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AFRICA IN FOCUS:

REWRITING CULTURES OF IDENTITY AND ENGAGEMENT

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In This Issue

A Photovoice Study Exploring the Subjective Constructions of 'Born-Free' Identities in a South African University By Marissa Brits and Thandokazi Maseti | Peer Review	8
Considering the Utilisation of Green Spaces in Potchefstroom, South Africa: A Tale of Three Parks By Zaakirah Jeeva and Wian Oosthuizen | Peer Review	26
The 'De-legitimization of South Africa': A Case Study on South African–Cuban Relations By Anton M. Pillay | Peer Review	41
A Thematic Analysis of N.G. Sibiya's Selected Essays in *Amalangabi* By Sizwe Zwelakhe Dlamini | Peer Review	49
'Two Souls, Two Thoughts, and Two Unreconciled Strivings in One Body': W.E.B. Du Bois' Double Consciousness in the Lived Experiences of Black South Africans By Vhonani MS Petla | Peer Review	58
Unpacking the Perceived Scarcity of Town Planners in South Africa: A Graduate's Perspective By Zaakirah Jeeva | Peer Review	65
Probing the Structuralist Analysis of a Selected isiXhosa Short Story, 'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo' (Suicide Is Not the Solution), as a Literary Work By Mlamli Diko | Peer Review	78
British Colonial Post-War Fiscal Policies in Benin, Nigeria: 1945–1960 By Frank Ikponmwosa and Collins Osayuki Edigin | Peer Review	88
The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance? Whistleblowing within the Context of State Capture in South Africa By Ugljesa Radulovic | Peer Review	101
Book Interview with Helene Strauss about her recent book, *Wayward Feeling: Audio-Visual Culture and Aesthetic Activism in Post-Rainbow South Africa* (2022; University of Toronto Press)	116

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Prof Ronit Frenkel

The University of Johannesburg acquired *The Thinker* in April 2019 from Dr Essop Pahad. Over the last decade, *The Thinker* has gained a reputation as a journal that explores Pan-African issues across fields and times. Ronit Frenkel, as the incoming editor, plans on maintaining the pan-African scope of the journal while increasing its coverage into fields such as books, art, literature and popular cultures. *The Thinker* is a 'hybrid' journal, publishing both journalistic pieces with more academic articles and contributors can now opt to have their submissions peer reviewed. We welcome Africa-centred articles from diverse perspectives, in order to enrich both knowledge of the continent and of issues impacting the continent.

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Nedine Moonsamy is an associate professor in the English department at the University of Johannesburg. She is currently writing a monograph on contemporary South African Fiction and otherwise conducts research on science fiction in Africa. Her debut novel, The Unfamous Five (Modjaji Books, 2019) was shortlisted for the HSS Fiction Award (2021), and her poetry was shortlisted for the inaugural New Contrast National Poetry Award (2021).

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A Photovoice Study Exploring the Subjective Constructions of 'Born-Free' Identities in a South African University

By Marissa Brits and Thandokazi Maseti

Abstract

The South African identity has been shaped by nation-building discourse; it remains a point of ongoing political discussion well into South Africa's democratisation. Literature suggests that 'South Africans' only exist through their creation by nationalist rhetoric; therefore, growing political discontent is reflected in a disentanglement from the 'South African' identity. This article, using photovoice, explores Black university students' constructions of their identity in contemporary South Africa. The participants viewed the South African society as a divided one. Although they described the impact of nation-building discourse as having existed in the past, they spoke of it as a disingenuous sentiment that has faded with the passing of former President Nelson Mandela. Instead, the participants turn to their ethnic groups to establish a fluid cultural identity. The 'born-free' generation is in a state of 'in-between': born after the official end of apartheid, they are thought of as having access to opportunities unavailable to previous generations. However, they continue to grapple with the challenges and unresolved legacies of the past. This project's significant contribution lies in its emphasis on the perspectives and experiences of the 'born-frees' themselves. Existing literature shows that politicians and academics usually control discussions related to nation-building and transformation. Yet, the voices of the 'born-frees' are frequently side-lined, as they are perceived to lack firsthand experience of apartheid's challenges. This study demonstrates that, even with democratic change, there are numerous aspects of 'born-free' lives that have remained untransformed.

Introduction

Despite a South Africa's national identity has been a strongly politicised concept, undergoing significant changes since the end of apartheid (Chipkin, 2007). However, this transformation often does not correspond to the everyday experiences of Black1 people (Ball, 2018; Mafoko, 2017). This study demonstrates how the 'born-free' generation perceives and experiences this transformation. Under apartheid, identity formation was rooted in divisive categories, defining South Africans through the politics and culture of the nationalist struggle (Marks and Trapido, 2014). In the post-apartheid era, constructing a national identity became a contentious political issue, leaving those emerging from apartheid without a distinct national characteristic. What was clear was who they were not: they were no longer the South Africans who had either committed or endured the injustices of the past (Chipkin, 2007). However, during the 1994 elections, regardless of whether the South African people constituted a nation, they were nonetheless a community of individuals eligible for citizenship, within the boundaries of a real or imagined political entity (Chipkin, 2007; Mark and Trapido, 2014).

The advent of democracy necessitated transformation and nation-building. However, many of South Africa's 'born-free' generation were born too late to fully embrace this new sense of nationalism. Born after the 1994 democratic election (Maseti, 2018), they missed the era of institutionalised racism, but still bore the social and economic scars of apartheid (Chipkin, 2007). The term 'born-free' is associated with those born after the struggle for democracy had concluded, with the hope that they would reap the rewards of the struggle generation (Maseti, 2018). This term does not describe a generation born free of racial segregation and all forms of inequality, it is an aspirational term and not always the reality of the group it wishes to describe. Transformation policies sought to bring significant changes to higher education (Cornell, 2015; Spillius, 2012) and to diversify the student body. However, the reality remains that the participation rates of Black, Coloured2, and Indian students remain lower than those of their White counterparts (Jawitz, 2012; Kessi, 2013). The identities of these students are shaped by the socio-political legacies of apartheid (Vander, 2019). This study focuses on the experiences of Black 'born-free' students who, having no living memory of apartheid, have the responsibility of an identity forged in constitutional freedom. The participants were studying at a historically White university. While transformation policies at tertiary institutions have aimed at increasing diversity, it is important to understand the experiences of Black students within historically White-only spaces. The 'born-free' generation emerged during a time when the aspiration was to move forward as one united nation, embracing diversity and accessibility in education (Mafoko, 2017). However, many come from financially struggling families and have experienced racial, gender, and ethnic discrimination (Mafoko, 2017). From their perspective, the ideal of a rainbow nation has not only failed them but the entire nation as well (Ball, 2018; Mafoko, 2017; Wa Azania, 2016).

More than half of South Africa's population, under the age of 25, was born with no living memory of apartheid, and this generation will play a central role in the nation's civic and political life (Norgaard, 2015). This generation grew up without memories of the National Party (NP), having only experienced the rule of the African National Congress (ANC), carrying an identity forged in constitutional freedom. When asked to describe their identities, South Africans will first identify themselves by racial categories, followed by subnational categories, and lastly by a national identity (Bornman, 2010). Yet, acknowledging that the South African identity has been shaped by various nation-building discourses and currently rests in the hands of President Ramaphosa, who evoked the preamble of the 1996 Constitution in his 2018 State of the Nation Address (SONA), this study aims to explore how the 'born-frees' construct their South African identity.

The construction of a South African identity

The construction of a South African identity during apartheid was deeply entrenched in exclusionary and divisive categories, grounded in an ideology of separatist development (Eaton, 2002). This inherited discriminatory system is a form of 'internal colonisation' which is characterised by the absence of a distinct separation between the colonising power

and the colonised population (Hirson, 1992). In South Africa, these features were compounded by the judicial independence of the White South African state, which laid the foundation for the apartheid government. The supremacy of the White South African state translated into the systematic and legalised discrimination that shaped the economic, social, and political structure of the entire country (Hirson, 1992). After the Anglicisation of the state, after the Second Boer War, Afrikaner nationalists started creating their own history and symbols which emphasised the importance of a unified Afrikaner Volk (Baine, 1998). Afrikaner intellectuals began creating an Afrikaner ethnic identity; it was within this context in 1946 that the NP won the general elections on the platform of 'separate development' (Chipkin, 2007). After the election win by the NP, a plethora of legislation that entrenched racial discrimination followed (Baines, 1998). The new government became increasingly aggressive with the introduction of the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, the creation of the homelands, and the promotion of the Bantu Self-Government Act (Chipkin, 2007).

Identity formation under apartheid was largely defined by racial categories, which obscured differences such as language or religion (Bornman, 2010; Chipkin, 2007). While Afrikaners witnessed the development and consolidation of a full-fledged nationalist movement throughout much of the twentieth century, minority groups found themselves constructing a sense of 'newly-imagined communities' (Marks and Trapido, 1987) or multiple identities. As Mamdani (2000: 176) proposes: 'the apartheid project enforced bipolar identities of White people as racial and Black people as ethnic beings, welding together its beneficiaries into a single identity...while fragmenting its victims into...' multiple minorities. It was within this context that the quest for a unified South African identity began. Calls for a shared identity can be traced back to the early days of the struggle for African rights; organisations like Imbumba yamaNyama (1881), the Native Congress (1898), the African Political Organisation, and the Indian Congress all championed equal rights for all (Mbeki, 1992). When the ANC was founded in 1912, it explicitly called for the unity of all South Africans, proclaiming, 'We are one people' (Mbeki, 1992). In 1955, the ANC held their first national assembly and introduced the Freedom Charter (Everatt, 2009); the assembly was a collaborative effort that involved individuals from various racial and social backgrounds. It strongly promoted the idea of 'non-racialism' as an ideology (Frederikse, 1990). Their message called upon South Africans, regardless of race: 'We call the people of South Africa, black and white—Let us speak together of freedom!' However, the ANC's talk about 'nation' and 'national identity' was influenced by their response to the apartheid regime's racialised discourse and despite their vision of a non-racial society, the very concept of 'non-racialism' still assumed the existence of distinct racial groups (Pieterse, 2002).

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After the 1994 election and the adoption of the 1996 Constitution, the uncertainty about what post-apartheid South Africa would look like began to fade away. These two events filled the nation with hope for the future. However, the country still faced the challenging task of addressing the deep-rooted socio-economic problems inherited from the apartheid era (Chipkin, 2016). The adoption of the 1996 Constitution was not just about embracing non-racialism but also about shaping the identity of the South African nation-state (Chipkin, 2016). This approach emphasised that while racial identities might hold personal significance, they were deemed irrelevant for a functioning political democracy. It emphasised the establishment of a nation built on the allocation of individual rights, irrespective of one's beliefs or origins (Blaser, 2004). The end of apartheid necessitated

the creation of a shared sense of nationhood and a collective identity. This was accomplished through the promotion of nation-building discourse (Eaton, 2002). Thus, the metaphor of the Rainbow Nation was invoked, a term coined by Archbishop Tutu (Daniel et al., 2003). The discourse underscored the idea of 'unity in diversity,' which was further reinforced through the adoption of symbols like the national flag and anthem. The message 'unity in diversity' was enshrined in the new Constitution, which echoed the words of the Freedom Charter: 'We the people of South Africa ...' (Constitution, 1996). This legislature also helped define the identity of the citizens in the newly formed democratic nation by emphasising the shared citizenship, common symbols, the recognition of the rights and languages of all, and a commitment to equality (Ngonyama, 2012). The concept of a rainbow nation, while offering a positive framework for citizens to engage and empathise with one another, has faced criticism for concealing the brutal realities of apartheid from public discussion (Harris, 2004).

Before Thabo Mbeki's presidency, the nation building discourse shifted from non-racialism to rainbow-ism. But, starting in 1999, former President Thabo Mbeki advocated for a supra-national ideal known as the 'African Renaissance' (Eaton, 2022). The central goal of this political rhetoric became the creation of a single nation with a strong African identity. Consequently, the concept of an African-inspired South African identity gained prominence (Bornman, 2010). Former President Mbeki, in his 'I am an African' speech, defined 'African-ness' as arising from a shared territory, history, and a strong stance against oppression (Chipkin, 2007; Mbeki, 1996). In 2008, he outlined the dream of a South African national identity, focusing on principles of national reconciliation, unity in diversity, democracy, non-racism, non-sexism, shared prosperity, a better life for all, and a cadre of leaders committed to keeping their promises to the people (Ngonyama, 2012; Mbeki, 2008). Mbeki's time in office has been marked by a renewed focus on racial issues, a shift attributed to the different presidential roles: while Mandela emphasised forgiveness and reconciliation, Mbeki stressed economic inequality rooted in apartheid (Fullard, 2004). The call for 'African hegemony' can be seen as an effort to enforce a dominant African culture within South Africa's multicultural landscape. The ANC, on the other hand, has recognised the country's cultural and ethnic diversity, supporting individuals' freedom to express their identities while working towards a united South African national identity (Pieterse, 2002). Consequently, it is not unexpected that some ethnic and cultural minority groups are critical of the ANC's nation-building initiative, viewing it as oppressive (Pieterse, 2002).

Jacob Zuma assumed the presidency in 2009, and during the Party's 2007 conference, he used his Zulu heritage to garner support, with many of his supporters wearing '100% Zulu' T-shirts (Gumede, 2016). His rise to power was marked by an ethnic and gender-based identity as he became closely linked with Zulu nationalistic discourse. This was evident in his public speeches where he frequently referenced traditional Zulu idioms and stories (Carton, 2009; Kataria, 2011). Critics of his policies were often labelled as opposing Zulu or African traditions, prompting Mondi Makhanya, the then City Press editor, to caution that Zuma was fuelling a troubling trend of tribalism (Gumede, 2016). Former President Mbeki also criticised the rise of tribalism under Zuma, highlighting what he referred to as the 'homeboy' phenomenon, where officials from a particular region often accompanied a minister appointed from that region (Gumede, 2016). According to research by Afrobarometer (2018), Zuma's approval ratings declined by almost half in the first four years of his presidency; this decline had widespread implications for both the ANC and the country. Additionally, the percentage of citizens who regarded their country as a 'full democracy' decreased from 66% to 48% in the first four years of his presidency (Afrobarometer, 2018).

Perhaps hosting the 2010 World Cup brought a moment of unity and patriotic fervour to South Africa's nation building efforts (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). Former President Mbeki saw it as an opportunity to send waves of confidence across the continent, and Archbishop Tutu viewed it as a chance to showcase the country's successful political transformation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). The nation rallied around sports as a tool for unity, building on Nelson Mandela's strategy of using sports to foster unity, as seen in the historic 1995 Rugby World Cup (Martin, 2013). Various sporting bodies continued to promote integration and development programs. However, the post-World Cup period witnessed challenges like civil servant strikes and incidents of xenophobia, raising questions about the lasting impact of the event (Ndlovu-

Gatsheni, 2011). In recent years, the ANC government has faced criticism for various issues, including the Marikana massacre and the introduction of e-tolls (Norgaard, 2015). The declining popularity of the ANC in elections has broader implications, as some argue that the concept of a 'South African people' is closely tied to the ANC's influence, whether through rhetoric or membership (Chipkin, 2007). Chipkin (2016) argues that the ANC and the nation are intertwined, and growing electoral competition may signal a looming national crisis.

These sentiments, especially among the youth, are echoed in political movements like the #FeesMustFall protests, which reflect a growing belief that the rainbow nation is more a historical concept than a current reality (Mafoko, 2017). President Ramaphosa's 2018 State of the Nation Address (SONA) aimed to address issues like corruption, youth development, and economic transformation while emphasising Mandela's vision that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it' (Ramaphosa, 2018). Despite this, the 2019 elections showed not only a rise in rival politics but also growing support for the Freedom Front Plus, signalling a resurgence of Afrikaner nationalism. This may be a reaction to the increasing popularity of Black nationalism, as seen in the growing popularity of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) (Mkhabela, 2019).

The 'born-free' generation and nation-building discourse

The relationship between race and economic inequality has changed since apartheid. However, it continues to influence contemporary South Africa in multifaceted ways (Erasmus, 2005). Research conducted by Erasmus and De Wet (2003) with tertiary education students highlights how students tend to cluster along racial lines, restricting cross-racial interactions. This study underscores that many students find comfort in racially homogeneous settings, demonstrating new, complex facets of racial discrimination that echo apartheid-era divisions (Erasmus, 2005). An investigation conducted by the Human Science Research Council (2007), culminating in the Social Attitudes of South Africans report, sheds light on the attitudes of the youth toward the 'new' South Africa. According to this study, and a Mail & Guardian report, the born-frees 'appear to be forging a new national identity that is independent of race' (SASA 2nd Report, 2010: 100). How young people are thinking about these new identity conundrums and the role the school plays in these processes are important; the schools and the teachers continue to struggle with the disparate messages about who they are and who they ought to be (Soudien, 2001). This sentiment is reflected by Mafoko who describes her early experiences:

'We sit in history classrooms which breed and fester animosity because as a generation, we either have parents who try not to think too hard about our history or parents who are bitter because they are still dealing with the effects of our history... these attitudes manifest themselves on us and become apparent in our open spaces' (Mafoko, 2017: 9).

Mafoko (2017: 9) further expresses the 'born-free' disillusionment with the state: 'As born-frees, we are told we can do anything, be anything and dare to dream in ways unimaginable. Because we are born free. But from where we stand, the dream is failing the nation'. This generation enjoyed the benefits of their rights being protected, but they also witnessed a decline in political effectiveness, growing corruption, political instability, and a resurgence of racial divisions in the political landscape (Ngonyama, 2012). They inhabit an 'in-between' space where the legacy of historical structures still perpetuates apartheid-like conditions in segregated townships, while also offering opportunities to explore unregulated spaces (Soudien, 2001).

The South African government promised to provide educational opportunities for the youth to help them reach their potential. However, the born-free generation is still dealing with poverty, inequality, and violence. Due to financial constraints, only 20% of them can afford higher education (De Lange, 2021). Despite having political rights, they face challenges like high unemployment and increasing poverty. The government has struggled to provide adequate education, and the expectations placed on the born-frees are often unrealistic (De Lange, 2021). The #FeesMustFall student movement protested rising university fees, demanding that education be considered a right, not a commodity. Students also called for the decolonisation of universities (De Lange, 2021). The movement revealed the gap between transformation policy goals and the actual

experiences of those within the system. Since 1994, South African educational policies have been mostly symbolic and aimed at addressing past inequalities with substantial and redistributive actions.

Growing dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the government may threaten the South African national identity (Chipkin, 2016). The born-free generation may be most affected by this as the foundations for their political support are not rooted in historical values but in perceptions of political efficacy (Kotze and Prevost, 2015). For them, the post-apartheid nation-building discourse is an inherited sentiment which conflicts with their lived experiences (Ngonyama, 2012). Wa Azania (2016), writer of the book Memoirs of a Born Free, describes this position:

'[My mother] wanted us to have a better chance at escaping the clutches of poverty than she had had, than many children who are confined to township life ever would. And she would always tell us, "The ANC fought hard so that you would have these privileges, so that you too would have the opportunities that were only available to white children in the past..." I was terrified of revealing to her the truth about this new South Africa that she so desperately wanted us to embrace that in Melpark Primary School, rich black students and white students were treating the rest of us like inferior beings...'

> "This study does not claim to uncover the ultimate 'truth', but rather to explore individual viewpoints. Social constructionism focuses on how participants see their identity, rather than insisting on a strict match with an external reality."

Foster (2012) expresses a similar view and makes the argument that the ANC, a party that once fought to make South Africa ungovernable, has struggled to transition from a social movement to an effective governing body. However, the born-free generation, despite having the potential to hold the ANC leadership accountable, seem to have a socio-political identity that is as fragmented as the rest of the country (Norgaard, 2015). In the post-apartheid era, the formation of identity varies based on age, location, circumstances, and racial categories. It is an ongoing process where individual identities are continually shaped and negotiated within the broader framework of a collective national identity (Soudien, 2001).

While past national rhetoric aimed at fostering unity among all citizens through concepts like the 'rainbow nation' and 'unity in diversity,' growing dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the government now pose a threat to this national identity (Chipkin, 2016). The born-frees perceive these discourses as historical rather than a reflection of their reality (Mafoko, 2017). Therefore, this study seeks to answer the question: How do the born-frees construct a South African identity, and what are the characteristics of this identity?

Theoretical framework

This study was guided by the principle of social constructionism (Grant and Osanloo, 2014). From this perspective, reality is seen as a blend of both personal experiences and objective factors. It puts the participants in the spotlight, acknowledging that they are the best source to describe their own perceptions and experiences. This study does not claim to uncover the ultimate 'truth', but rather to explore individual viewpoints. Social constructionism focuses on how participants see their identity, rather than insisting on a strict match with an external reality. It recognises that people are influenced by their experiences and their social interactions. In this context, the use of photovoice, a type of participatory action research, lets participants actively engage with their social experiences. In this approach, the researcher acknowledges their own potential biases and the dynamics of their relationship with the participants during the interviews.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative research framework with a participatory action research design to investigate how participants perceive and experience nationhood and national identity in South Africa. In this approach, the researcher actively engages with the participants to understand their perspectives and experiences. The focus is on exploring the meanings that participants give to their experiences. Photovoice is well-suited for capturing the often-overlooked voices and experiences of the born-free generation. Photovoice acknowledges that reality is subjective and socially constructed and emphasises the interaction between the researchers and the research subjects. This study used the photovoice methodology for data collection, a visual participatory action research (PAR) approach that equips participants with cameras. It empowers them to capture photographs and construct 'photo stories' representing their daily experiences. The goal is to enable individuals to convey their lives, engage in critical dialogues about their experiences, and mitigate potential power imbalances between the researcher and participants (Wang, 2006).

This methodology has been applied across diverse projects, settings, populations, and age groups (Bender et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2017; Wang, 2009; Ziergierbel, 2016). Gant et al. (2009) demonstrated that photovoice can effectively mobilise youth and reshape their perceptions of civic engagement. It has been used to empower participants experiencing homelessness (Bender et al., 2018) and to facilitate discussions on emotionally challenging or socially taboo topics (Smith et al., 2012). In gender and sexual identity exploration, photovoice has been found to bolster participants' pride in their identities (Christensen et al., 2020). Multiple photovoice studies have been conducted across South Africa: ranging from HIV/AIDS stigmatisation to empowerment, the studies have demonstrated the success of this methodology when used with young people (Cornell, 2015). The strength of photovoice lies not only in the images themselves, but also in the interpretations attached to them. It assists individuals in defining their identities, their connection to the world, and what they perceive as relevant (Smith et al., 2012). Photovoice is particularly suitable for university students who may feel powerless or disconnected from decision makers. It offers them a platform to make their voices heard and positions them as co-researchers actively engaged in instigating change (Cornell, 2015).

In doing this research, we were quite aware of our positionalities and the power dynamics involved when a White student does research with Black students. The first author is a White, Afrikaans, upper-middle class, cisgender, non-disabled, female. The first author did not have a pre-determined criterion for selecting participants of a particular race, gender, language, culture, or ethnicity. Her position undoubtably influenced the students who were willing to participate, and what they were willing to discuss in focus groups. She endeavoured to build trust by being clear about the study's aims and objectives. During the focus group discussions, the first author positioned herself as a listener and would very rarely ask a question, allowing the participants to talk freely among themselves. The second author supervised this research project and is positioned as a Black woman invested in research on transformation in higher education. We are aware that it is impossible to maintain objectivity in doing studies such as the present one, and it would be difficult to try and be an outsider in this study, but we also know the importance of ensuring that our own biases and positionalities do not compromise the quality of the study. To do this, we constantly engaged in dialogues (usually as part of supervision) where we would reflect on such biases and we were able to expose and challenge each bias that may affect how we interpreted the findings of this study. Given the power-dynamic inherent in the researcher-participant relationship, and the sensitive political nature of the research topic, participatory action research methodology was particularly appropriate.

Participants

The study participants consisted of five full-time undergraduate and postgraduate students from the University of Johannesburg (UJ): three females and one male, drawn from the faculty of Humanities. One participant chose not to disclose their race, and has not been included in the current article. Purposive sampling was used. This involved the deliberate selection of a diverse group of participants from a university environment who met specific sampling criteria. The study was conducted at the University of

Johannesburg, selected for its practicality and the variety of its student body. Recruitment took place during scheduled class sessions. To be eligible for participation, individuals had to belong to the born-free generation, meaning they were born between 1994 and 2000. The following table provides some demographic details about the participants at the time of their participation in the study.

Table 1: Participant Details

	Year of Study	Race	Home Language	Age	Gender
Samarah (4)	4th (postgrad.)	Indian	English	22	Female
Thato (3)	4th (postgrad.)	African	Zulu	22	Female
Refilwe (2)	4th (postgrad.)	African	English (& Shona)	22	Female
Bonga (5)	4th (postgrad.)	African	English (& Xhosa)	22	Male

Data collection

The nine-step strategy proposed by Wang (2006) to mobilise community action was used in this study. These steps were incorporated into three interactions with the participants: Phase 1: Initial briefing; Phase 2: Brainstorming; and Phase 3: Photo stories.

Phase 1: Initial briefing

Participants were briefed on the photovoice method, its project goals, and their expected goals. Ethical considerations, informed consent, and the responsibility of participants as photographers were discussed. Conversations revolved around the research problem, objectives, and aims. The participants received training on using cameras, including smartphones, with a focus on privacy. They were instructed to take a maximum of five photos related to the study's aims. Individual Google Drive folders were created for participants to upload their images, with privacy and anonymity maintained. Participants were educated on privacy rights, Google Drive's terms of use, and its privacy policy, along with how to use it effectively. They were given approximately one month to complete their photos.

Phase 2: Brainstorming

During the subsequent meeting, participants were provided with the opportunity to contemplate and interact with the study's objectives. They were encouraged to reflect on these aims and generate any ideas they had. The discussions held during this meeting were recorded and later transcribed for textual data analysis.

Phase 3: Photo stories

During the third meeting, each participant had the opportunity to talk about the photos they had taken. This allowed them to highlight any themes they observed and address any concerns they might have had. The discussions from this meeting were recorded and transcribed to aid in data analysis, with the aim of identifying emerging themes expressed by the participants regarding their photographs. Participants were required to select at least one photograph for each study objective and provide a brief narrative about that image. This meeting also served as a follow-up session, where participants were encouraged to discuss the benefits and challenges that they had encountered throughout the process and to reflect on their overall experience (Zway, 2015).

Analysis

Various data types were collected for this project, including focus group transcripts, photographs, and photo stories. Thematic analysis was chosen as it is a common approach in photovoice studies (Bender et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2017; Wang, 2009; Ziergiebel, 2016). The research followed the six step guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic

analysis. The first phase, data familiarisation, involved immersing the researcher within the dataset. All data was anonymised and uploaded to qualitative analysis software (NVivo12). Photographs which could not be anonymised were removed. The analysis followed the same order as data collection, keeping in line with the way stories develop through the photovoice approach while keeping the research goals in mind. The researcher carefully went through the focus group transcripts, photo stories, and photographs. Specific words and phrases were used to label relevant sections of the data, focusing on the main themes. Codes were refined, and anything with very few references was removed as 'outliers.' Participants' photos and stories were coded separately, and similar codes from the focus group discussions were merged. New or emerging codes were collected as 'free-nodes' until the data analysis was completed. These nodes were then integrated into existing codes or removed if they did not fit.

Findings

The results, analysis and discussion are presented under each aim of the study as shown in the table below:

Theme	Subtheme	Description
Perceptions of nation-building discourse	1. Sense of nationhood, unity of the nation 2. Possible sense of unity through sport 3. Attitude towards the rainbow nation	South Africa's national identity has been constructed through various nation-building discourses: the rainbow nation, ubuntu, unity through sport. The participants feel that if the rainbow nation ever existed, it no longer does. They describe South African society as divisive and disunified.
Construction of an individual identity	1. The importance of subnational and multiple identities 2. Real and imagined spaces of identity construction	The South African populace is diverse. The participants spoke of not only their religion, culture, and ethnicities, but also reflected on the 'in-between' (both literal and figurative) within society.
Perceptions of government, now and in the future	4. Lived experiences of participants and populace 5. Attitude towards government	The participants demonstrated their attitude to the current government, and towards those in power, through expressing disillusionment with the past, a hopefulness towards the future, and apathy towards the current political climate.

Perceptions of nation-building discourse

Participants had mixed feelings regarding national rhetoric and nationalism. They acknowledge that there might have been nation-building discourse in the past, but they believe that the commitment to transformation from the government, society, and institutions lacked sincerity.

Refilwe:

'Yeah, so there is this divide I mean it used to be Ubuntu … but now it's just more like a self-serving need for survival. Everybody just wants to segregate themselves and survive and be comfortable financially maybe or in terms of power.'

“This implies that any post-apartheid nation-building discourse, if it ever existed, has now led to a fragmented society. Participants emphasised a significant concern regarding division, not only among individuals but also between the people and the government. They expressed distress over the absence of a shared identity,”

Refilwe points out the inefficacy of previous nation-building discourses, while also implying a potential self-centred aspect to these. Her choice of terms like ‘segregated’ and ‘need for survival’ indicates her perception of division and isolation within society. This implies that any post-apartheid nation-building discourse, if it ever existed, has now led to a fragmented society. Participants emphasised a significant concern regarding division, not only among individuals but also between the people and the government. They expressed distress over the absence of a shared identity, which they believed contributed to the persistence of racism and segregation. This sentiment was articulated by Refilwe and Bonga during the focus group discussion:

Refilwe:

‘There’s just divide everywhere and we are all trying to identify with something we don’t even understand at this point.’

Bonga:

‘I think the division is amongst people, and amongst people and the government… so it is like we have multiple identities and they all clash…’

Both participants hint at the challenge of either not finding a common identity or struggling to connect with it. When a shared national identity is lacking, people tend to fall back on their ‘small identities’ (Refilwe). The students perceive the rainbow nation’s nation-building initiative not only as no longer in effect but also as a stark contrast to the current situation. Some participants believed in ‘the unity through sport’ policy sentiment of former president Nelson Mandela:

Photograph 1: *No Title*

Photograph 1, submitted by Thato, shows a young man in national sports attire. The image is accompanied by the following photo story:

> ‘Symbols such as the Protea flower or the Springbok … does enforce National Identity. It brings South Africans together to support their national teams.’ (Thato, photo story)

Thato shares the same feelings as former President Nelson Mandela, who believed in the unifying influence of national symbols and sports. This showcases the potency of these symbols. Thato’s patriotism for her country is rekindled through her support for her national teams. However, participation in and support for these sports is not devoid of negative stereotypes. In the focus group discussions, participants spoke about the social stigmas associated with specific sports, highlighting how they can contribute to division:

Bonga:

> 'It's very interesting conversation, [be]cause I follow a lot of sports, and even amongst our friends it's envious of how football is followed in Europe and here. And even when we get to the TV we're like "We're not gonna watch South African football, why we wasting our time" and they're like "No we wanna support" but like nah this is trash so...'

Participants believed that while sports have historically united countries and their citizens, the same cannot be said for South Africa. Discrepancies in their perceptions of local and international teams underscore the lack of unity experienced by this generation within their country. This sentiment aligns with the views of Hartford (2017) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011), who argue that the sporadic patriotism generated by international sporting events may not contribute to a lasting national identity. The participants described the rainbow nation as insincere. They referred to it in the past tense, as something that either no longer exists or that never did.

Bonga:

> 'I think that also that idea of the rainbow nation sort of died with Mandela... so once he died, this whole rainbow nation thing can stop now, this nationalism thing of us coming together can stop now...'

Bonga highlights the sense of disillusionment with the ruling party, stating that it was former president Mandela that held nationalism and, by extension, our national identity together. In his absence, the country will no longer be incentivised to unite. The greater ramification of this has left the South African populace without a common identity. Though Mafoko (2017) writes that the dream of the rainbow nation has failed her generation and South Africa, the participants would argue that the dream was destroyed by the state. When asked directly whether the accountability for the rainbow nation, freedom, or ubuntu could be ascribed to the ANC as well, Bonga answered:

Bonga:

> 'I think it is definitely him [Mandela], because after he died many people called him a sell-out for his ideologies but it is his very same ideologies that got South Africa this far ... yet [when] they're campaigning they put Mandela, like "do it for Mandela"...'

Although the participants expressed discontent towards the ruling party and a belief that the rainbow nation rhetoric was insincere at best, they do not appear to harbour those same sentiments towards the ideology itself, or the man behind them. Thato submitted a photograph of the South African flag:

Photograph 2: *No Title*

Photograph 2 shows a mural of the South African flag. The photograph was submitted together with the following caption:

> 'The flag represents South Africa and what it is made up of. The flag is known to demonstrate the "Rainbow Nation" with the various colours on it.' (Thato, photo story)

The image she shared reflects two important ideas: a) the diverse nature of South African society, and b) the enduring belief in a racially inclusive South Africa. Looking at these findings alongside existing literature it is clear that the ideas of 'unity through diversity' and 'non-racialism' have been present since the early days of democracy. The born-free participants may either carry forward these ideas from past nation building efforts, or as a mirror of the social realities they've experienced.

Construction of an individual identity

When the participants were asked to talk of a South African identity, Thato said:

Thato:

'Well firstly I'd be like: "I'm a human" … I'm human cause I don't like putting myself in a box, like I'm this and I'm that because I'm not. Like I'm part of like a whole lot of things and I can't just choose one.'

This concurs with the study published in the Mail & Guardian (SASA, 2010), which found that the born-frees not only have a fluid perception of identity and national identity but are 'forging a new national identity that is independent of race.' The participants also express the importance and centrality of subnational identities in constructing not only their own identities but those of South Africans as well. Refilwe stated that:

Refilwe:

'I honestly don't think there is this nationalistic identity as South African[s], because a few people will identify with that, some people will be against it… so it is like we have multiple identities…'

Her comments express the idea that South African society is divided along multiple lines, not simply along race, religion, or language, but along cultural and ethnic lines as well. The discourses of ethnicity dominate much of their day-to-day experiences. The exchange during the first focus-group discussion between Bonga and Refilwe demonstrates how their identity is not only dependant on context, but how it is influenced by their own ethnicity and decisions regarding identity:

Bonga:

'And I think that, me personally, I find it very difficult considering that my father is Kenyan, and my mother is South African so sometimes I find myself identifying with the one side more than the other depending on context. For example, when I first came to Joburg, not many people are fond of Xhosa people, so I was, I did not openly tell people I was Xhosa…'

Refilwe:

'Me too, yeah, I can agree with that cause I'm Shona and Zulu at the same time, my dad is Zulu, and my mom is Shona, but because of the lack of presence from my dad I tend to identify more with Shona.'

For Bonga, it is the context of space that determines which aspect of his identity he chooses to identify with. He expressed that his experience of Johannesburg was one filled with stereotypes and intolerance. As a result, he often chose to identify as Kenyan rather than Xhosa, as he felt it held less of a stigma. Refilwe, on the other hand, describes her identity as belonging to both a Shona and Zulu heritage; however, she attributes her identification with one more than the other because of her mother. The participants have multiple identities and they fluctuate between them of their own accord, depending on the given context or influences that are in play at any given moment. For this generation, identity is a fluid construct, rather than a fixed definition.

Real and imagined spaces of identity construction

The participants navigate a complex process of identity construction: not only do they willingly and purposefully switch between their multiple cultures, but they also navigate a complex space within which to do so. Refilwe referred to this space as an 'in-between' space:

Refilwe:

'In sort of… an in-between session with… being a born-free and then moving onward to decolonisation and stuff like that. So, I'm right in the middle of trying to navigate the sort of context, trying to figure it out having… the background of… my parents struggling with the past apartheid era to me now trying to figure it out and establish myself in this new context…'

For Refilwe, this is not a literal space but a generational gap. Her generation is forced to navigate the circumstances created by apartheid in an era of freedom. She describes the experience as 'trying to figure it out,' thereby acknowledging the difficulty she faces in trying to establish herself in the climate of a free and fair South Africa, while at the same

time trying to maintain her cultural and traditional position within her family. The participants appeared to be caught between the identities they wanted and those imposed by tradition. Being the first generation with newfound freedoms, they felt the weight of societal norms. To cope with this, some born-frees have started swapping out aspects of their identity to fit in with different expectations. But these aren't just physical spaces; they refer to the idea of an 'imagined community' that, despite the democratic changes, still lingers in the shadow of apartheid. For some, this 'in-between' state affects how they navigate their identities, but for others, it is a tangible consequence of apartheid's legacy. The participants spoke of their experiences of having to travel to the University during semesters and having to travel home during the holidays. They described this as not unique, but rather a common situation for many people living, working, and studying in Johannesburg's central districts. Bonga emphasises the differences not only in the experiences of these 'home towns', but in their structural, social, and educational development as well:

Bonga:

'Well think about it, I didn't grow up in the city, I grew up in a town, so the CBD, there is much more difference. Like a round circle, that's what they [Participant 5's home town] call the CBD, but you get round circles all over Jo'burg [Johannesburg], so just looking at the architecture, the history, the buildings, all those kinds of things, is things I do for fun.'

Bonga's thoughts shed light on how the apartheid government disproportionately invested in predominantly white areas. His comment suggests that smaller towns received little to no further investments, pushing young people in search of opportunities towards the cities. This migration widens the generational gap that the born-frees grapple with, which in turn shapes their identities. Later, Bonga lamented how his hometown, once the cleanest in South Africa, had deteriorated, becoming more materialistic as it gained access to luxuries like McDonald's. National identity involves both the external definition of a social space and the internal establishment of shared values among its members. When Bonga talked about his hometown's transformation, it suggested a shift in these shared values. He observed these changes as an outsider and found it challenging to reconcile his nostalgic memories with the current reality. In an earlier statement, Bonga compared himself to a tourist in Johannesburg's CBD. His feelings of displacement mirror this generation's struggle to fit into the existing discourse on identity.

Perceptions of government, now and in the future

The prevailing viewpoint suggests that the rainbow nation ideology was not highly regarded, and its implementation lacked sincerity. This has negative implications for the born free generation, leaving them without an internal framework to guide their perception of nationality.

Photograph 3: *No Title*

Photograph 3 shows a busy street in Johannesburg's CBD. The photograph was accompanied by the following photo story:

'This picture aims to depict the lack of jobs in South Africa...' (Refilwe, photo story)

In her photo, Refilwe captured a busy and cluttered street in Johannesburg's CBD. Her aim was to highlight the scarcity of job opportunities. The participants shared their personal experiences and

discussed what they considered to be the 'realities encountered by South Africans.'

Photograph 4: *No Title*

Photograph 4 shows a crowded intersection in Johannesburg. The photograph was submitted together with the following photo story:

> 'This picture depicts the nature of poverty in our country... It is overcrowded, dirty, and unsafe.' (Refilwe, photo story)

When requested to share images representing their perceptions of trust in governance and their understanding of South African identity, Refilwe submitted the two photos shown above. In the first image, she addresses the issue of high unemployment rates, while in the second image, she illustrates the prevalent poverty in the country. Bonga extends this perspective to encompass the broader population, saying:

> **Bonga:**
>
> '...On Friday I was in Sandton I had to do my visa and I did not even think about taking pictures, and I saw so many beautiful buildings it was so nice and clean, but it did not come across because I felt like that's not really what South Africa is like, it's only that part of the world so like, I was like, I'm not gonna take pictures of this cause it's not how everybody really lives, like yes, the people there, that's how they live, but, the rest of the country...'

Bonga pointed out the disparities in how the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' live, highlighting the enduring impact of apartheid on a society divided by wealth. Affluent areas are progressing rapidly, while impoverished regions lag behind, widening the gap between the contrasting realities experienced by the born-frees. Refilwe demonstrated, at best, a sense of apathy towards the democratic process in South Africa, stating: 'I feel like, they're [politicians] are all selling the same BS, but it's packaged differently.' Refilwe no longer believes that real change will come or is attainable. Despite her sentiments, which seem both apathetic and helpless, Refilwe continues:

> **Refilwe:**
>
> 'I told myself that if I'm this confused, I'm not gonna cast a reckless vote in the sense that if I cast this vote recklessly, I might tip the scales...'

