘mixed use residential development’ (see Khakzand 2016). This could become a pilot project for other occupied buildings in the city, which have become major sites of difference and conflict between communities and local authorities. It was noticed that after the initial renovations, graffiti was painted on the external walls boldly stating ‘WE WON’T LEAVE’, a demonstration of a sense of confidence and empowerment that may be a result of the building improvements.

The many disputes over space that happen in inner city Johannesburg means that explorations into how to create integrated, mixed communities are vital. While many times the focus is on the creation of new neighbourhoods (or even new cities as implied in the South African president's recent State of the Nation Address), this project rather considers interventions in existing neighbourhoods through community-based, smaller-scaled, acupunctural, project interventions and densification strategies, functional and typological mix. This is in direct opposition to larger-scale new projects and the current drive for 'mega-projects'.

■ Recapitulation of the examples presented

The Istanbul Gezi Park experience showed how strongly people feel about public space and the extent they are prepared to go to in order to have a voice in the decisions around those public spaces. In this and other occupation movements around the globe, it was the power of virtual networks that was harnessed to mobilise the masses and their presence in real space. This was powerfully evident at the Khartoum site of the sit-in in 2019 (see Figure 3.2). At Warwick Junction in Durban, the 'battle' between neoliberal forces and communities plays out in compelling ways, and while the city has not eradicated the Market, it continues to have an ambiguous relationship with it, an ambiguity that also plays out in the relationship between the City of Johannesburg and inner city residents such as those in the neighbourhood of Bertrams (see Figure 3.3). While places like Warwick and Bertrams remain for many years, they continue to be under constant threat of eradication creating an interesting, though unfortunate, dynamic. The unseen forces in the built environment mean that there is constant negotiation, transaction and deal-making happening behind the scenes in communities, between themselves and with authorities. There are different attempts by authorities to respond to the complexity and the 'mess' – but unfortunately, these

reactions are either withholding services and support of attempts to formalise, “clean up” and enforce “order”, many times causing friction and conflict.

■ **Beyond the built environment disciplines: society, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class and race**

The built environment professions, and our modes of practice and teaching, as is the manner in which we speak about space, infrastructure and buildings all remain highly exclusionary and exclusive. On numerous occasions over my career, when speaking about these matters, I have been silenced by a comment ‘we must not compromise standards’ as if accommodating other voices in the field would immediately reduce the standards of education or the outputs of practice. When attempting to address issues of exclusion through the content and methods of delivery in classrooms and studios, there has been a sense of superiority and a dismissiveness towards service learning, practical design, technology skills, applied design and contextual responses – favouring abstract representation and communication methods that are deliberately exclusionary rather than inclusionary. In my own efforts over the years to transform my teaching, I have often been told ‘this is not architecture’, ‘this is not in line with the image of the institution’ or, in one case, ‘this is not suitable for study at a post-graduate level’. Indeed, as a discipline we are known for our ‘archi-speak’ – a manner of communication that aims to obscure, isolate and confuse.

In architecture, our academic methods of instruction tend to favour a fervour for ‘celebrity’ (Buday 2017):

[A]rchitects, more than any other profession, appear to accept the primacy of ‘knowing- in-practice’: while they create an ‘immense’ body of knowledge it is largely shared informally... [...] learning styles and preferred communication methods, [...] are primarily visual and peer-to-peer. (n.p.)

This state of the profession means that a tight network and ‘click’ is created. If you are not part of that network, you are immediately disadvantaged. *This* ‘ivory tower position of autonomous architecture existing beyond the forces that impact other disciplines’ thus creates a situation where the profession continues to be very elitist. These beliefs are articulated by Jeremy Till in Buday (2017) referring to the ‘myths’ about the architecture profession, Till states that some architects believe ‘in order to establish itself as a credible and “strong” epistemology, architecture must turn to other disciplines for authority’ (Buday 2017). As explained previously, I believe that this is not necessarily a disadvantage but important to, not achieve credibility, but innovation – as I believe innovation happens when one is ready to cross between knowledge boundaries.

Murray (2010) has written:

[7]here was the need for a critical reflexivity from within the professionalised disciplines that includes a critique of the ‘culture’ of these disciplines ... I therefore came to be interested in debates outside of the disciplines... . (p. 4)

Architecture is often presented as a complex discipline. Is it more complex than others as some might claim? Or is this a conceited perspective? How does the architectural profession relate to concepts of culture, religion, rituals, gender, class and race? Indeed, how do the built environment professions relate to each other in the context of society, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class and race? And in the context of emerging economies, how do these concepts relate to the socio-economic realities of these contexts?

As one example, the relationship between culture and inequality is not well explored, nor are the cultural processes in which class and identity are created (Haylett 2003):

[M]arginal to these approaches is a well-advanced feminist literature on equality and difference in which cultural differences that are bound into economic inequalities are given more considered thought. In this regard, Nancy Fraser’s work on differentiating difference is of particular value. (p. 57)

As this chapter is premised on the idea that societal and cultural change will lead to professional and spatial progress and advancement, it is therefore argued that gender-justice lies at the heart of any struggle for an egalitarian society (as supported by Leonard & Fraser 2016). Investing in culture, be it tangible or intangible, is as important as investing in infrastructure or economic development as economic, social, cultural and spatial production are interconnected.

The Sudanese context will be used here to make an argument that conventional frameworks for studying space and architecture may sometimes prove inadequate. This is mostly sourced from an unpublished PhD dissertation (Osman 2004). Many of these issues would be deemed insignificant or unimportant in professional debates on the built environment:

1. In Sudan, attitudes to materiality and wealth have varied over different eras and have been linked to the values of self-denial and moderation of Muslim Sufis. Imagery was delegated a minor or major position depending on the dominant forces at any particular time. It is speculated that the influence of social status on settlement designs became less evident after the desiccation of the Sahara and the fall of the great Nubia empires; this coincided with Islam entering the region after a long period of uneasy peace, poverty became more widespread and the *shaykh* [religious leader] became more dominant in the day-to-day life of people.
 - *society, culture, **religion, spirituality**, politics, rituals, gender, class, race*
2. Elitism is defined by political power and material wealth. While discriminatory mind-sets are acknowledged as a key feature of Sudanese attitudes (historically, racist attitudes in the region are well-documented), yet, the materialisation of this is not so visible. This follows in the general pattern of the history of the region, where there is a perceived oscillation between the significance attributed to the intangible and tangible – the material or non-material. Social patterns were not necessarily

always reflected physically or spatially. Expression of status through built form has also oscillated in significance over time.

- *society, culture, religion, spirituality, **politics**, rituals, gender, **class, race***

3. Language and words in the form of speech and linguistic ability were, and still are, highly valued in Sudanese society. The linguistic creativity of the poets and the *fekis* [religious figures] at times had more dominance than the physical or material. Having said this, these attitudes have no doubt gone through a major transformation and continue to do so. Displays of wealth are now common place and some significant societal changes have taken place, perhaps most notably after the oil wealth of the mid 2000s. Yet the inherent societal values still favour moderation in formal expression.

- *society, **culture**, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, **class, race***

4. Built form, body images and dress form convey ideas around conformity, identity and the potential to express group affiliation. These cultural codes and attitudes are closely linked to gender perceptions. Thieme and Eicher (1987:116) distinguish between forms of dress that enhance and reveal individual identity of the wearer and those that conceal individual identity. Group affiliation is important in this context and is expressed through dress forms that communicate an individual's position within a group (Theime & Eicher 1987:116). The expression of individual identity versus conformity to a group identity is perceived as a quest for order and in Sudan, conformity is valued. There is a Sudanese saying that reflects this attitude: 'eat what you like, wear what others like'. This belief in conformity reflects in aspects of life such as in built culture.

- *society, **culture**, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, **gender, class, race***

5. The separation, or integration, of political power and religion has changed through time. The world, according to the northern Sudanese people, is still articulated into categories,

progressing from the subliminal which is focused on God and the Quran to the worldly and the world of the spirits. The concepts of 'this world' and 'the other world' co-exist in the minds of people and influence everything, including patterns of space-use.

- *society, culture, **religion**, spirituality, **politics**, rituals, gender, class, race*
6. Some researchers have defined the ethical systems in the region as being 'other-determined' where people adhere to social norms because of a process of shaming and ostracisation that keeps people 'in line'. Compliance with socially-accepted systems of duties and socialisation blurs the distinction between public and private and is deemed important to maintain social order, coherence and stability in the social and economic structures of communities.
 - *society, **culture**, religion, spirituality, politics, **rituals**, gender, class, race*
 7. Social systems of interaction are very elaborate and complex, yet their material or spatial manifestation is very simple and understated. Conformity to socially-accepted rituals has had major impacts on how people inhabit space or shape their physical artefacts. The homogeneity that is manifested visually can be traced back to this conformity as well as to ethical control systems. Differences in built form and space use are thus, traditionally, very subtle and not so apparent.
 - ***society**, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, **rituals**, gender, class, race*
 8. The concept of 'fareeq', which loosely translates as a 'community' of the daily network of face-to-face interactions in a neighbourhood or settlement, and the spatial demarcations thereof, is very strong in peoples' consciousness and is reflected in their patterns of interaction, but it is not necessarily apparent in the settlement layout. Frequent visits and assistance in the form of finances, food and a helping hand in ceremonial occasions, create what could be described as a 'corporate unit' (Kenyon 1991:21). People derive their identity

from the group corporate identity that has a powerful impact on their everyday lives and they feel considerable pressure to conform (Ferraro 1998:249).

- **society, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class, race**

9. There are strict boundaries in northern Sudan between public-private and men-women zones. While these strict boundaries are not always visually evident, there are clear social norms dictating certain behaviours and dress codes in certain spaces. At the same time, there is also a transience and fluidity of the places created to host social and religious rituals.

- **society, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class, race**

10. Women and men are involved in elaborate rituals of *mujamalat* [socialising] and *wajibat* [duties]. The daily activities, schedules and routines 'make' place and define the architecture. *Mujamalat* and *wajibat* are important environmental structuring agents and a means by which social norms are passed on from one generation to the other (Ferraro 1998:248) and are both an instrument for continuity as well as control; social and religious ritual play an essential unifying role by ensuring conformity and harmony.

- **society, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class, race**

11. There is a thin line between religious and social ritual in northern Sudan; never-ending social obligations dominate people's lives. Social structures represent the primary influence on the organisational characteristics of domestic and settlement spaces. A woman is perceived as *haneena* [kind] if she maintains networks with her *fareeq* [social network]: 'These networks are individual and female-oriented. They are maintained by women visiting assiduously... activated by... social occasions that demand a great deal of assistance from other women: life crisis such as birth, circumcisions, engagements, marriages, funerals, thanksgivings or *karamat* [things worthy of celebration] of varying sorts' (Kenyon

1991:21). The role of a woman as an intermediary of important information is also important in the social construct (Ismael 1982:181).

- **society, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class, race**
12. Loyalty to the village and family of origin is expressed through visits and gifts in elaborate, known and expected social rituals. It is sometimes difficult to identify the nuclear family in this setup. The interaction of the urban dwellers with their village of origin is very important in the Sudanese context.
 - **society, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class, race**
 13. In Sudan, building monuments or simple buildings is linked, not only to resources, but also to belief systems and cultural norms. Power is not only linked to material wealth but also to spiritual beliefs. Buildings, technology and infrastructure, whether they are understated or dominant, where these interventions take place and how the decision-making process is structured relate to forms of social understanding and political intentions.
 - **society, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class, race**
 14. Gender perceptions govern ideas of body and beliefs about the body play a major role in the structuring of social space and settlement patterns. How these beliefs are reflected on the body can be understood as universal and the social order is extended onto clothes, shelter and ultimately into place-making practices. Gender also traditionally determined the extent of movement within and outside of the home. A woman's space in traditional homes 'expands' depending on her dress form and how she takes over men's space, and other spaces in the home, at certain times of the day through makeshift kitchens and nomadic patterns – these are patterns that are translated into contemporary urban homes.
 - **society, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class, race**

15. In many traditional contexts, though there are exceptions, it has been believed that the female body is more related to nature, to the domestic and to reproduction; the male body has been perceived to relate more to culture, the public and production (Vagenes 1998:92). The spatial connotations of the public or private divide and reproduction or production divide are sometimes blurred – leading Vagnes to favour of a continuum between notions of interior and exterior, a blurring of the public and private zones, to replace, what she terms, rigid dichotomies of the above.