In the absence of real change or any means by which to affect change, Refilwe decided to withhold her vote. She is afraid that in the absence of an informed choice, or any politician with whom she can identify, she will invariably continue to vote for the ANC. This, according to her, is a common occurrence in South Africa. However, her feelings towards governance are not limited to apathy as she describes below:

Photograph 5: *No Title*

Photograph 5 shows an intersection in Johannesburg, displaying campaign posters of the three most popular political parties in South Africa. The image was submitted with the following photo story:

'I chose to take a picture of this area because at that time it was election season. The picture captures the three popular parties currently in South Africa. These parties advocate for "change" in cities and towns overrun by poverty. I just think this is an interesting juxtaposition of "wealthy and greedy" politicians seeking the poor man's vote under the impression that they are "voting for change".' (Refilwe, photo story)

Her comments reveal not just dissatisfaction with the ruling party, but also with those in positions of power in general. She strongly condemns their campaigning, which she sees as originating from privileged positions and targeting impoverished communities. This disillusionment with the ruling party might be shaping more flexible notions of nationhood. Similar discontent has previously sparked student-led protests, so it is not far-fetched to consider that these sentiments could also affect how the born-frees view ANC policies. According to Norgaard (2015), institutional failures, voter dissatisfaction, rise in rival politics, and blunders in national governance help explain why South Africa's transition has not created a synthesised perspective among the born-free generation. Despite this, the participants demonstrate an overwhelming sense of hope in the future of governance:

Bonga:

'I think in certain fields, and aspects we're moving forwards, and certain things we're moving backwards...'

The participants displayed disillusionment not only with the government, politics, and the state of South Africa but they also expressed deep dissatisfaction with their current living conditions. They believed these concerns were not a top priority for those in power and saw limited prospects for meaningful change in the future. Despite this, they remained hopeful about the country's future and even the politicians themselves. They saw the increasing political competition as a positive sign of a functioning democracy. Just as they become disillusioned with the rhetoric of the rainbow nation, the born-free generation has grown disillusioned with the ruling party. However, they still hold onto their belief in a non-racial ideology, just as they maintain hope in South Africa's governance and future. Perhaps the fluidity in their national identity is a result of these sentiments.

Discussion

Kotze and Prevost (2015) emphasise that the born-free generation's national identity is not rooted in historical values, but in political efficacy. Therefore, it is little surprise that this generation is critical not only of the ruling party and their transformation policies, but also of their nation-building discourse. The participants felt that transformation was primarily a homage to former President Mandela. While they recognise the inherited sentiment of patriotism (Ngonyama, 2012), they believed that these elements still carried an undercurrent of separation and division. The born-frees are critical of the government's efforts, which they view as token loyalty to Nelson Mandela. The participants reported confronting significant challenges, like inadequate education and high unemployment rates. They felt that government's efforts to address these issues have fallen short. The participants felt as though they have been left to fend for themselves; Refilwe describes this as a 'self-serving need for survival'. Widespread disillusionment with the ruling party can have a significant impact on how a national South African identity is perceived (Chipkin, 2007); when the population, responsible for upholding the ideals of a particular political community, begin to question and lose faith in these ideals, it can lead to a decline in the nation itself (Chipkin, 2007). In particular, the born-frees, who do not have a historically rooted national identity, experience this as an absence of a national identity.

For the participants, widespread disillusionment manifests as a divided nation, one in which there is 'division everywhere'. South African born-frees feel excluded from the democratic process (De Lange, 2021) and disenchanted with politics and, as a result, many of them choose not to vote. This emphasises the importance of addressing the born-free identity beyond just the political history, as they form an integral part of the democratic future of South Africa. The transformation policies of the ANC

appear to diverge from the daily experiences of many participants in this study, who highlighted many shortcomings of the ANC government. This concurs with accounts from prominent born-free writers Wa Azania (2016) and Mafoko (2017). The born-frees' lives are marked by a lack of transformation. They value the legal freedoms they have, but are constrained by economic, social, and political challenges. In response, they are increasingly seeking self-fulfilment and showing more anti-government leanings. Born-frees painted a picture of a society that hasn't entirely shed its oppressive and apartheid-inspired attitudes (Mafoko, 2017; Wa Azania, 2016). The participants emphasised the idealistic nature of transformation, portraying it as a state where they are expected to thrive. They bear the weight of transformation's high expectations and the complexities of a society where problems like poverty, inequality, discrimination, and corruption persist despite the end of apartheid. They perceived the notion of transformation as an idealised utopia that doesn't align with the actual situation. They feel pressured to conform to this transformation ideal. Refilwe described this as an 'in- between' state; she describes herself as being 'in the middle' and reflects on the pressure of not only having parents who are struggling with the past, but also trying to establish herself in a 'new context'. Soudien (2001) remarks that born-frees inhabit these 'in-between' spaces. They are studying in historically segregated institutions or living in apartheid-like townships, but they are simultaneously exposed to unregulated spaces that present them with new opportunities. For the born-frees, this juxtaposition results in a greater disillusionment with the transformation narrative.

In the absence of a national identity, the participants defined their identities as fluid and multiple. A SASA study from 2010 highlighted that the born-free generation is actively shaping a new national identity. In this study, the participants echoed this sentiment, expressing their disconnection from current definitions of a national identity. Some questioned the existence of a singular national identity, instead seeing themselves as a blend of various identities that come to the forefront depending on the context. They also noted a similar trend in the broader South African population, where people tend to identify more with their individual ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Aligning with Soudien's (2001) insights, the youth in South Africa construct their identities within unregulated spaces.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the participants perceived South African society as deeply divided. They acknowledge the influence of past nation-building discourses, but they regarded these as insincere sentiments that have waned since the time of former President Mandela. They described a persistently divisive culture based on ethnic and cultural identity that has remained largely unchanged. While these participants could effectively share their experiences and insights as experts on the subject, they did not seem to develop a critical awareness, propose potential solutions, or significantly alter their perspectives on civic engagement. As a result, it is the researcher's opinion that these study participants may not have been fully prepared for specific public actions. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies consider involving a larger and more diverse photovoice group to encourage deeper dialogue, reflection, and engagement. Additionally, having a Black facilitator conduct focus group discussions might also enhance the overall process. To achieve a more diverse sample in terms of race and gender, it is important to note that this study had limited diversity, with only one participant who identified as male and a single undergraduate student participating. Most participants identified as African, while one participant identified as Indian, and another opted not to disclose their race. To enhance the diversity of perspectives, it is advisable to seek a broader sample. South Africa's diverse social-economic backgrounds, languages, cultures, religions, and racial identities all contribute to unique experiences and viewpoints regarding the South African identity and national policies.

Declarations and Ethics Statements

Before commencing, the study was reviewed by the University of Johannesburg Faculty Committee for Academic Ethics (Code of Academic and Research Ethics, 2007) in an endeavour to ensure that the researcher conducted herself and the study with the highest regard and consideration for ethical values.

Notes

6. We acknowledge the complexity of the use of the term 'Black'. In this paper, we use Bantu Biko's definition of Black to include all groups that were known as non-white in South Africa under the apartheid regime. We therefore use this term to refer to Africans, Asians, Indians, and Coloured people (South Africans of mixed race, including African, Asian and/or European origin).

7. In this paper, the term 'Coloured' is used to refer to an ethnic group composed primarily of persons of mixed race within South Africa.

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Considering the Utilisation of Green Spaces in Potchefstroom, South Africa: A Tale of Three Parks

By Zaakirah Jeeva and Wian Oosthuizen

Abstract

Public green spaces, commonly known as parks, play an important socio-psychological, physical, and ecological role within cities. They are believed to support active lifestyles, promote citizenship, reduce air pollution, and offer recreational opportunities and psychological restoration. As a result, parks are designed to serve multiple functions. However, previous studies have found that the quality of parks fluctuates depending on the wealth of residents. This variation in quality (supply of park area or facilities) is expected to affect the utilisation (potential demand) of parks, which in turn reduces the benefits derived from these spaces. This paper sought to investigate if the quality of green spaces affects the utilisation of parks in Potchefstroom, South Africa. It observed three parks in three suburbs in the city to compare the quality provided. Furthermore, qualitative data was collected at each park through 30 semi-structured interviews to determine if the utilisation of the parks was affected by their quality. The analysis indicated that there are marked discrepancies in the quality of parks based on the wealth of the residential areas. However, this did not affect the utilisation of the parks. On the contrary, the study found that poor quality parks in lower-income areas were used more frequently, although not in the traditional sense. The study's findings shed light on the green infrastructure inequality in South African cities and display the alternative usages of open spaces. The study calls for a review on how green spaces are planned in South Africa and how municipal finances could be used more efficiently and effectively to plan these spaces.

Introduction

Public green spaces, or parks, are defined as open areas within the city that are provided for public use at no cost and maintained by local authorities. These parks are designed to offer citizens with the opportunity to enjoy nature, relax, exercise, play, and engage in social interactions within a safe and communal environment (Rojas-Rueda et al., 2019). The development of such parks aligns with the 11th Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations, which aims to promote sustainable urban development, active lifestyles, and emotional well-being for all citizens in an increasingly urbanised world (UN, 2023).

However, various reviews and empirical studies conducted in different regions of the world have revealed that the benefits and infrastructure provided in parks are not equally accessible to all (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014). Research conducted in Australia, South Africa, Spain, and the United States has consistently shown that lower-income residential areas or neighbourhoods with minority racial groups have less access to green spaces, trees, and recreational facilities such as benches, playgrounds, and grassy areas compared to more affluent areas (Astell-Burt and Feng, 2019). Furthermore, these studies have also found that parks in high and middle-income neighbourhoods tend to be cleaner and better maintained than those in low-income areas (Zuniga-Teran et al., 2020). As a result, the benefits that public green spaces are intended to provide are not equally enjoyed by all citizens in urban areas.

In South Africa, the utilisation of public green spaces is complex due to the country's political history, as well as the unique ways in which parks were previously planned. Shackleton et al. (2018) found that although neighbourhood parks in South Africa were planned to provide recreational services on paper, only the parks in the former white areas were developed, while many of the parks in the non-white areas were left vacant. Consequently, in democratic South Africa, many parks in former non-white areas are underutilised because they are underdeveloped (Cilliers, Diemont, Stobbelaar and Timmermans, 2011). This creates a vicious cycle between underdevelopment and the underutilisation of green spaces, with government hesitating to invest municipal funds to develop green spaces that are not being utilised.

However, from a planning perspective, the tendency to design public spaces based on returns of investment, rather than on the social-psychological benefits of such spaces, brings into question who these spaces are being planned for? Who is benefitting, and who is being disadvantaged as a result of these shortcomings? (Rice et al., 2020). This also brings forth questions regarding the level of public participation conducted during the planning of these public spaces and what is deemed as an acceptable utilisation of public spaces.

The aim of this paper is to explore the current quality of parks located in different suburbs of Potchefstroom and to determine how the different parks are utilised. The objective of the study is to determine if residents enjoy equal benefits from these green spaces. Resultantly, the paper will also engage the first dimension of environmental justice—that of distributive justice, which addresses fairness in provision of public spaces and related resources within the South African context (Low, 2013).

The paper is structured as follows. It starts by providing a brief backdrop on the development of South African cities and the relationship with public green space planning. It then describes the methodology, discusses findings, draws conclusions, and provides recommendations. The next section provides a background to the study.

Background

The South African apartheid city stands out as an extreme example of urban social engineering (Venter et al., 2020). Its spatial morphology was based on racial segregation and a hierarchy that systematically disadvantaged those who were classified as 'Non-white' ('Coloured', 'Indian/Asian', or 'Black'). One of apartheid's aims was to limit the extent to which affluent white municipalities bore the financial burden of servicing the more disadvantaged non-white areas (Kuruneri-Chitepo and Shackleton, 2011). To support this objective, the racial suburbs were treated as separate administrations and regulations were put in place to control social interaction between racial groups in public spaces (Seekings, 2011). As a result, within these settlements, white people lived

in well-planned urban neighbourhoods with good quality infrastructure and urban amenities, whilst non-whites lived in rural neighbourhoods with poor services and minimal infrastructure (Seekings, 2011).

Additionally, apartheid regulations restricted any development in non-white areas without prior approval and did not allow most retail or industries to develop in non-white areas. As a result, residents of these non-white administrations were forced to shop and work in white areas. Resultantly, the rates and tax revenues for non-white administrations were limited and communities lacked both power and resources to tackle community problems and provide facilities (McConnachie and Shackleton, 2010). This spatial-administrative system created a sense of exclusion, spatial fragmentation, and high levels of inequality within settlements. Image 1, below, illustrates the stark inequality in the provision of green spaces within South African cities during apartheid (Gwedla and Shackleton, 2017).

Image 1: *The contrast and inequality of green spaces during apartheid (Sources: Louise, 1988; Horree, 2023)*

As a consequence of these financial inequalities and rigid laws, many parks or open spaces in non-white areas remained as open spaces of land, with no facilities, while parks in the former white areas had green infrastructure and vegetation (Das and Honiball, 2021). In 1982, the Black Local Authorities attempted to raise additional revenue for white administration by charging Black people extra rent and service charges. This frustrated residents and they counter-implemented consumer and rent boycotts, which resulted in financial stress on the white administrations. As a first step, to stop civil disobedience, the apartheid government compromised by lifting influx control measures, which introduced rapid migration of non-whites into urban areas and sprawling informal settlements on the periphery (Lehohla and Shabalala, 2014).

In 1994, as the African National Congress (ANC) came into power, it pledged that environmental inequalities and injustices would be addressed as an integral part of the party's post-apartheid reconstruction and development mandate (ANC, 1994). Accordingly, a discursive and institutional space was created for the rethinking of environmental and administrative issues. The fundamental outcome of these developments was the broadening of the definition 'environment' in legislation to include the working and living space of non-white South Africans with the hope of bringing in environmental equality and distributional justice (Radebe and Irurah, 2016). It also introduced a 'one-city, one-tax base' principle which integrated the various racial administrations under one municipality and pledged that revenue collected was to be used to uplift all the areas. Subsequently, the apartheid Group Areas Act was abolished and individuals of different racial profiles were allowed to occupy homes in former white areas and utilise public spaces that were previously restricted (Das and Honiball, 2021).

Accordingly, in 1996, the South African Constitution granted all South Africans the right to human dignity, equality, and freedom. In terms of these rights, the law stated that everyone is equal before the law and everyone has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. Section 24 of the Constitution further

added that all citizens have a right to an 'environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being' and that development should be 'ecologically sustainable.' When these rights are read together, it becomes clear that environmental justice is part of a larger social justice paradigm, which sought to transform the lives of all people for the better (RSA, 1996; Chishaleshale, 2015).

On the national sphere, numerous policies and legislation were also passed in post-apartheid South Africa, including the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), the Development Facilitation Act (Act 76 of 1995), Habitat and Local Agenda 21 initiatives, the Green Paper on Development Planning (1999), the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998), the Municipal Systems Act (2000), and the National Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA, Act 16 of 2013). All of these emphasise the provision of equitable and integrated planning in consultation with the public. However, according to all of these legislations, before any decisions can be implemented on the local level, a broad framework of stakeholders including the public and council need to be engaged and consensus has to be reached. This often results in the approval taking a long time and green spaces having to be balanced against other urban land-uses such as housing, infrastructure, economic and business development (Cilliers, Diemont, Stobbelaar and Timmermans, 2011).

Subsequently, studies have found that apartheid spatial geography has remained largely unchanged and green infrastructure inequality has actually worsened (Harrison, 2008). A study conducted by Venter et al. (2020) found that 49 out of the 52 district municipalities displayed environmental inequality, with households living in former white areas still being located within 700 m of a public park, and households in former non-white areas having to walk, on average, 2.7 km to access a park or open space (Venter et al., 2020). Furthermore, the quality of the parks in these suburbs differed vastly and many still displayed the characteristics depicted in Image 1 of this study.

The design, location, and amenities (quality) in the parks play an essential role in attracting urban park users. Landman and Makakavhule (2021) found that parks that are vibrant, well maintained, appropriately located, easily accessible, attractive and perceived to be safe are utilised more frequently. However, additional studies have found that parks that offered facilities which were multi-functional and were able to respond to the social, cultural, and physical needs of people from different cultures, ages, and genders were used more frequently as well (Ríos-Rodríguez et al., 2021), while the opposite was true for those that did not offer the same (Ruiz et al., 2019). This would have meant that many of the former white parks attracted higher utilisation, as opposed to the former non-white parks. However, although planners and urban designers of urban parks are knowledgeable about design and the importance of such spaces, they are not always certain of people's needs, especially where such needs keep shifting. The repercussion is that if parks are not dynamic, vibrant, and well-planned to fulfil a current need, they are underutilised. Consequently, policies encourage public participation to ensure that parks are planned for the needs of the community (Das and Honiball, 2021).

Then again, even though planning is conducted with utmost care, the facilities within parks need to be utilised with care to avoid conflict and vandalism. In order to ensure the adequate utilisation of facilities, many public parks are governed by rules that determine the utilisation. For instance, Park By-Laws of 2010 state that the park can be used recreationally but only with written permission from the municipality for: a) public entertainment; (b) distribution of advertisement; (c) public gathering; (d) trade; and (g) store material. Additionally, the municipalities have the right to withhold permission, if it is believed that the activity will give rise to (a) public rioting; (b) the disturbance of public peace; (c) the committing of an offence; (d) the committing of an indecent act; (e) risks that compromise safety and security to the public or visitors to the public park; or (f) the likelihood of damage or destruction to amenities, wildlife, or plant material in the park (RSA, 2010).

Furthermore, to ensure safe utilisation, the city has enforced safety and order regulations to ensure that all citizens enjoy equal benefit of facilities; as a result, regulations are in place to ensure that no person will damage or destroy any equipment, amenity, structure, or animal. Furthermore, the regulation clearly states that public parks should not be used for any other purpose and that individuals using the park should not behave in an improper way or cause a

disturbance to others (RSA, 2010). The By-Law goes on to state that if anyone is found opposing these laws, they could be fined.

However, even though parks are designed to improve the quality of green spaces, and even though regulations are in place to govern utilisation, Hayward and Weitzer (1984) found that over the past 20 years, open space utilisation has declined. This decrease is associated with the negative perceptions of such spaces and fear of the other, which has led to emotional disconnect and detachment. As a result, people have changed their recreational needs and habits, with those who can afford memberships utilising indoor sports centres and gyms rather than open public parks. Furthermore, individuals who can afford to have also opted to visit malls and coffee shops for safer social interactions. The concern is what do those who cannot afford private memberships do?

Manstead (2018) found that the lack of access to quality, vibrant open spaces deprives individuals of the socio-psychological, physical, and ecological benefits that parks can provide. Additionally, the lack of facilities in poorer areas in comparison to their wealthier counterparts psychologically affects low-income individuals' identities, which influences the way they think and feel, in turn affecting their behaviour. The consequence is lower utilisation, which generates a vicious cycle, with local government motivating the lack of investment due to the under-utilisation of services in these suburbs.

The next section explains the methodology used in this study to investigate the quality of three parks in three suburbs and their associated utilisation in Potchefstroom. It will provide insight into the distributional justice in Potchefstroom.

Methodology

Over the past decade, there have been several urban ecological studies in Potchefstroom which have focused on urban biodiversity, ecosystem services, green spaces, and green economy (Cilliers et al., 2011). However, these projects focused on parks within high- and middle-income areas, and they did not provide insight into the quality distribution of parks within the city, nor their utilisation. Consequently, this research sought to address the shortcoming by investigating the correlation between the quality of neighbourhood parks and their utilisation in Potchefstroom, South Africa. The finding informs the aspect of distributional justice in secondary cities and provides insights into the needs of the local community.

Research method

The design of this study is predictive and observational, as its purpose is to analyse and explain behaviour and utilisation in relation to the quality of parks (Ato, Juan and Benavente, 2013). The study identified three parks: one in a high-income area, one in a middle-income area, and one in a low-income area. The parks were chosen randomly, by driving through the city and identifying the busiest park that was freely accessible in a suburb. The park was then analysed by the researcher in terms of quality, and photographs were taken to document the observations. (See Figure 1 below).

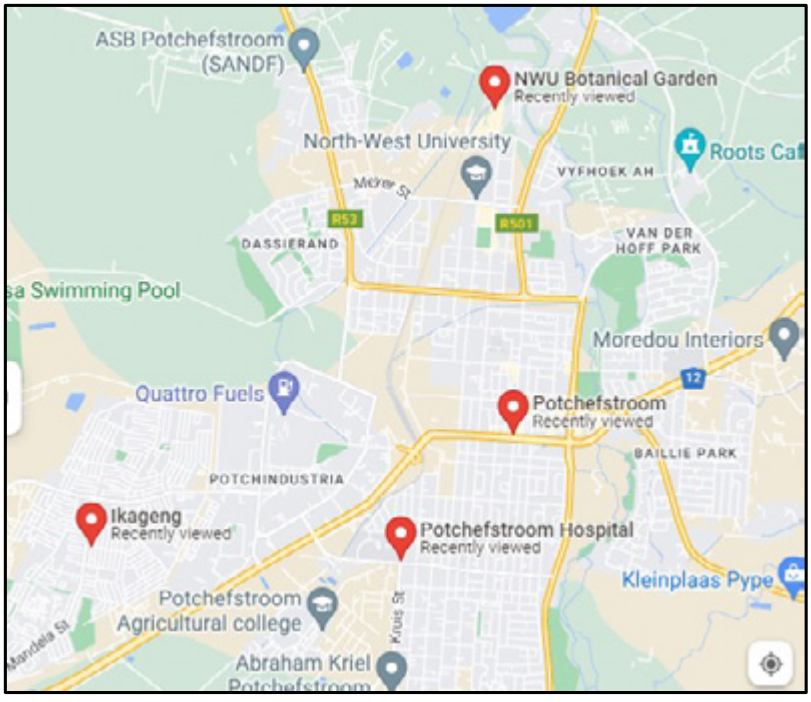

Figure 1: *Location of the three case studies in Tlokwe Local Municipality (Source: Own composition)*

The study areas comprised of: Area A—Botanical Garden in the built area (high-income); Area B—Hospital Park in Baillie Park (middle-income); and Area C—Ikageng Park in Ikageng (low-income).

Collection of qualitative data

The study interviewed 30 randomly selected and willing participants, all of whom were residents of Potchefstroom. There were 10 participants per park. Of these participants, 21 were male and 9 were female. This sample had an age range from 18 to 87 years old, with an average age of 22.6 years old. This age range was chosen since it did not require parental consent for participation. Before the interview took place, participants were introduced to the study. It was further explained that should they wish to participate, consent needed to be provided before their answers would be recorded anonymously.

Interviews were conducted between the 17th to 23rd of July 2021. Data was collected at the park during different times of the week (weekday vs. weekend) and at different time slots (morning/evening). The parks were not very busy and therefore the sample size is small. Upon completion, participants were thanked for their collaboration. Using Google Forms, the data was analysed to provide insight into how the quality of public spaces affects their utilisation.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, it should be noted that data collection was carried out at different times of the day. In order to get a holistic view, collecting data during the same time slot would have offered a different range of responses. Secondly, this study is transversal and provides descriptive knowledge of the relationship between utilisation and quality. A longitudinal analysis would complement the results, allowing for a better assessment on frequency utilisation and possible insight into its decline (Ríos-Rodríguez et al., 2021). The next section discusses key findings.

Findings

According to the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), there are 79 Parks in the Tlokwe Local Municipality (Potchefstroom). Of these, 44 are considered developed, 6 semi-developed, and 27 underdeveloped (JB Marks Local Municipality, 2018). The local municipality classifies developed parks as having green infrastructures which are regularly maintained, whilst underdeveloped parks are seen as not having adequate green infrastructure. The map below illustrates the distribution of green open areas around Potchefstroom.

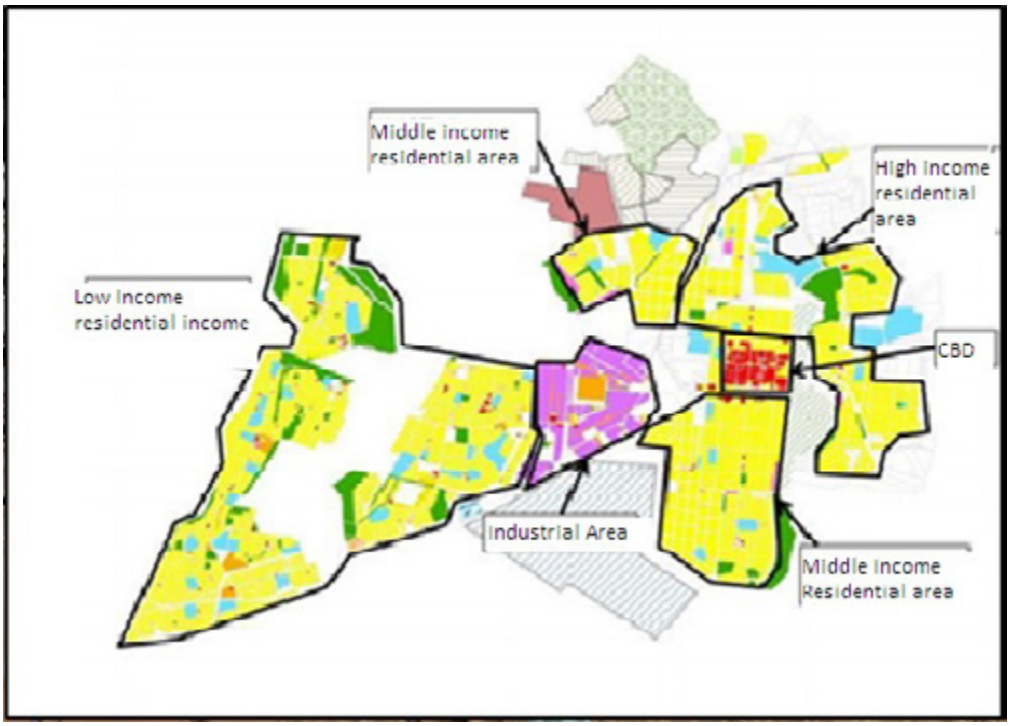

Figure 2: *Green spaces in Potchefstroom (Source: Author's Own)*

The green markings on the map illustrate the green spaces or parks. Analysis of the map reveals that green spaces across Potchefstroom are unequally distributed, with more yet smaller green spaces available in low-income residential areas and less but larger green spaces found in high-income residential areas. Additionally, the local IDP confirmed that most of the 'underdeveloped parks' are predominately located in low- and middle-income residential areas, while well-developed parks are located in high-income areas (JB Marks Local Municipality, 2018). Additionally, the IDP (2018) identifies two of the three randomly chosen parks of this study as 'developed parks' (i.e. Botanical Garden and Hospital Park) and one of the parks as an 'underdeveloped park' (i.e. Ikageng Park). The next section captures the key findings on the quality of these parks.

The quality of the parks

Not all impacts or benefits can be measured in monetary terms. Neither can all types of neglect and inequality be expressed in words. As a result, the researcher attempted to capture images of the three parks to provide insight into the quality of these parks.

According to Urban Land Institute (2021), high-quality parks have the following five key characteristics: 1. They are in excellent condition and are well-maintained; 2. They are accessible to all potential users; 3. They provide positive experiences for park users; 4. They are relevant to the communities they serve; and 5. They are flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. In order to capture and evaluate the quality of parks in Potchefstroom, each park will be discussed under separate headings according to the above criteria, with findings supported by images.

The Botanical Garden

The Botanical Garden is located in the high-income area of Potchefstroom and covers an area of 3ha, with more than 1,500 plant species and a variety of animals and insects. The park is located across from the university and is frequented by students who live in the nearby residences. In terms of Urban Land Institute (2021) standards, the park is in excellent condition and is well-maintained (with lights, dustbins, restrooms, benches, and paved footpaths). It is easily accessible to all potential users and entrance is free. The variety of spaces in the park provides a positive experience for park users and the landscape design allows for interaction and privacy. The park is relevant to the local communities since it allows students to study the plants and insects that they learn about at the university (see images below).

Figure 3: *Pictures of the Potchefstroom Botanical Garden (Source: Own Compositions)*

However, participants revealed that they did not like the park, because the maintenance was not as good as it was in the past, and because of difficulties in gaining entry due to Covid-19 regulations. Nonetheless, they enjoyed coming to the park since it was easily accessible and free.

Hospital Park

According to the Potchefstroom IDP (2018), this park is considered to be developed and is located opposite the public hospital. Based on the Urban Land Institute (2021) criteria and the observations of the researcher, the park appears to be in fair condition. However,

many facilities and amenities appear in dilapidated condition, and the park lacks general maintenance (long grass, broken fence, broken toilets, uneven paving, and litter). Although the park is accessible and is situated in the CBD, the overall sense is that it is not vibrant, not safe, and is lacking in hygiene. This provides a negative perception and deters users. Furthermore, even though the park was initially built and planned as a multiple recreational area (playground, tennis court, and grass patches) there is no parking available, no benches, no street lights, and no dustbins on the property (see images below). This displays poor design.

Figure 4: *Pictures of Hospital Park (Author's Own)*

Participants who were interviewed stated that they enjoyed the park, because it offers a quiet, spacious area near their homes. However, residents in the area also reported that homeless people live in the parks' bathrooms and that crime is high during the day. The study also found that local recyclers use the parking lot to collect and sort recyclables outside the park, which makes the entrance dirty and deters utilisation. As a result, local residents claim that the park is more of a stress to the local community than a recreational area.

Ikageng Park

This park is considered to be an under-developed park by the IDP and is located in Ikageng, which is a former African township. The park is literally an open space, with no grass, trees, or infrastructure (i.e.

no restrooms, parking, fences, playground facilities, lights, dustbins, benches, or footpaths). As a result, there is no maintenance in the park and the people of the neighbourhood use the open land to dump their garbage and graze their animals (goats) (see figures below). At this park, the researcher found that there are no parking facilities and it could only be accessed by foot. Whilst the researcher was at the park there was not a lot of activity going on and it appears as if the park does not offer safety or any recreational benefits.

Figure 5: *Pictures of Ikageng Park (Source: Own Compositions)*

Participants from this park reported that they do not like that there is no grass, the litter smells, and there is a lack of facilities that they can use. They further added that the park has no lights and they cannot use it at night. On the other hand, participants claimed that they liked the open areas because these offer a common meeting place to play and watch local soccer.

In light of the above findings, one could conclude that the Botanical Garden, situated in the high-income area of Potchefstroom, offers the best quality green spaces, since it adheres to all five of the quality criteria (see table below). On the other hand, both Hospital Park and Ikageng Park are not considered to be high-quality parks since they adhere to zero of the five quality criteria (see table below).

Quality Criteria	Ikageng Park	Hospital Park	Botanical Garden
Residential area	Low-income	Middle-income	High-income
Well-Maintained	No	No	Yes
Accessible	No	No	Yes
Positive experience	No	No	Yes
Relevant to local community	No	No	Yes
Flexible and adaptable	No	No	No

Table 1: *The quality of parks in Potchefstroom (Author's own)*

Furthermore, the study found that the quality of parks fluctuates with the wealth of residents. Hospital Park, which is in the middle-income area, is of a poorer quality than the Botanical Garden, which is situated in a high-income area. However, parks located in the former Black townships or low-income areas are still found to be the least developed. The next section unpacks the findings from the semi-structured interviews to provide insight on how each of these parks are used.

Utilisation of the parks

Utilisation is defined as the manner in which the public use a particular space. The study found that the Botanical Garden, which is located adjacent to the university, had a lower utilisation rate than the Hospital Park, which is located opposite the hospital, and the Ikageng Park in the low-income area. The respondents from the Botanical Garden (10) claim that they visit the park once a month, while those interviewed at the Hospital Park (10) and Ikageng Park (10) claim to visit the parks daily.

The respondents from these parks also displayed a different profile. Respondents from the Botanical Garden comprised of 6 females and 4 males between the ages of 19 and 29 years. Upon observation, it appeared that females visit the park in groups or as couples. The park is used since it is closest to their residence and offers recreation. On the other hand, respondents from the Hospital Park have a different profile, with more males (7) than females (3), between the ages of 20 and 60 years. The younger male adults (5) claimed that they visit the park every day to 'meet-up' and were there with their group of friends playing and skating at the park, while the older males (3) were sorting out recycling material, and the older females (2) were walking in the park and relaxing in the sun. They both stated that they utilise the park 'whenever they want'. Participants from the Ikageng Park were all males and their ages ranged between 18 to 25 years of age. Participants said that they use the park between three and seven times a week to meet their friends and play soccer. The motivation for the frequent visits to the Parks (Hospital and Ikageng) was that they were easily accessible and that they offered space for recreation and exercise.

However, none of the parks were utilised at night, since the Botanical Garden had time restraints (8am to 4pm) and the remaining two parks did not have lights and were 'dangerous' at night. Respondents from Ikageng (7) and Hospital Park (6) state that they have small gardens or no gardens and were dependent on parks for recreational space, even though the parks they frequented did not have many facilities. The table below captures the main findings.

One of the main findings from the semi-structured interviews was the manner in which recreation was defined. Respondents who were white and young (18–29 years) from the Botanical Garden stated that they used the park to walk, run, and picnic. However, respondents who were mostly Black and middle-aged (20–60 years) from the Hospital Park used the park for recreation, but defined recreation as 'sitting in the sun', 'watching children skating', and 'socialising'. Some (3) stated that they use the park to sort out recycling material, since they have nowhere else to sort it. On a Sunday, if one was to drive past, one could also notice a group of people in white clothes who use part of the park for 'worshipping' purposes. On the other hand, the Park in Ikageng was used to play soccer, and the community uses it to socialise during these matches. The main finding for the researcher was that parks offer a 'sense of place', and the likes and dislikes are subjective.

The researcher further asked each of the respondents if they visited any of the alternate parks in Potchefstroom, to which they all stated that they don't ever use other parks since they are not as accessible, and some just simply never thought of visiting parks in other suburbs. The next section discusses the key findings to determine if there is equality of green spaces and if quality effects utilisation.

Discussion

In 1994, a 'one-city, one-tax base' principle was implemented, which meant that all citizens in the city should be treated equally. This also meant that

Criteria	**Botanical Garden**	**Hospital Park**	**Ikageng Park**
Income Group	High-income	CBD/Middle-income	Low-income
Frequency of usage	Once a month	Every day	Every day
Purpose of usage	Recreation	Recreation	Recreation
Like about park	Accessible and clean	Quiet, spacious and near home	Meeting place and soccer field
Dislike about Park	Lack of maintenance	No maintenance and insufficient infrastructure	No grass, litter everywhere, no facilities and no lights

Table 2: *Findings on the utilisation of parks in Potchefstroom (Author's own)*

all suburbs within the city should have equal access to amenities, services, and facilities—green spaces included. However, access in this case was not just about facilities being open for everyone to use, but it also meant that the quality of facilities within the city should also be the same throughout the settlement. Unfairness of distribution fosters conflict and undermines cooperation. Furthermore, the inequality of services would mean that some citizens have greater benefits and a better quality of life in comparison to the rest.

recreational facilities within the city, despite these facilities being free. High-income residents, meanwhile, have access to well-developed parks, but may not fully utilise them due to factors such as fear, lack of interest, or safety concerns. Residents from high-income suburbs also showed little interest in visiting alternative parks in the city. These disparities highlight issues of environmental inequality and distributional justice, which are still prevalent 25 years into democracy.

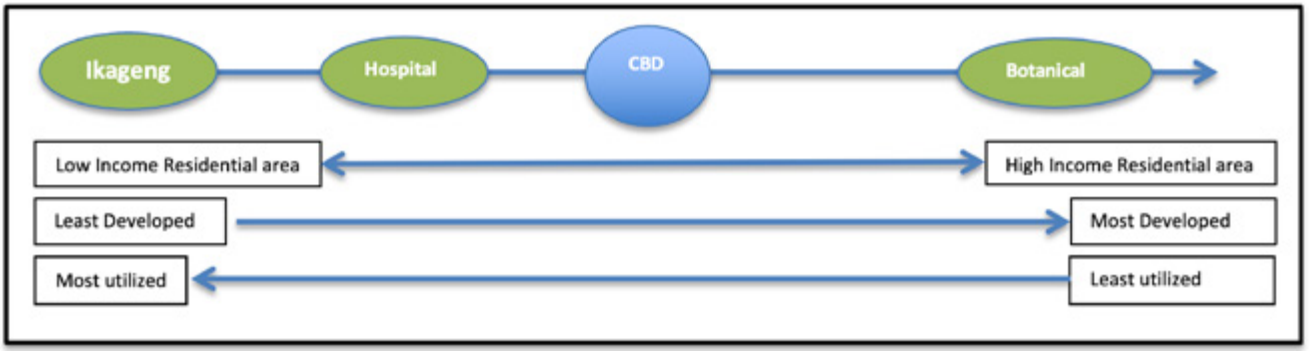

Figure 6: *The quality vs. utilisation of parks in Potchefstroom (Author's own)*

The study found that the patterns of green space provision from apartheid are still persistent and prevalent in Potchefstroom, with low-income areas such as Ikageng having the smallest and least developed parks, even though the utilisation of such parks is high. High-income areas, meanwhile, have the largest and best developed parks but are utilised the least (See Figure 6).

The research findings also indicate that there are still significant disparities in access to recreational facilities based on socio-economic factors, rather than political control. This creates two distinct realities for people living within a 10 km radius in the same city. Children in high-income areas have access to high-quality parks with diverse plant species, such as the Botanical Garden, while children in low-income areas have limited access to poorly maintained parks, dirt patches, and inadequate sports facilities. Additionally, many low-income residents face barriers such as transportation costs and self-imposed restrictions, which prevent them from accessing alternative

According to the study, it was further found that females utilised parks less frequently than males due to feeling less safe in those areas. They cited reasons such as lack of monitoring, low presence of people, illegal dumping, vandalism, uncleanliness, outdatedness, and criminal activities—all of which did not make the parks inviting. Consequently, females were hesitant to use the parks and bring their children to play there. On the other hand, despite the low and middle-income parks lacking facilities, services, and safety measures, males still utilised them for team sports. Therefore, the study suggests that park quality holds greater importance for females compared to males.

The lack of park quality is indeed a concern, as parks are meant to play a significant role in the social fabric, by promoting mental health and physical activity for all individuals (Sturm and Cohen, 2014). The negative perceptions and declining utilisation of these parks contribute to their deterioration and raise concerns within the larger community (Khumalo and Sibanda, 2019). This has led to frustration among community members who feel that the municipality is not adequately maintaining these spaces (Dai, 2011).

However, the municipality may be hesitant to invest in the parks due to their under-utilisation. As a result, the limited development and care of these green spaces has led to wasted potential and is depriving many individuals of the socio-psychological, physical, and ecological benefits that these areas could provide.

Manstead's (2018) theory, the 'logic of control', helps explain the thought process of participants in this case. Participants from higher to middle income households, who have more resources and a stronger belief in their ability to shape their own social outcomes, tend to express their dissatisfaction and seek alternatives such as gyms and indoor centres. On the other hand, individuals with lower incomes, who have fewer resources and perceive limited control over their circumstances, are more accepting. The system justification hypothesis further suggests that those at the bottom of the social system are less likely to question, challenge, or reject a provided service, opting instead to find alternative ways to utilise the resource to their advantage (Manstead, 2018). In light of this, the study also revealed that parks in low-income areas are used for socialising, playing soccer, grazing animals and, unfortunately, dumping rubbish.

The municipality is aware of this inequality and, in 2013, the Ikageng Park was supposed to be developed to provide local low-income residents with much-needed recreation facilities. The development plan included multi-functional courts, a children's play area, picnic and braai facilities, a large outdoor amphitheatre, and essential infrastructure such as lights, dustbins, grass patches, and paving (See Figure 7 below).

Figure 7: *Ikageng Community Park Concept Plan (Outlining Landscape Architecture, 2013)*

However, nine years later in 2021, the field observations illustrated the disparities between what was sold to the public and what was actually provided. The park design also shows a lack of public participation. This study found that the Ikageng community uses the open space to play soccer, but the design did not include a soccer field. Upon interviewing people within the municipality, no one could explain why the project was not seen through and what happened to the money. This also brings into question the level of corruption in the local municipality.

Physical activity is crucial for both children's development and adults' overall health (Du Toit et al., 2018). As physical activity often takes place outdoors, access to high-quality facilities becomes particularly important. To address the cycle of under-utilisation and under-development, it is essential to focus on creating vibrant and modern spaces that attract utilisation. Conducting further research to understand the community's preferred activities can help inform the provision of appropriate facilities.

One potential solution is to organise various activities such as exercise programs, paddle tennis, trading fairs, competitions, and concerts in parks. These events can help attract more people to utilise the parks and require minimal financial input. Additionally, ensuring that

parks are monitored by security personnel can create a sense of safety, especially for women and children, thereby encouraging their use of these spaces.

It is important to note that neglecting or allowing facilities to decay due to poor utilisation is not the solution. Instead, exploring alternative solutions that are relevant to the current needs and interests of the community should be considered. By implementing these measures, the city can experience benefits such as reduced obesity and stress levels, as well as enhanced social cohesion amongst its residents.

Conclusion

The study findings indicate that the apartheid city model continues to impact the appearance and functionality of cities in South Africa, including Potchefstroom. The paper highlights the unequal distribution of quality green spaces and green infrastructure, with higher-income areas having better facilities compared to poorer areas. Interestingly, even the developed parks in former white areas were not fully utilised due to concerns about maintenance, crime, vandalism, and illegal dumping. Conversely, the undeveloped parks were being used in unconventional ways such as for dumping, soccer, socialising, animal grazing, sorting recycling, housing the homeless, and worshiping—while notably lacking adequate facilities for relaxation. In summary, the study found that none of the green spaces in Potchefstroom are being fully utilised or providing the potential benefits they could offer.