- *society, **culture**, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, **gender**, class, race*

16. According to Habraken, in contexts such as this, the house structure articulates social concepts evident at a larger scale and stylistic variations represent the same, shared social meaning through layout, form or material. This is considered a higher-level configuration that ‘dominates *the lower level*; and *the latter is dependent on the former*’ (Habraken 1998:32). Thus, house design, for example, will determine dress forms (the lower-level configuration), where lower-level configurations of body or garment or utensils, food, furniture, partitioning transform more easily and with greater frequency, thus maintaining stability at the higher-level configuration of the house (based on Habraken 1998:42–43). Houses have been seen as models of society (Donley-Reid 1990:114); they convey social structure from one generation to the other and set up divisions and hierarchies, maintaining the importance of certain people, and thus power structures, within a community (Donley-Reid 1990:115). The house is, therefore, a microcosm of other spaces and public space and buildings.

- *society, **culture**, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class, race*

17. The spiritual influences on place-making activities and the formation of the urban centres in the northern Sudan are profound. Elleh (1997:158) refers to Africa as having a ‘triple heritage’ and offers Khartoum as an example of this concept: ‘in the Sudan pure and absolute Islam meets Africa proper.

Khartoum is at the centre of several worlds, which also includes the iron grid world of Western functional-spatial determinism that was based on the Union Jack. The directions of the city plan are thus as Islamic as they are Britannic, and the union of African, European, and Islamic architectural vocabularies reinforces the triple heritage concept.’ In addition to the colonial urban centres, the establishment of religious centres in Sudan, which then evolved to become the nuclei for many urban centres, was greatly influenced by Sudanese Sufism. These centres, now sacred sites of visitations, reflect the unique history and geographical realities. The dependence on the *shaykh* [religious leader] and his *karamat* [miracles] underpins Sudanese lives. Grunebaum (1955:145) refers to towns that developed around a sanctuary, the hermitage or tomb of a saint, as spontaneous developments, as he comments that they evolved without systematic planning on the part of a governmental body, or even against the wishes of a ruler (where he refers to Shiite Kerbela), when compared to ‘created’ settlements. Political power alone could not maintain these spontaneous cities, nor ensure their sustained development (Hourani & Stern 1970:9–10). For many Muslims, cities are perceived to support people’s interaction with God (Spahic 2003:153). Urbanisation patterns are dynamic and change with time. Today, in the Sudan, ‘new towns’ are emerging at the sites of popular or informal gold digging: ‘... gold rush... boom towns. It is reported that about 5 million people are offering support to the gold prospectors. Some are providing equipment and excavators to those who can’t afford to buy their own, while others are offering basic necessities such as water for those prospecting in the desert... There are entire villages and towns that have flourished in this gold rush...’ (Asmar 2015:n.p.).

- *society, culture, **religion, spirituality, politics**, rituals, gender, class, race*

In conclusion, cities and space are incredibly complex and multi-layered. They convey multiple meanings that are sometimes not

reflected in the way in which we write, document and interpret the built environment. By looking beyond the built environment disciplines into the fields of sociology, culture, religion, spirituality, politics, rituals, gender, class and race, we are able to better understand the dynamics that give shape to space and built form in different contexts.

■ More on gender, space and power

Gender has had a major influence in vernacular settings as can be seen from the Sudanese examples, and continues to play a major role, especially for the urban poor (Datta 2012:4). Space and place are gendered, and this gendering both reflects and has effects upon the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in society (Massey 1994:186; cf. Presterudstuen 2020:33). This and other factors that impact on space and built form reinforce the idea of looking at issues via the lens of intersectionality; these different categories - or lenses - through which to explore spatial and formal interpretations are strongly interconnected and many times used to reinforce certain power dynamics in society. According to McDowell (1999), places are defined by social-spatial practices, constituted and maintained by relations of power and exclusion. Boundaries, both social and spatial, define who belongs and who does not belong to a certain place; these boundaries may indeed exclude individuals, and women in particular may feel confined and constrained by space (Rose 1993).

Gender thus intersects with other social identities, and helps us understand the relationship between public or private, economic or social and geopolitical or intimate(re)productions of space (Datta 2012). According to Massey (1994:168), ‘a “place” is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location’, constructed through power relations and networks of social relations (Massey 1994:154). Feminist geographers explain that gender relations are often spatial in nature (Raju & Lahiri-Dutt 2011). According

to Rose (1995) and Massey (1994:164), a sense of place is based on complex differences between groups of individuals, generating different 'senses of place' which can be negotiated. The same place can invoke a different senses of place for different groups or individuals based on class, gender or ethnicity. The concept of 'sense of place' refers to the experiences, emotions and identities that are connected to places and can be seen as a part of the system of meaning through which we make sense of the world (Rose 1995:99). Many narratives are designed to deny the existence of multiple identities and difference – this leads to concepts of space that do not take into account gender, age, class and failing to recognise how social relations shape geography (Bondi & Davidson 2005:17 in Lindeborg 2017).

Public spaces have traditionally been understood as a male domain, while the home and private spaces have been seen as female domains. Thus, women who spend too much time at, or are present in public spaces at the 'wrong time', are questioned (Domosh & Seager 2001; Friberg et al. 2005). McDowell argues, it is important to emphasise that the division between public and private is a socially constructed and gendered division, just like the distinction between geographical scales (McDowell 1999:149). McDowell writes that such spatial divisions are complex and paradoxical (McDowell 1999:168). The distinction between Lindeborg passive and family-oriented private spaces versus political public space fails to acknowledge the fact that many manifestations of politics appear in private space, which may also be a space for political debates and mobilisation (Lindeborg 2017:7). Studies of gendered urban space being described through a public-private divide may therefore be unhelpful according to Whitzman (2007). This divide between public and private is also challenged by Massey's (1994) whose notion of space and place is articulated as moments in networks of social relations. What is helpful is to consider space and place as continuity, mutually created and recreated (Lindeborg 2017:8).

■ People and money crossing borders: Citizenship, belonging, migration

Cities are unique, yet no city is isolated; cities across the globe are linked. Remittances that are sent across borders are significant and it is argued that these are three times more than aid (Daramy 2016). Economic exclusion and homelessness are global problems; migration and settlement processes have great similarities across the globe and governments work with investors, within and beyond their national borders (Broquere, Choplin & Nancy 2015:20), international capital is mobilised to serve capitalist intentions, and also to serve the symbolic, political and cultural ambitions of political leaders (Pieterse & Edjabe 2015:5). While Pieterse has argued that cities are 'contextual creatures' (Pieterse 2019), it must be acknowledged that our sense of belonging to a city context has transcended the purely physical and spatial realm into the virtual realm. Pre-COVID-19, ease of movement across borders meant that strict physical boundaries are not easily defined – we are entering post-COVID-19, a new era and an unknown future. Cities operate on extensive networks and systems within their boundaries, and are also linked in across countries and continents: '...the categories of nation, city, architecture and building cannot be understood as separate entities: they exist as simultaneous and overlapping conditions' (Crysler 2003:n.p.). Crysler (2003) elaborates:

[/]t is not just the category the 'city' that has been unsettled and reorganized in global time and space: the nation has also become increasingly detached from the formal territory of the nation state through 'long-distance nationalism' and the spaces of 'diasporic citizenship'. (n.p.)

The idea of citizenship, belonging and identity is now disconnected from geographical location. The diaspora, physically disconnected from the 'home country', have a sense of identity and connection that does not rely on being in a specific territory. This is an important aspect for feminist interpretations of sense of place, which believe that a sense of place can exist on different spatial scales at the same time with the local, regional, national and

global perceived as a continuum of social relations (Rose 1995:90 in Lindeborg 2017:5); we can therefore think of the city as also existing beyond its defined political boundaries (Stott 2013). At a physical and spatial level, people entering cities and seeking access to opportunity face multiple barriers. Migration is many times from rural areas into city contexts across continents. Informality is many times the only way in which people can access opportunities in cities. People and money crossing borders thus becomes critical to a different understanding of citizenship, belonging and migration – as does the extension of these concepts into virtual space.

■ Urban policy and power: Decision-making processes in the built environment

‘Leaving no one behind’ is a concept that permeates strongly in almost every section of Agenda 2030 (United Nations 2015). Cities can become sites where this principle can be implemented, yet, despite this potential, cities continue to be sites of great inequality and environmental challenges. Cities are seen to be places where people are able to live diverse lifestyles with less scrutiny and less social judgement; they are also places where people may withdraw or connect at a degree that suits them. ‘In the city we can live deliberately: inventing and renewing ourselves, carving out journeys, creating private spaces’ (Raban 2017:3). Cities are seen as (Raban 2017):

[S]oft ... await[ing] the imprint of an identity ... invit[ing] you to remake it, to consolidate it into a shape you can live in ... Cities, unlike villages and small towns, are plastic by nature. We mould them into our images... . (p. 2)

In the city, the shaping of identity construction, power and agency are at play (Raban 2017:3). It is this very characteristic that offers people great opportunities to improve and reinvent themselves, allowing for ‘new beginnings’ and malleable class structures (Heathcote 2011).

Cities and governments have responded to this potential of cities in progressive or regressive ways. Brazil's innovation, the Ministry of Cities, created in 2003 under Lula da Silva, became a role model for many countries internationally with its unique systems of city management. Mier claims that it is '...one of the most innovative policy decisions in the history of urban planning' with a method of decision-making that has been called '...one of the largest democracy-deepening exercises in the history of urban reform' (Mier 2019:n.p.). This seems to have been 'undone' in 2019, with the advent of the new political dispensation.

South Africa has oftentimes looked elsewhere for answers to its housing and urban policy challenges. Brazil, with its similar socio-economic challenges seemed like the ideal context to study and replicate. The South African government has also tended to look towards China impressed by the scale and speed with which housing can be delivered and towards the Netherlands for social housing models - that is, subsidised, rental housing as opposed to ownership options. In all of these attempts, 'City governments [have] serve[d] as policy laboratories... [policy] enables people, especially those who have been historically excluded or underrepresented, to actively participate in decision-making' (Tynan, Bas Cohen 2018:1).

Urban development is regulated through zoning and land use laws. This may appear to be a neutral construct but it is not (Haylett 2003):

[U]rban-social policies are constituted in manifold ways, through language and concepts, institutional frameworks, agencies of delivery and the experiences of people on the 'receiving end' of such policies. (p. 56)

Furthermore (Lepofsky & Fraser 2003):

Much of the policy-based rejuvenation of cities that has occurred has relied upon a shifting sense of who can make claims upon urban areas. More specifically, this has transpired to a hegemonic expression of who has the right to place-making in cities. (p. 129)

Kotzen (2015) believes that:

[U]rban governance is not only about implementing and enforcing – often oppressive – state policies. It is about the formation of policies that recognise, include and support the practices of the poor in city planning and development frameworks. (n.p.)

We need to acknowledge both the state and the citizen as players in the complex process of city making. The role of the private sector must be strictly regulated and managed to ensure that it aligns with the developmental agendas – and the agendas of governments need to be strongly focused on equity and pro-poor policies. By building institutions based on these principles, what could be achieved are (Kotzen 2015):

Nuanced policy frameworks that recognise and support [*the*] existence [*of informal activities that*] are therefore crucial to level stark social, economic and spatial inequalities in South Africa's cities. (n.p.)

The same author proceeds to explain how land use management, hybrid business and residential zoning, regulations, etc. become tools for legitimising spaces and activities usually excluded in official planning systems.

State-sanctioned mega developments, collusion between government and the private sector government, usually means money crossing borders, prime land being prioritised for foreign investors and 'small players' and their livelihood strategies being disrupted. Women are subjected to this disadvantage more than others as public space is seen to be the rightful domain of males. In contrast to mega-developements, inclusive transformation could promote policy, legal and financial models that are more equitable. Space and planning are highly political in the manner in which they affect the residents of cities: 'The production of space has long been a largely undemocratic negotiation between developers with money & influence, government, and the citizens that occupy the space' (Stott 2013). When it comes to city space, those who have access to it try to protect it, and those who do not are constantly fighting for it; when conflicts emerge, 'big capital' takes precedence over societal benefits.

Urban policy many times reinforces existing power structures. Urban policy needs to be reconsidered in such a way so as to facilitate inclusion, participation and increased opportunity. Examples such as the Brazilian model of the Ministry of Cities need to be re-visited – simply because current systems that reinforce disadvantage are unsustainable and untenable. However, new innovations in city management need to be developed.

■ **A philosophy and its translation into practical tools to increase participation**

How can more people participate in decision-making in cities? And how can this participation be supported and enhanced through the mechanisms of operation of the various built environment professions? If we define participation as ‘...being able to speak in one’s own voice’ (Fraser 1990:69), it can also be premised that ‘Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody’ (Jacobs 2002:n.p.).

Participation has become a buzzword in practice and policy documents. Sometimes, what appears to be participative may not be so. Fraser believes that ‘political deliberation can easily mask subtle forms of control’. The language used may constrain the manner in which another view point or beliefs may be expressed: ‘...deliberation can serve as a mask for domination extended beyond gender to other kinds of unequal relations, like those based on class or ethnicity’ (Fraser 1990:64). Fraser therefore proposes the term ‘subaltern counterpublics’, when constructed in a positive way, for ‘parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinate social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs’ (Fraser 1990:67). These ‘multiple publics’ then become an opportunity to address the gap between dominant and subordinate groups (Fraser 1990:66).

It must be recognised that many benefit from maintaining the status quo as they are worried about what they will lose, in terms of privilege, in a process of transformation. In many contexts globally, it seems that a disadvantaged, yet 'hugely aspirational', population seems to be excluded from a 'spectacle of prosperity and excesses for the privileged few' (Karuri-Sebina 2016:n.p.). Various measures have emerged when trying to rate cities and are based on concepts such as liveability or lovability. These concepts raise complex intellectual controversies. This chapter adopts a very specific approach to the concepts, but first let us see what others have said about them.

The term 'liveability' has been used to describe the desirable aspects of cities globally. Yet, the set criteria always rate similar contexts highly (Manchester's finest n.d.; O'Sullivan 2019) and the 'winning' cities have no poor people and 'eschew diversity' (Heathcote 2011). These measures seem to exclude large cities which may be deemed desirable when considering the numbers of people that flock to them – these other urban contexts are large and complex with a juxtaposition of wealth and poverty. These are contexts of great opportunity for diverse categories of people. Are they also lovable? Is there a sense of love or attachment in how people relate to their urban contexts? (Kageyama 2011). Beyond the characteristics of the built environment, social offerings, diversity aesthetics and 'welcoming' are words that have also been used to describe the desirable characteristics in American cities, as an example, where it was also found that cities with the highest levels of attachment had the highest GDP growth (Challenge 2011).

These measures and polls exclude issues of the poor in cities, thus exclude cities in the developing world and in emerging economies. Is it possible that these cities are not desirable at all based on these global measures? And if so, how is it that their populations continue to grow? What measures, tools and innovative city management strategies have been put in place for these 'other' contexts and how have these cities set out to

accommodate for degrees of legality or illegality and formal and informal?

With many citizens, and their urban practices, being labelled as illegitimate, they are also rendered invisible in global polls and standards. Despite the Lefebvrian notion of the 'right to the city' being adopted by many and being translated into a call for active participation by researchers such as David Harvey, these principles still elude the built environment professions in terms of effective translation into policy and practice. This means that people who inhabit the city informally, with no official address, with locations that fall outside of the realm of official maps, become 'untraceable' and it is almost impossible for them to access services - leading to limited growth and exclusion (Kotzen 2015). It also means that the law does not support these communities which implies that for some city residents the relationship between law and justice is interpreted as a type of '... violence of law and its judicial interpretations' (Datta 2016:4).

This has meant that many cities in emerging economies have aspirations to become 'world class'. Delhi's aspirations were manifest through the 2010 Commonwealth Games and this meant that people '...encountered law within their everyday spaces and consequently transformed theory social relationships with the city and with each other' (Datta 2016:4). There are similar experiences in South Africa with Johannesburg labelling itself as a 'world-class African city' and Durban and Cape Town having undergone major transformation and interventions in order to present themselves with a particular image during the World Cup in 2010. These aspirations often leave poor communities further disadvantage, silenced and hidden.

By adopting the concept of the 'field' in the built environment, we may devise mechanisms for increased integration and spatial justice, at an urban design scale, by avoiding 'easy-to-distinguish' solutions for the poor. Conceptualising solutions for poverty or informality as part of city-wide strategies helps avoid the

perpetuation of difference and disadvantage. By considering the differentiation between ‘levels’ of the environment, informal processes, the involvement of small-scale builders and small local industries and full ongoing participation by residents and users may be facilitated. This approach provides the mechanism to include the poor within the city, on land conventionally thought of as too expensive for them – it also becomes an approach to achieve a balance between ‘top down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches and facilitates small-scale, low-budget and immediate interventions as catalysts towards the realisation of long-term strategies. Habraken (n.d.) describes this approach beautifully: ‘When you do something large, leave the small to others; When you do something small, enhance the large’.

Kendall (in Osman 2015) explains that ‘...TYPES are a primary nutrient in the cultivation of the built field’. Before built environment interventions are designed, the designer needs to understand (Kendall, cited in Osman 2015):

[7]he types that grow well in [*the*] soil... When we don’t know these types, and try to make new ones, its like a gardener being ignorant of the soil and the plant types that thrive in that soil, and who, trying to be creative and inventive, attempts to make new flowers never seen before. The chances that they will fail to take root are large! (p. 51)

This approach considers the obscure and the ‘everyday’ versus; the celebrated and monumental. It considers all participants in the field: the small players and the big players, levels of intervention and levels of decision-making in the built environment. Therefore, in the adoption of this particular philosophy to the built environment, cities can be reinvented as ‘liveable’ through spatial, design, technical and procurement mechanisms that achieve equity, beauty, function – thus offering diverse opportunities and a chance at improving lives and livelihoods. A city may also become ‘lovable’ by resonating with many people, over many years – accommodating and embracing diversity, choice and change – embedded in context in terms of culture and

climate. This approach is an 'open' approach and may help achieve a practical translation of the concepts of liveability and lovability in cities.

This philosophy can be translated into practical tools for real-life application so that we may be able to emerge from this apparent deadlock where concepts remain concepts, never to be applied in policy and implementation.

■ Conclusion

Let me conclude by recapitulating what I have accomplished in this chapter. At a theoretical level, I have introduced a multidisciplinary or ecosystemic framework with modes of inquiry that are not confined to the realm of the built environment disciplines. Through the use of a few examples, I have shown that competition for a 'voice' is prevalent in every sphere in cities and that this presents itself in the form of protests and conflicts around space. I have exposed imbalances inherent in the debates around cities in our writing, teaching and professional practice. Premised on my previous doctoral investigation, I have used the Sudanese example of the house form and the urban centre to show that much is omitted from institutional spatial and architectural studies which is crucial to the study of space and place globally.

At a practical level, I have emphasised the need for viewing the built environment at different levels, requiring careful management of the relationships between the agents that operate at those levels, as well as the need to 'disentangle' those levels to allow for a degree of permanence without restricting the necessity for constant transformation, is key. This 'open' approach allows for distributed decision-making in the manner in which the built environment is designed, funded and delivered. This 'open' approach to the built environment allows for the acknowledgement of the co-existence of formal and informal systems and can

address the disparity in different parts of a country and within cities by offering a rethink on infrastructure, finance and procurement strategies.

I have presented an argument that spatial injustices in cities can be consistently and systematically targeted, exposed and dismantled, and that there are tools to be used by professionals in the built environment to increase participation. I have also proposed a 'bringing together' of people and infrastructure in a way that can allow for an 'open' approach to governance and 'open' regulatory frameworks which allow smaller projects to be aligned with broader visions, facilitating coordination, involving more people and reducing conflict. Mechanisms of city management which allow for the formal and the informal simultaneously are considered.

Decrypting Brazilian territories

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■ Introduction: Inequalities in Brazilian cities

In Brazil, the commitment to reverse inequalities has been established, in smaller or greater presence and coherence, by different governments, entities, institutions and international organisations. The challenge has always been to make the poorest people take over bigger parcels of economic growth, represented as access to property.

The intention of this work is to present the contemporary city as a platform where the dominance of financial actors, markets, practices, measures and narratives, at various scales, is growing, resulting in a structural transformation of economies, companies, financial institutions, states and including practices at the level of families and communities.

My theoretical discussion and practical proposition are aligned with Bourdieu's concepts, the objective being to comprehend exclusion as a structuring structure *of* the practices and structure structured *by* the practices, defined by the neoliberal power that, in turn, gives forms to the city. Latour's arguments are also taken into consideration when dealing with exclusion without the social or socio-spatial adjectives; they would serve to connect things that are not social or socio-spatial by themselves. The term *exclusion* brings together all the heterogeneous elements gathered in a given circumstance. This avoids the risk of social or socio-spatial words to be understood as 'glue' that can fix everything (Tshwane University of Technology 2018):

[T]he *excluded* are no longer victims resulting from the analysis of some criterion but are constituted as a structure which is regulated by inequality in its associated facets: economic, political, social, subjective and legal. (n.p.)

The means of exclusion that conform themselves into a system are encrypted by the knowledge fields that categorise the city and the housing within, for example, zoning, periphery, centrality,

legal, illegal, formal, informal, urban, rural, public, private, precarious and poor, stable and rich, etc. Accepting Sanín-Restrepo's power encryption theory, it is understood that the categories of design and urban planning fields form the language game – a fragmented and binary game that is contaminated by power relations.

Therefore, I propose to read the city in a decrypted way so that, to some extent, the phenomenon of exclusion could be reversed. Decrypting means broadening the action of disobeying and resisting. Decryption works as a lens that unveils the contradictions and aberrations of the production logic of the cities and creates possibilities of having legitimate places of daily life. In order to do so, analysis lines are proposed that allow one to read the territories (and not to diagnose the territory), under the watchful eye of those who live in and occupy them (and not under the gaze of those who draw, plan or regulate – the architect, urbanist, entities or State) and on what the territory is (and not what it seems to show), resulting in another language game. The lines of analysis are methodologically constructed in a non-linear process, based on narratives of residents who live in Brazilian villages, favelas, urban occupations and peripheral territories, far away from the categories of architecture and urban planning.

■ Starting points

Brazilian cities are not poor, but are socially and spatially, extremely unequal. The violent condition of poverty is at the heart of the urban crisis. It is aggravated on a daily basis by the intensification of the peripheral pattern of cities, the linking of real estate capital to financial capital, the political immobility in implementing the urban reform, the imposition of individual private property in cities, the inefficiency of the judiciary, the State-market association and by strategically constructed political discourses, which are by no means constructive (Morado Nascimento 2016b).

Immersed in the permanent urban crisis, and aggravated by the permanent housing crisis (usually understood as housing deficit), the real estate market no longer identifies urban areas of economic risk that, when ignored, have been historically occupied by slums and villages, but urban areas that, with full investment potential, become places of violent public interventions (such as removals, resettlements, etc.). It is particularly important to recognise that the areas without urban services and public facilities, or in other words *with no city* and technically unfavourable for housing, are destined for the poor. On the one hand, slums as well as urban occupations and peripheral settlements occupy devalued or not financially valued areas, while, on the other hand, public housing programs, such as the *Minha Casa Minha Vida* [My Home, My Life] Program, repeat the logic of 'poor people in poor areas' determined by the establishment of large population plots in areas with no city.

In large Brazilian cities, we know that autoconstruction accounts for about 70%–85% of Brazilian housing provision, even though this number is not precisely proven by statistical agencies or state agencies. Because land ownership is the central triggering factor of autoconstruction which is more or less socially, politically, economically and constructively stable, the narrative of the precariousness or poor performance of these houses should not and cannot override the effective responses given by the residents to their housing needs (Morado Nascimento 2016a).