To address this issue, it is recommended that the municipality invest in cleaning and monitoring parks while implementing contemporary measures to attract utilisation. Closing parks and deflecting investment from green spaces would deprive many individuals of the socio-psychological, ecological, and physical benefits that parks can provide. Instead of giving up on these valuable spaces, the concept of 'Kintsugi,' which means fixing with gold, is suggested. This entails adding more value to these spaces and witnessing their flourishing. Additionally, the paper suggests further research be conducted on the socio-psychological inequalities resulting from the lack of adequate facilities in poorer neighbourhoods. By addressing these issues, the municipality can work towards creating more equitable and beneficial green spaces for all residents.

Recommendations

Public awareness

There are various policies in place to support environmental equity; however, the local municipality hesitates to allocate funds to develop the under-developed and semi-developed parks. The argument here is that these areas are under-utilised and therefore funds can be used more efficiently elsewhere. However, if the benefits of green spaces are to be realised and the importance of quality spaces inculcated, then the significance of these spaces might be realised. In light of this, more public awareness and environmental knowledge is required to really bring in change in the development and utilisation of public green spaces.

Avoid blueprints

Parks throughout the world have similar plans, structures, and infrastructure. However, these are not always suited to the needs of local communities. As a result, it is important to conduct public participation meetings in order to understand the needs of a specific community. For instance, this study revealed that local communities in Potchefstroom need space to 'worship' on a Sunday and 'socialise in the sun.' Other needs identified were for people to have space to organise their recycling material and to skate. All these needs might not be accommodated within a traditional green open space, but they nonetheless are the needs of the local communities consulted. Therefore, planners should be innovative and willing to break from conventional blueprint development and instead create parks that are unique and suited to the needs of a particular community.

Access to justice

On paper at least, South Africa's constitutional provisions of equality, justice, and freedom rank among the most progressive in the world. However, at a more practical level, many people in South Africa do not have the financial means to actively pursue costly court proceedings to ensure that their rights are not

“As a consequence, public interest law firms and civil societies are required to look at cases such as Ikageng, and seek justice and equality for those who cannot achieve it themselves. If local government is not held accountable for empty promises, the vicious cycle of inequality will continue.”

infringed upon. The study has revealed the initial plan and the reality of Ikageng Park. However, the citizens of the community do not have the financial muscle or the funds to open a court case against the municipality to ensure justice and service provision. As a consequence, public interest law firms and civil societies are required to look at cases such as Ikageng, and seek justice and equality for those who cannot achieve it themselves. If local government is not held accountable for empty promises, the vicious cycle of inequality will continue.

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The 'De-legitimization of South Africa':

A Case Study on South African–Cuban Relations

By Anton M. Pillay

Abstract

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, South Africa's international standing has come under attack by Western-leaning forces who advocate that the country should forget its global South stance in favour of obeisance to the neo-liberal world order. This can be seen in the almost 30-year-old narrative which questions who South Africa should be allied with. The purpose of this narrative, according to Professor Chris Landsberg, is to 'de-legitimize' the country's international image. In this research, the author examines South African–Cuban relations from a realist and post-colonial perspective, arguing that South Africa's rich history and foreign policy of non-alignment in fact give it a respected status in the community of international states—an idea which is never afforded to the country. Instead, the nuances of South African–Cuban relations, and in fact South Africa's relationship with other states which are vocally 'anti-imperialist', are often overlooked, distorted, and hidden from the public's attention. This paper brings attention to this debate.

According to Landsberg (2023), South Africa is undergoing an extensive 'international de-legitimization' programme. Translated from International Relations (IR) lingo, the phrase refers to the coordinated attacks the country is facing by actors who seek to provoke and derail the country's foreign policy with the aim of re-orientating it to lean Westwards instead of its current role as architect of a multi-polar world. In a nutshell, South Africa's foreign policy is based on a long-standing commitment to the Pan-African agenda, conflict resolution[1], nation building, and challenging the predominance of the Western powers and the liberal international economic order (DIRCO, 2022). These functions were not chosen because of their pleasant-sounding nature, but stem from the country's own transition from imminent civil war to peace, democracy, reconciliation, and equality (Southall, 2006; Miti, 2012).

The de-legitimization programme is implemented through a number of internal actors who are portrayed as 'voices of reason'. These internal actors or domestic sources are wrongly conflated and confused as drivers of South African foreign policy (Landsberg, 2018). Collectively, they argue that South Africa's foreign policy has lost its way, has morally disintegrated, is confused, shameful, and dotted with inconsistencies (Mills and Hartely, 2023; Van Heerdeen, 2022; Goris, 2022). The solution to this conundrum, they propose, as expressed by Gumede (2023), is that South Africa and other African countries 'must stop partnering with industrial and emerging powers based on the past.'

Since the country's transition to democracy, foreign policy initiatives by the government to not only distance itself from the Western world order but to challenge it have been met with immediate condemnation by the above-mentioned internal actors. In many cases, the analytical condemnation is impartial, never considering strategy, documentation, or policy as laid out by the Department of International Relations and Co-Operation (DIRCO).[2] The biased analysis is most likely due to the way Western multinational media[3] operates through corporate finance to persuade, disengage, and ensure that domestic commentary and narratives toe the line. In providing platforms to critics from Western-funded Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), opposition party members, and Western-leaning academics, multinational media create IR 'authorities' who are very capable of manufacturing and fabricating IR phenomena with the hopes of influencing and/or dictating South African foreign policy.[4]

Theoretically, the de-legitimization of South Africa's foreign policy speaks to defence of the Colonial Matrix of Power (CMP) syntax. The CMP consists of four interrelated domains: control of the economy, of authority, of gender and sexuality, and of knowledge and subjectivity. This power structure regards all Western knowledge as the only truth while relegating global South knowledges as irrelevant, outdated, and wrong (Licata 2012). In its control of knowledge, research, and thought, the CMP decides what is history, culture, language, and identity (Gurminder, Kerem and Dalia, 2018; Le Grange, Du Preez, Ramrathan and Blignaut, 2020). In his *magnus opus*, Rovogui foments that despite postcolonial independence, the transfer of political power to the state has been severely limited. Self-determination, then, is severely hindered as African states have little capacity to 'secure external recognition' (Rovogui, 1996). This speaks directly to how the forces of colonialism/neo-colonialism[5] 'accept as true' that they have the sole right to determine South Africa's global narrative.

Since the Russian-Ukraine conflict (2022–), the critiques of the de-legitimization project have grown louder due to their increased frustration

"The de-legitimization programme is implemented through a number of internal actors who are portrayed as 'voices of reason'. These internal actors or domestic sources are wrongly conflated and confused as drivers of South African foreign policy (Landsberg, 2018)."

with South Africa's foreign policy actioning.[6] The government has come under intense scrutiny for not speaking out against Russia or condemning the Russian invasion. For example, in the South African-led peace initiative of June 2023, the South African press described the initiative as shambolic, disgraceful, useful idiots, and a travelling circus. With the government not budging on its stance and refusing to dance to the tune of the West, the rhetoric has moved from admonishment to threat to punishment. Table 1 explains how states can come into non-violent conflict with each other.

Table 1: *Three levels of non-violent state conflict*

Level 1	Admonishment	Speeches by leading political figures, commentary in press, recalling ambassadors, or summoning ambassadors to clarify.
Level 2	Threat	Participating in army games and war simulations in controversial locations, purchasing specific military hardware to counter other states' purchases or capabilities, mobilising troops to a contested border, creating cordial relations with enemies of that state.
Level 3	Punishment	Economic hits, cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, social media propaganda.

In the case of South Africa, the agency to de-legitimize has steadily progressed. One threat is seen in the way an undoubtedly Western-funded agenda pushed to move the BRICS summit away from South Africa so to discredit the nation. The International Criminal Court (ICC), which consists of mainly British and American lawyers, and masquerades as international legality, also sought to force South Africa to arrest Putin if he arrived for the summit. Another threat is the 'warning' relayed by the South African Reserve Bank that the government's stance on Russia-Ukraine could see a shock to the system and possible US sanctions. According to Herco Steyn, more than 90% of South Africa's international payments are processed through the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication system (SWIFT). 'Should South Africa be banned from SWIFT due to secondary sanctions, these payments will not be possible.' South Africa's financial system would be unable to function if its ability to make international payments in dollars was impeded (Bloomberg, 2023).

In more recent events, punishments have been meted out. The claim by US Ambassador to South Africa, Rueben Brigety, that South Africa supplied Russia with weapons and ammunition was not a misstatement[7], but a calculated economic hit which sent the Rand crashing within minutes of the statement. The Rand lost more than 30 cents of its value against the dollar, hitting its weakest level since the record low set in 2020. The claim, which was later revoked due to no evidence, shows how the US can enforce its hegemony with a few cleverly calculated words. Another potential punishment is seen in the way a group of US lawmakers have pushed to move the US-African trade summit planned for Johannesburg in 2023. In a letter to the US Secretary of State, the group urged that South Africa lose its benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Overall, the main objective of the de-legitimization campaign is to re-align the country as it was during the apartheid era; a proxy and puppet to Western interests. One dimension of this de-legitimization is seen in the narrative on who South Africa should be allied with. This has been the subject of intense scrutiny since the unbanning of the ANC in 1988 and is visible in a famous interview of pre-President Nelson Mandela in New York in 1990.

As Deputy President of the ANC, on January 21, 1990, Mandela sat down for an *ABC Nightline Special Edition* interview with Ted Koeppel at the City College of New York. In a pre-arranged question from the audience, Ken Adelman of the Institute of Contemporary Studies asked:

“Who South Africa should be allied with is seen in the way certain actors cite history as the only glue that forges ties between different nations. History, however, is not static and exists both concurrently with the present and spirals simultaneously towards the future.”

> ‘Those of us who share your struggle for human rights and against apartheid have been somewhat disappointed by the models of human right that you have held up since being released from jail. You meet over the last 6 months three times with Yasser Arafat who you have praised, you have told Ghaddafi that you share the view and applaud him on his record of human rights and his drive for freedom and peace around the world, and you have praised Fidel Castro as a leader of human rights, and said that Cuba was one of the countries that is head and shoulder above other countries in terms of human rights...I was just wondering are these your models of leaders of human rights?’

In his answer, Mandela would state:

> ‘One of the mistakes which some political analysts make is to think that their enemies are our enemies. That we can and will never do. We have our own struggle which we are conducting. We are grateful to the world for supporting our struggle. But nevertheless, we are an independent organization with our own policy. And that our attitude towards any country is determined by the attitude of that country towards our struggle.’[8]

The above sentiments expressed by Mandela were instrumental in shaping the country’s post-apartheid foreign policy. In the years of Mandela’s presidency and those of Thabo Mbeki, South Africa opened numerous diplomatic missions across the world (Landsberg, 2005). The country was instrumental in peace processes in the DRC, Burundi, and Sudan given its own transition from the brink of civil war to democracy. In East-Timor’s succession struggle from Indonesia, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was replicated there with the help of South African officials (Jenkins, 2002). Building on the legacy of Mandela, the country’s foreign policy commanded both respect and admiration in the global community of states (Landsberg, 2010). The country was also key to bringing the ‘African Agenda’ to the world (Bohler-Muller, 2012). UNSC Resolution 2033, which aims to strengthen co-operation between the UN and the African Union (AU), stressed the importance of establishing more effective relationships with the UN and regional bodies. In more recent times, the country was elected to almost back-to-back UN Security Council membership which shows faith in South Africa’s vision and mission.

The above realities are almost always omitted from the CMP grand narrative on South Africa’s foreign policy. Who South Africa should be allied with is seen in the way certain actors cite history as the only glue that forges ties between different nations. History, however, is not static and exists both concurrently with the present and spirals simultaneously towards the future.

The case of South African–Cuban relations is a good example of how ‘history’ alone is perceived to be the reason for the alliance. South African–Cuban relations are often vilified as corrupt, dishonest, and a total waste of resources. According to Gibson, ‘Cuba accounts for virtually no trade with SA, yet this country has lavished billions (of Rands) on the Caribbean island state. Is the ANC’s loyalty to historical friends compromising its financial responsibility to its own citizens?’ (Gibson, 2022). Similarly, Ntyintyane (2022) notes that:

> ‘Then you hear on the radio international relations and co-operation minister Naledi Pandor pleading with South Africans to understand as her government wants to bless Cuba with another few million rand as a gift. This has been going on since 2012. I have stopped counting the millions dished out to the regime by our generous ANC-led government.’

In 2021, the decision to hire 24 Cuban engineers to help resolve the challenges faced by the water sector, as well as transfer skills, was slammed by opposition parties. One opposition member stated that 'to import Cuban engineers, who qualified from lower standard universities than our own world-class engineers, is criminal' (Sinkins, 2021). He would go on to declare that 'like the import of Cuban doctors, the import of Cuban engineers is 100 percent about the ANC scratching the back of a country that it has historical links with' (ibid). In May 2023, for example, a civil society group sought the interdiction of the High Court to prevent South Africa from donating to Cuba.

This history, or rather *the anger behind* this history, is based on solidarity[9] in both nations' shared fight to end colonialism and apartheid (Suttner, 2021). From Angola to Namibia, to Algeria and to Guinea Bissau, Cuba played a decisive role in contributing to the liberation of countries from colonial occupation (Pandor, 2022). At the Battle of Cuito Canavale (1987–1988), the biggest battle in Africa since WW2, an estimated 40,000 Cuban troops defeated the mighty apartheid military giant, which was armed and backed by the CIA and Israel.[10] With this counter-offensive, the South African-occupied provinces of Angola were liberated, and the South African Defence Forces (SADF) retreated from their positions. As Colonel Jan Breytenbach defines it, the South African assault 'was abruptly and definitively stopped' by the Cubans and Angolans (Gonzalez, 2023). In its totality, the battle was a major turning point in the history of the subcontinent and, in the negotiations leading to Namibian Independence, part of the deal was that Cuban forces return home (Breytenbach, 1997).

Since the 1959 Cuban revolution which freed the country from the US-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Baptista and subsequent nationalization of US assets on the island, the country has remained not only a threat to American imperialism in the entire Latin America but an embarrassment to the US government. The sanctions on the island which persist today have nothing to do with contemporary realities but are rather informed by pride, arrogance, and spite that a tiny nation would stand up to the American giant. The crippling sanctions have had dire consequences on the island's economy, increasing poverty, and effecting growth. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the island lost a main revenue stream in tourism and is more reliant than ever on its allies.

In a way, South Africa's unwavering support of Cuba speaks to its own leadership in global affairs. Where other states cower and do the bidding of Euro-American interests, South Africa manages its own destiny in the community of states. It continues to build stronger ties with Cuba and support an ally which always supported its struggle even when it was not fashionable to do so. Where the West labelled Mandela and the ANC as terrorists, it was states like the USSR, India, and Cuba that supported and financed not only the ANC but different pro-democracy and anti-apartheid groups in the country. So, while the US and Britain vetoed action against apartheid South Africa and armed it to the teeth, it was the minority who stood up against the imperial powers. On December 11, 1964, the Argentine/Cuban *revolutionaire* Che Guevara at a speech to the United Nations as Cuba's representative declared:

> 'We speak out to put the world on guard against what is happening in South Africa. The brutal policy of apartheid is applied before the eyes of the nations of the world. The peoples of Africa are compelled to endure the fact that on the African continent the superiority of one race over another remains official policy, and that in the name of this racial superiority murder is committed with impunity. Can the United Nations do nothing to stop this?'

The Cuban anti-apartheid stance has angered the 'powers that would be' in South Africa. Arguably anger of the pivotal role in defeating apartheid persists today and can be seen in the way the Western Cape refused to accept Cuban doctors in 2020 at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Western Cape, the opposition stronghold in the country, was the only province not to accept the contingent of Cuban doctors.

Nothing is however mentioned that Cuba has the highest life expectancy at birth and the lowest infant mortality rate in the Western Hemisphere thanks to its free healthcare scheme. Cuba has double the number of doctors per person, 5.91 per 1,000, as compared to 2.56 doctors per 1,000 in the US. Former General Secretary of the UN, Kofi Annan, stated in 2000 how

'Cuba should be the envy of many other nations', adding that the achievements in social development are impressive given the size of its gross domestic product per capita: 'Cuba demonstrates how much nations can do with the resources they have if they focus on the right priorities – health, education, and literacy.' In 2006, a *BBC* flagship news programme *Newsnight* identified the country's health systems as the world's best in public services. The Cuban healthcare system is also a destination for medical tourists from across Europe and Latin America. Treatment in Cuba is estimated to be 60 to 80% less than the cost in the US. Annually the country sees an average of 20,000 paying health tourists which generate revenues of around $40 million a year. These details are almost always omitted from the narrative on the relationship between South Africa and Cuba. With all the health crises faced by South Africa, there are definite lessons to be learnt from Cuba, a primary one being how to re-engineer South Africa's failing health system. Instead, we are repeatedly told that the cost of Cuban doctors is 'exorbitant' and wasteful (Khan, 2022).

A cursory analysis of the Cuban medical education system reveals there is much for South Africa to 'take home with'. Cuban medical education differs from conventional models by providing graduates with a wider skill set. The Cuban system emphasises a caregiver approach, where the medic is a decision maker, communicator, manager, community leader, and teacher (Sui, Reddy, Nyembezi, 2019). Cuba's approach to medical education has a strong focus on primary care, moving the centre of gravity from teaching hospitals to community facilities, and the promotion of polyclinics. Cuba has invested heavily in medical internationalism with an estimated 1/3rd of its 83,000 doctors working outside of Cuba, often in remote areas. According to Squires, Colville, Chalkidou et al. (2020), the negative narrative on Cuban-trained doctors in South Africa is incorrect. The authors note that 'they [South African doctors trained in Cuba] have highly appropriate skills in primary care and prevention and could provide much needed services to rural and urban under-served populations whilst gaining an orientation to the health problems of South Africa and strengthening their skills.'

Cuban-South African medical links were forged by Mandela and Castro in 1996 and expanded in 2011 to meet the needs of rural and underserved urban areas. This expansion amounted to around 800 students per year training in Cuba, with a total number of around 4,000 training in Cuba by 2017. In 21 years, 4,000 Doctors being trained represents a very miniscule figure in the timescale of South African medical history. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that it is not South African medics trained in Cuba that is the problem, but rather the relationship and shared history of South Africa and Cuba that is the problem. South African–Cuban relations speak to morality and ethics in international relations. Where countries like the US befriend, use, and betray their allies like Noriega, Saddam, and Bin Laden, South Africa has shown that International Relations does not have to follow that model.

Conclusion

In conclusion, implementing South African foreign policy is not an easy task. The country's main trading partners are from both the East and West blocs, as well as the global South, meaning that it must tread carefully in world affairs. In this scenario, it is bound to upset one or another side. South Africa has highly ambitious foreign policy strategies and goals which consider domestic, sub-regional, continental, global South, industrialised North, and global governance dimensions. Despite the agency which seeks to realign South Africa's foreign policy Westwards, South Africa is a leader in its own right. South African–Cuban relations should persist into the future given South Africa's commitment to building a multi-polar world and not one that serves the dictates of Western imperialism.

Notes

1. South Africa's role in conflict resolution has been the source of several books like Shillinger (2009) *Africa's Peace Maker? Lessons from South African Conflict Mediation*, Solomon (2010) *South Africa in Africa: A Case for High Expectations for Peace* and Bentley and Southall (2005) *An African Peace Process: Mandela, South Africa and Burundi*.
2. DIRCO is the equivalent of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
3. Multinational media refers to the West's influence over local media content which purports colonial,

imperial, and white supremacist epistemological thought on the world.

4. In a previous study from 2022, the author examined an IR event which concerned South Africa and asked how it was possible that 40 plus journalists from different media publications all shared the same opinion.
5. Are we experiencing colonialism or neo-colonialism?
6. The idea of neutrality to the Russian–Ukraine conflict was best expressed by India's Foreign Minister Jaishankar who asked if it was only India who was supporting Russia's war effort by buying Russian oil, as Europe still buys Russian gas. He would go on to say that 'Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe's problems are the world's problems, but the world's problems are not Europe's problems.' Jaishankar's stance is a view shared by all the BRICS bloc.
7. The Ambassador said he was prepared to 'bet his life' that Pretoria had provided weapons to Moscow (Seibt and Everett, 2023).
8. According to Suttner (2022), 'Mandela…made it clear that those countries that had not offered any support to the South African struggle had no right to prescribe to the ANC with whom it should be friends.'
9. Solidarity is not always about gains. Gestures of solidarity are signs of commitment towards each other. During the Cold War, Russia bought mega tons of sugar from Cuba, and more recently, Venezuela and Iran have supplied the island with oil at a loss. Solidarity trumps losses in that cordial relationships between states stretch right into the future.
10. Beginning in 1975, the CIA participated in the Angolan Civil War, hiring and training American, British, French and Portuguese private military contractors, as well as training National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels under Jonas Savimbi, to fight against the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led by Agostinho Neto. The CIA also collaborated with apartheid-era forces.

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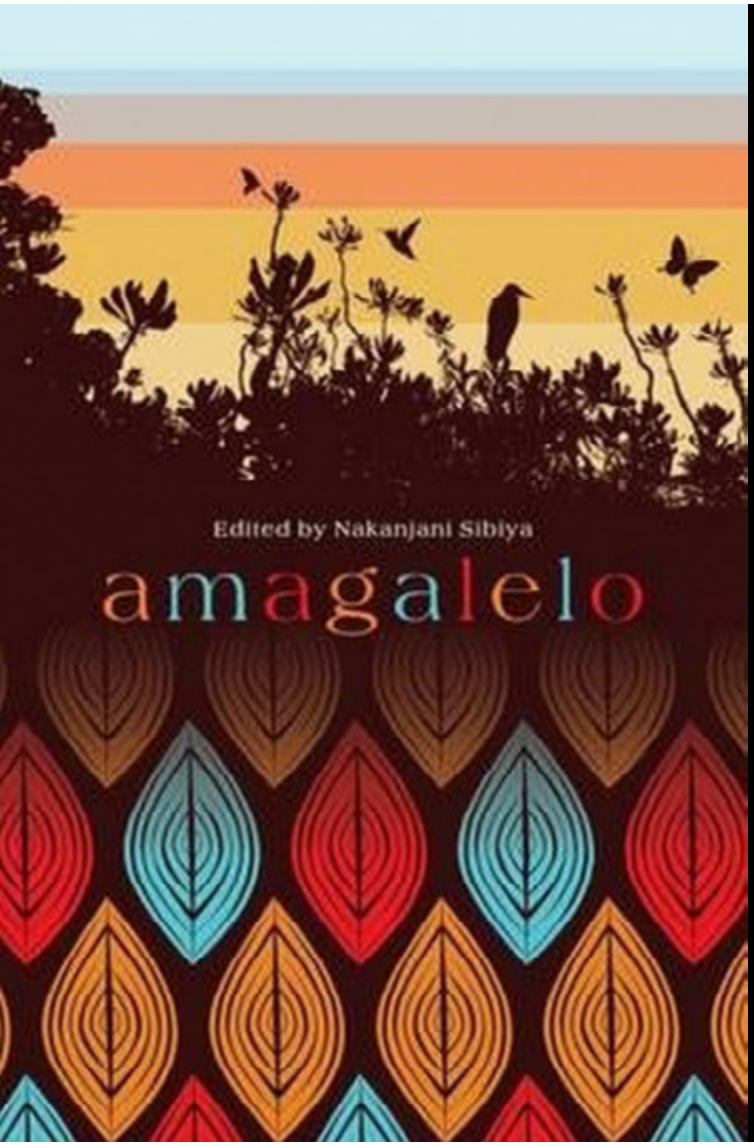

A Thematic Analysis of N.G. Sibiya's Selected Essays in *Amalangabi*

By Sizwe Zwelakhe Dlamini

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to critically examine themes that are found in N.G. Sibiya's selected essays in *Amalangabi* (1993). It was discovered that Sibiya highlights some thought-provoking issues in his essays, but to the best of the researcher's knowledge, nothing or less has been done so far about Sibiya's work on the essay genre. It is this scholarly gap that this study is attempting to fill. The study is done through the post-colonial approach since the selected themes touch on social aspects. The themes 'Discrimination against people with stutters', 'Stereotypes against people with stutters', and 'Patience produces good results' are examined from the essays 'Amalimi' and 'Ukulinda'.

Introduction

This study discusses some of the themes found in Sibiya's essays in *Amalangabi* (1993). There are three themes to be discussed and they are categorised under the phrase 'social aspects' because of their nature. N.G. Sibiya is one of the prominent authors who has contributed greatly to the literature of isiZulu. Not only is he an essayist, but he is also a short story and novel author. His book, *Amalangabi*, is a volume that consists of both short stories and essays. Attention is only paid to essays in this study.

Cuddon (2013: 251) defines an essay as a prose composition which discusses, informally or formally, a topic or subject matter. Abrams and Harpham (2009: 103), on the other hand, point out that an essay is a piece of literature that seeks to discuss a subject matter, express a point of view, and persuade the audience to accept a claim on the proposed subject matter. Murfin and Ray (2003: 143) share the same sentiment by similarly defining an essay as a non-fiction composition that is brief as compared to genres such as short stories and novels. It aims to explore a single theme or topic. The three definitions above emphasise that an essay is a prose composition which discusses a specific subject. In line with this view, an essay can be succinctly defined as one of the genres in prose where the essayist chooses a subject, makes a claim, and then outlines reasons in support of that claim. He/she can write about any topic and there is no specific length prescription.

Essayists, or authors in general, write literary works because there is a message they intend to communicate or convey. This is their way of engaging with the audience and this can be determined by analysing the themes that constitute their literary work. Sibiya's essays are thus examined to determine the themes that are identified. The term 'theme' will be defined first and, since the identified themes are treated as social aspects, it is seen as a necessity for the phrase 'social aspect' to be defined as well. The definition of this term is therefore provided after the definition of theme. This is then followed by a detailed discussion on the selected themes, and this is after literature review and methodology. Since essays are the primary source, this suggests that the study adopts textual analysis as a qualitative research method. The study is done through the lenses of the post-colonial approach as a theoretical framework.

The aim of this paper is to critically explore the themes found in N.G. Sibiya's selected essays in the volume highlighted above since, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, nothing much has been done exploring this aspect of Sibiya's works. Dlamini (2019), on whose Honours' research essay this study is based, is probably the only scholar to touch on themes identified in Sibiya's essays.

Literature review

There are very few research studies done on the genre of essays in Zulu as compared to novels and short stories. Zulu's M.A. dissertation (1991) 'The Structure and Content of Zulu Essays with Special Reference to Those of C.S. Ntuli' and Zukula's Honours research essay (2017) 'Ikhono Lika-D.B.K. Mhlongo Lokusebenzisa Izifenggo Kuma Eseyi esiZulu' ('D.B.K. Mhlongo's Skill to Use Figures of Speech in Zulu Essays') are the predominant studies the researcher could find in this genre. Zulu analyses the structure, contents, and style in C.S. Ntuli's essays. Zukula, on the other hand, scrutinises figures of speech in D.B.K. Mhlongo's essays. These include simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, euphemism, hyperbole, and rhetorical questions.

The fact that there are only a few Zulu research studies in the genre of essays does not, however, mean that there are no studies done in this field in other African languages. The following M.A. dissertations were done on essays in past years:

- 'An Analysis of the Essays of P. Lesenyane' by L.F Khumalo (1997) in Setswana.
- 'The Essay in Southern Sotho' by P.R.S. Maphike (1978).
- 'Essay in Xhosa' by W.M Kwetana (1987).
- 'A Critical Analysis of A.M Tlooke's Essays: Bohwabogolo' by Mashabela (n.d) in Northern Sotho.
- 'The Form, Content and Style in P. Leyane's Lethaku le Legologolo' by Monyai (1997) in Setswana.

All these studies will be useful in this work as they will provide guidance for the researcher. The discovery that there is no study, to the best of the researcher's

knowledge, that has been done on *Amalangabi* since publication in 1993, has prompted the researcher to undertake this study.

Theoretical framework

The importance of a theory in underpinning every research study based on literature cannot be denied. No one can do research in literature without using a theory (Sholomit in Zukula, 2017: 9). A theory plays an important role in enhancing the understanding of the fundamental elements that shape any written literary piece. In support of this, Castle (2007: 3) says:

> 'A natural scientist will use theory in ways that will yield precise, verifiable, repeated results; a literary scholar will use it in order to make informed and plausible interpretations that may not be precise, verifiable, or repeatable.'

Castle's view indicates that the use of theories helps scholars to interpret and get insightful meaning from literature. Abed, in Sithole (2017: 7), adds to this view by saying that theories are intended to explicate, predict, and enhance the understanding of phenomena. The insights raised by Castle and Abed above highlight the importance of theories in interpreting and getting meaning from literature. The post-colonial approach is the utilised theory that will underpin the interpretation and extraction of meaning in N.G. Sibiya's essays. Below is the explanation of this theory and its relevance to the study.

A basic idea in understanding the concept of post-colonial theory is given by Castle (2013: 242) who says:

> 'Post-colonial studies is an interdisciplinary domain in which we can discern two very broad trends: on the one hand, we see a concentration on imperialism and colonialism, while on the other hand we see primary accounts of post-colonial literature, culture, society, and politics.'

Castle (*op cit.*) further states:

> 'There is a historical progress at work here, with foundational works in the field focusing on imperialism and colonialism locations and later work, much of it emoting from post-colonial states, laying stress on questions of nationalism, local literatures and language, religion and culture and social conditions.'

The view presented by Castle above indicates how post-colonial theory has been perceived and approached since its birth. Its initial work focused on imperialism and colonialism. There has, however, been a shift that saw the inclusion of studying the present social aspects which may not have a lot to do with colonialism or imperialism in post-colonial societies. Murfin and Ray (2003: 356) maintain a similar view in support of this idea by saying:

> 'The term post-colonial theory is sometimes also extended to refer to situations that share material characteristics with post-colonial conditions but that do not actually involve a former colony.'

The insights provided by the scholars above highlight that post-colonial theory is an approach that is also concerned about social circumstances in modern societies. The themes to be discussed in this study are treated as social aspects as they are about people and their relation to society. As the post-colonial approach observes social circumstances, in general, it is seen as suitable and relevant for this study. This approach is perceived to be suitable in guiding the analysis data in this discourse because it seeks to critically review and account on societal/social issues. In this instance, the selected essays are the subject of analysis to uncover such issues.

Methodology

The primary source in this study is Sibiya's *Amalangabi* (1993), a volume that contains the essays to be studied.

"The insights provided by the scholars above highlight that post-colonial theory is an approach that is also concerned about social circumstances in modern societies. The themes to be discussed in this study are treated as social aspects as they are about people and their relation to society. As the post-colonial approach observes social circumstances, in general, it is seen as suitable and relevant for this study."

This means that other data collection methods such as interviews, surveys, and so on are not utilised. Studying Sibiya's essays implies that the study is done qualitatively, with textual analysis as a qualitative research technique. Malterud (2001: 483) describes the qualitative method as involving 'the systematic collection, organisation, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or observation.' Instead of talks or observations, information is collected, organised, and interpreted solely from *Amalangabi* in this study.

The concept of theme

According to De Silva (1991: 500), theme is the subject/topic of a narrative work of literature, or the main idea articulated by the author. This definition points out two different views. Firstly, it is a subject/topic of a work and secondly, it is the main idea expressed by the author. In view of these definitions, there are some scholars who agree with De Silva's second definition and not the first one. For example, Moloele (2001: 51) cites Cuddon who argues that theme is not a subject of the work, but it is rather the central idea. Cassill (1975: 169) supports this by stating that theme is not to be misinterpreted as a subject matter, it is the meaning portrayed by the story. Diamond (1993: 6) also moves along these lines by stating: 'Theme is that leading idea or concept which a text deals with.'

Diamond (1993: 7) further states:

> 'A topic is general while "theme" is specific. Theme refers to the insight the dramatist is trying to communicate to the readers by means of a certain topic, plot, and characters.'

While Diamond defines theme with regard to 'the dramatist,' his definition applies to other literary forms as well. The definitions given above show that theme is not to be confused with the general subject or topic of a literary work. In contrast to the subject matter, theme is the specific main idea that is communicated through the subject/topic of a certain piece of writing. It is the key idea that underpins the author's written work. Theme should also not be confused with the moral of the story. The moral is a lesson to be learned in the story (Cuddon, 2013: 445) and theme is the main idea.

The discussed themes in this paper are regarded as social aspects because of their social nature. The *Macmillan English Dictionary* (2002: 1358) defines the term 'social' as something that involves society and people's lives. The term is derived from the noun 'society'. To understand better what the adjective means, it is important to observe the original word which is the noun 'society'. Thus, the noun is to explain the adjective better. Ronney, in Tshomela (2006: 4), defines society as:

> 'The sum total relationships among groups of humans or animals...a structured community of people bound together by similar traditions, institutions, or nationality.'

Another definition is given by Gidden, in Tshomela (2006: 4), who perceives society as: 'The system of interrelationships which connects together the individuals who share a common culture.' The views given by the scholars above express that society is made up of a group of people who share a similar way of living and doing things.

By saying the themes to be discussed are treated as social aspects, the researcher implies that they have something to do with people and the society they live in. These are factors that directly or indirectly impact people's day-to-day lives.

Discussion of themes in N.G. Sibiya's essays

This section is a discussion of themes found in N.G Sibiya's essays. These themes are: 'Discrimination against people with stutters', 'Stereotypes against people with stutters', and 'Patience produces good results', as indicated earlier.

Discrimination against people with stutters

This is a sensitive theme found in Sibiya's essays, mainly because of the historical imbalances in South Africa and attempts to redress them over the years. The *Macmillan English Dictionary* (2002: 393) defines discrimination as an unjust treatment that a certain group of people may suffer because of their religion, race, gender, or any other personal features.

In the essay 'Amalimi' the unnoticed discrimination that people with stutters experience in their lives is highlighted. Discrimination is a social aspect as it involves people and their relation in community.

The essay expresses that people with stutters come across challenges in different areas of their lives. They receive unjust and unfair treatment because of their condition. The first example where such individuals experience discrimination is in workplaces. It is indicated that there are job opportunities people with stutters struggle to or do not receive. The words from the essay illuminate this:

> '*Awubheke nje imisebenzi enjengokuba ngumsakazi. Kangikaze ngizwe noyedwa umsakazi onamalimi. Kuwubandlululo olukhulu lokhu.*' (1993: 3)
>
> (Just look at jobs like broadcasting. I have never heard even one stuttering broadcaster. This is serious marginalisation.)

In the above words, the author is expressing his concern that stuttering people are not given opportunities to be broadcasters. He condemns this and believes it is an act of discrimination. The definition of discrimination given above reveals the truth behind the words expressed by the author. It becomes discrimination when people with stutters are not fairly treated because of their personal feature of stuttering. The essay highlights the reality faced by people with stutters; they are not given enough access to broadcasting vacancies.

It is also indicated from the essay that individuals with stutters also face challenges even in workplaces. The author is again showing his concern about these people's experiences in the following words:

> 'Nasemisebenzini yiso leso. Uma kukhethwa isigungu esizodlulisela izikhalo kwabakhulu kwenziwa isiqinisekiso esikhulu sokuthi akukhethwa umuntu onamalimi.' (1993: 4–5)
>
> (It is the same situation in the workplace. When a committee to present employees' grievances to the owners is selected, it is highly ensured that a stuttering person is not elected.)

The words above explain that even in workplaces, stuttering people do not receive equal opportunities to do certain tasks. According to the definition of discrimination given above, this is also an act of discrimination. People with stutters are not given fair treatment and access to equal opportunities.

It is further shown that learners/students with stutters experience discrimination even at school. This is shown in the following passage:

> *'Ezikoleni bayabandlululwa. Kabakhethwa uma kufuneka abazodlala emidlalweni yeshashalazi. Kabaqokwa uma kunezinkulumo-mpikiswano ezihlelwe ukusiza wonke umuntu osuke ewumfundi.'* (1993: 4).
>
> (In schools they are marginalised. They are not selected when there is a need for individuals to take part in theatre plays. They are not appointed when there are debates that are intended to help every learner/student.)

This is another example raised in support of the fact that people with stutters experience discrimination. The word '*bayabandlulwa*' from the passage means 'they are being marginalised' and it has been deliberately used to express disapproval of the marginalisation people with stutters suffer against in schools. The act of not selecting learners with stutters to take part in theatre plays and debates is considered to be an act of discrimination.

The points from the essay are given to support the argument that people with stutters experience discrimination. When looking at the definition of discrimination, the argument is indeed valid. If there is

"The essay expresses that people with stutters come across challenges in different areas of their lives. They receive unjust and unfair treatment because of their condition. The first example where such individuals experience discrimination is in workplaces. It is indicated that there are job opportunities people with stutters struggle to or do not receive."

a group of people not receiving equal treatment and opportunities because of personal features that they cannot change on any given day, this is discrimination. In this case, people with stutters are treated unequally because of their condition.

In summary, it was explained earlier that theme is the meaning and main idea the author intends to communicate. The subject is on stutters in general but one of the themes that can be extracted is discrimination. This was discovered after reading the essay. The truth of this is made relevant by the words of Boynton and Mack (1992: 276) who state: 'The theme cannot be understood in isolation from the story which embodies it.'

Discrimination is what the essay seeks to manifest. This section of the essay is intended to show that people with stutters experience discrimination in different areas of their lives. This is one of the social issues that calls for society's attention. An awareness that people with stutters are being discriminated against is marked by this theme in the essay. This alludes to what Cassill (1975: 172) says about theme in general:

> 'The theme is what is left, like resonance in the reader's mind after he has recovered from the emotions and sympathies he felt while reading and even after he has forgotten the shape of the plot and the allusion contributed by characters.'

Stereotypes against people with stutters

Stereotyping is another theme that is highlighted in the essay 'Amalimi'. The *Macmillan English Dictionary* (2002: 1406) defines the term 'stereotype' as a fixed idea that exists in people's minds about a particular person or thing which in most cases is not true in reality.

The essay shows the unrealistic ideas that exist in people's minds about people with stutters. The first unrealistic idea indicated in the essay is the fact that most people perceive stuttering people as disabled. It is explained in the essay that most people share the same sentiment that there is something wrong with stuttering people. The author's personal concern is revealed in these words:

> *'Lesi sicefe semizamo efile yabantu abangenawo amalimi sisuka ekutheni abantu abangenawo amalimi babheke abantu abanamalimi njengabantu abakhubazekile. Kubona kusengathi kuningi okungahambi kahlehle kubantu abanamalimi–yikho nje bedinga ukusizwa nokuqedelwa izinkulumo zabo.*' (1993: 3)
>
> (This nuisance of attempts by people who do not have stutters originates from the idea that they look at people with stutters as disabled. To them it seems as if there is a lot that is not going well with stuttering people–that is why they need to be helped to complete their utterance.)

The above words reveal one of the stereotypes people hold; they perceive individuals with stutters as disabled and needing help to communicate. The words are the author's attempt to address this stereotyping. They indirectly express the idea that people with stutters are not disabled. There is nothing wrong with them and they need no assistance to complete their sentences. By saying '*Lesi sicefe semizamo efile*' (This nuisance of dead attempts–), the author is expressing his disapproval to people's actions of trying to help stuttering people with practical tasks such as completing their own sentences.

The essay further exposes another example of stereotyping. The idea that people with stutters cannot complete some practical tasks well, such as teaching, is challenged. The words of the author explain this:

> *'Abantu abengenawo amalimi kababethembi abantu abanamalimi. Bababukela phansi. Kabakholwa ngukuthi ikhona into esile engenziwa ngumuntu onamalimi, ayenze kahle yenzisiseke. Yikho uma ngixoxa indaba yokuthi ngifuna ukuba nguthisha ngomuso kuye kube nokumangala kwabaningi: "uyofundisa kanjani unamalimi?"'* (1993: 3)
>
> (People who do not have stutters do not trust stuttering people. They underestimate them. They do not believe that there is something decent a person with stutters can do well. That is why when I share that I want to become a teacher in the future, amazement arises from a lot of people:

"How are you going to teach with stutters?")

In the words above, the author indicates that people with stutters are not trusted. They are generally underestimated. This is a result of the belief that they are unable to do decent tasks such as teaching because of their stuttering condition. The author's perspective is revealed in these words as the subject morpheme '*ngi*'- (I) indicates the first person singular. The belief that people with stutters are unable to do certain tasks is presented as an act of stereotyping by the author. He is condemning such beliefs to be unrealistic fixed ideas in people's minds. These beliefs amaze him. He is struggling to understand why people have such unrealistic ideas about stuttering people.