The universe of autoconstruction, resulting from differences in the citizens' access to the right of housing and to the right of city, opens the conditions of poverty derived from the undemocratic decision-making processes, imposed by the State-market association and the enlarged economic and political crisis. There are a significant number of families and individuals living in conditions of vulnerability – women, children, the elderly, the disabled, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), blacks, migrants – whose rights are compromised because of lack of

access services such as basic sanitation, water, sanitary sewage, waste management and rainwater drainage which are stipulated in the constitution. In 2017, more than a third (35.9%) of the Brazilian population had restricted access to the sanitary sewage service (AGÊNCIA IBGE 2018).

Unsurprisingly, ‘inequalities will keep growing worldwide’; however (Mbembe 2016):

[F]ar from fuelling a renewed cycle of class struggles, social conflicts will increasingly take the form of racism, ultra-nationalism, sexism, ethnic and religious rivalries, xenophobia, homophobia and other deadly passions. (n.p.)

This means the exclusion in the contemporary city, structured *by* and being the structure *of* the various elements in given situations. By not naming exclusion as *social* or *social-spatial*, Latour’s (2012) arguments on the adjectivisation of terms are taken into consideration so far as they would only serve if they connected things that were not in themselves social.² This, thus, avoids the risk of understanding social or socio-spatial as ‘glue that can fix everything’ (Latour 2012:22–23); in this case, exclusion.

If, on the one hand, we do not expect a consensus among those who suffer exclusion with those who, to some extent, benefit from it, on the other hand, we can no longer understand cities under the aegis of gentrification and segregation. The less unequal city is understood here as being beyond the city that must democratically allow access to goods and services, but is coupled with the comprehensive but emptied vacuous debate on

2. In defining exclusion without adjectives, Latour’s argument is taken into consideration; however, this work is based on Bourdieu’s social theory (2009), where social facts are negotiated within a *field* of struggles through specific capital. Latour (2012) understands social facts as collective ideas consolidated through alliances between human and nonhuman actors forming a complex network. The concepts of field and network indicate an important theoretical difference between the authors but, in this work, the Bourdieusian analysis remains since the field is aligned with the arguments about the power exercised *in* practice and *by* practice.

the right to housing and the right to the city. This refers to the real possibilities of redistribution of decision-making processes around a city that should provide everyone with the *right to exist*. Only from this point can we talk about a fair city, even with its explicit differences.

The intention is to highlight actions and reactions around the struggle (and the right) to exist and to re-exist, permeated by what Castoriadis called a *creative imagination of radicality*.³ The proposal of the radical imagination is understood as an individual and collective force that resists the present order, in line with what Holloway (2013) defined as fissures of capitalism. In his words, a *here-and-now* insubordination, a movement of *denial-and-creation*, being a legitimate force to counter practices and procedures of the State-market association and prejudices, discrepancies and disrespect of society in contrast to the freedom of creation from the reality that we want to modify – in other words, political access to the world against order. Or, to come closer to what Oliveira (2004:185) called ‘construction of the negation of negation’, referring to the recovery and valourisation of the space of exclusion – that is, ‘of the realities which, by not submitting to the logic of capital, can offer resistance’.

■ Guidelines

The first guideline of this work refers to Pierre Bourdieu’s (1989, 2009) *theory of practical action*. According to the sociologist, there are strategies and schemes incorporated in the form of dispositions that guide the action of agents – the *habitus*. This assumption dissolves the argument that exclusion is a linear effect of regulations, plans and models. On the contrary, the social, economic, political, cultural and symbolic forces, inextricably structured *by* and structuring *of* exclusion, reproduce

3. Proposal from the philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis, in his book *Figures du pensable* [Figures of the thinkable] (1996).

the socio-spatial order. Bourdieu (2009) argues that it is necessary to investigate the conditions that structure the subjective and objective experiences of the *agent*; that is, how each one, each group or each institution actually acts and reacts in certain situations, far from the blind obedience of rules and norms but constituted by reason of the structural traits of society (*opus operatum*) and the strategies that are triggered when making choices, making decisions or fighting for interests (*modus operandi*).

Therefore, the city is understood as a platform where forces that comply with the existence, production and reproduction of urban life are present. However, it is the history of each agent, shaped individually by social biography, educational schooling and cultural heritage and inserted within a collective history, which characterises the different perceptions, trajectories, purposes, appreciations and also oppositions, conflicts, power relations, contradictions and tensions in order to fuel choices, decisions and interests.

The second guideline refers to Ricardo Sanín-Restrepo's (2016, 2018) *theory of encryption of power*. His argument is that domination occurs where power is exercised by the one who captures the language of the other and imposes qualified and codified schemes of unity and identity of language, making it impossible to reproduce differences. As conflicts are encoded by language and, inevitably, marginalised, forms of pure violence arise and persist – racism, sexism, poverty, war, etc. – which, in that sense, produce and reproduce the excluded. For Sanín-Restrepo we only have access to the world if we have access to politics and if so, we cannot politically respond to the world if the language is *encrypted* and the place of enunciation and communication of language is reserved for qualified subjects or denied to the subjects that generate difference.

Therefore, by the assumption of power encryption, it is understood that access to the right to housing and to the city is

impossible insofar as the decision-making processes are carried out in forums, bodies, instruments and channels that have rules, protocols, rites, norms, processes and visible acts, but are in no way intelligible or democratic. When the encounter of differences and asymmetries is mediated by an external power force which, in the neoliberal city, serves the interests of the State's association with the market, defines the rules about the decision-making processes and ranks the singularities, the domination is present.

From these guidelines, the intention is to explain the city as a neoliberal platform and demonstrate that concepts of urban planning presuppose certain perspectives and theoretical-practical choices that make up a language game, in itself, exclusive and encrypted. The theoretical-methodological proposal presented here aims to map the point of view of the other and, supposedly, to unveil another language game to be included in the arena of dispute over urban public policies.

To some extent, this will hopefully contribute to the criticism of the contemporary production of urban space and cities where the right for all to exist must be assumed.

■ The neoliberal city

The terms *neoliberalism* and *financialisation* have been the subject of debate concerning their different meanings and variations, depending on the theoretical approach of different authors.

The historical sociologist Greta Krippner, in an interview with Lemoine and Ravelli (2017), highlights three views on neoliberalism: (1) a set of policies that favour market outcomes (e.g. monetarism, economic deregulation, social welfare containment, free trade, etc.); (2) a configuration of institutions that dominate capitalist society (e.g. the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the US Federal Reserve, the Wall

Street Treasury Complex)⁴; and, (3) the broad tendency in our culture to evaluate everything according to a market metric. In a more general sense, neoliberalism is used as a kind of shortcut to a pernicious form of hyper-capitalist exploitation, according to Krippner (Lemoine & Ravelli 2017).

Under the rubric of financialisation, Krippner points out that there are a number of related phenomena, including changes in managerial ideology, that increasingly drive companies to financial markets – rising debt in our economy, the trend of financial markets to go through periods of ups and downs and the growing power of a set of actors who are referred to as ‘financial’ or ‘financial capital’ (Lemoine & Ravelli 2017). However, Krippner generally defines financialisation as a phase in capitalist development in which profits accumulate mainly (or, at least increasingly) through financial channels (Lemoine & Ravelli 2017).

In this sense, the global economic crisis of 2008 is highlighted as an important historical landmark when considering the transformations of both financialisation and neoliberalism. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that, in the United States alone, ‘pension funds’, ‘common funds’, insurance and life insurance companies constituted financial assets that went from US\$1.6 trillion in 1980 (around 60% of GDP), to US\$5.2tn in 1990 (95% of GDP), and more than US\$8tn in 1993 (125% of the country’s GDP); this demonstrated that the historical financialisation of companies as productive investments declined steadily in favour of financial investments (Quijano 2002).

4. Attorney Jagdish Bhagwati coined the term *Wall Street Treasury Complex* which, like the military-industrial complex, refers to a pool of powerful and wealthy lobbyists from the financial community acting in their own interests and who, from time to time, are present in the US government, serving in important positions such as Treasury Secretary. For more information see: <<https://www.globalpolicy.org/globalization/globalization-of-the-economy-2-1/general-analysis-on-globalization-of-the-economy/48261-qwall-street-treasury-complexq.html>>.

Thus, Dardot and Laval (2016) state that it is from 2008 that neoliberalism became a dominant constructed order, leaving its *ideological condition* and becoming a *process*, structured by strategies, discourses and practices not only economic but also in their complementary dimensions political, social, subjective and legal. Aalbers (2013, 2015) also understands neoliberalism as a process where new policies, solutions and ideas arose to restructure the State, redistribute benefits to private owners, investors and multinationals and finance society.

There is no intention here to analyse the economic fundamentals that govern neoliberalism and financialisation; thus, the risks of dogmatically analysing the neoliberal model of developed countries prescribed to Brazil are avoided. The argument here is about the strong expansion of exclusion in recent years as normative practice of the process of financialisation of a neoliberal society.

In 2008, in the face of the deep global economic crisis that followed the *sub-prime* crisis (granting of high-risk mortgage loans), which had repercussions on the world stock markets, neoliberalism presented the innovation of 'making the market both the principle of government of the men and that of self-government' – a *government rationality*, so named by Dardot and Laval (2016:34). As said before, we have gone from the ideological condition of neoliberalism to the *process of neoliberalisation*, characterised by globalised financial capital, the State–market association, the individualisation of social relations, the polarisation between rich and poor and the new legal order that structured and organised the action of the rulers and the conduct of the governed.

Strategies were redesigned in favour of the permanence of a global coherence, again supported by the narrative of crisis. However, Krippner (Lemoine & Ravelli 2017) warns that even though the political contributions made by the financial sector have overlaid the contributions from other sectors, they do not in

themselves prove to be very useful metrics on the capacity of 'capital' to act coherently and effectively in the pursuit of its objectives. In this sense, the power of 'capital' is more a result of financial deregulation than its cause.

It should be clarified that the association of the State with the market was because of the premise that the 'State would no longer be able to exercise an essential attribute of sovereignty, of making monetary and fiscal policy', beyond the debate if the State could or should be an entrepreneur, or even monopolise strategies (Batista 1994:9). Thus, the State associated itself with the owners of capital to develop strategies where, in the end, various groups, even if with different interests, benefited from financial deregulation, privatisation and the weakening of the State. In Latin America, entrepreneurial sectors expected immediate benefits from 'specific suggestions of the neoliberal proposal in the area of tax reform', and international agents, such as the World Bank, thrived on international co-management projects (Batista 1994:7). As for social classes, Krippner (Lemoine & Ravelli 2017) suggests that we must analyse them, albeit carefully, in terms of how they were constituted and when they united around collective interests that are often tenuous, such as consumption (such as the Program *Minha Casa Minha Vida*), which in domestic financial deregulation played a very important role.

In the Brazilian cities (Morado Nascimento et al. 2018):

The nexus between State and capital takes shape in urban governance whose agenda is associated with State reform: the 'new' urban entrepreneurship (urban PPPs), the institutional rearrangement and the new administrative figures of the private legal regime in the cities (joint stock companies), the financing mechanisms of urbanization (public funds and investment funds). (p. 19)⁵

As a rule, because of the *results of the market crisis*, the State-market association proposed cuts in social policies, austerity

5. PPPs is an abbreviation of public-private partnerships.

measures, fiscal adjustments and new labour rules. Furthermore, and as *solutions to the market crisis*, it promoted public investment, financing packages, tax incentives and new legal rules. As a result of the crisis, risks (household indebtedness, unemployment of workers, depoliticisation of the labour force) were socialised and, as a consequence of the solution created for the crisis, profits were privatised (redistribution by small losses and large profits for the investors) (Aalbers 2013; Dardot & Laval 2016; Marcuse 2016; Sager 2011).

According to Aalbers (2015), the logic of the constituent practice of the neoliberalisation process was shaped by the *regulation of deregulation*, that is, the regulation of the market for the market, made possible by the growing domain of financial actors, markets, practices, measures and narratives, at various scales, resulting in a structural transformation of economies, companies, financial institutions, states and families. The market(s) did not care about what society prefers or with whom it should be privileged in the distribution of resources, says Krippner (Lemoine & Ravelli 2017). In other words, the process of neoliberalisation refers to the financialisation of society anchored by the logic of global economic practice, constantly subordinating cultural, social and symbolic forces.

On the one hand, strategies for coping with crises paved by speeches and practices of the State-market association, emerged as a structure and, on the other hand, unveiled a *system of exclusion*. Financialisation produced a very volatile economy that transferred the risks *en masse* to those in our society who are less able to absorb them, as Krippner (Lemoine & Ravelli 2017) states. Thus, the excluded are those who are unable to engage adequately in the rationality of government and the market, that is, those unable to absorb the risks.

■ Exclusion as a practice

In Brazil, the reduction of inequalities is included in the law of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil (1988), which has as one of its foundations, human dignity, and among its objectives, to promote the well-being of all, without prejudice of origin, race, sex, colour, age or any other forms of discrimination. In Article 3, subsection III, the constitutional text establishes that ‘the fundamental objectives of the Federative Republic of Brazil are [...] to eradicate poverty and marginalization and reduce social and regional inequalities’.⁶

Therefore, inclusion is a right and an indisputable foundation aligned with human rights and civil liberties. Nevertheless, even if political decisions are historically taken by the State to favour social integration and well-being for those who, by some criterion, do not have equal access to development opportunities or are unable to make ends meet, inequality in Brazil undoubtedly persists.

At the present time, in terms of income distribution, the average income *per capita* of the 20% households with higher incomes (R\$4,499.15) is 18.3 times higher than the average income of the 20% with lower incomes (R\$243.60), according to data from Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) 2016 (2017:59).⁷ In other words, the total income appropriated by the 10% with the highest incomes is 3.4 times higher than the total of the appropriate income for the 40% with the lowest incomes – data for 2016 (IBGE 2017:60).

Inequality also varies according to the territory and population segmented by colour or race. In 2016, blacks or mixed race accounted for 54.6% of the total income, against 44.5% whites, but among the people with the lowest 10% income, 78.5% are

6. Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988.

Available at <http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/constituicaocompilado.htm>.

7. Minimum wage: 2016, R\$880.00; 2017, R\$937.00; 2018, R\$954.00 (nowadays around US\$244.00).

blacks or mixed race against 20.8% whites (IBGE 2017:61). The biggest difference is in the Southeast, where black and mixed race people represent 46.4% of the population with incomes, but their share among the top 10% incomes is 16.4%.

Regarding housing conditions, the 2016 IBGE data (2017:68) show that housing inadequacies are also distributed unevenly in the territory. Two inadequacies – absence of a bathroom or sanitary area for exclusive use and external walls of the home built predominantly with non-durable material – related more directly to the precariousness of the physical structure of the home, ‘are geographically determined, occurring in a larger proportion in less urbanised areas and with a lower average income’. Furthermore, the black or mixed race population has a ‘much lower proportion of access to sanitation services than in the white population’ (IBGE 2017:78).

The IBGE (2017:80) also considers ‘access restrictions’ as a fundamental issue in the analysis of multidimensional poverty, being analysed in five aspects: education, social protection, adequate housing, basic sanitation and communication services. About 64.9% of the Brazilian population were lacking in at least one of the dimensions studied in 2016, with 80.0% of people 60 years of age or older, with their apex (81.3%) being female or black women without a spouse with small children at home (IBGE 2017:81). The dimensions that contributed most to multidimensional poverty were the lack of access to basic sanitation (30.1%) and communication (25.5%) (IBGE 2017:83). Data on educational mobility show that, in relation to the total population analysed with complete higher education, 71% were white and only 29% black or mixed race; among those without education, 29.4% were white and 70.6%, black or mixed race (IBGE 2017:99).

Owing to the data on black, mixed race and white people, and rich and poor, the question about the effective possibilities of reducing the inequality measured by the economy and access becomes trivial. The best distribution of economic growth has never been sufficiently achieved throughout Brazilian history.

The World Bank (WB 2017:3) estimates that 28.6 million Brazilians came out of poverty between 2004 and 2014, with about 58% of the decline in extreme poverty because of ‘changes in income from other sources (especially the conditional cash transfers of *Bolsa Família*)’. (The *Bolsa Família* is a federal government income transfer program to low-income families.) From 2016, when social assistance policies were reduced, about 2.5 million people returned to below-poverty levels (income below R\$140 per month).⁸ This is to say that the reduction of inequality in Brazil does not occur because it depends heavily on income from work and a politically supportive government. On the one hand, it has been a great challenge to make Brazil’s poor appropriate the largest plots of economic growth from earned income, while on the other hand, social policies are linked to a particular government which, in turn, is sustained by power structures, which are not always democratic or egalitarian.

Even though we know that reducing inequalities through better income distribution also tends to reduce exclusionary processes, there is another important point. OXFAM Brazil (2017), which aims to combat poverty, inequalities and injustices worldwide, states that:

[7]he increase in the income of the poorest, has not been enough to drastically reduce inequalities in Brazil, since there is still great asymmetry in the appropriation of total economic growth. (p. 19)

Recent research in Brazil points out that ‘between 2001 and 2015, the richest 10% appropriated 61% of economic growth, while the share of the poorest 50% was 18%’ (Morgan 2017, cited in OXFAM Brazil 2017:19). According to the IBGE Agency (2018), in 2017, the top 10% of the people with the highest incomes (of all sources) in the country accounted for 43.1% of the total mass of these incomes, while 40% with the low incomes had only 12.3%.

8. Policies reduced after the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, Workers’ Party, on 08/31/2016.

What's more, Piketty (2014) warns us that even if income inequality can be controlled, history tells us of another malign *force* that tends to amplify wealth inequalities to extreme levels: returns revert to owners of capital faster than the growth of the economy, thus giving the capitalists an increasing share of the spoils at the expense of the middle and lower classes. Such force fuelled inequality in the 19th century, and current economic and political conditions have become susceptible to deepening social and economic inequalities in the 21st century. At the beginning of 2017, the six richest Brazilian billionaires had a combined wealth equivalent to that of the poorest half of the population, more than 100 million people, with half of these billionaires' assets the result of family inheritance and not the result of their own work. It is thus worth remembering Piketty's (2014) proposal for the reduction of socio-economic inequalities, which is in global progressive taxation of the great individual wealth.

Among people receiving up to 1.5 minimum wages in Brazil, 67% are black, in contrast to less than 45% of whites; about 80% of black people earn up to two minimum wages.⁹ In 2017, white workers (R\$2,615.00) earned, on average, 72.5% more than black or mixed race (R\$1,516.00). In other words, the blacks or mixed race represented, in 2017, 75.2% of the people with the 10% lower income (AGENCIA IBGE 2018).

Added to the inequalities of race and gender is the regional disparity of income. The North and the Northeast house the majority of Brazilians with low income. In the Northeast, 44.8% of the population was in poverty (income below R\$406.00/month) in 2017, equivalent to 25.5 million people; the South had about 3.8 million people living in poverty, equivalent to

9. Calculations of OXFAM Brazil (2017), based on the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) of the fourth quarter of 2016, which only considers labour income.

12.8% of the almost 30 million inhabitants, while in the Southeast the percentage of people was 17.4% of the population, comprising 15.2 million people (AGÊNCIA IBGE 2018). Data from 2017 (AGÊNCIA IBGE 2018) show that 49.9% of the Northern region and 48.1% of the Northeast region had an average income of up to half a minimum wage.

That said, it may be asked: have the limits of slave rule been broken? Or, is there a possible agreement for a *good* Brazilian State to take root in favour of reducing inequality?

Slavery, immersed both in the fragility of police and legal institutions and in the fragmentation of the country's elite social class, 'defined social inequalities, made race and color fundamental markers of difference, organised command and obedience etiquette, and created a society conditioned by paternalism and by a strict hierarchy' (Schwarcz & Starling 2015:96). Even with the achievement of legal freedom, blacks and their descendants did not immediately 'enter into a world of full civil rights and enjoyment'; 'their lives and working conditions remained extremely precarious, lacking all kinds of legal, labour and social protection' (Mac Cord & Souza 2018:430).

Recently, research has shown that 96% of Brazilians state that they do not have any racial prejudice, while 99% admit to knowing someone close to them who demonstrates discriminatory attitudes (Canofre 2017). This ambiguous condition puts us before the wide and global universality of prejudice but also of the dissimulation of the structural exclusion violently constructed in Brazilian history. Because slavery, social and economic inequalities have also emerged because of marked physical differences (the poor, blacks, indigenous, LBGTs, the disabled, the elderly, women, etc.), which in turn occupy spaces marked by need (settlements, urban ghettos, slums, villages and urban occupations).

The history, numbers and laws that have been restated here reinforce the argument that inequality is not synonymous with difference or exclusion. To argue that exclusion is a *structuring structure* of practice and a *structure structured* by practice means to understand that the result of inequality is emblazoned on the territories.

■ The current language game

According to Sanín-Restrepo (2016), the encryption of power does not hide only the language itself, but also the process of its transmission, the norms in which language operates, the distribution of meanings and its possibilities of modification. However, it is necessary to understand that it is not enough to uncover what is hidden by language and its processes, systems and norms to access the world (hence, politics). If this were the case, it would be enough to create new models or methods of interpretation that clarify the obscure or unify the polysemic character of language. The concealment of language – the formal meaning of words, the structure of communication, access to interpretation and, essentially, the reality to which it refers – is engendered by power relations.

This set of elements is referred to as a *language game* where the meaning of things makes sense to the experts (us), imposing itself in a silent and violent way on the non-specialists (others), thus maintaining the apparatus of current practices. Wittgenstein (2009:19) had already used the term *language game* to express the ‘totality formed by language and the activities with which it comes intertwined’, considering it a *way of life*. He assumes that, although there is an associative connection between word and thing, things have different meanings, and he states: ‘The fact that descriptions of the use of words thus resemble one another, usage is no longer similar’ (Wittgenstein 2009:20). The language game coined by Wittgenstein refers to *the practice* of using language tied to the meanings of words but also to how others act according to the use of words. ‘Naming something is akin to

affixing a label to a thing', says Wittgenstein (2009:22), but the amount of naming of that thing is part of the game which expands with the variety of language tools and their modes of application.

One of Wittgenstein's most intriguing questions (2009:30) helps us understand the proposition of the term language game: 'to explain the word "red," could one aim at something other than red?'. Wittgenstein (2009:43) states that any explanation can be misunderstood because 'all that we call "being" and "non-being" consists in the existence and non-existence of connections between the elements'. Red exists in and of itself, but the language game is in the use of the word red, although the word red means the colour red by denomination, it does not explain the essence of this designation because the impression of the red colour belongs only to each one.

This means that the explanation of the thing is not possible, but only its denomination, which is given by someone who already knows what to do with it or is responsible for it. This becomes a hidden process, or, a *contaminated* game because it does not expose anything but a means of exposing something or the way of seeing things.

In referring to the process of concealment of the denomination of things, Sanín-Restrepo (2016) extends the term language game insofar as it intensifies the inevitable relations of power. Wittgenstein does not account for the phenomena of power that the theory of encryption accomplishes. 'You learn the game by watching as others play', states Wittgenstein (2009:45) - even the game is defined by rules (or orders). Sanín-Restrepo also understands that the rules and orders are present but always violently imposed by those who exercise the power. Taking from Wittgenstein's 'language games', Sanín-Restrepo (2018) claims that:

[/]n order for power 'as potestas' (oppression) to create a simulated language game it requires a 'power play'. The tendency of power as potestas to construct ideal languages, to detach meaning from ordinary language, to create forms of knowing and doing that are outside of any possible game, where the rules are said to anticipate the move (transcendent) but are only knowable in their application

after the move (ex post facto) is what I call a 'power play'. A power play consists of a method designed to jump out of a language game altogether and into transcendent models of power that deny every form of difference. (n.p.)