The essay also shows another act of stereotyping that is frequently revealed through people's questions. One example of such questions is: *'Kawakubambi yini amalimi uma ucula*' (1993: 5) ('Do you not stutter when you sing?). This question shows people's fixed idea that people with stutters are unable to sing. It is regarded to be an act of stereotyping in the essay. It is in fact regarded as an insult. This is evident in these words expressed by the author:

'*Uyacasula lo mbuzo. Uyasinukubeza isithunzi somuntu. Kusuke kufanele ahlawuliswe umuntu osuke ebuza lo mbuzo oyinhlamba.*' (1993: 5)

(This question is annoying. It degrades a person's image. A person asking this insulting question should be fined.)

A careful analysis of these words shows that this question is stereotypical and as a result, is challenged to be false. The words '*uyacasula*' (it is annoying), '*uyanukubeza*' (it degrades), and '*oyinhlamba*' (which is an insult) show strong emotions that are evoked as a result of this question. The response to the stereotype revealed through the question above is negative. The negative response indicates disapproval to this stereotype.

In summary, stereotyping is one of the themes/main ideas that can be extracted in the essay 'Amalimi'. The theme can be regarded as falling under social aspects. Stereotypes are perpetrated by people and affect people one way or another. People with stutters are part of the society and these stereotypes affect them to some extent. An issue that is sensitive and demands attention is stressed through the prose text once again.

Patience produces good results

This is one of the themes in the essay 'Ukulinda'. The essay describes how people's day-to-day lives revolve around waiting. Waiting is perceived to be a challenge to people. Nevertheless, it is considered to have its own values and merits. It is argued in the essay that waiting is significant as it builds people.

There are points given from the essay to explain the merits of waiting irrespective of the fact that it is often a difficult art to master. The first point shows the role waiting plays in helping people avoid car accidents. This is shown in the following words:

'*Kuliqiniso elingaphikiswa ukuthi kuyinkinga eyisicefe esiwumthwalo omkhulu ukulinda. Izingozi eziningi zidalwa yikho kanye ukwehluleka kwabantu ukubekezela isicefe sokuthi kufanelwe kulindwe. Emadolobheni kufanele ulinde kuze kuvele ilambu eliluhlaza kuqala. Kuvele isiphihli sengozi uma ngeshwa elithile kukhona ongalindanga, wawela lingakakhanyi ilambu okuyilona elimgunyaza ukuthi awele*.' (1993: 23)

(It is an undeniable truth that waiting is a huge annoying problem. A lot of accidents are a result of people's failure to be patient. In towns you have to wait for the green light to show. A terrible accident appears when unfortunately, someone fails to wait, and rushes before the light that grants him access emits.)

The passage explains that a lot of accidents in towns are a result of the failure to be patient. Lack of patience is considered to be one of the different causes of accidents. One of the important roles waiting plays is indicated as assisting in avoiding car accidents.

It is also shown in the essay that the ability to wait is not only helpful for car drivers in town, but it is helpful in rural areas as well. The following words from the passage explain this:

'*Emakhaya kufanele ube nesineke, ulinde uma uhamba ngemoto. Kunemihlambi yezinkomo othuka udibana nayo emgwaqeni. Kufanele uyimise imoto, ulinde ize yeqe, iwele umgwaqo le mihlambi, bese uyadlula ke. Uma kade lina kufanele ulinde kuze kuhwamuke umgwaqo kuqala, kunciphe udaka. Uma wehluleka wukulinda usuke uzifaka engozini yokuthi imoto yakho ibhajwe odakeni kokunye igingqike.*' (1993: 24)

(In the rural areas you need to be patient when you are driving a car. You come across cattle on the road. You have to stop the car and wait for the cattle to pass to the other side and then you pass. If it was raining you have to wait for the road to dry up and for the mud to reduce. If you fail to wait, you are putting yourself in a danger of being trapped in the mud or for your car to tumble).

Patience is seen as a necessity for those who are driving in rural areas as well. It is to be used to avoid car and animal accidents. Waiting is considered to be helpful to drivers in an attempt to avoid accidents that can be a result of heavy rains. The important role waiting plays in avoiding accidents is shown even through the above example. Car accidents are a general concern for the world and waiting is shown to be one of the solutions. The idea that waiting is a challenge but tends to produce good results is shown through the above example as well.

In supporting the view that waiting has merits, an interesting point is provided in the essay. The essay explains that many people meet and develop relationships while they are waiting for trains, to consult doctors, or in the banks. The following passage expresses this:

'*Imishado eminingi phela esiye simenywe kuyo imiphumela yokuhlangana ngenkathi kusamiwe, kulindiwe. Baningi ababonana belinde isitimela, bagcina bexoxa bezwana. Baningi ababonana kwadokotela nasemabhange belinde ukuthi kuvulwe. Ngokuxoxisana ngenkathi kusalindiwe bagcina bazene, bethandene*.' (1993: 24)

(A lot of weddings we are sometimes invited to are a result of waiting. There are a lot of people who met while they were waiting for a train, ended up talking and relating. There are a lot who met in surgeries and banks while waiting for the opening time. By talking while waiting, they end up knowing and loving each other.)

The passage above contains an important fact that is presented humorously. Many people met during the time of waiting. One can argue that if these individuals lacked patience and failed to wait for trains, in banks, or in surgeries, they probably would not have met the people they are married to. The waiting process resulted in them getting married. It was probably difficult to wait but they got something out of it. This is another example that shows the value and merit of waiting. The aim of this example is to emphasise the fact that waiting produces good results in general.

The points given from the essay stress that patience produces good results even though it is often a challenge to practice for most people. The ability to wait is one of the important qualities in any person's life. It produces good results, some of which are shown through the examples given from the essay. There are general sayings that 'good things come to those who wait' and that 'patience is virtue'. The theme illustrates the relevance of these sayings.

In summary, the essay 'Ukulinda' is about waiting as part of people's lives. It explains that everything revolves around waiting. This is the general topic of the essay, but one of the themes that are taken out of it is that patience produces good results. This theme is specific whereas the topic of the essay is general. This is in line with Diamond's definition of theme and topic earlier. Lastly, this theme can be regarded as a social aspect. Waiting plays a role in people's lives and the community as a whole. It generally develops people and contributes to their advancement. Society becomes a better institution when people learn to practice the art of waiting.

Conclusion

The paper has discussed three themes in Sibiya's two essays. It started by defining what theme is. The themes discussed are regarded to fall under social aspects because they are factors that are part of people's day-to-day lives in society. The first theme

discussed from the essay 'Amalimi' was discrimination against people with stutters. People with stutters are shown to be victims of discrimination as they are not treated equally in different areas of their lives. This includes being deprived of certain job opportunities and excluded from certain positions in the workplace and in schools. Stereotyping was also extracted from the same essay and discussed as a second theme. Ideas that are regarded to be fixed and unrealistic about people with stutters are identified. The last theme was on patience as an art that produces good results, even though it is difficult to practice for people. Examples were given and discussed from the essay 'Ukulinda'. It is through these examples that the merits of patience were outlined.

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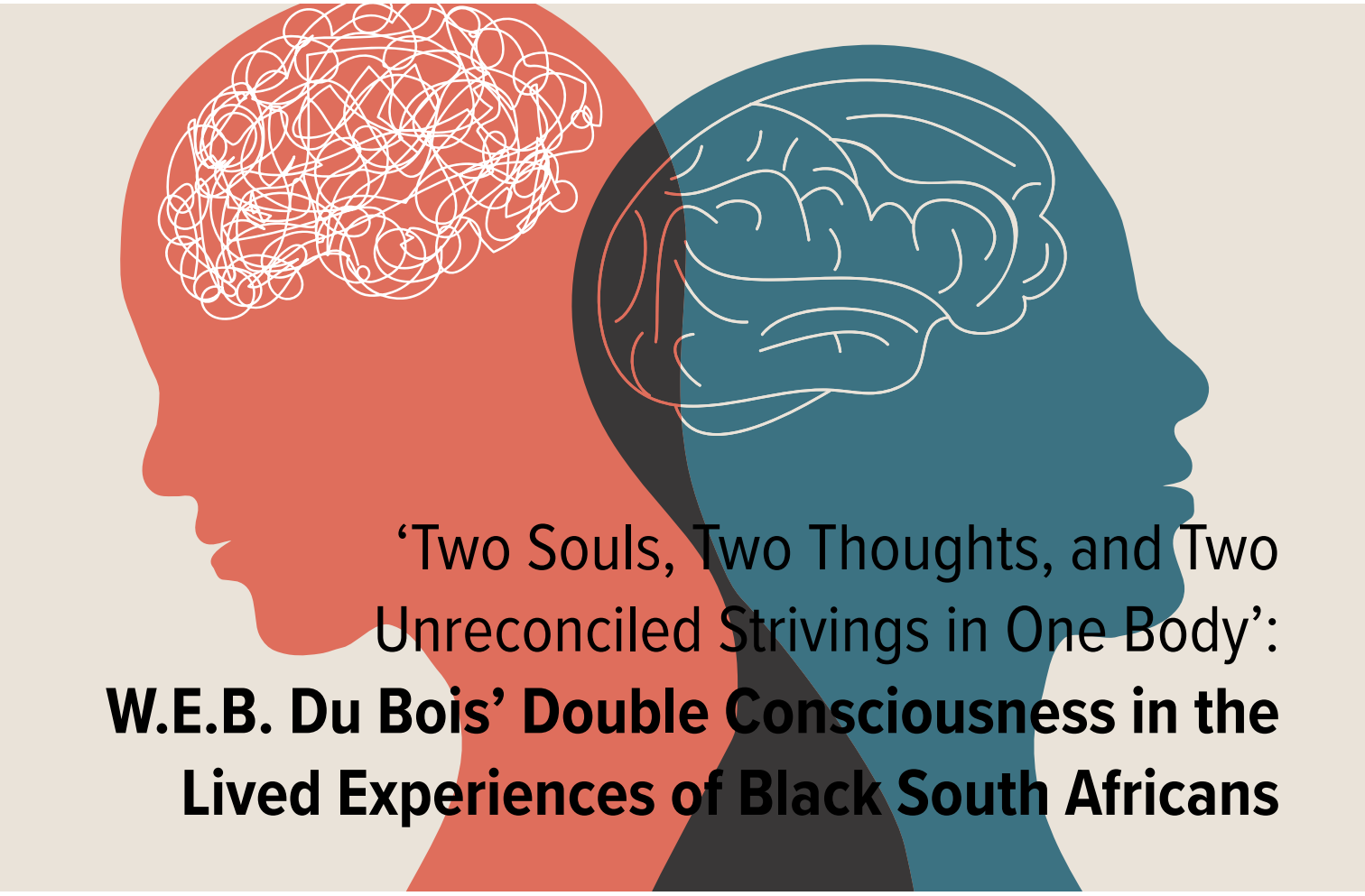

‘Two Souls, Two Thoughts, and Two Unreconciled Strivings in One Body’: W.E.B. Du Bois’ Double Consciousness in the Lived Experiences of Black South Africans

By Vhonani MS Petla

Abstract

American sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois introduces the phrase double consciousness in his work. According to Du Bois, this phrase describes a dilemma of two consciousnesses that Black Americans face due to what he calls ‘the veil of racism’. While the consciousness that Du Bois speaks of is in the context of Black Americans, this work attempts to answer whether colonisation and racism in South Africa did not also lead to a form of double consciousness to those who experienced it. This work does this by firstly exploring the institutionalised form of colonisation in South Africa known as apartheid. It shows how this system characterised and made Black people seem as though they were lazy, stupid, and inferior, which in turn led to the second consciousness. This work further shows the experience of double consciousness by Black South Africans through hair and beauty politics. It shows that Black South Africans retaliate and assert their blackness through protest despite the double consciousness. Furthermore, this work uses South African literature to demonstrate how Black people in South Africa are knowledgeable of the consciousness, its effects, and how it operates.

Introduction

Black people in Africa and the diaspora share a similar history of colonisation, racial segregation and its effects, which affect different aspects of their lives. With W.E.B Du Bois being a Pan-Africanist and a scholar whose work had a particular interest in race issues and equality for Black Americans, his writings are then devoted to this. One of his popular writings is on double consciousness; this term is first seen in his work *Strivings of the Negro People* (1897) and then later also seen in his book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Du Bois describes this consciousness as a peculiar sensation, where the American Negro has two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body (Du Bois, 1903: 8). Essentially, here, the negro is torn in between how he views himself as well as how a white racist America views him, hence the second consciousness.

While the consciousness discussed by Du Bois speaks to Black Americans who live in America, this work explores whether or not there is a link between double consciousness, as discussed by Du Bois, and the effects of racism that Black South Africans experienced due to apartheid. Secondly, once the link is established, this work further engages how Black South Africans experience this consciousness and how they react to it. This work begins by introducing the institutionalised system of racial segregation in South Africa, showing how it not only constituted of physical oppression, but how living under it also affected Black people's minds. It made them feel inferior and unwholesome (Biko, 1978; Manganyi, 2019).

Furthermore, once this is done, this work uses hair and beauty politics in South Africa to demonstrate how double consciousness exists and is experienced by Black South Africans. This work shows how, in some instances, they acknowledge it and retaliate through protest. In other instances, they perform tasks that are thought to not be for Black people of a certain nature; this is seen through South African model Zozibini Tunzi winning both the Miss South Africa and Miss Universe pageants in 2019. Lastly, this work also gives two examples of South African literature to show that Black South Africans experience this consciousness; these authors' work demonstrates that the authors are well knowledgeable of the double consciousness in their context and can document it well with its implications on individuals and society. This further demonstrates that South Africans do experience the double consciousness that Du Bois (1897 and 1903) speaks about in his work.

Who is W.E.B. Du Bois, and what is double consciousness?

Before engaging the idea of double consciousness, both in terms of African Americans and the African context, it is important to give an idea of who W.E.B. Du Bois was, what work he did, and his position in society so as to give context to the reader of the scholar's positionality and how he was able to theorise the situation that Black Americans were in. Du Bois was an African American intellectual who was the first Black person to receive a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) from Harvard (Edward and Alexander, 2018). Upon completing his PhD, Du Bois moved on to embark on a sociological study of Black life in Philadelphia (Edward and Alexander, 2018). Throughout his life, he had a major interest in race issues, dismantling racism, the immediate equality for African Americans, and full civil and economic rights for this group of people (Morris, 2020).

Du Bois identified as a Pan-Africanist and was referred to as 'the father of Pan-Africanism'. It is important to note that this was not because he had founded Pan-Africanism, but because he used his intellect to make contributions to Pan-Africanism that were considered to be valuable. This was due to him being a scholar of racism, an activist, a writer, and an orator; these traits allowed him to be the ideal candidate to spread the ideology of Pan-Africanism (Morris, 2020). As mentioned above, he was highly concerned about Black people, the consequences of racism in their lives, and their emancipation. He strongly believed that 'races were not oppressed based on biological criteria, but human-constructed racial hierarchies established for the purpose of human domination' (Morris, 2020: 98). His thoughts on racism can further be seen through what he termed 'the veil of racism'—here, he believed that white oppressors around the globe constructed a colour line, that pushed Black people into a veil of racism, where they were exploited, disenfranchised, and insulted (Du Bois, 1903). This 'veil of racism' was what led to the double consciousness

that Du Bois spoke about. This is because the double consciousness was a consequence of the racism that Black Americans faced.

Du Bois argued that the racism experienced by Black people was not only a physical act but also something that had a consequence on their minds, self-esteem, and identity. Hence, conversations on decolonisation will sometimes refer to the concept of decolonising the mind, as the way that Black people think about themselves, their capabilities, and the world around them has been affected by racism.

As an intellectual, Du Bois often expressed himself through essays and writings, and he speaks more of his idea of double consciousness in his book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Du Bois argued that African-Americans always looked at themselves through the eyes of others, and specifically through the eyes of white oppressors (Edward and Alexander, 2018). Annie Rawls (2000) argues that the consequence of this double consciousness is that the Black man had two cultural identities within him, each representing a social role. They argue that the two identities were at war with each other because of the difference that the two had in social standing within the American community. Hence, the battle of how they saw themselves and knew themselves vs. how a racist American system viewed them.

Apartheid South Africa: How do Black South Africans fit in?

There is a close association between South African history and that of African-Americans. South Africa lived through a system that categorised people based on an 'us vs. them' basis (Fredrickson, 2002). 'Us' referred to white people and Afrikaners, while 'they' or 'them' referred to Black people. Apartheid, which literally means apartness or separateness in the Afrikaans and Dutch languages, is the name that was given to the institutionalised segregation of people by race in South Africa (Clark and Worger, 2013). Like those in the African-American context that Du Bois speaks of, Black people in South Africa lived through a system that undermined their basic human rights, displaced them from their homes, and subjected them to numerous forms of violence (SA History, 2016). It is further argued that despite apartheid being institutionalised in 1948, segregating people

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based on their skin colour in South Africa dates back to the beginning of the 20th century and paved the way for the ideology and framework through which apartheid would be constructed (Dubow, 1989).

In his work, Biko (1978) argues that living in an unequal apartheid society led to Black people believing that they were inferior, resulting in an 'empty shell'. Biko believed that apartheid and oppression turned the Black man into a shadow of himself, where he doubted himself, drowned in his own misery, and was an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity. This description of living under apartheid that Biko gives carries some similarity with how Du Bois characterises living with double consciousness and its impact on Black Americans. This work then argues that there is a direct link between the 'veil' discussed by Du Bois and the 'empty shell' identified by Biko. Due to the nature of racial segregation that both groups faced, despite differences in geographical location, the experience of double consciousness discussed by Du Bois could be applicable in the South African context.

Furthermore, during apartheid, the name 'Kaffir' was used to refer to Black people. This derogatory term, 'Kaffir,' refers to being lazy and stupid, which the apartheid government considered Black South Africans to be (De Vos, 2008). This work argues that the use of such terms played into how Black people came to think of themselves. This meant that Black people found themselves in a dilemma between what they

thought of themselves as, versus a ruling government, plus an oppressive community, that thought of them as lazy and stupid. Fanon (1986) in his work argues that the coloniser knowingly instilled a fear and inferiority complex in the colonised. Manganyi (2019) alludes to this, arguing that one of the impacts of colonisation in Africa, in this case apartheid, was that the Black body was projected as 'bad' and thought to be inferior and unwholesome. This representation of Black people affected them not just physically but mentally too. This results in the argument by Biko (1978) that the most powerful weapon at the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. This is exactly where the similarity between apartheid and double consciousness comes in, as once again, the oppressors put Black people in a battle of who they see themselves as versus this oppressive system.

To understand the above better, this work makes use of what is known as the white gaze. In simple terms, the white gaze refers to how whiteness influences how we think and operate in society (Asare, 2021). Fanon (1986) also writes about how living under the white man's eyes also affects one's experiences of blackness. The white gaze enforces the idea that, despite democracy and increased Black mobility, people have not really escaped white contestation (Canham and Willans, 2017: 28). This is important in understanding Black people's experience of double consciousness—as existing within this white gaze is a constant reminder of how one views themselves, but also how the white gaze (which is dominant and racist) continues to view them. In a country like South Africa, living under the white gaze is a constant in Black people's lives. In the South African context, the white gaze is evident in numerous ways that include, but are not limited to, racialised discourse that is responsible for controlling, interiorising, and negating Blackness—while profiling the Black body as different and defiant (Fiske, 1998; Jungkunz and White, 2013; Nielsen, 2011; Yancy, 2013). This once again emphasises the relevance of double consciousness.

Double consciousness in South African lived experiences: Hair and beauty politics in South Africa

The relationship that Black women have had over the past years with their hair shows the existence of double consciousness in the contemporary South African context. This work argues that double consciousness has led to a system where Black women use their hair to assert their identity in social settings and the workplace. The conversation around Black people's hair has often come with much debate, with Black people being told that their hair is dirty or ungovernable (Mokoena, 2016). The solution for this dirty and ungovernable hair has often been to relax the hair, which gives it a silkier texture (Jadezweni, 2021) which is more acceptable to whiteness and how it frames acceptable hair. This has led to situations where the more aware Black people have to constantly fight this second consciousness that thinks so negatively about their physical appearance and identity, in this case their hair.

A Clicks hair advert from 2020 described Black women's hair as 'dry and damaged' and 'frizzy and dull' (Young, 2021), while white women's hair was said to be 'normal, flat and fine' (Young, 2020: 1). This advert had been published, which means that it had gone through many channels and had been approved—meaning that those in charge found no fault in this kind of blatant discrimination. This shows the influence of the white gaze in South African advertising and how white people perceive Black people in their own spaces. A protest following this campaign demonstrated that Black South Africans are aware of this double consciousness and, in their case, are able to assert their identity and acknowledge the double consciousness through protest action. They are put in a situation where they are required to perform their Blackness as a manner of responding to the second consciousness. This speaks to what Canham and Williams (2017) elaborate on when they discuss how blackness and whiteness are performative, and the consequence of this is that Black people must negotiate whiteness and face complexities in asserting their blackness.

Another example of the above is Black women embracing their afros and refusing to relax their hair. Double consciousness might have also reflected itself in hair politics and given itself the authority to set beauty standards of what is acceptable or not (Tate, 2007). This generation of Black women has become aware of this and once again has used protest action to fight this second consciousness. The protests that took place at Pretoria Girls High School in 2016 are a good example of this (Pather, 2016). Part of the school's

code of conduct had required Black girls to chemically straighten their hair, which they endured and adhered to for a while. However, protests began to spark due to the frustration of how the school had portrayed their hair. The girls are recorded sparking conversations about how their hair is tied to their roots; hence they are fighting for their identity (Pathen, 2016: 1). This demonstrates that double consciousness does exist, and in this regard, the young women at Pretoria Girls High School are in a situation where they assert their blackness as a response to double consciousness. This shows that though this internal dilemma exists, and they experience it, they also somewhat resist it by asserting their blackness by wearing their natural hair. Furthermore, it is important to note how the perspectives that were formed on hair at the school were based on racist and racialised thoughts about Black people's hair, which is essentially the same as what Du Bois describes as the situation that African-Americans are faced with, where racism was the cause of double consciousness (Edwards, 2008).

South African model Zozibini Tunzi winning both the Miss South Africa and the Miss Universe pageants in 2019 can also be used to further engage the existence of double consciousness in contemporary South Africa. This access to beauty pageants has always been influenced by racism and racial issues. This is due to beauty standards being reinforced by Western culture and used to shape what is considered a beautiful woman (Mckay et al., 2018). These standards include being fair-skinned, thin, able-bodied, with silky hair, and youthful and toned. These beauty standards became a benchmark to exclude Black women from beauty pageants as they did not meet these beauty standards (Carter, 2022). This is why Zozibini winning the two pageants was such a milestone for her and people of colour worldwide. The reality and existence of Black people with racism and the consequences through double consciousness had convinced Black people that a dark-skinned woman with a fade could not win pageants of such stature. Zozibini became the first woman with a fade in history to win pageants of that nature; she even said herself that she did not believe that a woman like her could win the pageant (Cohan, 2020). Her winning demonstrated double consciousness through the following: firstly, a 'common knowledge' that a woman like her could not win the pageant. Secondly, entering the pageant despite knowing she did not fit these conventional beauty standards. Hence, this act by her is a response to the double consciousness that she was aware of and experienced.

Tate (2007) argues how, throughout history, Black people have had to locate themselves and their performance in a framework of beauty as aesthetic and political (Tate, 2007). This here is a consequence of double consciousness, as Black people are then forced to use aesthetics to reinforce themselves and their identity because they exist within an inward battle of what they know themselves to be in terms of beauty, and what the white man thinks with regards to beauty, skin colour, and hair. It is as though they acknowledge the white gaze and its implications (in this case, double consciousness), and their response to it is to assert their blackness. This can extend to the hashtags used by Black South Africans, Africans generally, and African-Americans on social media when posting pictures of their natural hair or dark-skinned people in general. The use of hashtags like #melaninPoppin, #blackdontcrack, #blackisbeautiful, and #blackgirlmagic, amongst others, is not a coincidence (Hassan, 2018). This is rather an act of asserting their blackness and responding to the double consciousness. This is important, as discussed. They exist in an inward battle of seeing themselves through the perspective of others (Du Bois, 1903). These hashtags act as a response to double consciousness; they are used to affirm blackness by reminding themselves that they are not what the other consciousness or the white gaze has portrayed them and made them believe they are.

Double consciousness in South African literature and media

Work by South African author Kopano Matlwa in her book *Coconut* can be used to demonstrate two things: the existence of double consciousness in South Africa and Black South Africans' knowledge of it. While the work is fiction, it sheds light on what South Africans find themselves going through. In the book, Matlwa uses two girls struggling with class and race post-apartheid to demonstrate the existence of double consciousness in South Africa. Fikile, who is poor, dreams of being white, which she thinks is rich and happy, as opposed to being Black, which she feels is dirty and poor (Gqibitole, 2019). Ofilwe, on the other hand, is described as 'born with a silver spoon in

her mouth'; despite her class privilege and access to money, she still faces racism at school (Matlwa, 2007). Matlwa continues to allude to Ofilwe's strong desire to be white, which is the same as Fikile, who thinks being white would solve her financial state (Matlwa, 2007). This demonstrates double consciousness through the use of whiteness as a theme. In this instance, double consciousness makes Black people aspire to whiteness, as whiteness is associated with excellence, privilege, and resources (Gqibitole, 2019). The closest link to whiteness and its benefits that young Black people have is through the schooling system, which leads to Black parents taking their children to white private schools because of the idea of what proximity to whiteness can do for them. However, their access to whiteness does not exempt them from racism and its consequences, like Ofilwe in the book. Instances of Black students facing racism at school can be seen through protests that have sparked at private schools like Pretoria Girls High School, Herschel Girls School, and St Mary's Diocesan School for Girls over racism (Venter, 2020 and Mokoena, 2016). These students then struggle more with this double consciousness when racism occurs, and they see how this 'better' they aspire for rejects them.

Even the book's title, *Coconut*, symbolises Black people's struggle with the two identities they battle with. Coconut refers to a brown fruit on the outside and white on the inside. This analogy is often used to refer to Black South Africans who are thought to have an identity crisis: people who are Black but thought to behave like white people (February, 2018). This work argues that the idea that one is labelled as a coconut represents the existence of double consciousness. This is because these people acting like 'coconuts' is not by choice but because they view themselves 'through someone else's eyes' (Edwards, 2008: 10)—in other words, through the eyes of a white society. Furthermore, as stated above, it has been shown that whiteness for Black people is linked with a better life, money, and excellence—hence their aspiration towards it. This battle that these individuals face represents what Du Bois speaks of in his work when he writes of 'two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body' (Edwards, 2008: 8). This all exists due to the idea of the veil of racism that was explained above, obviously in South Africa, existing through the apartheid system and segregation.

In addition to the above, South African comedian Lesego Thlabi is an example that double consciousness does indeed exist in contemporary South Africa. Lesego created a character that she portrays through skits on social media; the character is known as Coconut Kelz, who is a white woman trapped in a Black woman's body (Peloo, 2021). Interestingly, Lesego can identify what Du Bois means by looking at one through the eyes of a racist society (Edwards, 2008). Through this, she then creates content that shows life in South Africa from the perspective of a racist white person and tries to engage their thinking. This shows double consciousness as the content is not fictional, which indicates that Lesego is aware of the experiences of Black people and what it means to attempt to navigate life through their identity, as well as the one that has been created for you by the oppressor. Lesego has further used her understanding of the situation to write a book called *Coconut Kelz's Guide to Surviving This Shithole* (2019). An analysis of this book argues that her work demonstrates the existence of a problematic perspective in South African society that views white people as superior (Nkoala, 2021). In essence, Lesego has used her knowledge and experience of double consciousness to bring attention to existing issues of social injustice and racism in South Africa.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this work has demonstrated that the double consciousness faced by Black Americans, as discussed by Du Bois, is also experienced by Black South Africans due to the shared history between the two groups. This work begins by tracing South Africa's history of racial segregation, emphasising its implications on how individuals view themselves as a result. The work is able to draw similarities between the effects of this segregation and that faced by Black Americans. It shows how, in both instances, a result of this racism is the formation of this double consciousness that both groups struggle with. This work further discusses double consciousness in South Africa, looking at the beauty and hair industries and South African literature. With the hair and beauty industry, this work demonstrates that while the people experience double consciousness, they retaliate by asserting their blackness in the form of protest. This not only demonstrates their knowledge

of the double consciousness but demonstrates the toll it has on these individuals, as protest is not an easy task to perform, physically or mentally, but they are left with no choice. Furthermore, the example of Zozibini Tunzi used also demonstrates how, in some instances, despite knowing of double consciousness and what it means, these individuals retaliate by doing what racism and whiteness deem is not possible for these people.

Furthermore, the engagement in literature demonstrates the knowledge of double consciousness in South Africa. However, unlike the first discussion on beauty and hair, this work uses Kopano Matlwa's book to show that a consequence of double consciousness, in this case, is that it makes people aspire to whiteness due to the idea that proximity to whiteness is beneficial. However, the work demonstrates how this does not exempt these individuals from experiencing double consciousness. Both Matlwa and Tlage's ability to discuss the impacts of double consciousness through the use of various themes in their books demonstrates the existence of this double consciousness in South Africa and that it is experienced by all Black people despite their socio-economic class.

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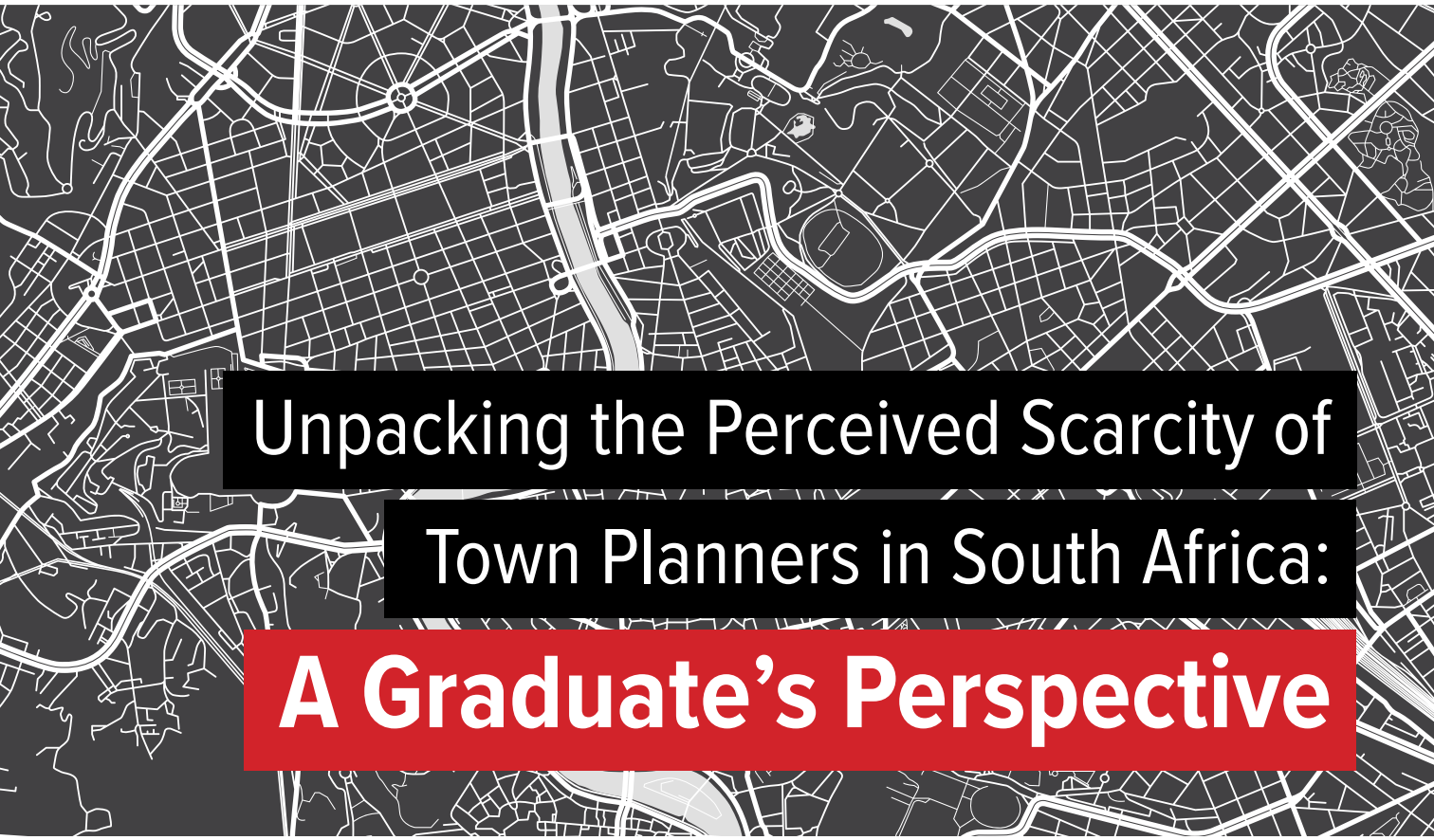

Unpacking the Perceived Scarcity of Town Planners in South Africa: A Graduate's Perspective

By Zaakirah Jeeva

Abstract

On the 15th of November 2022, during a question and answer session in Parliament, the President of South Africa was asked how the impact of apartheid planning was being addressed in the country. In response, he stated that the 'country does not have good town planners and transformation is slow.' This statement had the professional community up in arms, since many in the professional community remain unemployed. However, the statement reiterates the findings of numerous policies passed over the last 25 years, including JIPSA, LGTAS, ASGISA and NDP, which all emphasised the scarcity of professionals. In light of this, the article seeks to unpack the scarcity of town planning professionals using the definitions given by the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA), as well as from a young planner's perspective. The study utilised a purposeful sampling technique which identified town planners via LinkedIn and conducted 105 online structured interviews. The interviews confirmed the scarcity in the profession, but not in the labour force. Rather, the scarcity is created through skills gaps, vague policies, lack of professional registration, and BBEE policies. As a result, the town planning capacity in the country is fragile due to the complex environment within which it operates. The current study provides insight into the lack of town planning professionals in South Africa and suggests recommendations to reduce this dilemma.

Introduction

As reported by Oakenfull (2021), just a year after democracy (1995), the shortage of town planners was identified as an obstacle to the spatial administrative and land-use reform of South Africa. As a result, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) provided bursaries to up-skill and educate town and regional planners (DHET, 2014). However, the shortage continued to be referred to in the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) policy, as well as in the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LGTAS), and the National Development Plan (NDP) (2010–2030) (South Africa, 2008; South Africa, 2010). Additionally, the Government Gazette (No 45860, Notice 1727 of 2 February 2022) once more identified town planning as a national scarce skill, and later that same year, President Cyril Ramaphosa restated this sentiment in the question-and-answer session held in Parliament (Tshazi, 2022).

Town planning as a profession has existed for over a century and historically dealt with controlling land usage, as well as zoning and spatial policy implementation. However, the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority added that a person with a Town Planning degree could also occupy positions such as: Community/Country/District Planner, Environmental Consent Planner, Land Use Planner, Natural Resource Management Consultant, Officer/Planner, Town Planner, Traffic and Transport Planner (LGSETA, 2016). Therefore, the president's statement seems to infer that South Africa has had a shortage of individuals who could plan, organise, and develop land and transport within the country over the past 25 years.

However, as a town planner myself, I have found that work opportunities are limited, and the unemployment rate amongst my colleagues is high. In light of this, one could question how scarcity was defined in the aforementioned policies. According to the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA, 2016), the shortage of qualified and experienced people could be either a result of: (a) skilled people not being available; (b) skilled people being available but not meeting the employment criteria; or (c) the fact that this is a new or emerging occupation and skills need to be acquired.

This could be understandable, considering the apartheid racial history and the previous educational exclusion caused by the Bantu Education Act of 1952. However, the country's universities have been open to all racial groups for the past 30 years, and government has provided bursaries since 2006 to individuals of colour to study the degree (DHET, 2016). In light of this, this paper seeks to unpack the evolving role of town planners in South Africa and to evaluate the shortage of town planners based on the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority definition, as well as from a young graduate's perspective (LGSETA, 2016). This paper starts by discussing the evolution of town planning as a profession in South Africa. It then explains the research methodology and discusses the findings of the structured interviews. Lastly, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations are suggested.

Evolution of town planning in South Africa

Town planning has always played a role in structuring human settlements both formally and informally. However, rapid urbanisation, haphazard high density development, lack of sanitation, and plagues even as far back as the industrial revolution called for a better spatial structure (Kuvar, 2022). As a result, various policies, development strategies, regulatory aspects, and spatial models were legislated globally by national governments to improve cities' spatial structures and the quality of life of citizens (Duminy and Parnell, 2021). Thus, the question of who would be responsible for the implementation of these trans-disciplinary policies and strategies came about. Consequently, the term 'town planner' was introduced as one who would ensure the implementation of spatial policies related to housing, land, and green space development (Erickson, 2012; Davoudi, 2015). For example, the British Housing and Town Planning Act was passed in 1909, and town planning became a service that officially operated under local government. It was largely responsible for implementing blueprints of government-approved spatial planning policies and plans, but with limited interest in the social, economic, environmental, and cultural aspects of the locality (Erickson, 2012; Cherry, 1993).

Similarly, in 1911, Sir Herbert Baker introduced planning controls in South Africa such as town planning schemes, township approval procedures, zoning, layout planning,

building regulations, height restrictions, and spatial policies in order to avoid spatial neglect and poor planning (Drake, 1993). However, as reported by Oakenfull (2021), during that time, there was limited knowledge of the South African context, and it was difficult to draft original town planning schemes. Furthermore, the education and training of South African town planners was run by the Town Planning Institute of Great Britain. Consequently, this lack of local knowledge and practices, during the early 1900s to the 1940s, resulted in town planners and land surveyors in South Africa merely implementing British town planning practices in a top-down manner (Cherry, 1993).

However, by the 1950s, the apartheid government came into power and sought control of the physical, social, and economic components of South African society. To achieve this, they implemented an apartheid spatial model which comprised of a single central business district (CBD), an industrial area, and surrounding residential suburbs in a blue-print manner (see Figure 1 below).

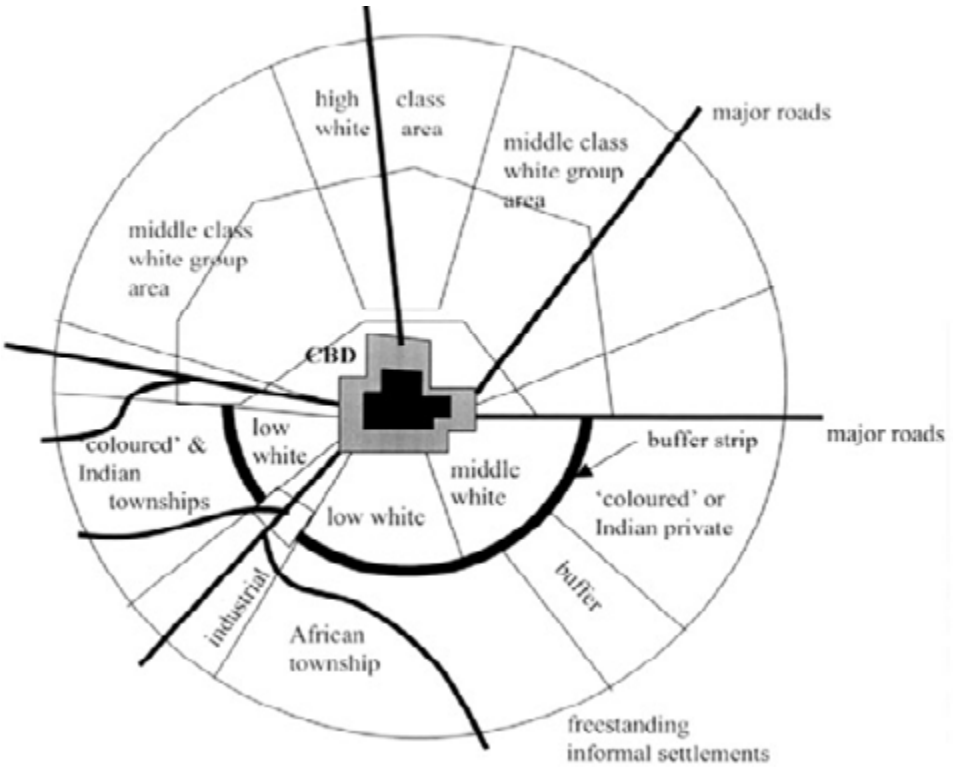

Figure 1: *The apartheid city model (du Plessis and Landman, 2002)*

These residential suburbs were classified according to race and were treated as separate administrative regions which were further governed, planned, and taxed independently (Harrison, Todes and Watson, 2007). Additionally, the apartheid national government implemented various laws restricting people of colour from integrating socially, spatially, economically, educationally, or politically (Oranje, 1999). One way in which control was enforced was through influx control measures which regulated migration between provinces. Alternatively, if a township needed to be established or if zoning was revised, an application was submitted to a local government. However, the outcome of the matter was determined by a Provincial Administrator and further reviewed by a Director of Local Government (Drake, 1993). Jones (1974) found that these restrictive laws made 'town planning' rarely necessary between 1950–1970, and local town planners were primarily employed by the state to ensure adherence to apartheid policies in their locality (Oranje, 1999). A lack of information exists about how many town planners there actually were in the country during this period (SACPLAN, 2014).