Rules, plans and models, and their indicators, indexes and categories, form a language game that aligns certain perspectives and theoretical-practical choices that are far from the heterogeneity of concepts, arguments and discourses as well as gaps, flaws, disorders, overlaps and incompatibilities, as pointed out by Foucault (2008). From Bourdieu's point of view (1989:9), the instruments of structured knowledge and communication, called *symbolic systems*, exert a structuring power of 'construction of reality that tends to establish a *gnoseological* order', that is, 'a homogeneous conception of time, of space, of number, of cause, which makes possible the concordance between intelligences'. Lacan (1981:10) said that it is necessary to understand that 'it is not with the knife that we dissect, but with concepts', which 'arise from the words themselves' as 'tools to delineate things', while hampered by the language of science.

Decrypting the city refers to another way of reading the city from the point of view of the other, or from the different, and therefore, far from rules, plans and models of the fields of architecture and urbanism and urban planning. Decrypting does not only mean to understand the indicators, indexes, categories nor to describe the real structures of the city but to seek another language game. Decrypting means to extensively drill the fields and dispositions of reality, which construct the language game or symbolic systems, and thus to unveil the cartographies (operations and practices) that design them. Decrypting means to enlarge the action of disobeying and resisting. The interpretation of the command order of the State-market association and the projection of the language beyond this command, therefore, constitute decryption. This would be, for Sanin-Restrepo (2016), the possibility of rehabilitating politics in its democratic place where the meaning of language is still to be decided. Decryption works as a lens that reveals the contradictions and aberrations of

the current logic, opens the practical experience of thinking and creates possibilities of the power of the new.

This proposal approaches the '*close and inward perspective*' undertaken by Magnani (2016:185) in the analysis of the way of life of the 'multiple, varied and heterogeneous groups of social actors whose daily lives unfold through their creative arrangements, the landscape of the city and in dialogue with its facilities' and the many practices that develop in the city. Thus, decrypting is not part of any new method or any theory of decoding of language, but it seeks the reverse; the submerged – the access to the world.

I believe in the decryption of categorisation, indicators and indexes – that is, on clearing the production of the current language game, thus opening up effective possibilities of reversion of exclusion as a structure of systems. The proposal is to create lines of analysis that make it possible to read the territories (and not to diagnose the territory), under the watchful eye of those who live and occupy (and not under the gaze of those who draw, plan or regulate – the architect, the urbanist, the State or entities). Furthermore, to understand what the territory is (and not what it seems to show), resulting in another language game that, maintaining the *status* of 'being' permanently subject to denial, can be recreated.

The theoretical-methodological proposal here is to reveal certain points of view and particular approaches expressed by concept categories that conform to the current language game and contribute to the encryption of the city. However, the intention is not to disappear with the historically constructed urban theme, but to identify exclusion as regularity and order, that is, as a structure that governs social space and, in the end, opens possibilities of thought to other actions in the fields of architecture and urbanism and urban planning, as mentioned at the beginning of this article.

The concept categories referred to are present in the institutionalised debates on housing issues and public

policies – slums, villages, urban occupations, settlements, housing allotments and various others. Therefore, it is necessary to ask, who and what speaks?

■ According to the United Nations – ONU

According to the United Nations (Onu-Habitat III 2015), informal settlements are:

[R]esidential areas where: (1) residents have no security of tenure with respect to the land or dwellings they inhabit, with modalities ranging from illegal occupations to informal rental; (2) neighbourhoods generally lack or are isolated from basic services and urban infrastructure, and (3) housing may not meet current planning and construction regulations, and are often located in geographically and environmentally hazardous areas. (p. 2)

■ According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2001), informal settlements are:

[*Firstly*] (1) areas where groups of housing units have been constructed on land that the occupants have no legal claim to, or occupy illegally; (2) unplanned settlements and areas where housing is not in compliance with current planning and building regulations (unauthorised housing). (n.p.)

■ According to the Brazilian Ministry of Cities

According to the Brazilian Ministry of Cities (MC 2010), precarious settlements are:

[A] set of inadequate urban settlements occupied by low-income residents, including typologies traditionally used by public housing policies, such as tenements, irregular lots on the outskirts, slums and the like, as well as housing developments that are degraded. (p. 9)

■ According to the Inter-American Development Bank – IDB

According to the Inter-American Development Bank (Magalhães & Villarosa 2012), precarious settlements are:

[P]redominant forms of family housing in urban Brazil [...] in a situation of housing inadequacy and land irregularity: tenements, slums, irregular lots, or even housing complexes, which, although produced by the public power, are in a state of degradation and/or irregularity [...] These settlements are very diversified, varying in location, size, density, constructive quality, degree of illegality, level of risk and level of consolidation and integration. However, in common, they generally have the illegality of ownership of land or property, the precariousness of housing conditions, the lack of urban infrastructure and segregation in relation to the formal city. (p. XV)

■ According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE 2012), subnormal settlements are:

[A] set consisting of a minimum of 51 housing units, occupying or having occupied until recently the land owned by others (public or private), generally disposed in a disorderly and dense manner, and lack, for the most part, essential public services. [...] This concept, utilised for the first time in the 1991 Demographic Census, has a certain degree of generalisation, in order to cover the diversity of irregular settlements in the country, known as slum, invasion, grota, lowland, community, village, backwater, runaway slave settlements, and stilt house, among others. (p. 209)

■ According to Belo Horizonte City Hall

The Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte comprises 34 municipalities as the third largest metropolitan area of Brazil with more than 5 million inhabitants. The largest city by population is

Belo Horizonte. Their (PBH 2010) definition states that settlements of social interest are:

[7]hose that present a predominance of low-income population and some kind of precariousness such as land irregularity, infrastructure deficiency, level of physical-environmental risk, predominance of poor construction standards, identified by the following typologies: Villages or Slums: Settlements originated by spontaneous occupation on third-party land by low-income population; Housing complexes and public housing lots: Settlements originated by Public Power on its property, destined for the low-income population and that present urban and/or legal irregularities: a) housing complexes built from 1993, whose only inadequacy was the demand for completion of its regularisation; b) housing complexes and public housing lots, which present the demand to finalise their regularisation and other inadequacies; Irregular private housing lots: Settlements originated by irregular division of private land, at the initiative of its owner or illegal sellers, real estate or housing cooperative, from a reference plant, with informal commercialisation of the resulting fractions; Organised occupations: Settlements originated from occupations on land or buildings owned by third parties, public or private, on the initiative of organised movements, prior to July 2009. (p. 24)

The *Observatório das Favelas* [Slum Observatory] considers that favela [slum] has been historically defined 'by what it *would not be* or what it *would not have*' (Silva 2009:16).¹⁰ It can be noted that the above definitions do not escape such metric. If this point of view is incorporated, the city's *rules* can be aligned with the above definitions: the typification of form, the legalism of juridical norms, the homogenisation of appearance, the personification of poverty, the negativity of absence and the extension of danger. It does not matter who the authors of institutional definitions are, but the evidences of these representations govern the interventions of the State and international organisations in these spaces.

The regularity or the order is in the demarcation of the places that *are not* and the places that *do not have*, creating people who

10. Organization of civil society of public interest dedicated to the production of knowledge and political propositions about slums and urban phenomena, based in Rio de Janeiro.

are not and people who *do not have* – exclusion *per se*. Slums, villages, urban occupations, settlements, peripheral housing lots, etc. are named, circumscribed, described, analysed and defined as discursive formation constantly from exclusion perspective. These categories generate new categories of excluded – slum residents, invaders, people from the periphery, etc. According to Foucault (2008), these types of enunciation are assigned qualifications according to certain degrees of rationalisation, conceptual codes and types of theory – instances authorised by society that play a legal role, and inevitably, are fragmented parts of a whole (the power play named by Sanín-Restrepo).

In the case of cities, the rules of formation are structured *by* the structuring *of* exclusion. This constitutes, in the case of cities, urban policies of public agencies and cooperative actions of international organisations, which are themselves ruled by ‘urban, social, legal and moral’ absences (Silva 2009:17) and by models of occupation and land use ‘referenced in urban theories and cultural assumptions’ (Silva 2009:21). In this sense, the rules are as unrelated to the fact that the city is a place for political action of all its inhabitants as they are arbitrated by the political and legal capital of certain individuals, groups, social classes and institutions because of the social position they occupy in the city.

Therefore, discursive relations, being ‘established relations between institutions, economic and social processes, forms of behaviours, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization’ (Foucault 2008:50), become practices, and not mere manifestations of some. These do not define what objects are, but what they allow them to appear.

The *Observatório das Favelas* (Silva 2009:22–23) proposes, instead, that the slum be considered a constituent territory of the city. It is characterised, in part or in its totality, by references that ground the city, which is diverse, united and plural and that guide a metropolitan management ruled by territorial justice. The concepts of slums, villages, urban occupations, settlements, etc.,

seem to be, as Foucault (2008:55) suggested, 'words ... as deliberately absent as the things themselves'.

The words are used to define settlements in land or buildings *owned by third parties or the property of others*, subject to the legal concept of individual private property. The question is what if these definitions enunciate occupations in land or buildings that do not meet *the social function of property or the social value of land? The degradation, the precariousness, the inadequacy* currently present in the discourses - adjectives subject to revitalisation depending on the subjectivity of those who look or speak - are far from the understanding that (VILLAÇA 1986):

[T]he 'great' or 'right' or 'ideal' housing standard is that which the working class thinks it can achieve through the possible advance within the political, social and economic conditions in which it finds itself. (p. 31)

What if slums, villages, urban occupations, settlements, tenements, etc. were understood as *possible answers* for residents because of the political, social, cultural and economic conditions they face? *Illegality* and *informality* are reflections of norms, laws and legal treaties that undoubtedly indicate the complexity of the issue, more associated with the imposition of economic and political interests as well as technical parameters than legal precepts. What if the *legitimacy* of the actions produced by the residents and social movements were recognised by the fact that they represented in themselves the conflicts arising from the very principles that instruct legality and formality? Who or which institutions are not interested in having other rules for developing a city?

■ Another language game

This work is regulated by the prospect of another language game. Wittgenstein (2009:61) states that 'a rule is there as a guideline' which, if it proves doubtful, can open a 'crack in the foundation',

creating other rules and another set of language. In this sense, the theoretical-methodological proposal here aims to analyse analytically ideas, narratives and perspectives that arise from inaccuracies, irregularities and inconsistencies of the Other's gaze, constructing an alternative logic of practice, as suggested by Bourdieu (2009).

The constructed methodological matrix, as proposed by Bourdieu (1989), presupposes the construction of a model that is not coated with a 'form' but as a choice to:

[C]onnect the pertinent data in such a way that they function as a program of research that poses systematic questions, appropriate for receiving systematic responses; in short, it is about building a coherent system of relations. (p. 32)

The lines of analysis were methodologically constructed in a non-linear going-and-go process. It is based on Bourdieu's (2009) relational analysis methodology which has two presuppositions: (1) the rupture of the pre-constructed problems about what one wants to investigate; and (2) research problems are socially produced and never objectified or recorded data. From the theoretical-practical perspective of the city, the lines of analysis were extended by the visible, evident and daily features of the territories, not predetermined, but with the objective of generating analytical cartographies.

In the first stage of the work, we sought to identify and delimit, through satellite imagery (*Google Earth*) at the metropolitan scale, urban areas whose pathways and land plot divisions presented formal and constructive patterns of Brazilian auto-constructed popular territories such as non-linear or non-orthogonal streets, overlapping and horizontal houses. In some cases, the preliminary demarcation incorporated inaccurate limits that, through *Google Street View*, were revised.

From this first mapping, evidenced by the premises in the identification and delimitation of the areas and by the doubts

regarding the limits and the typification of the territories, narratives of 12 territories selected from the initial sample were developed. During this stage, the intention was not to be led by urban planning and architecture categories; the goal was for the reading of the places to be, to some extent, close to our daily life, as residents and citizens, not architects. Nevertheless, we were inevitably aware of our accumulated experiences as researchers, teachers and students. However, this attempt was centred on us leaving behind our professional *place* and escaping the traps that accompany them. Throughout this venture, several conceptual, theoretical and methodological confrontations occurred, resulting in the design of the initial Lines of Analysis.

In these terms, seven of the 12 territories were analysed in greater depth, selected as a result of the territorial restructuring underway in the Northern District of Belo Horizonte. From the visits to the territories and the residents, the narratives were gradually articulated around the Lines of Analysis, still with provisional and permeable *status* in the face of conceptual and theoretical debates. In this stage, it was observed that each Line of Analysis required a level of approximation specific, firstly, by Google Earth; then through Street View and later on-site.