However, by the early 1980s, a number of public protests arose to display growing dissatisfaction with town planning decisions made by the provinces. As a result, by the mid-1980s, state-employed town planners adopted a more 'development-oriented' approach to involve the community through public participation (Harrison et al., 2007; Drake, 1993). By 1986, the Town Planning Act (19 of 1986) and Townships Ordinance Act (15 of 1986) were passed in Gauteng,

North West, and Limpopo Provinces and the planning community moved under the mantle of statutory control (Oakenfull, 2021). This demonstrated a more participatory planning approach and planning method (Laburn-Peart, 1993). However, due to planning activity previously having profound political overtones and being accountable to the state, a large section of the South African population distrusted the very concept of planning. Accordingly, the government sector required the assistance of private urban planners or consultants to assist with public participation and to report matters in a non-biased manner (Oranje, 1999).

Since the 1990s, there was a further shift from physical planning to policy planning, which allowed for the flexible interpretation of plans and permitted more liberal public participation. In a sense, town planning transformed from a top-down to a bottom-up process, and the planner's role changed from an administrator of the legislative process to that of a facilitator or team player (Oranje, 1999). This to a certain extent diminished the role of the town planner. Additionally, during the same period (1990–2000), influx controls were lifted and there was rapid migration into urban areas which resulted in haphazard development. These sprawling settlements meant that there were not enough town planners to assist with land usage (SACPLAN, 2014).

However, the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) employment policies which were also legislated during this period gave preference to people of colour to occupy government posts. Despite these opportunities, there were few non-white town planners in the country due to the previous employment and educational restrictions (Bantu Education Act, 1953). As a result, many planning posts were filled by officials who were not qualified as planners, which contributed to a loss of institutional knowledge and diminished the role and importance of town planning (SACPLAN, 2014). Subsequently, experienced town planners, architects, and engineers who were not absorbed by government departments started practicing as private consultants to the government sector. However, private as well as government-employed town planners lacked the skills to conduct public participation and implement participatory development policies (Harrison et al., 2007). These combined factors contributed to a 'skills gap' and a scarcity of town planners in the government sector (Oranje, 1999). In response, the government provided bursaries to individuals of colour to study town planning (DHET, 2006).

To further address the issues of sprawl, the democratic government passed numerous laws and policies such as the Development Facilitation Act (1996), Municipal Structures Act (1998), Municipal Demarcation Act (1998), Municipal Systems Act (2000), provincial ordinances, and a vast array of other legislation on ancillary aspects of town planning. The key focus during this period (1990–2000) was to revise the fragmented apartheid model to form larger integrated municipalities with a 'one-city, one-tax base' principle. During this period, one could argue that town planners actually transformed into urban and regional planners. This was because the areas delimited were no longer just towns, but rather municipal regions that were made up of a number of towns and cities (Jeeva, 2019). These extensive municipal regions needed Integrated Development Plans and Spatial Development Plans to operate as integrated units to reduce spatial sprawl. However, there was no clear division of roles and responsibilities between the provincial and national governments on land use, environment, heritage, water affairs, and land subdivision. Neither was there a clear division of responsibility between local and district municipalities on the provision of services (Jeeva, 2019). Furthermore, there was also confusion as to how the legislation on delimitation and demarcation should be interpreted and implemented (Jeeva, Cilliers and Gumbo, 2022).

Additionally, the strategic environment within which the town planning profession operates has been in constant flux with the strategic objectives being vague. For instance, the National Development Plan 2030, which was announced in 2010, sought to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality (South Africa, 2012). Furthermore, in 2013 the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) promulgated the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) No. 16 of 2013 which sought to address social justice, spatial sustainability, efficiency, spatial resilience, and good administration through planning (South Africa, 2013). Similarly, in 2016, the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) sought to make

cities more inclusive, safe, productive, and resource efficient (South Africa, 2016). However, what exactly these factors entail in practice and how planners could achieve these outcomes was not entirely clear.

Consequently, the shift from rigid top-down planning to liberal bottom-up planning has all amplified the administrative burden of the system, delayed development outcomes, and created confusion around the role of town planners in the country (Van Wyk, 2010). This is because of the aspect of public participation together with the lack of clarity on policy terminology, implementation, and direction. This is combined with the delimitations of larger administrative areas; shortages of skilled employees in municipalities; vagueness around the role and responsibilities of municipalities, provinces, and national government; and the new components to planning (IDP and SDF). Resultantly, the country has continued to experience haphazard land-use, lack of service delivery, and lack of development reform (Ballard and Butcher, 2020). A direct effect of all of this is the existence of 163 dysfunctional municipalities due to poor governance, ineffective and sometimes corrupt financial and administrative management, and poor service delivery (Ramaphosa, 2023).

In an attempt to create some sort of system, in 2002, Section 2 of the Planning Profession Act (PPA) 36 of 2002 introduced South African town planning as a profession that brings about sustainable changes in the built and natural environment across a spectrum of 35 different geographic scales (region, sub region, city, town, village, neighbourhood). According to this Act, the main responsibilities of town planners are to delimit, regulate, and manage land uses; organise service infrastructure, utilities, facilities, and housing; and assist in the preparation of strategic and statutory policy and plans. Furthermore, this Act called for the establishment of The South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN) as a statutory council responsible for regulating the planning profession. This juristic body has the responsibility for professional training and registration of urban and regional planners, as well as the identifying work they are capable of delivering while ensuring high ethical standards.

As a starting point, according to the PPA, all professional town planners need to study at a

> “Since the 1990s, there was a further shift from physical planning to policy planning, which allowed for the flexible interpretation of plans and permitted more liberal public participation. In a sense, town planning transformed from a top-down to a bottom-up process, and the planner’s role changed from an administrator of the legislative process to that of a facilitator or team player (Oranje, 1999). This to a certain extent diminished the role of the town planner.”

SACPLAN-accredited tertiary institution which offers appropriate programs (SACPLAN, 2014). The council further recognised that the changing political environment has had a direct influence on the way in which planners operate. As a result, new skills need to be taught at an undergraduate level (SACPLAN, 2014). In light of this, upon graduation, SACPLAN requires graduates to have developed three competencies: 1. Generic competencies; 2. Core competencies; and 3. Functional competencies. Core and generic skills ensure that graduates understand planning theories’ guiding practices, and that they are able to analyse and apply concepts. Functional competencies, on the other hand, are the skills required to get the job done in an ethical manner. The latter would include aspects such as communication, negotiation, teamwork, and project management (SACPLAN, 2014). Furthermore, these competencies also cover contemporary issues such as gender equality, poverty alleviation, informality, appreciation of cultural diversity, and communication skills.

Upon completion of the degree or diploma, graduate planners are then expected to register with SACPLAN. The registration of planners, according to the SACPLAN policy document, falls into one of five categories (Lewis and Nel, 2020: 38) (see Table 1 below).

Member Category	Qualification and experience required
Student Planner	Full-time or part-time students enrolled in a planning education program.
Candidate Planner	Graduate of a SACPLAN-accredited planning education program.
Assistant Planner	Graduate of a SACPLAN-accredited planning education program with 12 months training.
Planner	Graduate of a SACPLAN-accredited planning education program with 24 months of practical training.
Professional Planner	Graduate of a SACPLAN-accredited planning education program with 24 months of practical training.

Table 1: *Categories of planners and requirements according to SACPLAN (Adapted from SACPLAN, 2014).*

According to SACPLAN (2014), graduates require an additional 24 months of practical training which entails different aspects of statutory and strategic planning under a professional planner, in order to qualify. Upon completion, planners who have a diploma are able to register as technical planners, while those who have a bachelor's degree or higher become professional planners. According to SACPLAN, the hierarchy is important since it is believed that certain types of planning work can only be signed off by professional planners, given the more advanced level of training (Denoon-Stevens et al., 2020).

In 2007, the JIPSA report found that there were approximately 4,125 South African graduate planners in South Africa. However, a study conducted by Ovens and Associates (2007) found that only 2,498 town planners were demanded in the country (see Table 2 below):

Organisation	Sub-total
National Government	96
Provincial Government	293
Metros	372
Local Municipalities	486
District Municipalities	101
Academic Institutions	68
Parastatals, NGOs / Research Institutions	34
Private Planning Firms	998
Corporate sector	50
Total	**2,498**

Table 2: *Summary of demand for planners in 2007 (Source: Ovens and Associates, 2007)*

Consequently, one could but question how scarcity was defined in the JIPSA (2007) report if an independent study found that the demand (2,498) for town planners was half that of the supply (4,125). Denoon-Stevens et al. (2020) found as part of the SAPER project that the country has 3,815 urban planners who were registered in various positions in the country (See Table 3 below).

	Planners registered on SACPLAN database at the time of survey
Professional Planners	2,245
Candidate Planners	1,262
Technical Planners	308
Total Registered Planners	**3,815**

Table 3: *Number of urban planners in South Africa (Adapted from Denoon-Stevens et al., 2020)*

These figures demonstrate that there was a drop of 310 planners over the 25-year period (1995–2020) in which the government had identified town planning as a scarce skill. However, the demand statistics for town planners from 2007 still reveal an excess of 1,318 planners. Nevertheless, it is difficult to say with certainty how many town planners there currently are or what the demand currently is due to lack of data. As a result, the estimated number of planners and the demand for them must be viewed with caution.

The recent statement by Cyril Ramaphosa which implied that the 'skills in town planning are few and far between' has two parts to it: 1. Lack of planning graduates (supply) and 2. Lack of appropriate skills (demand). These are two separate issues that relate to scarcity as defined by the LGSETA. Subsequently, this paper chose to purposefully interview town planners who were registered on the professional platform LinkedIn, in order to identify those who were looking for work but were not registered with SACPLAN. The next section explains the methodology followed by this paper to collect data.

Methodology

The aim of the interviews was to determine if there is really a scarcity of town planners in South Africa and what contributes to the scarcity (LGSETA, 2016). However, accurately depicting the employment status of town planning graduates is almost impossible due to the unavailability of actual data (Lewis, 2022). Subsequently, the researcher invited 200 purposefully selected town planners, based on education and experience, who were registered on LinkedIn, to participate in the study. Interviewees initially came from the 11 accredited institutions and had a range of experience. However, not all participants responded and, as a result, not all intuitions are covered in the findings. From the 150, planners, 105 (70%) responded, of which most were recent town planning graduates. Subsequently, the results are more a perception of graduates, with a few inputs from planners with more experience. Due to time and space constraints, a follow-up study was conducted with employees from town planning firms and heads of institutional departments to provide an alternate perspective. This used LinkedIn to collect input from planners who were not registered with SACPLAN and provided new insights into the profession.

Interviews were conducted between March 2022 and May 2022. The survey contained both open- and closed-ended questions and was made up of a variety of question formats. Responses to these questions were analysed as frequencies. The responses to the short open-ended answers were coded and used as quotes to unpack some of the wider dimensions of the quantitative findings. The key findings are captured below under the subheadings of scarcity as defined by the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority.

Findings

Over the past 25 years, numerous policies have mentioned the scarcity of planners. However, the reasons for the perceived scarcity have never been unpacked. The next section therefore discusses key findings from the semi-structured interviews under the three definitions of scarcity identified by the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority.

Skilled people are not available

The number of town planners estimated by JIPSA (2007), Oven and Associates (2007), and SAPER (2020) (see section 2) does not really reflect the supply due to emigration, deaths, retirement, or lack of engagement with the profession councils. The Local Graduate data or SAQA data do not factor in the number of South Africans who have studied abroad and returned to the country, or foreign nationals seeking town planning employment in South Africa. Moreover, SACPLAN or SAPI registration only provides a rough estimate, as membership is affected not only by the supply of planners, but also by their perceptions of the value of joining the Councils. Literature reveals that membership in Planning Councils (SAPI) dropped from 1,100 in 1996 to only 300 in 2001 as a result of weak and contested leadership (SACPLAN, 2014). The current membership numbers for SAPI are at least 1,964 active planners and 1,977 for SACPLAN (SACPLAN, 2023). However, there are also an unknown number who are practicing as planners but do not belong to SACPLAN or SAPI (SACPLAN, 2014).

This was confirmed through a telephonic conversation with the outgoing CEO of SACPLAN, Mr. Martin Lewis, in 2022 who stated that they did not have information on the number of planners in the

country. Resultantly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with town planners who were listed on LinkedIn to investigate their qualifications, experience, and skills available in the country.

The study found that from the 105 respondents, 15% had national diplomas; 37% had Bachelor's degrees; 21% had Honours degrees; 24% had Master's degrees; and 3% had PhDs in town planning. Of these respondents, 53% claimed to have an above-average pass, while 19% had exceptional passes. Furthermore, 36.2% of the 105 respondents stated that they had qualifications in addition to their town planning degree/diploma. These included: project management; architectural drafting, development studies; LLB; air traffic controls; transport and logistics; social science and housing; information technology; business entrepreneurship; infrastructure design and management; as well as film and video editing.

These additional courses were taken due to respondents feeling that there was a gap between their formal education and the working world. Many believed that they lacked functional competencies such as motivational writing, public speaking, negotiating, analytics, AutoCAD, and GIS to communicate their ideas to developers (Lewis and Nel, 2020). An older planner added that many 'new graduates simply did not have the basic skills to interact with social, environmental and cultural dimensions to come up with practical solutions.' As a result, many graduates feel under-prepared to enter the workforce, become discouraged, and choose to study additional degrees. This makes them 'more skilled but less experienced.' This is similar to the SAPER study (2020), which found that formal planning courses did not prepare students sufficiently for the workplace.

This study also found that SACPLAN as a professional body acknowledges the shortcoming and requires graduates to train under a professional to understand the dynamics of the environment before they can register as professional planners. Furthermore, professional planners have to complete CPD points to upskill and remain relevant (SACPLAN, 2014). This is in recognition that planning is dynamic and not everything can be taught in a degree. As a result, being skilled would not only refer to graduates (because we have those) but also professionals with the wisdom and experience of tackling everyday issues on the ground.

However, some respondents stated that they studied further to 'move away from planning as there were no opportunities.' The study found that one of the main reasons for people moving out of the profession has been linked to the underrating of planning posts both in terms of the expertise required and the grading thereof. This is reflected in the number of municipalities which have employed people in planning posts who have only a matric, with some of these officials even managing the planning departments. This study further found that 52.4 % of the respondents were not practicing as town planners even though they had the qualification.

In conclusion, there are skilled town planners, but there is a lack of experience and relevant training. As a result, capacity is being lost.

They are available but do not meet the employment criteria

Even though there is skill and zeal to practice town planning, individuals require employment to sustain their lifestyles. South Africa has the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE) (53 of 2003) which seeks to advance economic transformation and enhance the economic participation of African, Coloured, and Indian people who are South African citizens in the economy (South Africa, 2003). According to this Act, preference of employment is given to females of colour over men. Of the 105 respondents, all of them claimed to have completed either their degree or diploma in Town and Regional Planning, with 61% of these respondents being female and 39% male. From this, 70.1% were Black South Africans; 17.1% were Indians; 8.6% were white; and 5% were Coloured. The majority (74%) of respondents were born after democracy and were aged between 20–30 years; 13% were between 31–35 years and a further 13% were older. In terms of meeting the employment criteria based on the BBBEE policy, the study found that there are individuals available to occupy planning posts based on racial profile and qualifications.

However, of these respondents, 45% were registered as candidate planners; 23.8% as professional planners;

and 1% as technical planners—while 25.7% stated that they have not registered as either with SACPLAN. The literature review revealed that registration with SACPLAN is a requirement for employment in the profession. Nevertheless, those who have not registered stated that they 'did not see the sense of registering', or 'don't have the money to pay for registration', or 'have not been employed', or have 'not completed registration.' Others added that they are 'not sure how the process works' and got 'discouraged and de-registered.' Subsequently, of the 105 respondents, 52.4% were not working as town and regional planners, and only 47.6% were employed as town planners.

Thus, there appears to be a vicious cycle between employment and professional registration. To be employed as a town planner, by either the private sector or the public sector, graduates need to be registered with SACPLAN. However, in order to register with SACPLAN, one needs funds and employment. Moreover, those who are not registered are often competing for internship positions which do not 'pay much.' One respondent claimed to only be paid 'R 5,000 per month' which was 'not enough to pay rent.' Thus, planners get discouraged and pursue other career options. Furthermore, respondents pointed out that many town planning jobs are listed on the SACPLAN website. However, if one is not registered with the council, one would not be able to access the opportunity. This is a form of exclusion (See Figure 2 below).

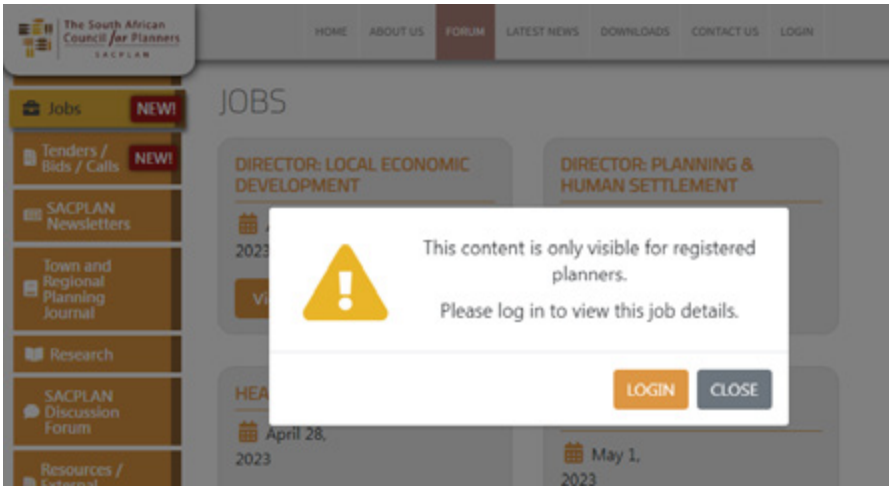

Figure 2: *Employment opportunities on SACPLAN (Screenshot by author).*

Thus, Inch, Wargent and Tait (2022) concluded that an increasing proportion of town planners are being employed in the fields of engineering, architecture, management, scientific and technical consulting services, estate agents, auctioneers, housing officers, property, public relations and housing and estate managers. This indicates a diversification of the employment opportunities for town planning graduates which could contribute to the scarcity in the profession. Nonetheless, an older respondent added that they are frustrated that 'other professionals such as architects, engineers, developers all practice town planning, but they do not have the skills or the qualification' and 'we [planners] have to compete for work with them.' They further added that 'they [other professionals] undercut our [professional town planners'] prices and we with the degree are left with no work.'

In synthesis, there appear to be graduates with the right racial profile to meet the employment criteria. However, they cannot be employed professionally without registration. As a result, many of them work in other professions which do not require registration with SACPLAN. Furthermore, the study found that there is a lack of work reservation for town planners, and professionals from other fields are practicing as planners. This drives many town planners to look for alternative employment opportunities, resulting in many who end up encroaching into other professions. This feeds the 'scarcity' of the profession but also brings in a diversity of skills.

It's a new or emerging occupation

Literature has revealed that town planning has existed for over a century, and as a result it is not a new profession. However, planners were previously employed by the public sector to implement and monitor physical planning policies in a top-down manner. Over the past 25 years, however, they have played a more socially inclined, participatory role

to ensure 'sustainable development' that balances 'environmental, social and economic aspects.'

Furthermore, planning previously was based on intensive settlement structure and layout, while contemporary planning is more extensive and includes the integration of multiple settlements under one administrative body (local municipality). Hence, there are two components to planning work: a) statutory planning (town planning) and b) strategic planning (regional planning) (Oakenfull, 2021). Hence, one could say that town planning has emerged as the domain of contemporary urban and regional planners.

Nevertheless, there has been limited change in the content of zoning schemes and land usage in the country since the 1980s. As a result, respondents added that statutory planning based on the Town Planning Act No. 19 of 1986 and Townships Ordinance Act 15 of 1986 'remain relatively outdated.' Subsequently, this aspect of town planning is 'mundane' and 'anyone can do this' (Denoon-Stevens et al., 2020).

Strategic planning or urban and regional planning integrates the provision of engineering and social infrastructure; the management and regulation of land use within the larger administrative region; and the preparation of spatial strategies for future urban growth within the municipal administrative region manner (Oakenfull, 2021). As a result, contemporary town planners also have to strategically address rapid urbanisation, informality, poverty, planning justice, public participation, and safety over and above the statutory planning matters within the municipality. However, the strategic spatial direction from national, provincial, and local government remains vague; it only provides broad guidelines on what it wants to achieve and then allows the planner, together with the public, to determine how it should be implemented (Erickson, 2012).

These are all emerging issues since municipalities were recently demarcated (in 2000) and still needed to be planned in a holistic manner. There are still many previous racial areas which remain unequally developed and still have a lack of basic services. Subsequently, a thorough understanding needs to be developed before changes can be implemented on what needs to be achieved and how it will be achieved within the larger region (Barton and Ramírez, 2019; Wicks, 2015). However, the responsibility does not solely lie with planners, but also with the municipal teams responsible for the administrative regions.

The figure below provides a snapshot on how planning has evolved in South Africa.

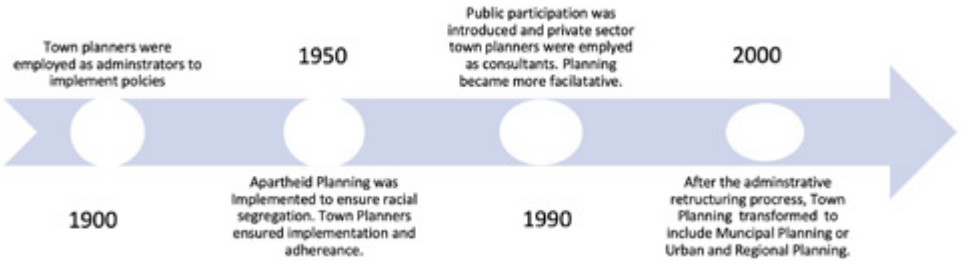

Figure 3: *Phases of town planning as a profession in South Africa (Author's own)*

The century-long development of town planning in South Africa displays considerable evolution in response to its environment (See Figure 3). Town planners have transformed from government employees in charge of implementation of plans in the early 1900s to more contemporary professionals working in government and the private service sector by 1990. The profession has grown from one that was apartheid policy-driven in the 1950s to a champion for the sustainable development and voice of citizen needs by 2000. It has extended its attention to the surrounding urban and regional (municipal) areas from a profession focused on land usage within a town or local vicinity. One could therefore confidently say that the role has evolved, and that the profession has metamorphosed (See Figure 3 above) (Kuvar, 2022). Resultantly, the skills required have also had to evolve to suit the new role, responsibilities, and environment. This evolution explains the emerging nature of the profession and the skills gap which urban planners are grappling with, and which feeds the perceived scarcity in the profession.

Conclusions

The study found that the role of town planners has changed drastically over the past century. Planners in the 1900s were only employed by the public sector to fulfil an administrative role to create structure, whereas by the 1990s, town planners began playing a more facilitative role in balancing the need for people-policy-processes with the hope of bringing about sustainable development. Consequently, the skills that they require have also had to adapt to the environment within which they operate (Barton and Ramírez, 2019).

The South African context is more complex because of apartheid planning prior to 1994. Subsequent to 1994, the administrative structure was revised, and town planners were required to make decisions to integrate the development of larger municipal regions. However, these regions were unequally developed and there was limited knowledge and lack of strategic direction as to how policies should be implemented spatially. Resultantly, their role transformed from a town planner to an urban and regional planner.

Moreover, BBEE policies restricted the employment of white individuals into government posts. However, there was a lack of non-white planners in the country, and as a result, individuals with no professional background were appointed to occupy government posts. Those planners who were not absorbed by the government practiced as private planners or consultants. However, neither public nor private planners knew how to implement participatory changes. The planning profession has tried to organise themselves under a council (SACPLAN) to ensure professionalism. However, to date, there is limited data on the supply and demand for the profession.

The limited data that is available from 2007 demonstrates an excess supply of planners which questions the 'scarcity' that is being referred to in the JIPSA (2007) policy documents. However, the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has defined the scarcity in three ways (See Table 4 below):

Definition	Finding
Lack of town planning skills	There are graduate skills, but these skills need to be matured and developed to make a difference
Does not meet the employment criteria	Graduates with the right racial profile are available but lack of registration hinders employment.
It is an emerging profession	It is an old field but with new administrative areas and policy approaches. It has transformed from town planning to urban and regional planning.

Table 4: *Summary of key findings (Author's own).*

Based on these definitions, the study found that there are many highly qualified graduates of different racial profiles passing through South African town planning tertiary institutions. However, many graduates are struggling to register with SACPLAN and are not getting employed as a result. The study also revealed that the contents of the degree are not always suited to address the daily challenges in South Africa. As a result, many graduates diversify from town planning while others remain in the profession. Of the 105 respondents, 52% were not practicing as planners.

"there are many highly qualified graduates of different racial profiles passing through South African town planning tertiary institutions. However, many graduates are struggling to register with SACPLAN and are not getting employed as a result."

In summary, there is no shortage of town planners; rather, there is a skills gap to address the issues the country faces. Furthermore, it is an emerging profession, since the focus has shifted from town planning to urban and regional planning within the context of a larger administrative area. In light of this, the paper recommends that further research be conducted on the South African town planning profession.

Recommendations

There are three main recommendations that can be taken from the paper to reduce the scarcity of town planners:

More practical work in undergraduate studies

The study found that town planning education in South Africa was failing to demonstrate how theory can be applied to local contexts. Many respondents felt that even though they studied town planning and had the diploma/degree, they could not apply themselves practically. This was because they did not have the functional skills such as project management, public speaking, negotiating, report writing, cultural awareness, and GIS mapping. It is recommended that more practical development application during undergraduate years be considered. Furthermore, exposure to different cultures within the country and the teaching of native language during the undergraduate years might equip students to facilitate public participation meetings with more empathy. These skills, together with project management, financial skills, and monitoring and evaluation might build the confidence of graduates and equip them for the workplace.

Professional registration

Currently, graduates are responsible for finding their own employment and have to work under a professional planner for 24 months in order to register. This appears to be the biggest hurdle to registering, since most planning jobs are advertised on the SACPLAN website, and one cannot access these jobs unless registered. This discourages individuals and feeds the scarcity and unemployment in the profession. It is recommended that a system similar to that practiced in the medical field be introduced, where town planning graduates are 'placed' in various municipalities for a year in a 'community service program.' After this, they are further placed in private registered firms at the cost of the government for a yearlong internship. This will provide the 24 months of training required to register as professional planners. This would help reduce the scarcity of town planners and assist in building up capacity in dysfunctional municipalities (Lewis et al., 2018).

Set clear expected outcomes

Given the highly diverse and rapidly changing nature of planning work in South Africa over the past 25 years, there is definitely a skills gap (Andres et al., 2018). Town planners in democratic South Africa are expected to plan in complex municipal environments which are riddled with extreme inequality, fragmented spatial structure and poverty while aspiring to global standards of sustainability. Furthermore, spatial policies are vague and require community participation which fosters different interpretations and complicates policy application. Also, owing to the past history, individuals of different racial groups know very little of each other's cultures and preferences. In some regards this creates conflicts of interest and a lack of common understanding of what is required to bring about transformation and integration. Hence, there is more of a skills gap over a skills shortage. Further research would need to be conducted to understand what is it that we as a nation require and where would we like to go. In light of this, a professional public service, staffed by skilled, qualified, committed, and ethical people, is critical to ensure effective state and planning policy direction.

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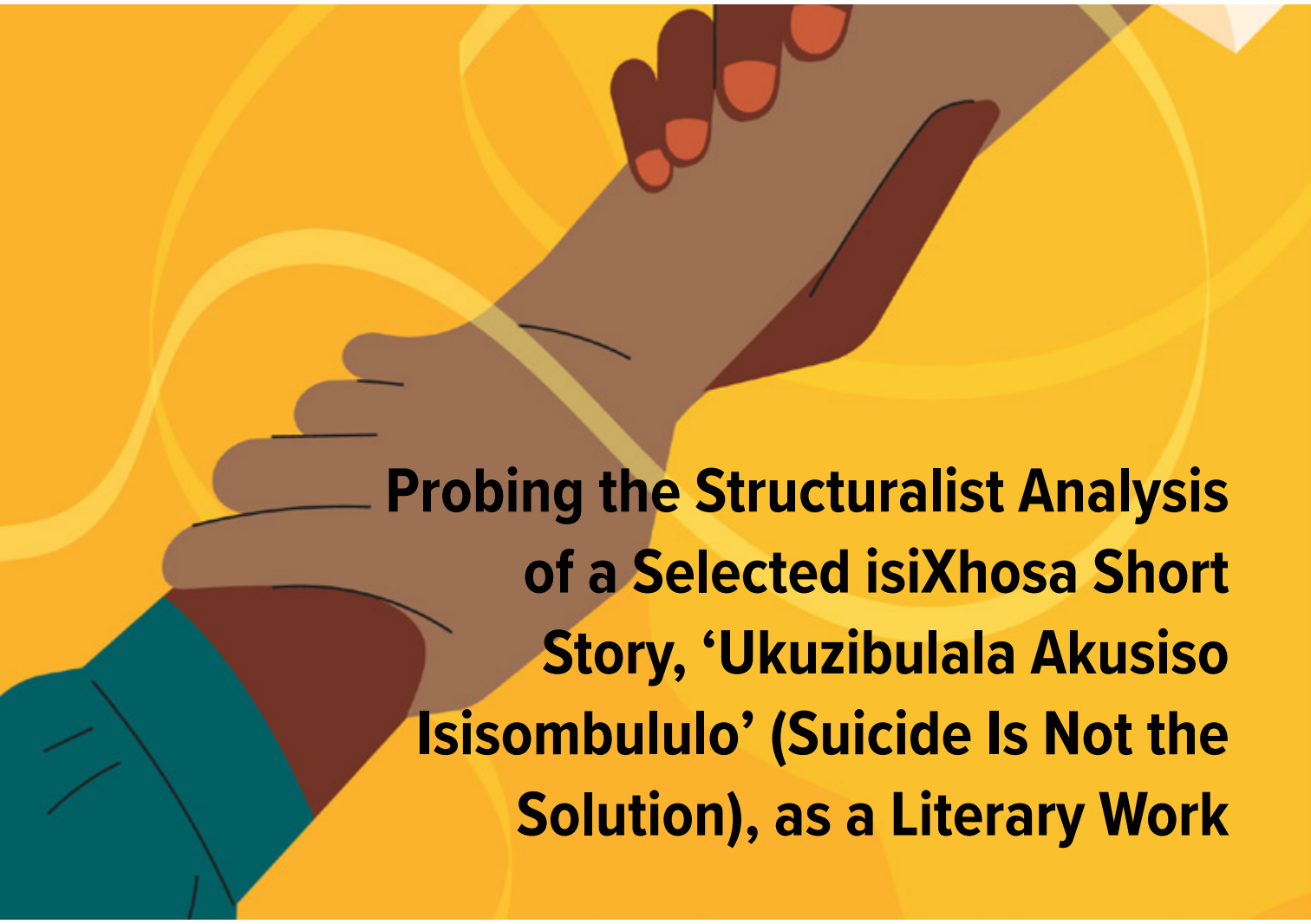

Probing the Structuralist Analysis of a Selected isiXhosa Short Story, 'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo' (Suicide Is Not the Solution), as a Literary Work

By Mlamli Diko

Abstract

Mental health crises and suicide continue to plague young men and women in South Africa, and not irrefutably secluding other age groups. While scholarly and non-scholarly dialogues pivot to address this conundrum, isiXhosa short stories as a literary art are no exception. As a result, this article aims to conceptualise how mental health crises and suicide are mirrored in 'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo' (Suicide Is Not the Solution). The objective was to unravel the interplaying meanings in respect of the phenomenon of interest. This particular short story was further appreciated as a source of data while structuralism as a theory was elicited as an instrument to enact reasonable and empirical debates. Ultimately, it became evident that mental health and suicidal thoughts and behaviours are acutely entrenched in the South African milieu, and that necessitates an extensive scholarly discourse beyond the limitations of this particular article.

Introduction and contextual background

> *'Take a shower, wash off the day. Drink a glass of water. Make the room dark. Lie down and close your eyes. Notice the silence. Notice your heart. Still beating. Still fighting. You made it, after all. You made it, another day. And you can make it one more. You're doing just fine.'*— Charlotte Eriksson (2013)

Language is a primitive component of human communication and is an essential instrument for expressing thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Cele, 2021; Ngcobo and Mvuyana, 2022). The multitudinous cultures and languages found in the world offer prototypical insights into the experiences and perspectives of different communities, and isiXhosa as an indigenous language in South Africa is no exception (Batyi, 2022). IsiXhosa has a rich or exquisite literary tradition, with many authors using the language to express their ideas, and stories as well as direct and indirect experiences. Short stories are an integral part of isiXhosa literary production, with many authors using the format to delve into themes and issues relevant to their communities. For example, Zengethwa (2014) pronounces that before the official end of colonialism in South Africa, authors of isiXhosa short stories predominantly contested themes relating to traditions and customs, religion, and politics. To this, Diko (2023d) outlines that the pre-colonial era within the arena of isiXhosa short stories or literature wholeheartedly challenged political discourses and practices such as the struggle for liberation and illiberality, tensions between rural and urban life, among many other pertinent subjects. However, in the current dispensation, authors of isiXhosa short stories, like any other genre, demonstrate pertinency by challenging post-colonial discourses and practices such as the Covid-19 era and its politics, education, economy, and many other relevant matters (Letlala and Zulu, 2022).

By the same token, themes or issues prevalent in isiXhosa short stories are not invariably clear and coherent on account that isiXhosa literature is habitually constructed and produced using viral matrixes that are not always fathomable (Cakata and Ramose, 2021). Ultimately, structuralism, which this article pursues to employ, is one of the literary transpositions that prove to be consequential in the process of probing isiXhosa short stories and other genres. Briefly, structuralism[1] focuses on the oblique structures and praxis of meaning in a literary text (Naji, 2022; Knack et al., 2023). Structuralists accept that all literary texts have a set of implicit binary dichotomies that configure their meaning (Sewell, 2018; Mutekwa, 2023). For instance, in a short story, these binary dichotomies could be things like life or death, heaven or earth, love or hate, good or evil, and order or chaos (Appiah, 2017). By probing the way these duels are engineered and modelled in the literary text, a structuralist approach can unravel the fathomless meanings and themes of the short story.

And by the way, what is an isiXhosa short story? An isiXhosa short story is a work of fiction or faction (fact plus fiction) written in the isiXhosa language and typically comprising fewer than 10,000 words (Musila, 2019). It also has a limited number of characters—largely, less than ten. It is a literary form that has a long tradition in amaXhosa culture and is used to express the experiences, belief systems, and perspectives of amaXhosa people. IsiXhosa short stories can be located in a variety of formats, including published collections, magazines, newspapers, and online platforms (Mutekwa, 2023). These stories submerge a hierarchy of themes and issues, from traditional cultural practices to contemporary social and political concerns. Some isiXhosa short stories elicit oral storytelling traditions, while others are universally influenced by Western literary modes (Chapman, 2019).

In terms of structure and style, isiXhosa short stories often incorporate vivid descriptions of people, places, and events, as well as dialogue and character development (Diko, 2023c). They can be humorous, satirical, or serious, and may contain elements of fantasy or magical realism (Chapman, 2022). Some isiXhosa short stories are explicitly political, while others explore the complexities of interpersonal relationships or the challenges of everyday life. In simple language, an isiXhosa short story is a story that is 'short' in length and less complicated when compared to other literary pieces of art such as novels and dramas. The atomicity and less complication of isiXhosa short stories should not be misconstrued to denote the deficit in ingrained meaning(s) that require extensive examination.

Bearing this introduction and contextual background in mind, the article presents a structural examination of one preferred isiXhosa short story: '*Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo'* (Suicide Is Not the Solution). This specific short story is found in an anthology of Monwabisi Victor Macabalea titled *Kuba Mnyama Kube Mhlophe* (From Darkness to Light) which was published in 2021. The structuralist examination concentrates on identifying and illuminating the themes and patterns of dominant meaning in the short story. The implicit and fundamental meaning contested herein pertains to suicide, and *how* and *why* suicide should be continued to be acknowledged and accepted as a pertinent problem today and tomorrow in South Africa, and probably, elsewhere in the world.

In fact, the rationale for this scholarly discourse lies in the veracity that issues related to suicide in South Africa are a significant public health concern. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), South Africa has one of the highest suicide rates in Africa and elsewhere in the global village (Morgan et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2023). By discoursing issues interconnected to suicide in South Africa, one can better comprehend the factors that contribute to suicidal behaviour and develop effective interventions to intercept suicide and promote mental health and welfare in the country. Inevitably, this article interrogates the following research questions that it pivots to address in the final assessment:

i. How suicide is mirrored in '*Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo'*?
ii. How and why the conundrum of suicide should be understood in the South African milieu?
iii. To what extent does '*Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo'* provoke pertinent matters *vis-à-vis* mental health and public health in South Africa?

With these research questions in mind, the principal objectives are:

i. To ascertain the complex and multidimensional nature of suicidal behaviour and to comprehend how it is represented and portrayed in the preferred isiXhosa short story.
ii. To reasonably identify patterns and trends that may help inform suicide prevention and intervention strategies, and improve human understanding of the social, cultural, and psychological factors that contribute to suicidal behaviour.

Before gratifying and addressing the phenomenon of interest hereunder, it is consequential that existing literature is acknowledged through the review process. Therefore, the following section attempts to conceptualise and contextualise what has already been determined by other scholars and non-scholars.

Literature review

This section is dual in that the first subsection provides particular deliberation on existing dialogues on what suicide is, and how it predominantly manifests itself in the South African context. Other mental health issues are not overlooked in this endeavour. The second part (which is the last part) acknowledges scholarly views in respect of African literature on the issue of suicide. Conclusively, an observable gap is pointed out.

Comprehending suicide in the South African context

Suicide is a major public health concern in South Africa. According to the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), as referred to by Miric and Ancer (2022), suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 24 years in the country. This does not entirely seclude young adults and other age groups (Modest et al., 2022). The high prevalence of suicide in South Africa can be pinned on a number of factors, including poverty, unemployment, crime, violence, substance abuse, and mental illness (Davies et al., 2023). In South Africa and other parts of the African continent, suicide typically starts with feelings of dejection, impotence, and despair (Khan et al., 2023). Needless to say, people who are considering suicide often feel over-exhausted by their challenges and problems, and conclude that there is no way out (Miric and Ancer, 2022). In support of the previous claim, Masango et al. (2008) report that over-exhausted people may feel like they are a burden and tonnage to others, and that their loved ones would be better off without them. In addition, people who are considering suicide may experience prognostics of depression, anxiety, or other mental health disorders, which can further aggravate their feelings of despair (Omari et al., 2023).

Frequently, suicide in South Africa is also linked to the country's high rates of violence and crime (Modest et al., 2022). People who have faced violence or trauma may be more probable to consider suicide as a way to circumvent their pain and suffering (Modest et al., 2022: 601). Additionally, substance abuse is also a major risk factor for suicide in South Africa (Zolopa et al., 2022). As a result, Omari et al. (2023) determine that people who abuse drug substances or alcohol may experience significant transmogrifications in mood and behaviour, which can accelerate their risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours. In a nutshell, suicide in South Africa is a multifaceted phenomenon that requires a multi-collaborative approach, including increased access to mental health care, social support, and economic opportunities.

In addition to the scholarly discourses outlined above, there have also been some non-scholarly dialogues. For instance, in his 2020 State of the Nation Address (SONA)—which is a political discourse—President Cyril Ramaphosa[2] acknowledged that mental health is a major public health challenge in South Africa (Venter, 2022). He vocalised the high rates of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide in the country, particularly among young people. The president promised to augment investment in mental health services and to improve access to care for all South Africans. Cyril Ramaphosa has also made statements specifically addressing suicide (Venter, 2022). In 2019, after the deaths of several high-profile South Africans by suicide, Cyril Ramaphosa called for a national consultation about mental health and suicide in South Africa. Among other prescripts, he challenged South Africans to dismantle the stigma around mental illness and to seek help if they are struggling (Venter, 2022). In his political address, an emphasis was that mental health is a priority for his administration, and he has affirmed working with stakeholders to improve mental health services and raise awareness about mental health issues in the country. Therefore, this is enough to indicate that mental health and suicide continue to receive the attention of the national government in addition to scholarly attention for the very reason that it sabotages the welfare of many young men and women.