The consolidated Lines of Analysis after these stages are listed and described in Table 4.1.

The concepts of infrastructure, mesostructure and superstructure refer respectively to the physical support given by the geological system, the basic operating systems, including streeting layout, electricity grid and water network, et cetera, and to the set of anthropic structures, such as housing, schooling and industry, etc. These three concepts subsidised the creation of lines of urban capacity and natural capacity. The aspects related to what Carvalho (1999) calls superstructure were also encompassed in the attributes and daily life lines. In addition, the group used the Geotechnical Zoning Map of the city of Belo Horizonte (Figure 4.1).

TABLE 4.1: Lines of analysis of territories.

Lines of analysis	Description and objective
Socio-economic pressure in the territory	<p>> characterisation of values per m² of real estate over time, by area.</p> <p>> analysis of the impact of the valourisation of the neighbourhood and the city over time, by means of temporal observation of the changes in the square metre values in the surrounding neighbourhoods.</p>
Vulnerability in the territory	<p>> characterisation of the conditions of vulnerability of the residents.</p> <p>> analysis of the informational (access to information), programmatic (access to urban services) and practice (being able to think and act) vulnerability in which the residents are involved in facing adverse events.</p>
Pathways in the territory	<p>> characterisation of urban distances that fragment territories.</p> <p>> analysis of the distances of the houses or residents to where they want to access, mobility (barriers of mobility); internal mobility of the neighbourhood (bus, car, bicycle, walking) and quality of the routes (forestation, quality of roads, lighting, smaller distances).</p>
Equipments-services in the territory	<p>> characterisation of education, health, sport and leisure, culture, commerce in the territory.</p> <p>> analysis of the supply (superstructure) of the territory of equipment (education, health, sport and leisure, culture), commerce (mainly referring to subsistence goods such as markets, bakeries, groceries, fruit and vegetables shops) and services that support everyday activities. In the absence of these items, to analyse what the 'anchors' of the territory are (where [<i>and if</i>] to consume, where [<i>and if</i>] to have leisure; where to go in cases of diseases; etc.).*</p>
Actions in the territory	<p>> characterisation of the occupation of public and collective space.</p> <p>> analysis of the resident's action in the territory, the interactions of people with the constructed space, linking them to the uses, in qualitative character; the occupation of the public space, whether or not there is permanence and which areas experience this; how flows occur and what relationship they maintain with the uses and attributes of the site.</p>
Fissures in the territory	<p>> characterisation of the residents' association to organised collective groups, without the mediation of State.</p> <p>> analysis of the active reaction of residents to adverse events, the presence of collective use and maintenance spaces (gardens, meeting spaces, etc.) and who organises them (social movements, residents' association, etc.); achievements or benefits achieved.</p>

Table 4.1 continues on the next page→

TABLE 4.1 (Continues...): Lines of analysis of territories.

Lines of analysis	Description and objective
Property in the territory	<p>> characterisation of the relationship between the property owner (land or house) with the resident.</p> <p>> analysis of the processes of control and commercialisation of houses and their agents; concepts of ownership, means of acquisition practised, informal processes involved, commercialisation via real estate; legal owners of the area; local developers.</p>
Urban capacity of the territory	<p>> characterisation of access to basic sanitation (water supply, sanitary sewage, storm drainage, paving, garbage collection), road system and electric energy.</p> <p>> analysis of the urban capacity (mesostructure) of the area to have houses built, the presence or absence and means or agents of production (public power or autoconstruction), how materials are acquired and ways of financing them.*</p>
Natural capacity of the territory	<p>> characterisation of the topographic and geological conditions of the area.</p> <p>> analysis of the physical capacity (infrastructure) of the territory to have houses built; terrain: rugged, valley, crest, flat, nature (relief, rivers, woods, gullies, etc.).*</p>
Articulations of the territory	<p>> characterisation of the articulation of the territory with the city.</p> <p>> analysis of the typological and morphological continuity of the territory in relation to the urban area: continuous and integrated (territory established in the urban area without interferences from barriers of the physical or anthropic environment), continuous and disjointed (territory established in the urban area with interferences from physical or anthropic barriers), discontinuous (territory visibly fragmented from the urban area).</p>
Logic of occupation of the territory	<p>> characterisation of the occupation of the territory.</p> <p>> analysis of the logic of occupation in the territory over time: agglomerate (without planning); housing lot division; occupation division-occupation; housing estate.</p>
Attributes of the territory	<p>> characterisation of the attributes of the space constructed in the territory.</p> <p>> analysis of the construction of the territory (road size, land plot size, number of families, type of building, materials, densification).</p>
Separation lines of the territory	<p>> characterisation of natural or constructed demarcations that fragment territories.</p> <p>> analysis of the physical separations of houses and territory by water courses and topographic and anthropic conditions (road system) and access and circulation controls (walls, fences, cameras, bars, etc.).</p>

Source: Data provided by PRAXIS-EA/UFMG, in 2019, published with permission from PRAXIS-EA/UFMG. *, The concepts of infrastructure, mesostructure and superstructure refer respectively to the physical support given by the geological system; the basic operating systems, including streeting layout, electricity grid and water network, etc.; and to the set of anthropic structures, such as housing, schooling and industry, etc.



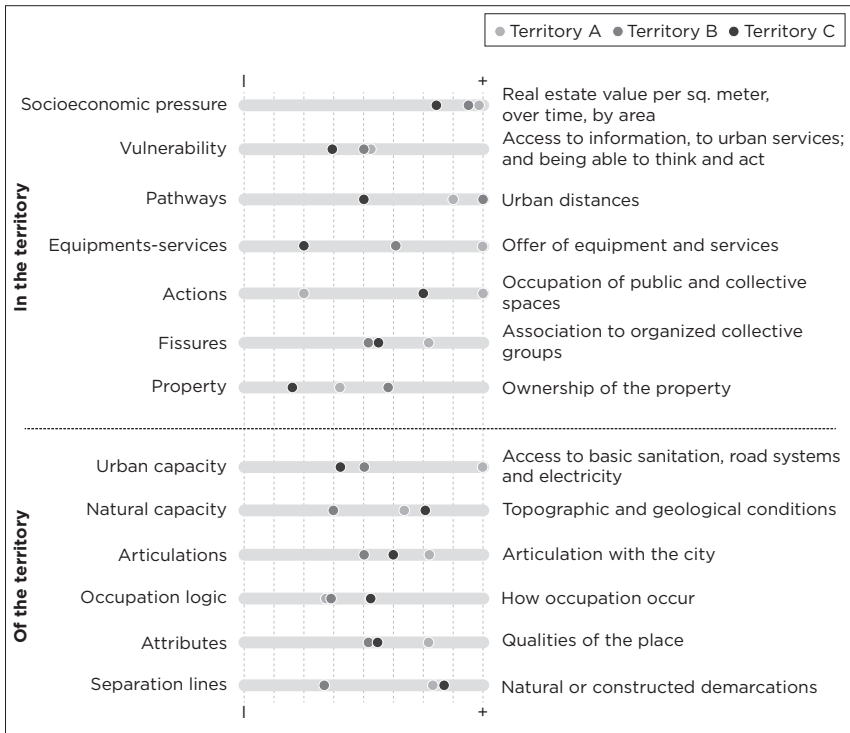
Source: Image provided by PRAXIS-EA/UFMG, published with permission from PRAXIS-EA/UFMG.

FIGURE 4.2: Morro Alto, Vespasiano; patterns of occupation of the territory.



Source: Image provided by PRAXIS-EA/UFMG, published with permission from PRAXIS-EA/UFMG.

FIGURE 4.3: Morro Alto, Vespasiano.

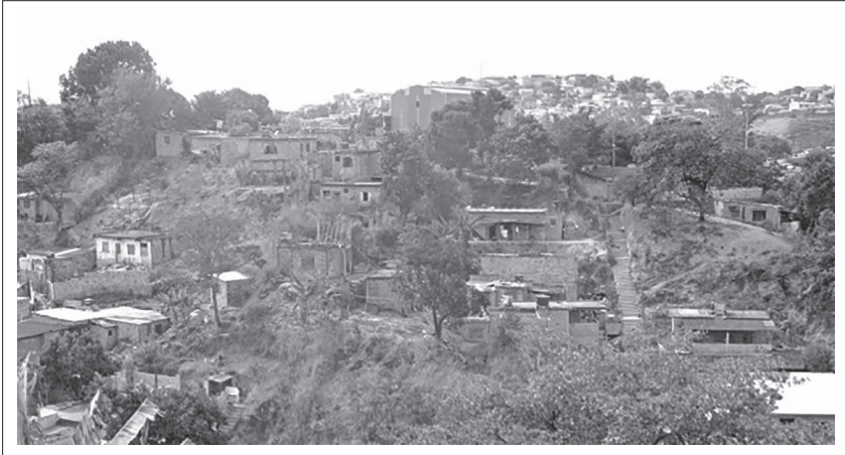


Source: Data provided by PRAXIS-EA/UFGM, in 2019, used with permission.

FIGURE 4.4: Lines of analysis of the territories.

responsible for urban planning; (2) the differences and singularities do not nullify points that can be approximated or compared between territories; on the contrary, they allow the relational analysis and legitimise the proposed lines. The diagram 1 systematises the information of each line of analysis and allows us to visualise their relational analysis.

The theoretical-methodological debate of the proposal allowed several questions to be asked, over time, revolving around the legitimacy of the lines of analysis that can be seen or from the point of view of the residents. In this sense, partnerships were sought that could accommodate our research and, through contact with the UFGM *Observatório da Juventude* [Youth



Source: Image provided by PRAXIS-EA/UFMG, Marro Alto, Vespasiano, exact date unspecified, published with permission from PRAXIS-EA/UFMG.

FIGURE 4.5: Morro Alto, Vespasiano.

Observatory], we contacted Professor Daniela Patrícia Gomes Silva de Oliveira, responsible for the geography discipline at the Maria Carolina Campos State School (EEMCC), Bairro Leblon (Venda Nova, Belo Horizonte). At that moment, Professor Daniela was teaching one part of the discipline's curriculum, namely *urban segregation*, to her second-year high school students. From the partnership established between the PRAXIS-EA/UFMG group and the EEMCC, two workshops were proposed with the following objectives: (1) to get to know the place from the point of view of its residents, in this case, the students; (2) to legitimise the proposed lines of analysis as capable of decrypting the prevailing language game and creating another; (3) to assess the place from the others' perspective; (4) to fissure the socio-political space of all those involved, PRAXIS-EA/UFMG researchers and EEMCC students.

The first workshop – *Reading the place I live* – was held at the EEMCC and consisted of work, to be evaluated and graded by the geography teacher, with questions divided into blocks corresponding to each line of analysis, but without the unveiling

of the same, thus avoiding any induction of what we intended. The main challenge of the researchers in the preparation of the itinerary was the use of terms and expressions that distanced them from academic language – a challenge minimised by the participation of Professor Daniela who enabled the approximation of the desired decrypted language.

In open classes, the idea of the project was presented to about 120 students by the PRAXIS-EA/UFMG researchers and EEMCC teachers (see Figure 4.6 to Figure 4.8).

The students chose neighbourhoods close to the EEMCC. In groups of up to four classmates, they constructed narratives prepared from the answers given to the itinerary questions around what they had studied in the discipline of Geography related to cities; the importance of the view of those who live in the place; participation in political decisions; the decisions of public power over the city; different points of view regarding the



Source: Photograph taken by PRAXIS-EA/UFMG, exact date and location unspecified, published with permission from PRAXIS-EA/UFMG.

FIGURE 4.6: First open class presented to EEMCC students and teachers.



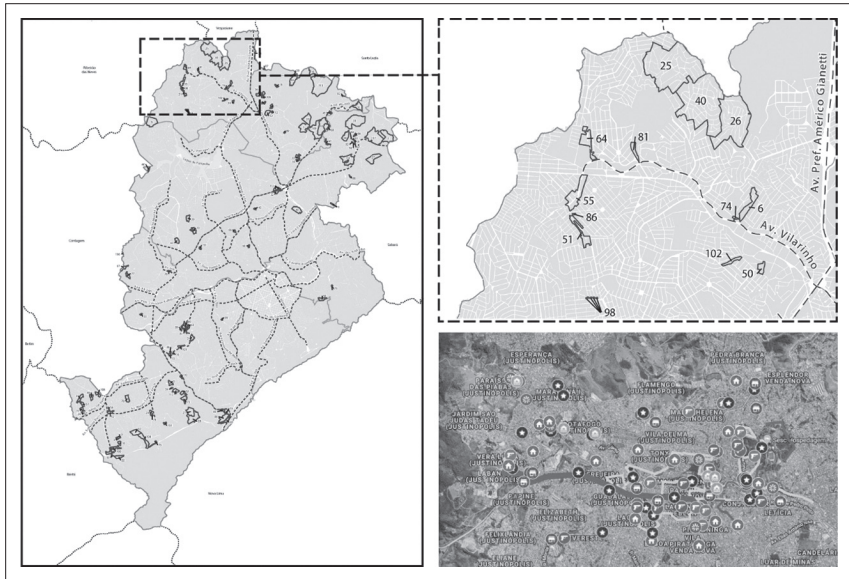
Source: Photograph taken by PRAXIS-EA/UFMG, exact date and location unspecified, published with permission from PRAXIS-EA/UFMG.

FIGURE 4.7: Second workshop with EEMCC students.

way of living. The use of images, drawings, maps, diagrams, photos, among other possibilities, was encouraged. The students also received support from Portuguese language teachers in how to construct narratives, with a summary to also be compiled with by the EEMCC. Of the 120 students present in the first workshop, 92 students submitted their narratives, totalling 28 papers. Therefore, 28 students did not hand in narratives or were not authorised by the parents to attend the workshop.

The second workshop was held with 41 students from the EEMCC at UFMG's School of Architecture and consisted of mapping the neighbourhoods that had been analysed by them in the first workshop.

It should be remembered that the main objective of this chapter is to present the theoretical-methodological construction of the



Source: Photograph taken by PRAXIS-EA/UFMG, exact date and location unspecified, published with permission from PRAXIS-EA/UFMG.

FIGURE 4.8: Institutional view of the territory Venda Nova *versus* cartography produced from EEMCC students' narratives.

lines of analysis from the reading of the territories. Initial responses from the workshops are being systematised to analyse different approaches to the city. Some answers are presented below, albeit in preliminary form, but they do demonstrate an enlarged and distinct view of the territories by those who live there:

'To a great extent, the residents chose the neighbourhoods of Venda Nova as a place of residence because of existing kinship relations, inheritance received and/or the low cost of the acquired land plot. In the vast majority of cases, the houses, on average for four residents, were auto-constructed by their parents or grandparents, and in some cases two, three or even four houses share the same lot.

Young students feel vulnerable because of the presence of drug trafficking in neighbourhoods or in nearby slums – areas where 'houses are on top of others' –, a condition amplified by curfews, conflicts between traffickers, robberies and the high numbers

of rapes. The perception of safety exists when police vehicles are present or when they call the police.

Places where robberies occur are close to recreational areas such as soccer fields, or where there are tall and long walls around large land plots, at intersections of two or more streets, at points of the stream and on paths of wooded land next to woods.

The subject of public safety was recurrent in students' narratives: "where you cannot walk with a cell phone in your hand, there is no safety to me"; "You cannot have safety where there is no light"; "The bus is important for improving safety"; "The mobile police base doesn't do any good"; "If placing security is not going to solve anything, at least trying to protect us will be a way [*of responding to the problem*]".

Only winding, steep and bumpy streets, as well as open streams, walls and high bushes have been identified as barriers that hinder the free movement of the residents: "It's true, near the school there are hills everywhere". The lack of maintenance of the public spaces is a problem for the residents: "near my house there is a stream that fills up until it floods, and it is full of holes"; "At night the street has no light, it is a dirt road. I think it is not feasible to continue this"; "Is this the finished square? [*it is*] the one near that school".

The topographically designed and maintained streets are identified as ideal places to walk. The students walk through neighbourhoods with bus routes, where there is the greater presence of stops; on foot, to visit nearby businesses and visit relatives and friends – "everyone is in someone's house, it takes 5 reais"; and by car, to access more distant facilities such as hospitals and shopping malls, or even visit relatives and friends outside the neighbourhoods.

Nevertheless, several students reported difficulties accessing health clinics, hospitals, banks and supermarkets, as well as the lack of better public leisure options in the neighbourhood. Even with squares, soccer fields and ice cream parlours they feel the need to go to other points of the city given the shortage of empty areas singled out for public use.

The street is appropriate, to some extent, as a place of conversation and partying on celebratory dates (carnival and June parties, for example).

The students know the centre of Belo Horizonte, for example, a Praça da Liberdade, Praça Sete, Rodoviária, Palácio das Artes, Parque Municipal (Liberty Square, Seventh Square, the Bus Station, The Arts Palace, Municipal Park) and the Pampulha region, but consider it difficult to visit them because of the long distances involved (EEMCC is 17 km from the centre of Belo Horizonte).

The inequality of the neighbourhoods of Venda Nova in relation to the centre of the capital is expressed: “take the map more inside Belo Horizonte, you will see that it is much greener than here”; “If you take as an example the tuition of the [State] Central High School (located in the centre of Belo Horizonte), they are public things but it is very different because it is in another location”.

The students identified the arrival of the hypermarket, college and residential buildings as new works that enrich the Venda Nova neighbourhoods; even the recent occupation of the rural area, in an accelerated way, is seen as appreciation of the entire area.

The improvements in the neighbourhood are also attributed to industry: “Now the neighbourhood has been improving a lot. Let’s suppose, here, for example, there was a block factory, which then closed, then opened again – this has greatly improved the visibility of the neighbourhood, there is a large business area here, the bakery, the EPA supermarket, the butcher and the others businesses”.

Basic sanitation is present in the territories but there are occasional complaints about problems in the sewage network and garbage collection besides the annoying presence of sanitary landfill.’ (Researcher, location unspecified, date unknown)

From the cartography produced, based on the students’ narratives about the territories, unstructured interviews are being carried out by the PRAXIS-EA/UFMG researchers with the residents of the territories mapped out by the EEMCC students.

Within the proposal of decrypting the city through the insertion of another language game in the political arena, the constructed lines of analysis proved to be relevant. It should be remembered that this proposal does not aim to portray the territory, but to reveal the complexity of the urban dynamics encrypted by current

categories, indices and indicators and to indicate another approach of analysis based on the narratives of the Other. From there, a digital platform will accommodate the narratives of the residents with the objective of visually making available another reading of the territory, or other language game, which is not based on institutional or scientific categories, indexes and models.

For instance, Venda Nova, according to the City Hall of Belo Horizonte, has a population of 262183 inhabitants, with an average salary of approximately two minimum wages and the Municipal Human Development Index (IDHM) between 0.690 and 0.788. For students, these numbers do not express the place they live because they camouflage positive and everyday aspects, which are non-measurable:

‘We feel good, safe and valued in the neighbourhood we live in.

The neighbourhood is a good place to live if we evaluate housing and accessibility. It is a quiet and good neighbourhood to live in, but it needs some improvements such as: creation of squares and more leisure spots, more paved streets, intensification of policing and several other improvements to make it a better neighbourhood.

We like the neighbourhood where we live, regardless of defects; it is where we grew up, where we lived our childhood; where we make friends; we know people, we lose people. In short, it is part of us, of our life. The places we frequent have history, memories for each one of us. It is part of who we are and what we like to be and do. Everything that we live through in the neighbourhood will be maintained with us, even if we move to another neighbourhood. The good life we have with our neighbours is also important to us, and makes life more enjoyable in the neighbourhood.’ (Students, gender undisclosed, date unknown)

In the language game, lines of analysis carry, *per se*, traces of temporality and permeability insofar as differences are permanently rebuilt in everyday urban life. This understanding displaces the emphasis of hegemonic discourses in relation to

what is typical of daily life, of local life and to the way the residents occupy and experience the city. The re-signification of the language game allows the residents to claim political authority in their territories.

The ongoing interviews intend to increase the knowledge of the territories from the perspective of the residents' daily lives. In the long run, the intention is to adjust and consolidate the proposed theoretical-methodological proposal, without any pretension of absolute or definitive result, thus maintaining the temporary and permeable language game.

Conclusion

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■ Concluding remarks

The ‘conversation’ that has taken place between the various authors has led to interesting and new perspectives in the field of cities and space and power. A ‘synergy’ has emerged between encryption and phenomenology of place – this is strong and fluid parallels that could be pursued further, as well as the concepts of ‘unheard and marginalised’ and the ‘hidden people’.

Cities impact on whole nations. Cities have a powerful influence in a country’s development. Principles of democracy and equity are many times established in cities and then ‘exported’ and applied elsewhere. The relationships between cities, nationally and internationally, assist in creating networks that are beneficial in terms of the environment and better functioning

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socio-economic systems. Cities in emerging economies have unique characteristics which may help in creating a rich global dialogue.

The built environment disciplines, in emerging economies, present unique opportunities for a discourse around the practical, political and symbolic elements of space, identity and culture. Cities need to accommodate all, in all of our diversity, welcome all and be accessible to all.

The four chapters presented in this book, though diverse in approach are unified in values. They are presented, as far as possible and without losing the individual voices of the authors, as one cohesive narrative and an intellectual flow from the metaphysical and implications for understanding and teaching and praxis.

Sanín-Restrepo thus opens the conversation with a philosophical, metaphysical investigation into the encryption of power and its applications when considering cities and urban contexts.

Toffa interrogates the state of the architectural profession, albeit in South Africa, but having resonance in an international context. He addresses both the professional amnesia of the past and impotence in the present and sets the challenge to shift stance and thinking in reimagining the role of the teaching in the built environment professions and promotes reconfigured modes of practice.

Osman addresses a metaphysical stance for understanding the material of the urban as a residue of traditional and indigenous knowledge as part as a wider cultural ecosystem and that to contemplate design for these those for whom it must serve they must act as primary agents in its conceptions.

Morado Nascimento moves theory to praxis in charting the urban condition as 'what is' rather than through lenses of ideologies.

The book therefore brings the metaphysical, through theory to the practical in discussing cities, space and power in emerging economies.

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This scholarly book focuses on a common theme of urbanism and transformation, approached from the metaphysical through to the application of current theories of urbanism and the praxis of its professionals. Significantly, many of those here given their voice are new to the disciplinary debate, a refreshing aspect which lends richness to the discussions and their insights here presented. The authors' voices - some militant, some measured - are all impatient for revolutionary change of the status quo, for the dismantling of neo-liberalism and rampant capitalism. This they wish to achieve by changing stances to the reading of the city as an ideal and as a flawed artefact of this ideal. Urbanism is viewed as the product of cultural systems, with all its intangible aspects and the urban material as the residue of such an urban cultural ecosystem. The book expresses the imperative that the active participants in a cultural system of making and becoming be their own voice and the repository of meaning which can be discovered and understood when the dominant voices of those with and in power are silenced and the communities given their own voice.

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Cities, space and power is a collective book included in the series 'The Built Environment in Emerging Economies (BEinEE): Cities, Space And Transformation'. As it is highlighted by the editor, the four chapters of the book – respectively written by Ricardo Sanín-Restrepo, Tariq Toffah, Amira Osman and Denise Morado Nascimento – are heterogeneous in style, disciplinary points of view and terminology, but the authors share values and concerns, focusing on the same set of issues.

The general aim of the book is to study the relations between power, urbanisation processes and the production of built environments in the context of emerging countries, emphasising the need to overcome schemes and concepts closely related to the reality of Western countries, even if often presented as having universal and scientific value. This approach implies also a radical criticism of the professional and educational structures that reproduce practices and knowledge based on ethnic and social inequality, while appearing open to innovation in the pursuit of excellence. At the same time, it requires an attempt to construct theories, concepts and methods of analysis related to the subjectivity and practice of the poorest and most marginalized parts of the population not only in emerging countries, but more generally in the Global South.

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