> "suicide in South Africa is a multifaceted phenomenon that requires a multi-collaborative approach, including increased access to mental health care, social support, and economic opportunities."

In the same fashion, the University of Cape Town's (UCT) former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, has vocalised the importance of addressing mental health concerns among university students and staff (The Citizen, 2022). In a statement released in 2021, she emphasised the necessity for a holistic approach to mental health, one that includes counselling and other support services as well as efforts to address the root causes of stress and anxiety, such as financial hardship, academic pressure, and social isolation (Dhiman and Kaur, 2023). Phakeng also underlined UCT's covenant to promote mental health and well-being on campus, citing the availability of counselling services, mental health awareness campaigns, and initiatives to reduce ignominy around mental illness. She encouraged students and staff to seek help if they are struggling, and stressed the importance of addressing mental health concerns in a timely and proactive manner. Phakeng's statement reflected a growing recognition of the importance of mental health and suicide in the higher education sector, and a commitment to creating a supportive and inclusive learning and working environment for all members of the university community. The nature of these dialogues underlines the ongoing crisis concerning mental health and suicide in South Africa and elsewhere in the global village. It is prudent, therefore, that these dialogues are viewed and accepted as an attempt to eliminate the problems of mental health risks and suicide.

Depictions of suicide in African literature

Depictions of suicide in African literature, isiXhosa literature included, vary widely depending on the

context, culture, and time period in which they were written. Suicide has been a censored topic in many indigenous African societies (Marangu et al., 2014), often seen as an ignominious and dishonourable act (Venter, 2022). Nevertheless, some African authors have addressed the subject of suicide in their works as a means of exploring issues such as colonialism, cultural turmoil, personal and societal trauma, and mental health (Diko, 2023d).

For example, in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), the character Okonkwo commits suicide after the arrival of Christian missionaries disrupts his traditional Igbo way of life (Wilson, 2009). This act is observed as an epitome of the obliteration wrought by colonialism and the erosion of traditional African culture. In Wole Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman* (2002), the character Elesin commits ritual suicide in accordance with Yoruba tradition, but is prevented from doing so by colonial authorities. The play explores themes of cultural clashes and the consequences of colonialism. In Buchi Emecheta's novel *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), the main character named Ego attempts suicide after struggling with poverty and the loss of her children. The novel traverses the challenges faced by women in African societies and the impact of colonialism on traditional gender roles.

Other African authors, and in particular South African writers, who have depicted suicide in their works include Witness K. Tamsanqa in *Ukuba Ndandazile* (Had I Known) (1971), Archibald C. Jordan in *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* (The Wrath of the Ancestors) (1940), and many more. These authors have used suicide as a means of exploring complex issues facing African societies, including mental health, identity, and cultural trauma. With these discourses in mind, it is coherent that suicide in South Africa can be viewed as a pandemic that requires scholarly attention. Also, it is evident—based on the literature review—that '*Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo*' has not been accorded any scholarly and/or non-scholarly attention hence this article views it as consequential to hinge on this particular short story using the very same phenomenon alluded to previously. To undertake such a pursuit of delineating the phenomenon of interest herein, reasonable research techniques are elicited, hence the section below.

Research approach and theoretical framework

This article utilises '*Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo*' as a primary source of data. Using a short story as a source of data involves examining the short story in order to segment information or insights that can be used to answer research questions or to explore a particular topic (Sufanti et al., 2021). In this context, the short story is treated as a primary source of data, and the researcher uses various methods of analysis to extract meaning and gain a deeper understanding of the story and the themes it addresses. For instance, repeated reading of the short story has been used as one of the research methodologies, while note-taking has been appreciated for underlining pertinent segments that will be used to gratify the aims and objectives of the article. Diko (2022b) welcomes this approach in unravelling isiXhosa literature by overtly stating that isiXhosa literary texts must be appreciated for their propensity to provide primary insights—insights that must be accepted as a source of data. Similarly, Winkel et al. (2023) affirm that written and spoken literary material cannot be overlooked as an essential source of data given that it habitually provisions covert meanings that necessitate extensive scrutinising.

It is within these scholarly determinants that isiXhosa short stories can provide valuable data for researchers in a wide range of fields. For example, literary scholars might use short stories as a source of data to investigate the use of literary devices and techniques by authors, or to analyse the representation of particular themes or ideas in literature (Winkel et al., 2023). Social scientists might use short stories to explore cultural value systems, social norms, or power dynamics within a particular community or society (Diko, 2022b).

Fundamentally, the procedure of using a short story as a source of data typically involves close reading and analysis of the story, identifying central themes and concepts, and extracting relevant data or information that can be used to answer the research question or explore the topic of interest. This might involve techniques such as thematic analysis, structural analysis, content analysis, or discourse analysis, depending on the specific research methodology being used. Essentially, using a short story as a source of data underscores treating the story as a rich and

complex source of information that can provide valuable insights and deepen our understanding of a wide range of topics. Correspondingly, Dick (2022) advises that a theory must be appointed to uncover hidden meanings in a literary text. In this article, structuralism as a theory has been preferred.

This theory focuses on the underlying structures and patterns of meaning in a literary text (Sanusi, 2012). Structuralists believe that all literary texts have a set of underlying binary oppositions or dichotomies that configure their meaning (Sanusi, 2012: 125; Zhang, 2020). The structural theory articulates that a literary work is a complex system made up of interwoven features, and that understanding the relationship between these features is essential to understanding the work as a whole (West, 2020). Owing to the reality that isiXhosa short stories are produced using language, a language that is complex in its nature, the selected short story is governed by cardinal structures and conventions, and uncovering these structures can propound important insights into the work's meaning and significance. One of the exclusive merits of a structuralist theory is that it makes it permissible for the reader to move beyond surface-level interpretations of a literary work, and to explore the rudimentary systems and structures that shape the text.

The use of a structuralist theory in this article further encompasses identifying the deeply entrenched structures and patterns that shape suicide as a social occurrence. For example, and in respect of this probe, the cultural facets and value systems that contribute to feelings of isolation or hopelessness, or the power dynamics within a particular community or society that might lead individuals to consider suicide as a viable option are deliberated. Essentially, using the preferred isiXhosa short story and this particular theory is a purposive strategy that empirically proves to yield desirable outcomes.

Findings and discussions

Categorically, the short story *'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo'* commences with the idea that no one holds a legal and/or Biblical right to murder others or murder themselves. This is evidenced in the extract below:

> '*Umntu akangowakhe kuba akazidalanga kodwa udaliwe. Umntu ngamnye udalwe nguMdali weento zonke. Njengoko kungekho mntu unelungelo lokubulala omnye umntu, akakho umntu onelungelo lokuzibulala*.'
>
> ('Human does not belong to themselves because they did not create themselves but were created. Each person is created by the Creator of all things. Just as no one has the right to kill another person, no one has the right to commit suicide.') (Macabela, 2021: 104)

Based on the excerpt above, the question of whether an individual has the right to end their own life is an intricate and provocative issue that subsumes religious, philosophical, ethical, and legal considerations. However, it appears that Macabela (2021) only imposes the religious component given that reference to the Creator is recurrently made, and other belief systems and notions are not explicitly entailed in the literary text. This may be a point of controversy for those who do not necessarily believe in the referred Creator. However, that cannot pose any problematic judgments about the short story on account that short stories are open to any scrutiny—depending on the potential meaning that may be enacted by different readers.

The short story's position in the view just above can be allied to the religious philosophy owing to the reality that some religious traditions, such as Christianity and Islam, consider suicide to be sinful or a violation of God's commandments (Potter, 2021). Others, such as Buddhism, take a more nuanced view that recognises the importance of ending suffering but still dissuades against suicide as a means of doing so (Potter, 2021). Given that, the short story's standpoint on suicide may prove to be valid and consequential for those who believe in either Christianity and/or Islam.

Similarly, and from a philosophical perspective, some schools of thought, such as existentialism, elucidate that individuals have the right to end their own lives if they choose to do so (Soyinkwa, 2002). This view is based on the idea that individuals have the ultimate freedom to determine the course of their lives and that they should be able to exercise that freedom even in matters of life and death. It is these dichotomies that a structuralist theory appreciates in the examination

of literary texts—the dichotomies between life and death, or survival and demise. Similarly, from an ethical standpoint, the issue of suicide provokes questions about the value of human life and the responsibilities of individuals and society to prevent unwarranted harm. For instance, Macabela (2021: 104) covertly states that life is characterised by vicissitudes. Let us observe the analects below:

> '*Ubomi bunzima, akasoloko ehamba ethafeni umntu kuba kunamaxesha okuba azibhaqe engqubeka kwiziphunzi nakumatye axananazileyo. Ezi zinto zimshiya egruzukile engxwelerhekile ngamanye amaxesha uyawa athi folokohlo emahlahleni naselubobeni aze avuke enemikrwelo engasokuze iphele. Inene ubomi bungamahlandinyuka*.'
>
> ('Life is hard, one does not always walk on the plain because there are times when one finds oneself bumping into stumps and scattered stones. These things leave one bruised and injured, sometimes he or she falls and cuts their wrists and legs and wakes up with scars that will never fade away. Indeed, life is full of ups and downs.') (Macabela, 2021: 104)

Inevitably, it remains prudent that it is acknowledged that suicide is a personal decision that should be respected, while on the other hand should be viewed as a tragedy that should be prevented by those affected directly and indirectly. This denotes that individuals and society must recognise suicide as an integral part of humanity, and must then pivot towards eliminating it using reasonable and proactive approaches. It would be incoherent and obtuse to recoil from the realities of social ills. From a legal and structuralist perspective, the question of whether suicide should be a crime is a matter of debate (Violanti et al., 2019). This is because it has been recognised and acknowledged as one of the constituents of human and social formation. The structuralist theory provisions for the assessment of a literary text in context; hence, it must be contextualised that in some countries, suicide is still considered a criminal offense (Lew et al., 2022), while in others it is not. The assessment of this particular isiXhosa short story further induces the conventional idea and ideology that aided suicide or euthanasia is legal under certain circumstances (Lew et al., 2022), while it can fairly be agreed that Macabela (2021)—the author—rejects it.

On the same wavelength, it must be glorified that '*Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo*' continues to prescribe that mental health crises and suicide require proactive efforts such as speaking, and having someone who is willing to listen, thereupon making the victim valuable and honoured. Speaking up about mental health challenges and suicide is crucial to addressing mental health disasters such as harm and death. Mental health and suicide are a fundamental aspect of overall health and wellbeing, and affect how individuals feel, think, and behave. Unfortunately, mental health issues are often stigmatised, which can make it difficult for people to speak up about their struggles or seek help. By encouraging people to speak up about their mental health, humans can help deconstruct the stigma surrounding psycho-social issues and create a more gratifying environment for individuals who are struggling. This can include talking openly about mental health, sharing personal stories and experiences, and providing information and resources about mental health and welfare. When people feel comfortable speaking up about their mental health, they are more likely to seek help when they need it, which can lead to earlier intervention and better outcomes. The proactive measure of *speaking* and *listening* is explicitly evident in the extract below:

> '*Qhuba ndimamele Sthandwa sam. Kuyacaca ukuba baninzi abantu abazifumana bengamaxhoba ngenxa yeenkxwaleko nezivubeko eziveliswe zabhentsiswa yimingeni yobomi*.'

"Inevitably, it remains prudent that it is acknowledged that suicide is a personal decision that should be respected, while on the other hand should be viewed as a tragedy that should be prevented by those affected directly and indirectly."

('Continue, I am listening, my love. It is clear that there are many people who find themselves victims because of the sufferings and injuries caused by the challenges of life.') (Macabela, 2021: 104–105)

Pertinent to the above debates, Macabela (2012), through the preferred short story, progresses to certify the complexities that exist in the phenomenon of suicide and mental health. In fact, the entire short story proves that suicide is a manifestation of deeply rooted mental illnesses. For instance, one of the principal characters, Mthuthuzeli, reports on the beginning of his mental pressures while his wife, Simangele, makes an interesting objection to the dialogue:

'*Ndaqala ukubona ukuba umhlaba undijikele ngowe–1987. Ndandivela kwiyunivesithi yaseKapa apho ndandisenza unyaka wokuqala. Ngaloo nyanga yeNkanga, ndandilindele ukwenzelwa itheko kubhiyozelwa usuku lwam lokuzalwa nanjengoko ndandigqiba iminyaka engamashumi amabini ananye. Uyazi ke nawe Sthandwa ukuba elo liphupha labo bonke abantwana...*'[13]

'*Ndingakubethanga emlonyeni Sthandwa, kwimizi efumileyo abantwana bathengelwa imoto banikwe nesitshixo esingumqondiso wokuba bangenza nantoni na ngobomi babo, thina ke bantu bahlelelekileyo, loo mathuba asinqabele njengezinyo lenkuku.*'[14]

('I first realised that the world has turned around me in 1987. I was from the University of Cape Town where I was in my first year. That month of November, I was expecting a party to be held to celebrate my birthday as I turned twenty-one. Do you know, my love, that is the dream of all children...')

('Without disturbing you, my love, in rich families, children are bought a car and given a key as a sign that they can do anything with their lives, but we are poor people, those opportunities are denied to us like hen's teeth.') (Macabela, 2021: 105)

The above statement from Mthuthuzeli certifies that suicidal thoughts, as a mental illness, are profoundly rooted. For instance, Mthuthuzeli continues to express his discomfort about the fact that he was not accorded the 21st celebration that ordinarily takes place for some young men and women in South Africa. At this time, he was an undergraduate student at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Subsequent to that, his mother, father, uncle, and mother-in-law departed this world in a short space of time that is not explicitly stated in the short story, but it does appear that they all died in less than three to five years—in other words, Mthuthuzeli suffered multiple traumas. This empirically underlines that suicide is a complex and deeply troubling phenomenon that can have a significant and adverse impact on individuals, families, and communities. It involves the premeditated taking of one's own life, often in response to overwhelming emotional pain, tribulation, or misery.

In conjunction with the previous claim and observing the earlier extract, the interjection by Simangele is embracive of a fascinating understanding of life in general. It suggests that in life, it is common for people to battle challenges and experience catastrophes. While it is natural to yearn for certain things, it is important to be cognisant that not everything is within human control and that we may not always get what we want. Instead of focusing solely on what we want, it can be thoughtful to cultivate a sensory faculty of gratitude and appreciation for what we do have. This can include things like health, relationships, opportunities, and personal strengths. It is also significant to develop fortitude and coping skills to help circumnavigate difficult times and to cope with calamity. This can involve seeking support from friends or family (such as in the case of Mthuthuzeli and Simangele) and learning to reframe human thinking in more positive, corroborative, and constructive ways. While it can be challenging to accept that people may not always get what they desire, it is equally significant to exhibit consideration that life is full of meteoric opportunities and experiences. In so doing, people can cultivate a greater sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, even in the face of adversity. Ultimately, mental pressures such as family stress, social stress, academic stress and so forth can be tranquillised.

Conclusion

This article underlined that suicide is a complex and multifaceted issue that can have an extraordinary impact on individuals and communities. While the portrayal of suicide in isiXhosa short stories may not be appropriate or helpful in all contexts, it can provide a valuable opportunity to explore and raise awareness about this important issue. Additionally, it was stressed that isiXhosa short stories can provision a powerful means of exploring the emotional and psychological experiences of individuals who may be struggling with suicidal thoughts or behaviours. It further became evident that by portraying characters who are grappling with mental health challenges and contemplating suicide, isiXhosa short stories can help to promote affinity and understanding for those who may be experiencing comparable difficulties.

In addition, isiXhosa short stories can provide a floor for discussing the social and cultural factors that contribute to suicide, such as stigma around mental illness, social isolation, and access to lethal means. '*Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo*' further outlined that by raising awareness about these issues and promoting dialogue, isiXhosa short stories can help to reduce defective misconceptions and increase support for individuals who are at the peril of suicide. In closing, while the portrayal of suicide in South African short stories must be done sensitively and responsibly, it can be a valuable means of exploring and addressing this complex and deeply rooted issue.

Notes

1. A detailed explanation of structuralism as a literary theory, and its role in the examination of isiXhosa literature, will be provided later.

2. It is important to notice that at the time of constructing and assembling this article, Cyril Ramaphosa was the South African president.

3. It is Mthuthuzeli uttering these words.

4. It is Simangele uttering these words through interjection.

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British Colonial Post-War Fiscal Policies in Benin, Nigeria: 1945–1960

By Frank Ikponmwosa and Collins Osayuki Edigin

Abstract

This paper focuses on post-war fiscal and economic policies in colonial Benin between 1945 and 1960. It was the period of British economic reconstruction occasioned by the effect of the Second World War. The paper therefore examines the impact of the post-war fiscal reforms on tax and expenditure patterns of the British authorities in Benin. It gives a robust analysis, as a background, of the goal and effect of the British economic reforms in her colonies. The study argues that the main objective of the British was to promote fiscal policies in order to revamp the metropolitan economy battered by the Second World War. Thus, at the Benin protectorate or division, the tax assessment rate was relatively high compared to the level of income paid by the colonial authorities, in order to create surplus for expenditure. This created discontents and petitions from different local communities against the assessment rate. The paper shows that the expenditure level, especially on social services, was low compared to the tax revenue generated. It adopts the historical method of research which utilised data obtained from both primary and secondary sources for interpretation and analysis. It's on aspects of the Benin Division in Benin Province, created in 1914, as one of the administrative divisions, by the British which comprises of the Benin speaking people of southern Nigeria. It subsequently became part of the Western Region in 1945 following the constitution of regional government in Nigeria.

Introduction

The British metropolitan government adopted a policy of minimal intervention in the economic management of her colonies prior to the Second World War. This implied that Benin, which had been under the British colonial rule since 1897[1], was largely responsible for her financial sustenance even in the face of bureaucratic organisations and basic infrastructural development requirements. The precarious financial situation of the division limited it from engaging in basic infrastructural projects. However, the War exposed the inadequacy of this policy as it limited the division's efforts in responding to the war-time need of its mother state. This probably compelled Britain to reform the policy towards providing development needs to her West African colonies in general, including Benin. While justifying the policy, the British government (authorities) argued that it was structured in line with the principle of trusteeship which required that she held her colonies in trust for the native inhabitants, and had the main responsibility of training them for self-government. This position was well-articulated by the Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech Jones, in a Local Government Dispatch of 1947:

> '[T]he principal object of the administration being the welfare, education and development of those inhabitants...a primary object of the administration should always be to train the native inhabitants in every possible way, so that they may be able in the shortest possible time to govern themselves...The test of our policy should not be British advantage, but the happiness, prosperity and freedom of the colonial people themselves.' (Ola, 1984)

This implies that colonial subjects' (citizens) consideration were uppermost in the reform policies of the British government. It aimed at providing not only social and educational institutions as preparatory for future governmental responsibilities, but also the economic development of colonies for the general wellbeing of the citizens. Therefore, post-war reforms were viewed as British generosity towards promoting economic advancement and civilizing mission in the colonies. This is, however, invalidated by the fact that the reforms wrought in changes that were not conducive to the rapid positive growth and development (Afolabi, 2010). Rather, the British deviously used fiscal policies to exploit the citizens massively.

In addition, some scholars largely of African descent (Crowder, 1968; Phillips, 1989; Ajayi, 1969), and members of the conservative party in Britain have countered this position of the Secretary (Nwaubani, 1992). They argued that the post-war colonial economic policy was aimed at exploiting the colonies in the interest of the metropolis. They justified their position that the British economy was severely weakened by her involvement in the Second World War with detrimental loss of capital to the tune of £300 million and accumulated debt burden of about £3,000,000 million (ibid: 102).

Beyond that, however, certain factors highly justified the view that the post-war reforms skewed towards the interest of the British economy. For example, Britain sold a large chunk of her overseas assets worth about £1,000, 000 million as a consequence of the War. Perhaps, the most disastrous effect of the War came in the form of the huge decline in British exports as she lost control of valuable territories including Malaya and Sumatra in the Far East (Njoku, 1987). Consequently, by 1945, British exports were at only 40 percent of her pre-war level (ibid.) and the country lost its position to the United States of America as the most powerful nation and biggest economy in the world. It was to remedy this precarious situation that Britain turned to her colonies for economic relief and greater trade relations as a catalyst for increased exports above the 1938 level. It clearly became, according to L.S. Amery, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies:

> '[t]he duty of the Government to use all means in its power to direct the monies available for investment into channels where they will create a demand for British goods and employment for British labour, and it is to the opportunities which the Empire affords of fulfilling that duty that I am drawing attention.' (Malmsten, 1977)

This appears to be the main objective of Britain in her colonies, as the nation embarked on policies that would generate both resources and revenue for

investment in the crown with the view of boosting her trade, investment, and employment opportunities which had experienced a downward trend. Reforms in colonies were therefore initiated to propel the metropolitan economy towards this goal. While this is in line with the thesis of this paper, it does not however imply that nothing was gained by indigenous terrain, though they were by-products of activities intended to promote the metropolitan interests (Kaniki, 1987). While examining the implications of the British economic reforms for Nigeria, Dupe Olatunbosun avers that:

> '[A]fter the Second World War the colonial government realized that only by interfering in the organization of primary and other activities could it remedy the acute shortage of export crops badly needed by its home markets. Besides, all of Western Europe needed planning.' (quoted in Ihonvbere and Falola, 1987)

The war drained the resources of Britain and became manifest in the post-war times. Having lost some of its sources of supply of primary products such as rubber and palm oil in Asia during the war, she had to embark on reforms in order to boost production of these products in territories still under her control in the post-war times. Hence as parts of the interference policy, persuasion and aggressive campaigns were adopted by respective colonial officials towards rapid production of primary products (agricultural products and minerals) for export, while stringent restrictions were imposed on imports from the metropolis (Faluyi, 2005).

Similarly, Ernest Bevin, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in his address to the Trade Union Congress in 1947 observed that, 'we have within this Commonwealth (the colonial empire) both the primary products and resources which have been badly neglected. We have (now) turned our attention to the colonial territories' (Nwaubani, 1992) toward improving trade and expanding agricultural raw-material production for the metropolitan interest. This was reiterated by Mr. C. J. Pleas, the Colonial Development Secretary of Nigeria thus:

> '[t]here will undoubtedly be benefits to Great Britain from the expenditure on Nigerian development, if more people are in better health, if the land itself is in better health; if the means of transport are improved, the primary products of Nigeria will flow to the markets of Great Britain in greater volume and the Nigerian worker will have more money to buy the products of Great Britain's industry.' (Nwaubani, 1992: 100)

This clearly illustrates the benefits that could accrue to Britain from its economic reforms specifically in Nigeria as a whole. The British colonial fiscal policies and investment specifically in the health and transport sectors of the economy would have a more positive impact on the metropolis. A healthy labour force would result in increased productivity of raw materials, while transport infrastructure in the forms of roads and railways would facilitate the exploitation of produce or raw materials to the port for onward transportation to the metropolis for productive investment.

Suffice to state that this is a micro study that has not received much research attention in Nigeria's historiography. However, enough works exist on the colonial tax system which have adopted a macro-level approach (Bolt and Gardner, 2020; Gardner, 2012; Dekker, 2020), thereby limiting our understanding of the reforms in colonial tax policies and implementation on the micro economy such as Benin. The structure of the tax systems and the amount of revenue they generated has become important for comparing and measuring the level of

"The British colonial fiscal policies and investment specifically in the health and transport sectors of the economy would have a more positive impact on the metropolis. A healthy labour force would result in increased productivity of raw materials, while transport infrastructure in the forms of roads and railways would facilitate the exploitation of produce or raw materials to the port for onward transportation to the metropolis for productive investment."

investment in Benin. Ewout Frankema and Marlous Waijenburg contend that British fiscal policy and implementation promoted the wellbeing of colonial subjects because the biggest items on colonial government budget were on salaries and funds for building railways (Frankema and Waijenburg, 2014). These were salaries of urban European officials which were repatriated or out flown and development of railways for the exploitation of produce, both of which were consequently invested with the metropolis. Also, R.I. Garvin and W. Oyemakinde, and M. Havinden and D. Meredith take a general overview of the British fiscal reforms and implementation in the pre and post Second World War periods and argue that it promoted economic development and wellbeing of citizens (Gavin and Oyemakinde, 1980; Havinden and Meredith, 1993). Thus, contrary to the scholarly arguments that Britain reformed the tax system because it had the welfare of citizens at heart, this current study argues that the main objective of the British was to promote fiscal policies in order to revamp the metropolitan economy battered by the Second World War.

British Post-War Tax Policies in Benin

The aftermath of the War witnessed revolutionary reforms in the Benin divisional tax system. The colonial development scheme of 1945, which increased the demand for domestic revenue, the need to maintain a balance budget so as to control inflation as a result of the rubber and timber boom in Benin immediately after the war[2] and the need to fund the reorganised Native administration introduced in 1948[3], necessitated the upward review of taxes and fees in Benin Division. The colonial authorities assumed that since the review was based on the ability to pay, resistance would be unlikely from the targeted tax payers. In light of the above, the colonial authorities increased taxes, court fees, license fees and rates in 1945/46 and 1948/49. For instance, available evidence suggests that the Flat Rate was raised from 8/- to 9/- in 1945/46, while the Income Tax rates were correspondingly increased by 12½ percent.[4] Also, there was a conversion of many Flat Rate payers to Income Tax payers which consequently increased from less than 2,000 to nearly 6,000 (ibid.) especially in villages, without consultation with the local tax assessment committee members (Edo, 2001). In 1948/49, the Flat Rate was further increased from 9/- to 10/-[5] making it the second of such increases within a short period of three years.[6]

Many taxpayers questioned the basis of assessment since the tax assessors did not collect enough information about their income. They (taxpayers) complained of being over-assessed by the Tax Office as their net income did not match their rate of assessment. For instance, in a petition to the District Officer, one Aluyi Osakwe complained that before 1947, his tax ranged from 10/- and 15/- but in 1948, his tax rose to £1:3:6. Again in 1949, his tax was increased to £1:12:6 by the Tax Office and in 1950, the same establishment assessed him at £3:2:6.[7] He complained that these increments occurred without any proportionate increase in his level of earnings. It was also accused of indiscriminately assessing the non-natives in the Division whose income tax increased by over 300 percent (ibid.), which was much higher than their indigenous counterparts. Thus, that all these increments were made without any consideration of the actual income of the people, or recourse to the local Tax committee members, was nauseating. However, while explaining the motive behind the arbitrary assessment, the Chief Tax Officer simply made it clear that 'the Governor (of Nigeria) had ruled that there should be an increase in taxation'.[8] Hence the Tax Chief arbitrarily increased the assessment rate in order to generate more revenue for the administration.

For all intents and purposes, it appears that the people were assessed based on the potential wealth of the respective communities and the proposed expenditure of the administration. This implies that the people were expected to improve their production level in order to pay the exorbitant taxes. This appeared to be the notion of the British Resident, Benin Division in 1950 when he sums that:

> 'So long as direct taxation remains one of the principle sources of Native Administration revenue, the incident of taxation must be determined not only by the wealth of the area concerned but by the quality and cost of the services maintained for the benefit of that area by the Native Authority, and will vary in accordance with these two factors.'[9]

Taxation was imposed without recourse to the people's ability to pay or actual earnings. It was based on the potential resources of the area, as assessed by the authorities, and the cost of the native administration's

governance (unknown to the citizens). The main resources of the division were agricultural and forest products largely made up of rubber and timber. While rubber was tapped by local peasants, timber was exploited by British timber merchants who were granted concessionary rights. So, taxing the people based on these resources (wealth), which in most cases was beyond their exploitation, heaped the tax burden on the peasant populace. The British authorities were very unwilling to commit any monies to local administration from the metropolis despite the much-propagated post war economic reforms for the purpose of advancing local development. Consequently, the people accused the authorities of imposing all their taxes before attempting to explain the advantages (Odeke, 2018). Beyond that, there appeared the problem of 'political victimisation' in the assessment of tax by the Tax Office. This was particularly evident in the tax assessment of Olumoye village[10] where members of the Otuedo Union[11] were assessed higher than associates of the Benin Taxpayers Association/ Reformed Ogboni Fraternity.[12] This demonstrated the divide and rule policy of colonial taxation in Benin.

Invariably, the high tax rate was expected to induce the people to engage in the colonial economy, and therefore, generate more revenue by driving productivity. Also, it was expected to promote industry and drive full employment in the division. But in reality, there were no genuine attempts at instituting structural reforms in the economy. Colonial authorities were indifferent to the factors that could promote economic growth and sustained revenue generation such as industrialisation and manpower development. This stemmed from the fact that the level of extraction or revenue from taxation far outweighed the resources invested in the division.[13] This situation was bound to cause severe hardship on the people who complained that the tax rate was increased at a time when the prices of food produce were on the rise and consequently lodged several petitions against the Tax Chief. Yet, the authority rather commended the Tax Chief for his arbitrariness in tax assessment and collection. This elicited petitions from the division, as for example, evidence obtained from the report of the Igbanke District Council where the people complained that:

> '[T]he Chief Commissioner Western Province congratulated him (the Chief Tax Clerk) for the efforts made last year to achieve the erroneous assessment which swelled up the Benin Native Administration (B.N.A.) revenue and thus he resolved to act more erroneously this year in the endeavour to win more praises at the expense of the poverty ridden natives.'[14]

The Chief Tax Clark was responsible for enforcing (based on the directive of the colonial authorities) the arbitrary assessment and taxation that was prevalent in the division. Though he was one of the locals (citizens), yet earned his position due to his commitment and loyalty to serve the authorities, and not his people with which he had traditional affinity. Hence, he was congratulated by the Chief Commissioner for his effort which manifested in revenue boost to the authorities even in the face of the obvious low standard of living of the people. Consequently, they viewed the arbitrary tax system as expression of the authority of the Chief Tax Clark, a creation of the colonial authorities, to increase their exploitation tendency in the division which is in line with the argument of this paper. Thus, it was therefore inevitable that tax revenue moved from £15,077 in 1948/49 to £34,000 in 1949/50[15] which amounted to about 120 percent increase in tax revenue. Again, in 1950/51, the total tax collected was £37,321 from an initial £31,007 (ibid.) This increase was largely due to the sales of tickets during the election period as tax receipt was a necessary requirement for voting at the 1951 polls. Consequently, the Tax Office was empowered by the British to increase the rate of assessment in order to fund the expanded budget of the administration, while the Chief Tax Clerk was merely an instrument used by the British to execute their fiscal policy in the division.

Consequently, Mr. H.O. Uwaifo, the Chief Tax Clerk, enjoyed the confidence of the colonial officials until members of the Otuedo Union organised protests against the native administration over the excessive taxes. This compelled the British to take immediate steps to avert a political crisis in the division, which only pacified the people temporarily and created an enabling environment for the collection of taxes. First, Mr. Uwaifo was dismissed from the services of the Native Administration in 1952, while the British also abolished the rule which made it compulsory for anyone dissatisfied with his tax to first make payment before appealing to the tribunal. In its place, the British authorities introduced a down payment of 10/- as initial deposit.[16] Also, the Tax Office was mandated

to ensure proper assessment of Income Tax with a close supervision of the Tax Assessment Committees. In addition, the Tax Office was directed to increase the number of Income Taxpayers from its current level of 24 to 50 percent with the aim of generating more revenue from the middle- and higher-income earners. The authority was of the opinion that the increase in the minimum wage from 1/3d to 1/5d per day justified the inclusion of more people in the Income Tax roll. Furthermore, a compulsory 5/- Education Rate was introduced in the division, in line with the commitment of the Western Regional government, to provide qualitative education for the people.

Finally, the flat-rate was increased from 10/- to 12/- which again, undoubtedly, increased the tax burden of the people. To ensure total compliance to the payments the colonial authority issued a single receipt for both the education rate and the income or flat-rate taxes which made it difficult to evade any.[17] It was therefore not surprising that the administration recorded a 40 percent increase in tax revenue over the previous year's collection.[18] The table below gives a comprehensive record for the tax returns in 1950.[19]

	1950/51	**1951/52**	**1952/53**
Total Tax	£31,008	£32,898	£45,531
Income Tax	15,680	16,383	27,512
Flat Rate Tax	15,928	16,515	18,019
Total No. of Taxpayers	42,440	43,519	48,294
Proportion of Income Tax Payers	25%	24%	38%

This clearly shows the progressive increase in tax revenue during the period. This implies that the increase in assessment rate and the number of income taxpayers significantly improved tax generation in the division. However, reforms did not reduce the burden of tax, but rather caused undue hardship on the people. Many complained that the tax increase came at a time when the prices of rubber and timber had fallen considerably[20] with the attendant temporary retrenchment in the timber industry. The people's frustration was aptly captured by the annual report of one of the District Councils that, 'this council does not in any way agree with (the) circular letter that 50% of all taxable adults should pay Income Tax. That over 90% of the villagers are poor and that less than 10% only are recommended for Income Tax.[21] The imposition of income tax on the lower strata of the society called to question the responsibility and convenience of the colonial taxation in Benin.

Perhaps this became visibly demonstrated with the imposition of a uniform system of tax in 1953. Consequently, the flat-rate was abolished while all taxable adults were migrated into the Income Tax Roll without uniform assessment. For example, although the assessed rate was also increased such that every taxable adult in good health paid a minimum of 27/- (including education rate) as tax,[22] yet anyone appearing to have a status above that of a labourer was assessed above the minimum rate. For most of the former flat rate payers, therefore, there were consequential increases in tax from 10/- in 1951/52 to 17/- in 1952/53 and above 27/- in 1953/54. This astronomical increase was enforced without any detailed assessment of the actual tax capacity of the people, rather than the mere arguments that the low-income group constituted the largest proportion of taxpayers, and also, that every taxpayer had the capacity to pay the new rate. The authorities attempted strenuously to justify the migration of all adult tax payers to the Income Tax Roll without proper assessment. In a statement through the district officer, it explained glowingly the advantage of the policy that:

> 'During the past year (1952/53), 58% of the taxpayers paid Flat Rate. Compared with the schedule 11 rates of Income Tax, a flat rate payment of 15/- represented an income of only £30, whereas it is generally accepted that government or Native Administration general labour, which earns more £33 in a year is the lowest income group. If these and other persons in the slightly higher income groups were all made liable to assessment for income tax (which the very existence of a Flat Rate suggest that they are not) a considerable increase in revenue would result. It is the existence of this Flat Rate which is the principle difficulty in bringing people in the lower income groups onto Schedule 11.'[23]

The desire to realise increase revenue from taxes influenced the introduction of the income tax in the

division. Unlike the flat rate, which levied uniform payment, the income tax purportedly introduced proportional tax according to income. It eliminated incidence of tax evasion or under assessment which was observed in the flat rate. However, the mode of assessment was skewed to favour the authorities which assumed that every 'adult in good health'[24] in the division was an income earner, whether employed or not, and enrolled into income pay roll. Although the new tax was proportional according to income (as explained by the authorities), but the fact that the minimum tax paid was 27/- makes its burden more on the low income group and peasant farmers who at times realised low yield of produce from their farms, hence the resentment from this group to its mode of assessment. Hitherto, the focus was to assess the middle- and high-income earners progressively in order to augment the flat-rate paid by the low-income group. But henceforth, the authority increased the tax burden of every income group in the society.

However, it is important to point out that the majority of the taxpayers were engaged in cash crop production whose prices fluctuated according to the vagaries in the international market. This created a huge instability in their income, while labourers employed by indigenous contractors were paid below the minimum wage in the division. Also, a number of taxpayers were without formal employment but took odd jobs such as petty trading just to make ends meet. Consequently, the burden of the new tax policy was obvious, as illustrated by Isi District Council:

> 'It is a matter of policy that we people of Isi pay Income Tax because a man of taxable Income can be easily known. Not more than 40 people of Isi would be taxable. The wretched thatched houses and very poor clothing, inability to educate our children, and poor farm harvest are enough to prove our poverty. We are asking the officers to arrange a Commission of Enquiry to investigate our situation.'[25]

The people aligned to and accepted the payment of tax not only as obligation to the colonial government, but also as a means of identification as citizens of the district. However, they argued validly that the income tax policy should take into consideration in assessment their economic activities, farm harvest, and the standard of living of people in determining

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appropriate tax to be paid by the district. In other words, they called for proper tax assessment based on actual income and responsibilities of the taxable adults, instead of the estimated income tax placed on the district. This was the lamentation of the people of the district whose men who could not afford the tax. These people were sometimes bounded into prison while many abandoned their homes into the farms and forest to escape arrest by the authorities (Odeke, 2018: 11).

In order to actualise optimum taxation, the authority established Area Tax Units in each of the twelve wards of Benin City and in the twenty-one districts of the division. These units comprised the Assessment Committees, the Tax Collectors and the Area Tax Clerks, whose duties were performed by the various districts court clerks.[26] This decentralised the tax process by creating Local Income Tax Appeal Committees (as tax tribunal) to facilitate tax collection and to ensure swift resolution of petitions arising from taxes. As a form of incentive to this tribunal, a fee of 2/6d per day was approved for its members.[27] The authority also commenced the payment of sitting allowance to members of the District Income Tax Committee beginning from the 1952/53 financial year. The cumulative effect of all these was a rapid increase in tax revenue to £80,229.4[28] in the 1955/56 financial year, which was about 60 percent increase compared to 1952/53. However, this increase came at a huge cost to the people. Many were assessed based

on perceived earnings rather than actual income. For instance, a certain T.I. Imasogie was assessed at £9.13.9d in 1953/54. When he challenged this sum by submitting his financial records, the resident replied that he thought Mr. Imasogie 'would make £300 per annum from timber trade.'[29] He also asserted that the appellant would realise £60 from his premises as rent without checking the receipts to know the actual or exact amount the tenants paid (ibid.)

There was another instance where two persons, Degbeyi Gaza and Usiaghan Eze from Ekenwan District, complained about their assessment. When the Assistant District Officer visited the area and saw their houses, he nullified the case on the ground that they (the complainants) had enough money to pay. In his exact words, 'I have seen two of the houses of these people. I am satisfied they have more income than palm wine and should pay the tax.'[30] Beyond this, there were cases of assessment based on gross earnings rather than net income. This caused a lot of hardship for business owners as the lion share of their total income went into the payment of tax. Some even had the added responsibility of paying for the services of office assistants, which further increased their running costs. This is obnoxious and adversely affected small-scale enterprises in the division which some resorted to, for economic earnings in the absence of profitable employment. The consequent economic hardship that citizens experienced during the close of the year 1952 was captured in the annual report which expressed the precarious unemployment thus:

> 'Economically the close of the year (1952) has seen a decline in profits formerly realized from rubber and timber. This is always a dangerous time, when men are thrown out of profitable employment and forced to look for less well-paid jobs (e.g., small businesses). Some, as has been reported, are taking to crime. Others are spending their money and are putting off the evil day of going to work again. Most officers, however, see a silver lining to the cloud.'[31]

The period was not pleasant to people of the division with rubber and timber as the main sources of their income, as the prices of these commodities fluctuated according to the vagaries of the international market. The slump in the international market for rubber and timber in the 1950s adversely affected the industries in Benin, as producers faced a decrease in prices for their respective products, and therefore found it difficult to maintain their level of employment. Consequently, rubber producers and timber merchants were compelled by the prevailing economic reality to reduce the workforce, which led to a high rate of unemployment with the consequential effect on crime rate experienced in the division. The situation, no doubt, was hard enough but the insistence by the authorities on the payment of inappropriately assessed tax, without rebate or reduction in the face of the economic down-tone in the society, made it even harder and constituted a further expression of insensitive fiscal policies in the face of the plight of citizens.

Furthermore, an evaluation of the complaints forwarded to the Income Tax Committees indicates that the assessment rate was relatively high compared to the people's income. This position was reiterated by a taxpayer who remarked that, 'it is no fairness in asking a person who earned about twenty-four pounds a year with families to maintain and other personal unavoidable expenses to attend, to pay an Income Tax of ten or more pounds.'[32] The situation compelled many taxpayers to borrow money or sell their valuables in order to pay taxes. There is also evidence that several non-natives returned back to their ancestral homes in order to escape the high tax rate in the division.[33] It must be added that the colonial authorities explored all possible avenues to expand the revenue base of the division. In certain cases, they resorted to unlawful means. For instance, boys below the legal age of sixteen as well as the aged, weak and infirmed were compelled to pay taxes. There were also cases of visitors to village communities who were induced to pay Income Tax. All these demonstrate the determination of the colonial authorities to exact wealth from the division.

Post-War Colonial Expenditure Pattern in Benin

The main thrust of the post-war fiscal policy was to improve the economic potentials of colonies in order to facilitate economic interest of the metropolis. This made it necessary to expand the budget to promoting economic growth and diversification. In the division, the expenditure estimated was usually divided into three main categories: Administration, Special Expenditure, and Miscellaneous.[34] The items

under administration included staff salary and office stationeries, while physical infrastructure and educational development were prominent in the other two categories. However, in terms of budgetary allocation, the division's example clearly demonstrates that physical infrastructure (roads and bridge construction) and administration consumed the lion share of the budget.[35] This was done to effectively enforce colonial policies and also to eliminate most of the impediments to exploitation of the agricultural and forest resources in the division.

For instance, before 1945, about 291 mileages of roads were constructed and maintained by the Public Works Department of the authorities[36], while in 1953/54, the mileage of roads maintained was approximately 85 in Benin City and 370 in the various districts. A further breakdown shows that this accounted for a total cost of £9,994.5.11d[37] with the figure increasing to £10,844.3.27d in 1955/56.[38] The administration opened economically strategic roads outside Benin City such as the Ekiadolor-Enah, Ekiadolor-Olumeye, Ekiadolor-Uhen, Benin-Ikpe-Sakponba roads and the Gelegele port road embankments (Shokpeka, 2008). Yet, progress on road maintenance in the division 'was very disappointing due to the fact that qualified staff were not available for the adequate maintenance of mechanical plants' (road repairing appliances).[39] This challenge lingered for long as the administration were unwilling to commit resources into training of skilled manpower for supervisory work in road maintenance. So, the standard of road maintenance remained abysmally poor and attracted criticism in the division.[40]

The expenditure on administration consistently appeared second highest to physical infrastructure in the division. Some of the major items under administration included salaries, cost of transport of officers, and general upkeep of government lodge and grounds which included gardeners' wages. For example, in 1955/56, the total expenditure on administration was £3,195 out of which £2,150[41] was expended on the welfare of colonial officers. This included the cost of transport both within and outside Nigeria of officers proceeding on or returning from Annual Leave outside West Africa, and the maintenances of their rest houses within the division, which were charged to the divisional expenditure. This was the colonial situation in Benin where the wretched peasant farmers and other citizens were inflicted with heavy tax to take care of the welfare of the British officers and for the ultimate benefit of the crown.

Another major initiative was the Compulsory Education Scheme of 1954. This scheme introduced tuition free education at the primary school level which significantly increased enrolment and facilities in public primary schools.[42] Consequently, considerable efforts were equally made to expand the educational facilities in the division to meet this expanded enrolment of pupils in primary schools. Thus, native administration schools increased from three in 1939 to twelve in 1948 and by 1955, this number rose to 148.[43] This scheme was executed with the active participation of the Western Regional Government in conjunction with the local revenue from the education rate.[44]

However, it can be argued that the social services provided during this period were too restricted to have a significant impact on the people. Apart from the provision of basic education and the attendant effect of reading and writing, most of the projects executed during the period were geared towards promoting colonial interest. Even the Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme did little to change this position. For instance, in 1950, grants were allocated to six priority sectors, including primary education, transportation, research, town planning, and water supply. None of these projects was capable of revolutionising the economy of the area or drastically improving the standard of living of the people. At best, the primary education was to produce record keepers for the colonial authorities, while endeavours in research and transportation, on the other hand, respectively improved the quality of raw materials (e.g., rubber) produced and facilitated their freightage to England. There were no deliberate attempts by the authorities to invest capital in productive research that would stimulate the industrial base of the division (Nwaubani, 1992: 107).

Furthermore, the amount of capital invested in the division was inadequate to meet the developmental needs of the people, as evidenced from the quality of services provided. For instance, in 1953, out of the total 762 teachers in the division, only 189 were trained.[45] This means that only 25 percent of the teachers in the

division were qualified and this affected the quality of school leavers. Moreover, the administration did not establish enough secondary schools to cater for the large number of primary school leavers in the area. As at 1954, the ratio of secondary to primary schools in the division was 1: 235 (ibid.) This is hardly surprising since the focus of the colonial authorities was to churn out semi-skilled manpower who could perform basic administrative functions in the colonial services.

The situation was not so different in the agricultural sector where the colonial authorities failed to make appreciable investment that improved the production techniques of the peasants. Hence Walter Rodney argued, while referring to a common trend in colonial Africa, that:

> '[T]he most decisive failure of colonialism...was its failure to change the technology of agricultural production. The most convincing evidence as to the superficiality of the talk about colonialism having 'modernised' Africa is the fact that the vast majority of Africans went into colonialism with hoe and came out with a hoe. Some capitalist plantations introduced agricultural machinery, and the odd tractors found its way into the hands of African farmers; but the hoe remained the overwhelmingly dominant agricultural implement.' (Rodney, 1972: 239)

Colonialism did not bring about the much-desired technological revolution in the agricultural sector of the economy. Much of the resources (or raw materials) exploited were from agricultural products, and throughout the periods of British rule nothing was done to advance the technology on agriculture, even to its own advantage of exploiting adequate yield from produce. No financial commitment was made for studies and research in agriculture, hence—at the demise of colonial rule—the same methods of soil cultivation and implements remained. However, this cannot be taken to be a general assessment of colonialism. Though it did not advance the technological aspects of the colonies, it laid the framework for modern fiscal policies and provided the English model educational system that had the potentials for propelling technological advancement.

Beyond the imperial interest of the metropolis, the internal local politics equally influenced colonial

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fiscal policies. For example, the skewed budgetary allocation and development grants in favour of the Yoruba-speaking divisions in the Western Region constrained capital development in Benin division. This meant that the Yoruba-speaking communities received more funds than the Edo-speaking area.[46] This partly accounted for the slow pace of public works and the absence of financial provision for electricity. This situation was further worsened in 1955 with the introduction of elected councils. This increased the recurrent cost of the administration as more persons were incorporated in the (local) government. The implication of this was that less resources were available for social projects. In addition, the local and regional assemblies were denied fiscal responsibilities over public revenue and expenditure. As such, proposals were subject to the final approval of the Governor.[47] Therefore, socio-politically and economically, there was little development to justify the exorbitant taxes imposed and exerted in the division. The standard of living of the people was not improved, nor were basic amenities provided to the villagers. This point was emphasised by the divisional adviser, Benin Division succinctly:

> 'Due to the financial position the councils in this Division have barely kept the existing services going and in Benin City have not been able to do that... In the financial year 1956–57, the only capital works carried out by all the councils are two offices at 2 District Council Headquarters and

> several dispensaries and maternity centres which are grant-assisted. Meantime the standard of road maintenance and building maintenance has fallen.'[48]

The level of development is not comparable to the rate of extortion and exploitation. Thus save for Benin City, the headquarter of the division, most rural villages including Isi, Abudu, Ekenwan, Urhonigbe, Ugbine, Egbatan, Iguobazuwa, Siluko, Odighi, Usen, among others, fell short of the impact of colonial fiscal policy and implementation as there existed no pipe borne water, electricity, health care facility (dispensary), or schools. Rather, what appeared as the only sign of the colonial authorities' presence was the native courts where tax defaulters or evaders were tried and sentenced accordingly (Ikponmwosa and Evbayiro, 2017: 160–161).

The tax system was not directed towards income redistribution but to actualise colonial interest. It will therefore be out of place to describe British colonial taxation as progressive and development oriented. As Abraham Thomas puts it, 'development is about people—the mental state of the people, the economic, social and institutional activities and arrangements, the people are capable of and put in place to enhance and sustain a better life in a given society and epoch' (2011: 15). As long as the tax regime did not significantly improve the lives of the people, it cannot be said to have been development oriented.

Conclusion

The economic consequences of the Second World War compelled Britain to review her economic policies towards her colonies. The objective was to make the colonies optimum and more efficient in the production of raw materials that could aid in resuscitating the ravaged metropolitan economy. This led to the introduction of the Colonial Development and Welfare schemes which earmarked revenue for socio-economic infrastructure that promoted economic development in the division and at the same time responded to colonial economic objectives. Consequently, the colonial authorities were compelled to increase taxes and fees in order to generate enough revenue to fund the expanded budget without any recourse to the wellbeing of the people and their ability to pay. This increased the burden of tax on payers as the assessment rate was high compared to income. This elicited protests from local communities who expressed their wrath on the authorities for being insensitive to their economic plight. Equally disappointing is the unsatisfactory nature of colonial infrastructure as captured by annual reports on the division, especially on roads and education. Colonial roads were poorly maintained, narrow gage and mainly designed for the transportation of raw materials. Hence most of the roads were seasonal and hardly accessible during the rainy season. However, the interconnectivity of the colonial roads opened up the entire division, which was subsequently improved on by post-colonial governments in Benin. Colonial education, on the other hand, laid emphasis on elementary education with the objective of providing literate semi-skilled individuals required in colonial authorities as messengers and, at best, as book keepers. The system was not aimed at future social and economic advancement but for the immediate needs of the British. Services provided were inadequate to meet the developmental needs of the people of the division. Therefore, post-war economic and tax policies in Benin were geared towards economic exploitation rather than development.

Notes

1. This marked the beginning of British colonial rule in Benin after the military conquest and subjugation which subsequently led to the fall of Benin and its independence (Igbafe, 1979).
2. N.A.I. Benin Province 2, BP.41, Vol. x, Annual Report Benin Division, 1947–50, 1950.
3. This was the main organ of the indirect rule system responsible for the administration of the division and also the execution of public works but with the strict supervision of the colonial authorities. See Annual Report 1947: 21–32.
4. Thus, all male adults, who earned below 24/- were categorized under the Flat Rate schedule, while those who earned above that figure paid income tax. See, National Archives, Ibadan (hereafter refers to as N.I.A), BP. 41/Vol. ix, Annual Report, Benin Division 1946: 8.
5. NIA, CSO 26/2, File No.14617, Vol. xv, Annual Report, Benin Province, 1949: 15.
6. Annual Report, 1946: 8.

7. N.A.I. BD 713, Vol. ii, Direct Tax Collection, 1951–52, 1952.
8. N.A.I. BD. 713, Vol. i, Report on Tax Assessment by Mr. H.O. Uwaifo, 1950.
9. N.A.I. BD. 255, Vol. ii, Native Administration: Revenue and Taxation, 1950.
10. A village now in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State where political affiliation influenced the assessment in taxes paid.
11. The Union claimed to represent the majority of the people in the division and were engaged in political agitations and commenting on petitions to the Native Administration allegedly dominated by members of the Reformed Ogoni. Chief Osagie, the Aighobahi of Benin, was a member and prominent in the agitation. Consequently, the Union members claimed to be over-assessed by the tax assessment officers because of the anti-Native Authority postures. See, N.A.I. BP.40/xv Annual Report, Benin Province 1952: 41; BP. 41, Vol. x Annual Report, Benin Division: 85.
12. N.A.I. BD. 713, Vol. ii, 1952. The Tax Payers Association was dominated by members of a private cult known as the 'Reformed Ogboni Fraternity' whose main objective was to promote the interests of its members.
13. See for example N.A.I., BD 1419, Vol. iv, Government Revenue and Expenditure Estimate, 1948/49, 49/50, 50/51, 1954: 68–429.
14. N.A.I. BD. 841, Vol.iii, Petition Re-Extraordinary Assessment Income Tax, 1950/51, 1951.
15. Mr. H.O. Uwaifo, Report on Tax Assessment.
16. N.A.I, BD.841, Vol. ii, Income Tax-Appeal against petitions, 1953–54, 1954.
17. N.A.I, BP.41/Vol. xiii, Annual Report Benin Division, 1953: 12.
18. Ibid: 11. No account being taken of the arrears of tax collected after the 31st of March.
19. NAI., BP.40, Vol. xiii, Annual Report, Benin Division, 1953.
20. NAI., BP. 40, Vol. xi, Annual Report, Benin Province, 1952: 36.
21. NAI., BD. 713, Annual Report, Benin Division, 1952.
22. Income Tax-Appeal against petitions, 1954.
23. NAI., BP. 2985, Vol. i, Tax Collection, Benin Division, 1953–54, 1953.
24. This was implemented without taking into consideration the adult's internal medical conditions which are not always obvious except through medical examination.
25. Petition Re-Extraordinary Assessment Income Tax, 1951.
26. N.A.I. BD. 255, Vol. iii: Resident, Benin Province to District Officer (DO), Benin Division, 7/7/1953.
27. Annual Report Benin Division, 1953.
28. N.A.I. BP. 1659, Vol. I, Annual Report, Benin Division 1956.
29. N.A.I. BD. 841, Vol. ii, 1954.
30. Income Tax-Appeal against petitions.
31. Annual Report, 1952: 54.
32. Annual Report, Benin Division, 1952.
33. This group was imposed ground and farm rent in addition to the excessive general tax levied by the authority which consequently forced some of them out of the division. See the petition titled: Reference to Mr. Moses Arise of Umuza Siluko Area, No. 138, Income Tax Assessment for 1950–51, 1950.
34. See, N.A.I. BD. 1419, Vol. iii, Government Revenue and Expenditure Estimates, 1953.
35. Government Revenue and Expenditure Estimate, 1948/49, 49/50, 50/51, 1954: 68–429.
36. NAI, BD. 16, Vol. ii, Roads, Benin Division: 33.
37. Annual Report Benin Division, 1953: 26.
38. Government Revenue and Expenditure Estimate, 1955/56.
39. N.A.I. BP. 40, Vol. vx, Annual Report, Benin Province, 1951: 41.
40. Annual Report, Benin Province, 1954: 16–17.
41. Government Revenue and Expenditure Estimate: 369 and 414.
42. The total number of schools in the division increased to 147 with 21 extensions to existing ones while student enrolment increased by about 48% from that of 1952 which stood at 79123 in public

schools. See Annual Report, 1954–55: 3.

43. Annual Report, 1948: 8.

44. This rate was increased from 5/- to 10/- in 1956. See N.A.I. BP. 1659, Vol. I, 1956: 5.

45. Annual Report, 1953: 26–53.

46. N.A.I. BP. 2 Annual Report, Benin Province, 1947: 13.

47. The administrative head of the region based in Ibadan, headquarter of the western region.

48. N.A.I. BP1659, Vol.1, 1956: 5.

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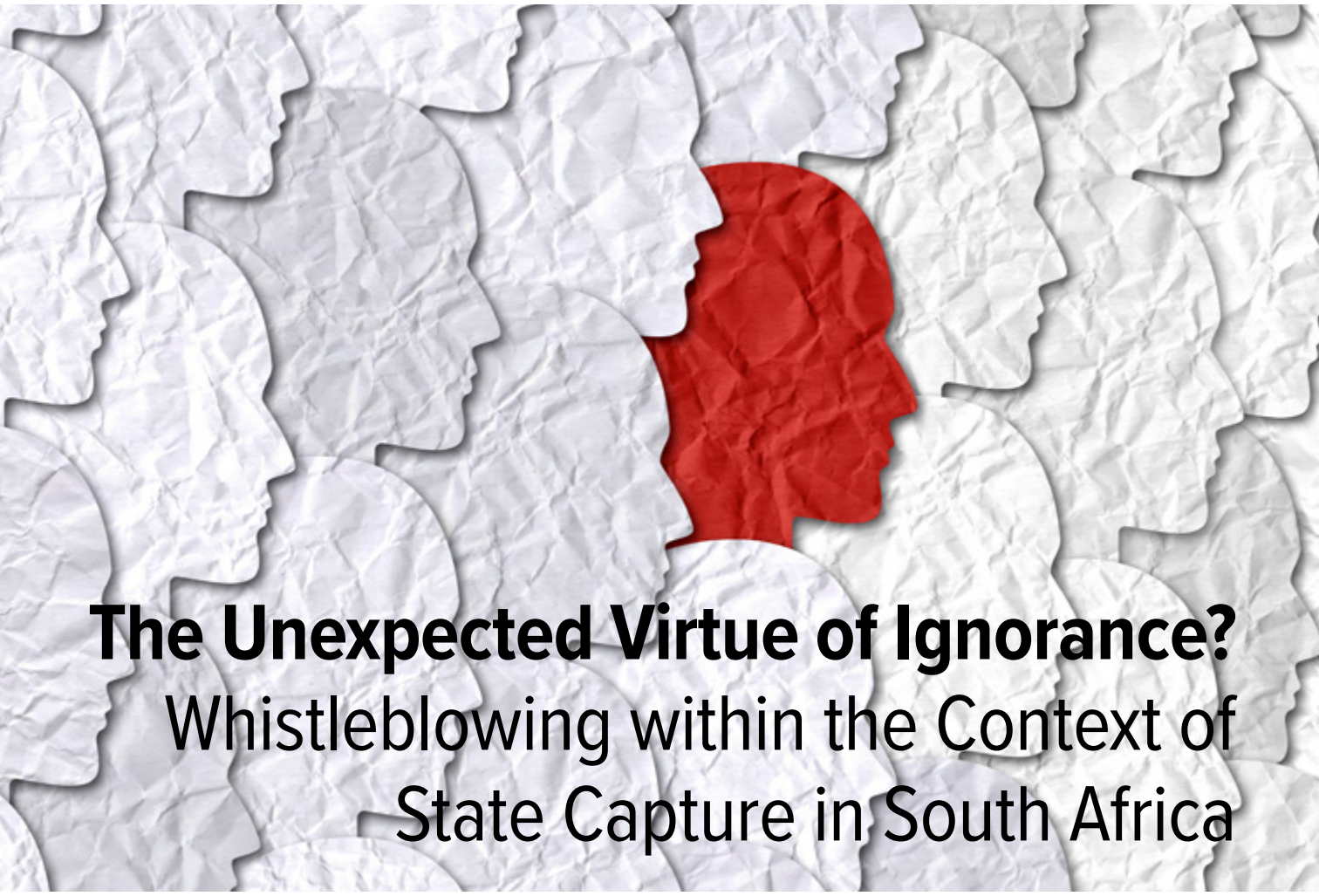

The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance?
Whistleblowing within the Context of State Capture in South Africa

By Ugljesa Radulovic

Abstract

Corruption has been a prevalent phenomenon in South Africa for an extended period, but it was during the presidential reign of Jacob Zuma that corruption evolved into state capture. South African whistleblowers were instrumental in detailing the breadth and depth of state capture during Zuma's presidency. Their disclosures brought the epidemic of state capture into the public eye, making citizens aware of the crippling of state-owned enterprises and the brazen looting of state resources. The whistleblowers, however, did not expect the backlash they would receive from the wrongdoers and their employers. This article presents the experiences of these whistleblowers, emerging from semi-structured interviews conducted with whistleblowers and civil society, as well as document analysis of relevant sources. The whistleblowers' disclosure experiences were marred by various forms of retaliation: work-related retaliation; social retaliation; physical retaliation; and a form of retaliation identified from the narratives of South African state capture whistleblowers—retaliatory lawfare.

Introduction

The title of this paper borrows from Alejandro González Iñárritu's Oscar-winning film— Birdman. The subtitle of Birdman, *The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance*, presents the dilemma of the film's protagonist. The protagonist, Riggan, was ignorant of the difficulty of the task ahead of him. It is because of this ignorance that he was able to produce something meaningful, reinventing his domain of the dramatic arts. Not knowing that he would achieve something great resulted in him unconsciously approaching his domain. This lack of consciousness of the magnitude of what he would achieve would lead him to greatness. However, for Riggan, this greatness was achieved at a substantial personal cost as he unsuccessfully attempted to commit suicide on stage only to wake up in a hospital with a surgically reconstructed nose. Though, in retrospect, maybe this trade-off was well worth it for Riggan. He exchanged his nose for applause, with critics lauding his attempted suicide as an avant-garde theatrical performance.

Just as the theatrical stage for Riggan was a difficult one, so too was the stage for South Africa. The stage that was set was one of the country grappling with state capture, which is when private actors and corrupt state officials exert full control over state affairs and institutions, for the purposes of personal gain (Desai, 2018: 501; Fazekas and Tóth, 2016: 320). State capture is a much more complex form of corruption, which leads to further reaching negative consequences for the state. Whistleblowers were instrumental in exposing state capture, but they were just as ignorant as Riggan. When they decided to blow the whistle on state capture, they were unaware of how important their acts would be. The outcome for South Africa was significant, as the whistleblowers' disclosures exposed that state capture reached the top echelons of the South African state. Their disclosures exposed a deep crisis that has affected the vast majority of South Africans, negatively impacting the economy with money siphoned out of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), such as Eskom, Transnet, South African Airways (SAA), SA Express and Denel, for the personal benefit of a few. They also exposed that state capture involved many actors across several institutions—illustrating just how far-reaching state capture in South Africa had become. Their acts of disclosure set in motion the impetus for positive change, with Jacob Zuma having been compelled to resign as president of South Africa. Commissions investigating the allegations of wrongdoing emerged, and the broader South African public became aware of state capture.

The actions of whistleblowers would put in motion a chain of events that would promote accountability in South Africa. A problem arises in that the whistleblowers were unaware of the virtue of their actions. When they decided to act, they had no supportive audience—South African citizens were generally not even familiar with the meaning of the term 'state capture'. Yet, this changed once the whistleblowers' audience began to appreciate them. But these whistleblowers are in the same predicament as Riggan: they exchanged their noses for applause. They were lauded by broader South African society for their actions, which aided in detailing the depth and breadth of state capture. However, they have suffered immensely by being subjected to physical, social, and occupational retaliation because of their disclosures. The whistleblowers were not cognisant of the severity of the impact their disclosures would have on their lives. Only civil society stood on the stage with them by providing them support. It is in light of this trade-off (contributing to the advancement of South Africa's democracy against huge personal costs), that this article seeks to detail the contributions made by South African whistleblowers and the subsequent detriments they suffered.

State capture in South Africa: A synopsis

Corruption entails the misuse of state positions for personal gain, being an opportunistic action that is enacted by a loosely connected network (Bagashka, 2014: 166; Bhorat, Buthelezi, Chipkin, Duma, Mondi, Peter, Qobo, Swilling, and Friedenstein, 2017: 5). Corruption has been prevalent for a long time in South Africa. It dates back to apartheid but appears to have grown in prevalence after 1994, with it reaching epidemic proportions with the arms scandal (Hyslop, 2005; Lodge, 1998: 187; van Vuuren, 2017). However, the relationship between the former South African president, Jacob Zuma, and the Gupta brothers plunged the country into state capture.

State capture is far more perfidious than corruption.

It distinguishes itself from corruption because of its complexity and higher degree of organisation, whilst also resulting in far worse consequences than corruption; moreover, private actors will exert full control over the state's integral elements for their own benefit (Desai, 2018: 501; Fazekas and Tóth, 2016: 320). The influence of private interests is illicit and non-transparent, negatively impacting the public good (Fazekas and Tóth, 2016: 320; World Bank, 2000: 3).

When unchecked, state capture reaches epidemic proportions, with the wrongdoers (namely the corrupt politicians and private corruptors) assuming complete political control, complicating the everyday lives of ordinary citizens due to moral erosion and the destruction of the rule of law (Longhurst, 2016: 151–152). Consequently, countries undergoing state capture suffer devastating economic detriments (Smith and Thomas, 2015: 783). State capture appears to be more abundant in transitional and developing economies (Bieber, 2003: 39; Longhurst, 2016: 151; Myburgh, 2017: 4; Uzelac, 2003: 113). This is typically because states in transition possess an inability to achieve sustainable transformation, which stems from contextual factors, structure, and geopolitical competition (Longhurst, 2016: 151). If the process of transformation is incomplete (with the state still undergoing transformation), interference and irregularities come into play, which leads to the capturing of a state (Uzelac, 2003: 113). South Africa is one such state having gone through a triple transition (Uys, 2014: 205–213) and, as a result, has become susceptible to state capture (Bester and Dobovšek, 2021: 85). The transition occurred on three levels: political (shifting towards democratic rule), economic, and social (Uys, 2014: 205–213). The country underwent a political transition through the implementation of an electoral democracy with elections becoming free and fair in 1994, a progressive post-apartheid Bill of Rights, and a Constitutional Court for protecting South Africa's constitutional democracy (Uys, 2014: 206). The economic transition sought to fundamentally transform the economic order of the country, with several macro-economic restructuring principles applied in 1994 which were replaced with the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy in 1996 (Uys, 2014: 209). Several replacement strategies and plans continued to be implemented throughout the 2000s (Uys, 2014: 209–211). The social transition was concerned with racial reconciliation and the creation of Nelson Mandela's vision of a 'rainbow nation' based on tolerance, plurality and diversity (Uys, 2014: 212). Though, as the country was undergoing a transition, it appeared to be experiencing a fragile stability (Beall, Gelb and Hassim, 2005: 682).

This fragile stability coupled with the threat of state capture poses a risk for any country to descend into a fragile state. A fragile state is one where the fundamental structures of the state are deteriorating, vulnerable or broken (Nay, 2013: 327). South Africa is currently ranked within the warning category on the Fragile States Index (Fragile States Index, 2022). This should present a concern for powerholders, namely state officials, and 'ordinary' citizens in South Africa, particularly considering the country's history of state fragility and dysfunction (Beall et al., Greffrath, 2015). The alleged key player in South Africa's state capture, the Gupta brothers—Ajay, Atul and Rajesh, arrived from India in 1993 and began to establish relationships with high-ranking government officials (Basson and du Toit, 2017: 56–61; Pauw, 2017: 20). From 1998, the Zuma faction began to benefit from the Gupta family economically. When Zuma eventually assumed presidency, the Gupta family began receiving preferential treatment with lucrative state contracts being conveniently awarded to them (Basson and du Toit, 2017: 59; Desai, 2018: 500; Shoba, 2018; Sundaram, 2018). Cabinet appointments were reshuffled at will to appoint people that would aid

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the Zuma and Gupta families in their capture of the state (Desai, 2018: 500; Madonsela, 2016: 86–87; Ntsabo, 2019). Once it became evident that crucial South African state institutions had been captured, other actors jumped on board to further the degree of state capture in the country. Institutions such as the Department of Correctional Services (Styan and Vecchiatto, 2019: 39) and the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) were, then, captured (Dlamini, S., 2019; Mahlaka, 2019a; Mahlaka, 2019b; PIC Commission, 2019), and this was executed not by the Gupta family but by newly emerging players with links to the African National Congress (ANC).

Whistleblowing, which is when former or current organisation members disclose information regarding 'illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organisations that may be able to effect action' (Near and Miceli, 1985: 4), positioned itself as a mechanism to combat state capture.

Method

A qualitative research methodology consisting of two research methods was employed to examine the experiences of South African state capture whistleblowers in light of their disclosures. The dominant information source for the study came from semi-structured interviews with whistleblowers and members of civil society organisations. A total of fourteen participants were interviewed, namely: six whistleblowers and eight members of civil society organisations that supported whistleblowers. The members of civil society organisations that were interviewed all formed part of organisations that were instrumental in supporting whistleblowers, particularly organisations that aided state capture whistleblowers in communicating their messages.

Non-probability purposive sampling was employed when selecting the participants. Purposive sampling proved useful as the participants were easily identifiable, with whistleblowers' identities being in the public domain because of their disclosures. The identities of members of civil society who were directly involved in assisting the whistleblowers in amplifying their messages regarding state capture were also available in the public domain. Once having gained initial access to the participants (with the initial sample consisting of seven participants), snowball sampling was then used to secure access to additional participants. Furthermore, access to some high-profile whistleblowers was secured via various mutual acquaintances.

The semi-structured interviews were supplemented with document analysis. This entailed the analysis of digital and print news articles, books discussing the exposure of state capture in South Africa, and official documents. The text data was used to corroborate the narratives presented by the participants. It also served the purpose of further detailing the experiences of the whistleblowers, and gaining insight into the experiences of whistleblowers which were inaccessible for this study. After gathering the data, thematic analysis was used to determine recurring themes emerging from the interviews.

Whistleblowers' state capture revelations

Several whistleblowers, aided by civil society, were instrumental in exposing state capture in South Africa. Their disclosures exposed the breadth and depth of capture in key state institutions. They were not acting together but rather independently, in varying temporal and spatial contexts. They were, however, bound by their contribution to the state and their experiences of retaliation. This section presents each whistleblower's individual contribution to the state capture revelations.

Glynnis Breytenbach's disclosure occurred during the early stages of state capture. While occupying the position of prosecutor at the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), she blew the whistle on Nomgcobo Jiba and Lawrence Mrwebi's interference in NPA proceedings (Breytenbach and Brodie, 2017: 155–158). Jiba and Mrwebi were undermining the capacity of the NPA to function adequately. They abused their positions of power to protect individuals within their network, such as the then-head of Police Crime Intelligence—Richard Mdluli (Breytenbach and Brodie, 2017: 154). Breytenbach's disclosure shed light on the capture of the criminal justice system, which proved to be even more significant as allegations of state capture began to emerge.

Stan and John are two anonymous whistleblowers. As they remain anonymous, they were inaccessible and, thus, Branko Brkic of the Daily Maverick and Stefaans Brummer of amaBhungane were interviewed to gain

insight into their experiences, with several news articles also being consulted. The two whistleblowers were in possession of 300,000 emails that documented the corrupt relationship between the Gupta brothers, Duduzane Zuma (Jacob Zuma's son), heads of South African SOEs, international and local companies (Dlulane, 2018; Head, 2018; Ramphele, 2018). They provided this information to South African human rights lawyer Brian Currin and the independent media outlets amaBhungane and the Daily Maverick. The media outlets helped the whistleblowers make a public disclosure of this information, aptly named the Gupta Leaks. The Gupta Leaks would eventually serve as evidence in the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, which was a public inquiry established by Jacob Zuma in January 2018 to investigate allegations of state capture, corruption, and fraud within the South African public sector.

Mosilo Mothepu, who was interviewed for this study, was the CEO and Director of Trillian Financial Advisory. She became aware of Trillian's close ties with the Gupta family. Trillian had favourable contracts with the SOEs Eskom, Transnet, South African Airways (SAA), SA Express and Denel. Trillian management also possessed knowledge of ministerial reshuffles that were to occur, which they intended to use to establish a business advantage for the company. She resigned from Trillian three months after becoming its CEO and later blew the whistle to the Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela, who was compiling the State of Capture report (Mothepu, 2021: 85; 89–96). Subsequently, Bianca Goodson also blew the whistle at Trillian. She added further credibility to Mothepu's claims, supporting the allegations that dubious relationships existed between Gupta associates and the Zuma regime (Wiener, 2020: 261–262).

Cynthia Stimpel, who was also interviewed for this study, was the group treasurer of SAA when she blew the whistle on attempted capture within the flag carrier airline. She contested a R256 million advisory services deal to be signed with a service provider she deemed suspect. Having compared quotes from banks that would offer the same services as the suspicious provider, at much lower costs, she blew the whistle internally in an attempt to stop the transaction. With her internal disclosure being ignored, Stimpel was forced to go public and enlisted the help of the media and a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to stop the deal from occurring (Stimpel, 2021: 153).

Joanne, a whistleblower who opted to remain anonymous for this research, was on the board of an important SOE. She testified at a commission of inquiry that the SOE was undergoing state capture, with the ruling ANC planting their agents to control the organisation. State funds were misappropriated, with bonus structures being manipulated in favour of those in powerful positions. Furthermore, the institution was to undergo an unnecessary IT structure modernisation which would have likely opened the door to further looting of the SOE.

Altu Sadie, the CFO for Cards and Electronic banking at Ecobank Transnational Incorporated (ETI), testified at the PIC Commission regarding wrongdoing at the West African bank. His testimony exposed the severity of capture at the PIC (Sadie, 2019: 1–36). He questioned the PIC's investment into Ecobank, reasoning that investing in a bank with a poor credit rating was an unnecessary risk. Anonymous whistleblower, James Nogu, shed further light on issues within the PIC. Nogu disclosed that board members and management of the PIC were engaging in impropriety and corruption (Dlamini, P., 2019). In addition, Simphiwe Mayisela revealed further improprieties occurring at the PIC. After a short period working as the head of IT Security at the PIC, he was designated to uncover the identity of whistleblower James Nogu. A series of events brought Mayisela into contact with the Cyber Crime Unit of the Hawks, through which he gained super admin access at the PIC. Having access to highly secure data, he determined that Nogu's allegations were, in fact, true, and he supported Nogu's allegations by making his own disclosure.

Angelo Agrizzi, who was the COO for Bosasa, revealed that the Department of Correctional Services was captured. Bosasa accomplished this by gifting bribes and luxury items to government officials in exchange for contracts with the Department (Styan and Vecchiatto, 2019: XI). Agrizzi's disclosure highlighted a highly-flawed public procurement system.

The societal impact of the whistleblowers' disclosures has been immense for South Africa. With the severity of corruption and capture becoming public knowledge, their disclosures raised general public awareness of how severely compromised the country

was across many levels. It was likely the eleventh hour before South Africa descended into a fully-fledged fragile state, with the whistleblowers' revelations raising the red flags that would stop that descent. State capture has undeniably impacted the South African economy, with investor confidence waning, which has greatly impacted the ordinary South African citizen's life. However, without the whistleblowers' testimonies, the Zondo Commission would not have been promulgated. The Zondo Commission played an integral role in comprehensively detailing state capture and fingering the wrongdoers. It also set forward recommendations to combat corruption and capture within the state (with the hope of recovering the economy), whilst commending the role of whistleblowers. Ultimately, the role of South African state capture whistleblowers was one which led to an increased pressure for statesmen to be held to account for their actions and, thus, contributed to the advancement of democracy. The whistleblowers have all, unfortunately, suffered retaliation despite the numerous positive ethical benefits for society which have flowed from their disclosures. This study has identified four types of whistleblower retaliation.

Work-related retaliation

Work-related retaliation is when organisations engage in tactics of normative violence (Kenny, Fotaki and Scriver, 2019: 812), which is a form of 'violence that is socially defined as legal, acceptable or moral' (Ball-Rokeach, 1980: 45). Work-related retaliation can vary 'from subtle indications of displeasure to drastic victimization' (Uys, 2022: 116). It aims at discrediting and destroying the whistleblower by using workplace-related tactics such as blacklisting, dismissal, transfers to another section, personal harassment, character assassination, and the implementation of disciplinary proceedings (Cortina and Magley, 2003: 248). Workplace bullying can also occur, which entails 'repeated and persistent patterns of "negative" workplace behaviour' (Keashly and Neuman, 2008: 2). Work-related retaliation is institutionally formalised by recording it in the whistleblower's employment records (Miceli, Near and Dworkin, 2008: 15).

Work-related retaliation often results in whistleblowers being dismissed or suspended from work, or undergoing a process where their eventual dismissal would be legally justified (Bashir, Khattak, Hanif and Chohan, 2010: 8–9; Uys 2022: 116). Whistleblowers often end up bearing that work-related stigma and struggle to find employment post-disclosure. As work-related retaliation comprises normative violence, rejection and 'acute mental strain' mark the effects of such forms of retaliation (Kenny et al., 2019: 812).

Disciplinary proceedings

Mayisela, who was interviewed for this study, was one such state capture whistleblower that experienced work-related retaliation. He was suspended without a charge and underwent a disciplinary proceeding after he blew the whistle. After almost ten years at SAA, Stimpel was also subjected to suspension. Management at SAA cited 'insolence' as a reason for her suspension. The citation for insolence emerged because she accused the SAA board of unethical behaviour, thereby allegedly committing misconduct. Stimpel possesses evidence, in the form of written messages, that her interaction with the board members regarding the wrongdoing was respectful. She felt that the citation of 'insolence', which provided the basis for her suspension, was unlawful.

Bureaucratic citations within organisations are often manipulated to retaliate against whistleblowers. Stimpel recalled that SAA cited her failure to adhere to the company's 'internal anonymous policy' as one of the reasons for her suspension, a common tactic employed to enact work-related retaliation against those who expose wrongdoing. Stimpel explained that there was a prescribed process for reporting such serious misconduct, which involved making a disclosure on a Deloitte-operated website. She, however, felt uneasy about following this procedure because it would ultimately bring her disclosure to the attention of the very individuals she was reporting on—the board of directors at SAA. Instead, she chose to write a separate email to Deloitte in an attempt to prevent her disclosure from reaching the SAA board. Her decision to bypass this process resulted in work-related retaliation being directed towards her.

Breytenbach faced internal disciplinary charges that were proven to be incorrect. She was also side-lined at work. This form of retaliation affected Breytenbach adversely, despite the fact that she continued to earn a large salary while doing no work. It negatively impacted her workplace experience as she wanted

to be a constructive member of the NPA and not a passive 'employee':

> 'So, I earned a massive salary, did nothing, it sounds wonderful, but it's not really, and at some point, you know, you become a little agitated and earning such a massive salary and doing nothing to earn it.'

It was after experiencing this side-lining that Breytenbach decided to leave the NPA. In contrast, some whistleblowers are fortunate and willing to be reinstated in their original work roles after retaliation. Joanne still remains at the SOE despite having testified at a commission against what she perceived to be attempts at capturing the organisation. She was, however, forced to resign from the board of directors briefly but later occupied the same role again. After her disclosure, Joanne noticed that potential whistleblowers became fearful of losing their jobs or not being promoted. According to her, employees at the SOE were 'disarmed' and 'intimidated' as a means to dissuade future whistleblowers.

Loss of work

As the examples of other whistleblowers in this study showed, work-related retaliation can also follow a more immediate process. Some organisations bypass the steps of suspension and hearings or suggesting resignation, and enforce an immediate dismissal. Initially, Sadie's superior shielded him against retaliation. However, when she left the organisation, Sadie's buffer disappeared, and the wrongdoers engaged in work-related retaliation against him. The immediate form of retaliation that he faced was dismissal.

After the dismissal, Sadie's life was irreversibly changed. He lost a very good salary, children's school fees being paid for by the organisation, a non-contributing medical aid, and a company-paid cellular contract. He felt that he had 'lost just about everything' while the wrongdoer continued 'having a fantastic time getting huge pay in pounds.' Looking back, Sadie maintained that whistleblowing is 'the worst thing you can do.' His point of view is understandable because of the financial burden resulting from his dismissal. Sadie lamented the struggle of having to explain to his children how he can no longer work in the banking sector, how they have no money, are unable to purchase commodities and cannot afford to go on holiday. In retrospect, Sadie concluded that ETI used the strategy of dismissal to dissuade people from bringing wrongdoing within the firm to the fore:

> *'They don't want whistleblowers. The thing is, they actually want examples to show people to not whistleblow, to not take on. Do not report on the management because we will find you, and we will get rid of you.'*

Being rendered unemployable

Whistleblowers commonly experience work-related retaliation affecting their professional lives outside of the institution they made a disclosure about. This entails rendering the whistleblower unemployable, the apex of occupational detriment.

The professional careers of whistleblowers are destroyed, with their disclosures haunting them in their search for prospective employment. Goodson said that her life was 'ruined' since blowing the whistle on Trillian (Comrie, 2017), and she was removed from her post-Trillian job at the accounting software firm Sage. This occurred in light of her pending disclosures regarding Trillian and its involvement in perpetrating state capture, as Sage believed that Goodson's disclosures could damage the company's reputation (van Zyl, 2017).

Whistleblowers in South Africa are often not even considered for positions because of having previously made a disclosure. Sadie said that he became unemployable due to the betrayal by the very institution he attempted to protect. He said he experienced significant mental strain when his ex-employers accused him of being a disgruntled former employee. He felt that his name was being 'dragged through the mud,' and that he was being discredited. This retaliation had a significant impact on Sadie's further career, making him an undesirable employee.

Mayisela suffered significant occupational harm due to his disclosure, which irreparably damaged his career. Similarly, Stimpel encountered comparable occupational repercussions that have left her unable to secure employment:

'You suffer the loss of your current job. You suffer the loss of any future income because when clients, future prospective companies Google you, they see the main headline. Mine says SAA Defiant Treasurer, and you read further, and it says misconduct, so who is going to hire you?'

This work-related labelling has made it 'very hard to do business with some companies,' according to Mayisela. He felt 'like someone who has got a stigma... or a cloud hanging over him.' Mayisela continues to bear the negative stigma associated with being a whistleblower, which has profoundly and adversely impacted his professional trajectory. He explained that companies tend to err on the side of caution and prefer candidates with no history of whistleblowing. As a result, he is often disregarded by prospective employers. In the past, Mayisela had been a highly sought-after candidate during job interviews, with job offers almost guaranteed. This was evident when he was headhunted for positions throughout his career, including his recruitment by the PIC. However, he now encounters significant difficulties, if not insurmountable barriers, in securing employment. Consequently, Mayisela found himself compelled to establish his own consulting firm, a path he was forced to take.

Work-related ostracisation

Ostracisation is a common informal consequence that whistleblowers have to deal with (Åkerström, 1991: 44). When a whistleblower experiences ostracisation, they end up feeling on the cusp of society, rejected, and abandoned.

Whistleblower ostracisation starts in the workplace. Shortly after Stimpel's disclosure, derogatory workplace electronic correspondence about her was mailed to her colleagues, resulting in them ostracising her. She sensed that they wanted her 'out of the way.' None of the ten team members in her department asked her whether she was coping with her post-disclosure situation. Moreover, they did not even display negative emotions towards her. Colleagues distanced themselves from her, telling her they were warned not to talk to her, and she was continually 'kept out of the loop.' This situation exerted immense mental strain on Stimpel.

In interviewing Mosilo Mothepu, it came to the fore that ostracisation often leads to whistleblowers experiencing feelings of abandonment and loneliness. This starts when the whistleblower first comes out with their disclosure and lasts until well after their disclosure. Out of 250 employees at Trillian, only Mothepu and Goodson blew the whistle on perceived wrongdoing within the organisation. Mothepu felt alone and abandoned when she made her disclosure. She said that her former colleagues resented both her and Goodson and treated them with disdain. Mothepu argued that others stood by and did nothing because wrongdoers are well-connected, as they are in possession of social capital and resource power. The wrongdoers are able to recruit loyal subordinates that offer support to the wrongdoers at the top of the hierarchal structure. Therefore, it becomes difficult to stand up against people with that amount of position power, which often dissuades others in standing up against the wrongdoer and supporting the whistleblower.

Breytenbach felt that the sense of abandonment stems from a lack of collegial support, which she referred to as the 'weakness of individuals.' This means that people are not willing to expose themselves and refrain from taking riskier actions. This is why others took no action to support Breytenbach's claims when she blew the whistle. In social science terms, we refer to this as the bystander effect—when people do not take action against a wrongdoing because they feel that another person will do so (Forsyth, 2014: 229; Gao, Greenberg and Wong-On-Wing, 2015: 86). This occurs because 'perceived individual responsibility is decreased' (Gao et al., 2015: 86); in other words, a diffusion of responsibility transpires.

A prominent South African journalist interviewed for this study, Mandy Wiener, added that those individuals who succumb to the bystander effect typically use the excuse that it is the government's responsibility to 'do their job.' With these individuals, a diffusion of responsibility occurs, shifting responsibility to the government to effect action. The diffusion of responsibility is one socio-cognitive factor that contributes to the bystander effect (Forsyth, 2014: 229). It occurs when individuals in a group do not feel personally responsible for taking

“Ostracisation is an informal consequence that whistleblowers have to contend with not only in their workplace but also in their lives beyond the work environment.”

action, as they (wrongly) presume that other group members will engage in action (Darley and Latané, 1968: 377).

Social retaliation

Social retaliation also accompanies work-related retaliation (Uys, 2022: 118) and is an informal and undocumented process (Miceli et al., 2008: 14–15). When social retaliation occurs, the whistleblower is stigmatised as having negative social characteristics (Bjørkelo, Ryberg, Matthiesen and Einarsen, 2008: 71). As such, the whistleblower experiences negative labelling (Miceli et al., 2008: 128–129), and social ostracisation (Davis, 1989: 5; Rothschild, 2008: 890), feeling disillusioned and humiliated (Uys, 2022: 118–119). These negative practices can entail referring to the whistleblower as a troublemaker or outsider and isolating them by closing ranks (Cortina and Magley, 2003: 248). Whistleblowers end up being excluded from meetings, and co-workers whom they previously considered friends now avoid them (Uys, 2008: 905). This marginalisation tends to occur both in and outside of the workplace (Alford, 2001: 131).

Social ostracisation

Ostracisation is an informal consequence that whistleblowers have to contend with not only in their workplace but also in their lives beyond the work environment. We can, therefore, discern between two types of ostracisation, namely the formerly-discussed work-related ostracisation and social ostracisation.

Whistleblowers often face social ostracisation from their friends and acquaintances, who fear being implicated by association. After Stimpel’s disclosure became public, she said her circle of friends began questioning her actions. In an attempt to address their concerns, she sought to meet with them in person, but none of them were willing to engage with her. This experience left her feeling overwhelmed by a sense of rejection. Stimpel stated that her former friends reacted this way out of fear, as they sought to distance themselves completely to avoid any potential implications tied to their association with her.

Labelling

Labelling accompanies ostracisation as a form of social retaliation. An acquaintance, a colleague, or even a friend might use labels to categorise a whistleblower. These labels carry negative connotations concerned with distrusting the whistleblower, who is perceived as someone who cannot be entrusted with sensitive information. The labels often shadow the whistleblower throughout their life. The personal experiences of South African state capture whistleblowers are a testament to this.

According to both Stimpel and Wiener, a negative stigma is attached to whistleblowers in South Africa. Stimpel had first-hand experience of this, with terms such as ‘snitch,’ ‘impimpi,’[1] and ‘rat’ having been frequently used to refer to her and other whistleblowers. As a result of these labels, she felt that she became a pariah and ‘an outcast.’ Mothepu, like Stimpel, felt that labelling was a significant form of retaliation which she felt constituted a type of ‘character assassination.’

There is also the probability that the media will portray the whistleblower in a negative light. Mothepu experienced this, with mainstream media outlets presenting a negative image of her. She recalled that they labelled her ‘a fraudster, a liar, and disgruntled,’ with some newspapers even creating the impression that they had interviewed her (even though they had not). She felt that her narrative was embellished and did not paint a true reflection of her experience. It

was only later that media reports, and in particular independent media reports, vindicated her and validated her claims.

Public reprimand

During the interview with Mayisela, a distinct form of social retaliation emerged, which proved challenging to classify and categorise under a specific retaliatory theme. The narrative centred around a public reprimand, and this evoked memories of my own experience of being scolded as a schoolboy in front of my classmates.

I reflected on my experience as a twelve-year-old child of immigrants, on the absolute cusp of school social circles, with no social capital. I was a top ten elementary school student, particularly enthusiastic about mathematics. In maths class, the teacher held up a textbook and asked: 'what is this?' I eagerly responded, 'a book' (the correct answer was 'algebra'). A fifteen-minute berating (which felt like hours) ensued in the glaring presence of my peers, which included being labelled as 'the class clown and joker' (my response was not intended as a jest). So how does a schoolboy's experience relate to a state capture whistleblower's experience? It is completely different in terms of magnitude, though the underlying principle is the same.

By making a disclosure and facing the retaliation that accompanies this, a whistleblower already feels on the absolute societal cusp (as evidenced with the whistleblowers' experiences of ostracisation). Yet, having reported something so important in an attempt to remedy wrongdoing, a whistleblower would expect an acknowledgement of gratitude from, at the very least, an official inquiry. Mayisela was not thanked or lauded; he was publicly reprimanded at an official commission. The scars of a public reprimand run deep—twenty-four years later, I still resent the elementary school teacher who reprimanded me. Compared to Mayisela's experience, mine was a reprimand of insignificant proportions. His embarrassment in the glaring public's eyes will leave an everlasting imprint on him.

It is even more paradoxical as the PIC Commission of Inquiry would not have progressed if it were not for individuals like Mayisela, and the same CEO would still have occupied his position in the PIC. Nevertheless, the Commission of Inquiry did not see his contribution positively:

> '*The Commission of Inquiry never saw my contribution as being towards PIC, they saw it as untoward* [the PIC]. *You know, they even said I acted wrongly; I violated the ECT Act*[2] *by sending these documents to the police and all of that. How can I put PIC in detriment if I am sharing information with the police? And secondly, none of the information that I garnered from PIC was for my own benefit…*'

The reprimand was a form of social retaliation. The public reprimand is absurd and illustrates how senseless the whistleblower's disclosure experience can be, yet its tremendous effect could likely dissuade potential whistleblowers from making a disclosure.

Retaliatory lawfare

This paper has identified a form of retaliation not previously acknowledged in literature— retaliatory lawfare. Retaliatory lawfare is when extended hostile legal action is used against a whistleblower. This entails misappropriating the legal framework so that whistleblowers suffer detriments, such as the perpetual delay of final outcomes and the subsequent accrual of exorbitant legal costs. Mothepu said that Trillian's most common retaliatory weapon used against her was lawfare. They accused her of cybercrime, extortion, fraud, contravention of her employment contract, theft of confidential information, perjury, and defeating the ends of justice (Mothepu, 2021: 110). Her criminal case was put 'on top of the heap,' despite the many allegations against those perpetrating state capture, yet the legal structures instead focused on prosecuting Mothepu. She said that the charges against her were 'hot air' to drive attention away from the actual wrongdoers.

Lawfare has been used to delay an outcome in the whistleblowers' legal proceedings and accumulate their legal costs. It has also entailed the use of the legal system to arrest whistleblowers.

Delaying strategies

Wrongdoers utilise retaliatory lawfare to delay or

avoid an outcome, in order to further impede the whistleblower's attempts at closure after blowing the whistle, or to force the whistleblower into a compromise with the wrongdoer. SAA used delaying strategies that made Stimpel waste a lot of time. As a by-product of these delaying strategies, her lawyers recommended that she accept six months' compensation and an early retirement. She compromised with this decision but felt that this was a forced outcome that made her 'give up.'

In Sadie's case, although he emerged victorious, his former employers employed various delaying tactics to prolong the resolution process. He encountered months of delays caused by subsequent appeals filed by the opposing party. Similarly, Breytenbach had to endure three years facing dubious charges brought forth by the very individuals she had blown the whistle on. Mothepu also faced a lengthy sixteen-month period defending herself against allegations.

All of these cases have had significant impacts on the whistleblowers. Kenny and Fotaki (2019: 22) identified these impacts as intangible costs that affect one's family life. This, most frequently, means that whistleblowers lose time with their spouses and children. The accompanying psychological effects can be devastating. In addition, these delays significantly increase the financial costs that whistleblowers have to deal with.

Accrual of costs

Wrongdoers utilise the strategy of retaliatory lawfare with the knowledge that lengthy legal proceedings, resulting from delaying strategies, accrue massive legal costs for those involved in the proceedings. Whistleblowers are generally financially disempowered as a result of post-disclosure unemployment. On the other hand, the wrongdoers tend to possess deep financial reserves (being private corporations and SOEs) and, therefore, have the capacity to further torment whistleblowers with mounting legal costs.

To defend herself against accusations of the breach of her confidentiality agreement, Mothepu resorted to taking legal action against her former employer, bringing the case before the Council for Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration (CCMA). Unfortunately, this legal process resulted in Mothepu accumulating R1.3 million in legal expenses. Mothepu raised concerns about her ability to cover these substantial costs, considering she was unemployed and without a regular income. Eventually, Mothepu was contacted by a state official who informed her that her case needed to be expedited due to the sensitive 'political situation' surrounding it.

A labour lawyer defended Stimpel against the charges of insolence, both at the Labour Court and the CCMA. She spent many hours with her labour lawyer in preparation for her defence, where she was charged a highly discounted fee.

Breytenbach was charged in a criminal court for the same charges she faced in her internal disciplinary proceedings, with the disciplinary charges having already been proven as false. She reflected that her defence cost her around R14 million, despite the fact that there was no substantial case against her, and she was eventually cleared of all criminal charges.

Detainment

The most extreme manifestation of retaliatory lawfare occurs when whistleblowers are subjected to arrests. This involves the malicious exploitation of legal measures within the framework to unjustly apprehend individuals who have exposed wrongdoing. On 6 February 2019, the priority crimes unit, the Hawks, arrested several individuals based on a ten-year-old fraud and corruption investigation into Bosasa (Styan and Vecchiatto, 2019: 217). Only a few days prior, three of those individuals (Agrizzi, and Bosasa executives Andries van Tonder and Frans Vorster) had concluded their testimonies at the Zondo Commission (Styan and Vecchiatto, 2019: 218).

Styan and Vecchiatto (2019: 220) were critical of the Hawks, stating that it took them ten years to arrest someone within Bosasa and when the arrests were eventually made, it was the whistleblowers testifying before the Zondo Commission who were arrested. Gavin Watson, who was repeatedly implicated by whistleblowers as the primary wrongdoer in Bosasa, remained free (Styan and Vecchiatto, 2019: 218). Due to this, Agrizzi opted not to testify at the subsequent Mokgoro Commission[3] (Styan and Vecchiatto, 2019: 220). Agrizzi maintained that the purpose of these

arrests was to sabotage the Zondo and Mokgoro commissions (Styan and Vecchiatto, 2019: 220). He felt that '[t]he whole thing was a set-up' and claimed that it resulted in many people, who intended to blow the whistle, going silent (Styan and Vecchiatto, 2019: 220). The retaliation faced by Bosasa whistleblowers was so severe that it dissuaded not only these whistleblowers from engaging in further exposures but it also deterred prospective future Bosasa whistleblowers. Here, detainment as a form of retaliatory lawfare was successfully used to discourage potential disclosures.

Physical retaliation

Physical retaliation is the severest form of reprisal that a whistleblower can be subjected to. Uys (2022: 119–120) detailed several physical retaliation cases in South Africa revolving around corruption in state organs. Upon analysing these cases, it became evident that physical retaliation can be defined as a deliberate and premeditated act of physically assaulting the whistleblower, often involving the use of a weapon, or threatening to cause physical harm. The potential for physical injuries or even death instils a profound sense of fear and apprehension in the whistleblower. As a result, the whistleblower is forced to live in constant fear for their life as a direct outcome of their decision to come forward (Uys, 2022: 119).

Vytjie Mentor, who disclosed that she was offered a ministerial position by the Gupta family (Madonsela, 2016: 88), feared physical retaliation because of her disclosure. She claimed that the Gupta brothers had 'frightened her with issues around her safety' (Lekabe, 2018). Similarly, whistleblowers interviewed for this study lived with these fears of physical retaliation. Mayisela received many threatening telephone calls, with his family members also being threatened. However, nothing more than threats occurred. Mothepu felt that her safety had been compromised. Because of this, she increased her home and personal security:

> *'I had to get these Trellidors[4], had to get security. I needed a security person to come and do an assessment on my house.'*

In order to ensure her safety, Mothepu takes precautions such as avoiding the same travel routes, varying her routine, and keeping her cell phone's location turned off. She harbours a fear of motorbikes in traffic, as assassins often use this method to make attempts on people's lives.

Following Breytenbach's disclosure, she encountered physical retaliation on three separate occasions. She was forcefully driven off the road once and subjected to gunfire on two occasions. Intriguingly, Branko Brkic, the editor of the Daily Maverick, also experienced a similar life-threatening incident. This prevailing concern was shared among members of amaBhungane and the Daily Maverick during the publication of the Gupta Leaks story, as they feared the possibility of fatal consequences for individuals like Stan and John.

"The potential for physical injuries or even death instils a profound sense of fear and apprehension in the whistleblower. As a result, the whistleblower is forced to live in constant fear for their life as a direct outcome of their decision to come forward"

The assassination of Babita Deokaran (who blew the whistle on the misuse of the Covid-19 pandemic equipment and relief funds) presents the worst possible outcome for the whistleblower. After dropping her child off at school, Babita was gunned down in a rain of bullets in front of her house. She was about to implicate top government health officials involved in a criminal syndicate at the forefront of Covid-19 PPE procurement fraud. (Cruywagen, 2021). There are also several cases of state capture whistleblowers who lost their lives. Moses Thake died after being kidnapped and tortured, and Philemon Ngwenya was murdered in his own home (Uys, 2022: 120). Both whistleblowers detailed the fraudulent diversion of state funds to Gupta-linked Estina dairy farm. Most recently, Cloete

and Thomas Murray, a father and son duo who were liquidators for Bosasa tasked with further detailing the criminal activity of the firm, were assassinated by gunmen whilst driving their vehicle (Horti, 2023).

The reasons standing behind these severe and varied forms of retaliation are grounded in unequal power dynamics. In captured states, the powerholder develops the ability to hinder, disgrace and dismantle political opponents with relative ease (Longhurst, 2016: 152), due to having accrued a disproportionate degree of power. The powerholders, who in this case were the wrongdoers, exercised this power over the whistleblowers who wished to place the knowledge of the wrongdoing into the public domain. As the powerful wrongdoers became fully aware that these disclosures would have dire consequences for their positional security, they acted to mobilise their resources and retaliate against the whistleblowers in an attempt to silence them. Thus, they used power plays as a political manoeuvre to exert power over others, and as 'an aggressive attempt to compel acquiescence by the concentration or manipulation of power' (Isaeva and Crawford, 2022: 250).

Conclusion

It is evident from South African state capture whistleblowers' experiences that, much like Riggan from Birdman, they were ignorant of the possible consequences of blowing the whistle but virtuous because of their ignorance. They changed South Africa's socio-political landscape, for the better, by exposing state capture. Their narratives showed that this came at immense personal costs for them. They were, therefore, ignorant of both the costs that their disclosures would have on their lives and the broader impact that their disclosures would have on South African society.

Their narratives indicate that the present situation for whistleblowers in South Africa does not inspire optimism. Work-related retaliation is abundant, with trumped-up disciplinary proceedings and the resultant loss of work being commonplace. Many whistleblowers, then, face workplace spillover by being rendered unemployable once they are forced out of the organisation where they blew the whistle. They also face work-related ostracisation post-disclosure, often being ignored by colleagues. Retaliation also seeps into non-work-related environments, with whistleblowers facing an abundance of social retaliation. They are, again, ostracised but now by friends, labelled, and might even face absurd but belittling public reprimands. Retaliatory lawfare plays a prominent role in South Africa, with South African whistleblowers being unfairly subjected to the South African legal system. Outcome delaying strategies are used in order to mount costs for the whistleblowers, and the legal framework can also be misappropriated to detain whistleblowers post-disclosure. The worst form of retaliation that a whistleblower can face is that of physical retaliation. This, unfortunately, is a reality for South African whistleblowers, with many of them living in fear of physical retaliation, some having experienced physical retaliation, with even a few having lost their lives due to physical retaliation.

Some whistleblowers have, however, exercised their agency post-disclosure. Cynthia Stimpel is at the forefront of offering support to South African whistleblowers through the civil society organisation The Whistleblower House, Glynnis Breytenbach continues to champion the cause of a free NPA, and Simphiwe Mayisela offers cyber security consultation through his own firm.

However, what the experiences of these whistleblowers ultimately confirm is that South African whistleblowers are offered very little protection throughout the disclosure process. For, if there were a presence of adequate legislative protection, the occurrence of retaliation would likely be far less frequent and severe. This is also evidenced by the recurrent involvement of civil society in supporting whistleblowers in South Africa.

For the situation to improve for South African whistleblowers, whistleblower protection legislation would need to be revised to meet adequate standards. Since revising, and implementing, any piece of legislation is a lengthy process, an immediate mechanism would need to be employed in the interim (one which would still remain in effect after legislative revision). This would entail an accountability system, namely a central state institution for whistleblower support.

Such an institution would prove useful as some whistleblowers struggle to access support from

civil society, with support also being fragmented among many organisations. The central state institution would, then, collaborate with civil society organisations to offer accessible and comprehensive support to whistleblowers.

The central state institution, with the aid of civil society organisations, could also conduct an exploration of the full psychological effect that disclosure has had on South African whistleblowers. This would present a sufficient base of data to develop future whistleblower counselling support programmes. A framework could, thus, be established on creating structured, accessible counselling services that fit with the idiosyncrasy of the whistleblowers.

In conclusion, whistleblowers cannot be solely reliant on individual agency. The impetus needs to lie with the South African state, with input from civil society, to protect and support the South African whistleblower in the face of retaliation. This would ensure that future whistleblowers would not be subjected to the degree of retaliation that the whistleblowers in this study experienced.

Notes

1. A South African derogatory term deriving from Xhosa, Zulu, and English and carrying the meaning of being a police informer or collaborator.
2. The Electronic Communications and Transactions Act 25 of 2002 makes provision for 'the facilitation and regulation of electronic communications and transactions' (Electronic Communications and Transactions Act, 2002: 2).
3. The Mokgoro Commission, led by Justice Yvonne Mokgoro, was a commission of inquiry into the fitness of Nomgcobo Jiba and Lawrence Mrwebi to hold office at the NPA. It produced a 140-page report that criticised Jiba and Mrwebi, finding them dishonest and lacking in integrity and, therefore, being unfit to remain in office (Ramphele, 2019).
4. Trellidors are high-quality, South African made, security doors and burglar-proof bars.

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Wayward Feeling

AUDIO-VISUAL CULTURE AND AESTHETIC ACTIVISM IN POST-RAINBOW SOUTH AFRICA

HELENE STRAUSS

Leila Hall, Assistant Editor of *The Thinker*, in conversation with Prof. Helene Strauss about her recent book, *Wayward Feeling:* Audio-Visual Culture and Aesthetic Activism in Post-Rainbow South Africa (2022; University of Toronto Press).

Leila Hall (LH): Thank you for taking the time to talk to us about your book, *Wayward Feeling: Audio-Visual Culture and Aesthetic Activism in Post-Rainbow South Africa*. The book has just been awarded the University of the Free State Book Prize for Distinguished Scholarship for 2022. Congratulations on the award! Before we delve into a discussion of the book, could you tell us something about yourself, your background, and the work that you do?

Helene Strauss (HS): Thank you, Leila! I am currently a professor in the Department of English at the University of the Free State. I obtained my PhD from the University of Western Ontario, Canada, in 2006, and took up my first permanent academic post in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in July of that same year. Most recently, I was a visiting research associate at Bard College, Berlin, where I completed the manuscript of this book. My current research focuses mainly on Southern African literature and audio-visual culture, feminist and queer aesthetic activisms, protest cultures, mining, and embodied pedagogy.

LH: It sounds like your research spans a wide range of interests! This is certainly reflected in *Wayward Feeling*, which explores varied creative and activist responses to the increasing feelings of disaffection that have taken root in post-apartheid South Africa. Your focus in the book is on the work of South African filmmakers, audio-visual activists, and performance artists. Before we discuss some of the specific audio-visual texts that you analyse, I am curious about two of the key terms in your title and in your book. Firstly, what does the title *Wayward Feeling* signify here? Why have you chosen this title and how does it encapsulate some of the broader arguments and ideas that you put forward in the book? Secondly, could you talk us through the term 'post-rainbow', which as I understand is significantly different to 'post-apartheid'?

HS: Thank you, those questions really get us into the heart of the work. There are many ways in which this term, 'waywardness', helped me to shape my thinking around post-apartheid—and specifically post-rainbow—'structures of feeling', to use Raymond Williams' famous phrase. I tie this together very concretely in the conclusion, where I talk about waywardness as a term for the many creative, life-affirming, and breath-giving ways in which various forms of suffocation—emotional, spiritual, epistemic, economic, environmental, as well as those found within university institutional spaces—are being mitigated in affective and embodied ways by the artists that I address in the book. So, there is this move towards waywardness as what Saidiya Hartman so beautifully refers to as the 'everyday struggle to live free [...] when there is little room to breathe' (2019: 227–228). I was very pleased, at the end of this project, to discover this superb text by Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019), in which she thinks about waywardness in part in terms of the capacity to breathe. Indeed, this is a preoccupation that has long been central to the work of many theorists of racial injustice in the US, South Africa and elsewhere. At that stage of my writing, the breath had already emerged

as a theme in this book, *Wayward Feeling*. So that helped a lot, but I also differentiate between wayward feelings as feelings that are difficult to contain, that are unruly, that cannot be clearly managed, that come out in unpredictable ways, and 'wayward feeling' as a conceptual frame that helps me to tie together the different parts of the book. The first part of this framing is defiant survival in contexts of extreme daily hardship, which is basically an extension of Hartman's notion of breathing in constrained surroundings. The second part, and this pertains specifically to the book's later chapters, is 'wayward feeling' as a marker for the kinds of aesthetic strategies that filmmakers and artists in the book use to enliven viewers and listeners to the sensorial realm of embodied feeling, to draw the body into a kind of ethical responsiveness to scenes of inequality, suffering, and hardship—and maybe to gesture towards alleviating some of that harm. And then, the third part of the definition is as a kind of methodological commitment to undoing the body-mind dualisms that have become so entrenched in the Westernised university and the kind of university that we've inherited here in South Africa. So, this is a condensed account of the definition of 'wayward feeling' I provide in the book.

I prefer the term 'feeling' because of its capaciousness, and its privileging by feminist and queer theorists, a lot of whom I draw on in this study. It's an umbrella term for many other words—including mood, affect, emotion, and sensation—that have been used to do similar work by those who are associated, whether willingly or not, with what we call the affective turn. I chose the term 'feeling' particularly for feminist reasons, because this study is deeply indebted to the body of feminist, queer and antiracist scholarship that has been thinking about the embodied experience of inequality for a much longer time than many of those anthologised in more recent volumes on affect in dominant critical and continental theory.

For the term 'post-rainbow': I periodise this as starting roughly in the mid-2000s, when the affective palliatives offered during the early transitional years started to wear off, which then resulted in a sharp rise in national protest action. It also earned South Africa the unenviable label of being the protest capital of the world. But I also read the 2006 Jacob Zuma rape trial as partly inaugurating this 'post-rainbow'

“ the breath had already emerged as a theme in this book, Wayward Feeling. So that helped a lot, but I also differentiate between wayward feelings as feelings that are difficult to contain, that are unruly, that cannot be clearly managed, that come out in unpredictable ways ”

era. I did this in part for stubborn reasons, because I think it's important to make sure that gender and sexuality are placed at the very centre of the larger intersectional project of decolonial redress, and I don't think any feminist reader of the past twenty or so years of South African history will miss the importance of that key moment for attuning South African publics to some of the failures of the nation-building projects put in place in the immediate aftermath of apartheid, particularly as far as gender justice is concerned. Having said this, I'm less interested in the term 'post-rainbow' as a temporal than as an affective marker, namely as signalling some of the affective complexities left not just in apartheid's wake, but also in the wake of the various projects of affective management—including the widely discussed Truth and Reconciliation Commission—implemented since the end of apartheid. I'd say that the anaesthetising effects of these projects started to wear off most markedly in the mid-2000s when we began to see these new expressions of insurgent citizenship. We also started to see the emergence, however sporadically, of a reinvigorated public sphere. In many ways, aesthetic activisms since then have been filling part of the void left by a government who no longer bothers to invest in the kinds of grand unifying narratives, visions, and nation-building projects that characterised the Mandela and Mbeki eras, as the state has become stuck in the never-ending crisis- and scandal-management cycle.

LH: Your answer already touched quite significantly on affect and embodied experience, which leads well into my next question. A concern with affect is central to this book. You not only explore affect in terms of the feelings of 'despair, disappointment, and rage' (Strauss, 2022: xiii) that have become so prevalent in present-day South Africa, and that reverberate throughout the audio-visual texts that you study, but you go deeper than this in advocating for the importance of understanding how these emotions are inextricably tied to the physical, material body. This is closely linked to the particular way that you use the word 'aesthetic' as related to the original meaning of the word, and as concerned with sensation and feeling, rather than with beauty or artistic merit. In what ways is the centring of the physical body a key part of your study?

HS: My late cat Tulsi Banana, to whom the book is dedicated, offers one entry point into this question. Tulsi suffered from a disease called feline hyperaesthesia syndrome, a condition characterised by episodes of extreme agitation, hallucinations, and even seizures caused by hypersensitivity to sensory stimuli. The treatment she was given for this debilitating condition was a daily dosage of Prozac, which as you know is a medication given to humans to treat depression. Tulsi's condition has haunted me for years, and it certainly influenced how my thinking on aesthetics took shape as I wrote the book. In popular usage, the term used to describe Tulsi's condition, namely hyperaesthesia, reveals more about the history of aesthetics than the term aesthetics itself, since, like the terms anaesthesia and synaesthesia, it still has the body at its centre, whereas aesthetics in its conventional sense as a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of beauty and art has been stripped of this power by many years of elitist disciplinary specialisation and depoliticization designed to serve dominant Western sensibilities. With Tulsi's guidance, I came to understand aesthetics as concerned less with some object confined to a gallery, museum, page, or a screen, than with the muddle of affective co-existence, and the capacity of audio-visual cultural production to relationally redirect the flow of our bodily energies.

Aesthetic activisms, as they feature in the book, are concerned specifically with the intersections between politics, sociality, and material affective embodiment. These activisms reach us at various stages of being either numbed to or enlivened by the state of the world. A lot of these insights have become commonplace in the fields of decolonial affect studies, and feminist art and cultural theory, but when I started this project, I was surprised by the relative absence of work reading the combustive terrain of protest and audio-visual mediation in South Africa through an affective lens. That was the case certainly at the start of the project, though this has now started to be addressed within pockets of South African cultural theorising.

As I wrote the book, it further struck me that extractive and colonial capitalism's current culmination in the climate crisis has turned all of us into Tulsi Bananas in some or other way, as we are trying—and more often than not failing—to manage the effects of various forms of overstimulation and violence on our psyches, our bodies, and our spirits (albeit from varying places of privilege). It's not an accident that we are currently facing a global pandemic of addiction to anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medication, or related drugs across the upper and downer spectrum. This is not really the topic of the book, but these issues intersect with the book's interest in the many ways in which cultural workers have been harnessing the affectively enlivening or dulling capacities of the body towards visions of a better future than the one to which our current reality seems to point us.

LH: That's so interesting that Tulsi set so many ideas and thoughts into motion. Could you tell us more about the process of writing this book? What initially sparked the idea for the book? What drew you to the specific audio-visual texts that you analyse? How did the ideas and main arguments in the book begin to coalesce as the project unfolded?

HS: Writing the book was informed in large part by my transnational biography. I spent many years in Canada prior to returning to South Africa to take up my current post. It was during my time in Canada, in conversation with many peers and friends, that the book's initial preoccupation with these complex reciprocities between body, sense, world, and politics, began to take shape. But the book was written after my return to South Africa and specifically during the time that I served as the Chair of the English Department at the University of the Free State. So,

it was very much informed by my own fluctuating feelings about various shifts in public culture during this time, and the forms of protest to which these shifts gave rise. But, perhaps more importantly, my interest in the entanglement of the social and the psychic, and the personal and the political, was driven by my longstanding concern with forms of mediation that propel South African publics towards what I call more affectively discriminating and ethical ways of inhabiting gross social inequality. The various turns associated with growing international scholarly interest in feeling, emotion, affect, mood, and so forth, offered a generative lens for re-thinking the post-rainbow South African moment and the failures of approaches that try to focalise our current political ferment through the lens of cognition—or even the psychological—alone.

The filmmakers, audio-visual artists, and aesthetic activists that drew my attention in the study did so in large part for how they harness the full embodied sensorium in a range of conscientizing aesthetic projects. And by conscientizing I mean not simply a raising of awareness that would accompany a straightforward dissemination of knowledge. Instead, most of the creative cultural workers that I discuss in this study conscientize in and through their appeal to bodily energies that exceed what can be fully articulated through conventional discursive or linguistic means. They express the malaise of our time through a deliberate engagement with affective socialities that include, but also exceed, language. My aim in the book was to take guidance from these cultural workers as I tried to interpret some of the key moments in recent South African history—including the Marikana massacre, the hashtag student protests, ongoing feminist organising against gender-based violence, and outbreaks of xenophobic violence—through the lens that some of the scholarship on affect provided. But also, through an engagement with post-rainbow audio-visual cultural texts and performances that, in both explicit and more subtle ways, invest in undoing the afterlives of historical harm, the project was able to highlight the complex collective embeddedness of individualised feeling in larger structural and historical currents that exceed our immediate experiential biographies. The book further identified in the tension between publicly prescribed or sanctioned feeling, and the feelings called forth by our everyday lives, an enormously generative site of inquiry.

“through an engagement with post-rainbow audio-visual cultural texts and performances that, in both explicit and more subtle ways, invest in undoing the afterlives of historical harm, the project was able to highlight the complex collective embeddedness of individualised feeling in larger structural and historical currents that exceed our immediate experiential biographies.”

LH: In the book, you write about an awareness of your own positionality in South Africa today, and how you—as a white South African—are inevitably a beneficiary of South Africa's colonial and apartheid histories. How did this awareness of your positionality influence and inform the writing of this book, and how does this awareness continue to influence and inform your research and teaching?

HS: This is a very important question that white South Africans, and white academics, must continue to confront as we try to formulate newer and better answers. And this shifts continuously; the work here is never done. As my former colleague Daniel Coleman once taught me, citing Malcolm X's famous claim, racism is like a Cadillac: there's a new model every year. One of the most important outcomes of the hashtag student protests has been a renewed emphasis on holding white academics to account in university spaces in terms ranging from curriculum design to improving equity in hiring. Inhabiting this higher education environment, with students across the racial spectrum, has been instructive in guiding me towards responses to this question not driven by defensiveness, but by a genuine interest in mapping new forms of relationality that are anchored in accountability and a sincere concern with trying to

undo harm. And there's certainly a great deal of harm left to be undone in this country, especially on the part of those of us who inherit unearned racial privilege.

So, it's imperative for me as an educator to help students find new ways of crossing experiential racial divides ethically. For white students, undoing the histories of racism from which we continue to benefit demands that we take a role in a 'political project that outstrips one's own interests' (2016: 197), as psychoanalytic and critical race theorist Derek Hook so memorably phrases it. Working towards an ethical politics of care, reparation, and interconnectedness in this sense requires that one step out of the overdetermining 'I, me, mine' story (a lesson I take from my yoga practice), and learn to genuinely look at how suffering can be alleviated. In the book, this comes through for instance in Chapter 4 on 'Feeling the Fall' and the amazing work that student activists and scholars did during the #Fallist period to place Black pain squarely on the national agenda. And part of the imperative and the political project of that chapter was to listen to that call, to not simply pathologise or anthropologise Black pain, but instead—and this is something that white students and scholars especially must do—to look at the roots of Black pain. Doing so requires that we confront the histories, the affective, the political, and the social modalities at the root of Black pain, to which students so powerfully drew our attention. It's also important to get out of those deep psychic grooves that leave white students especially within their racial siloes, and instead to face Black pain without dismissing it, without retreating from it, and to do so knowing that one cannot share this experiential reality. This is a point that Sara Ahmed makes beautifully in her reading of witnessing another's pain. She says it's crucial not to transform somebody else's pain into one's own sadness. And this is something that white people so often love to do, that is, to again place ourselves at the centre, whereas what's needed is to acknowledge that we cannot know this pain, but that this experiential gulf does not absolve us of the ethical obligation to act towards undoing that which causes the pain.

And then, just one more point here: when I went back and re-read the book prior to drafting the conclusion, I noticed that my growing interest in the cultural politics of mining had a formative role to play in how the various threads in the book came together, and specifically in how one needs to re-think the inheritance of white privilege as something that works not only in discursive and economic ways, but also biochemically, in the sense that we inherit forms of bodily health by virtue of our positioning within histories of racism. As white South Africans, we might for instance live in areas that are less polluted than the areas identified by the apartheid government for Black South Africans, and we may therefore be protected from the many forms of environmental racism that have settled into Black people's bodies—often across generational lines. So, part of the agenda here has been to first acknowledge those very specific forms of privilege, but also to think differently about an ethics of healing, which I get to in Chapter 5 of the book, where I discuss the work of Gabrielle Goliath, but also in my Conclusion where I think more carefully about the embodied politics of the 'shutdown' in the context of the corporate university and the contemporary climate crisis.

LH: In Chapter 3 of the book, you discuss Rehad Desai's documentary *Miners Shot Down*, which investigates the Marikana massacre of 2012, in which 34 striking miners at Lonmin Platinum Mine were killed by the South African Police Service. The Marikana massacre, as you and numerous other critics have pointed out, is now widely understood as a turning point in South Africa's post-apartheid socio-political imagination. For you, Marikana also signifies the beginning of increased securitization and what you term 'affective engineering' (Strauss, 2022: 21) in post-apartheid South Africa. Could you talk us through your understanding of Marikana, how it forms a central part of this book, and what drew you to Desai's documentary?

HS: The Marikana massacre itself really shifted attentions around the mining industry: the ongoing struggles of the men who are locked into these unsustainable forms of extractive labour, but also of women—both those working in the mines and those impacted by the ongoing injustice of migrant labour. These experiences have been part of what was swept under the rug during the heady days of the early post-transitional and liberation euphoria years. The Marikana massacre brought this reality, which the ending of apartheid has not alleviated, newly to the forefront of people's attentions. And, as a turning

point, I think increasingly mining has, following this massacre, emerged as a key consideration for many contemporary cultural theorists in South Africa, specifically also because of how the politics and the history of extraction are currently culminating in a growing climate crisis. So, there are multiple strands that come together around histories of extraction in the text. But the third chapter, alongside Desai's documentary, very concretely tries to listen to the miners themselves. What drew me and many other scholars to this documentary is precisely the fact that it centres the experiences and perspectives of the miners. Their voices, as those of us who lived through that moment will remember very vividly, were muted in the kind of rush towards wrapping this up, towards affective management, towards hurriedly declaring a week of national mourning, without having really stated what precisely was being mourned. This rush towards closure was particularly striking given the fact that the surviving miners were still at the time being held accountable for the deaths of their comrades, a charge justified under that archaic apartheid-era 'common-purpose doctrine,' which extends criminal liability to all involved in an action deemed unlawful. What we saw then was akin to what Rob Nixon might call a 'turbo-capitalist' (2011: 4) scramble to manage the affective, political, and of course financial, fallout of the massacre, and to swiftly lull South African publics into a false sense that the crisis had passed.

Miners Shot Down does the opposite of this: it forces South African publics to slow down, to get the side of the story that the mainstream media brushed over. The politics of securitisation that we saw emerge in the aftermath of the massacre made me think very concretely about 'neoliberal time' as characterised by the use of many opportunistic temporal tactics to direct or divert public attention for the sake of securing the interests of capital, first and foremost. And so, temporality became a thread that ran through the entire manuscript. The accelerated temporality of overcoming, for instance, is one that we've seen emerge in many tense moments in history, where we are told that we've prevailed over all these hardships, and those public declarations then serve to delegitimise the responses and the traumas of those whose experience of time does not align with national structures of feeling. If one remains attached to loss and suffering in a melancholic way, one is then stigmatised as pathologically refusing to move forward, when in fact these national initiatives don't chime with the individual experience of trauma and loss. The miners who survived this incident have never, in fact, been at the forefront of these national initiatives of mourning. They were designed more as a way of placating national South African publics. Thankfully, a very robust creative public sphere emerged in the wake of Marikana, in which precisely these supposedly pathological attachments to loss, these forms of productive melancholia, started to power interventions aimed at addressing the hardship and the pain of people at the centre of events like these in a more substantive way. These interventions include the work done by a range of civic organisations, as well as aesthetic mediations of this moment in documentaries, various forms of performance and audio-visual artwork, as well as in literary texts. Most recently, the poet and academic Uhuru Phalafala's volume *Mine Mine Mine*, offers a particularly compelling rethinking of the ongoing destruction wrought by South Africa's history of gold mining in particular.

There's a connection also between the chapter on Marikana and Chapter 5 of the book, 'Feminist Resonance', in which I consider Gabrielle Goliath's moving mediations of the experience of gender-based violence, and her long-standing investment in the work of reparation, care, repair, and healing. Desai's documentary on Marikana came out at a time when a lot of the information that he shares was not widely available, so it was a very necessary move, but many feminist theorists have subsequently criticised the documentary for the absence of women's voices. A lot of subsequent work, including a film such as Aliki Saragas' *Strike a Rock* and the writings of Phalafala and others, has centred the experiences of women who are either affected by histories of migrant labour, and were left for years on end with living husbands who were absent, women who work in the mines themselves (the focus, for instance, of Asanda Benya's research), or the women in the surrounding communities.

The kind of aesthetic strategies that Desai uses to focus our attentions, quite rightly, on the suffering of the miners, have further been approached with greater caution by someone like Gabrielle Goliath, who has long expressed concern about the ethics of screening violence and extreme bodily suffering. These

concerns are especially relevant to African contexts, where a long history exists of spectacularising the violated Black body—a history that we can trace from the slave era in South Africa into the global present. So, there are many ethical questions that surround the representation of violence to which someone like Gabrielle Goliath is painstakingly attuned because of her expressly feminist training and her interest in finding aesthetic registers within which viewers are called upon—in very multisensorial, embodied ways—to break cycles of violence. In many of her installations she focuses both on survivors and on the women who did not survive, and the communities of mourning left in their wake. Key to her approach is the search for ethical ways of honouring these histories and legacies. Through her diligent curation of collaborative, survivor-centric performative spaces that amplify the agency and subjective singularity of her subjects, Goliath forges new creative pathways towards ethical spectatorial responsiveness to sexual and gender-based violence. My reading of Goliath's work in the book's fifth chapter brought me to the concept of 'resonant feminist listening', which I define in part as a way of attending to deep histories that continue to echo across generational lines. I've also been thinking about the notion 'toxicity' in its many forms. 'Toxic' has become such an overused word, but I think there's value in how it guides us to the intersections between the inheritance of damaging forms of interpersonal interaction resulting from histories of colonisation and the reality of inhabiting polluted environments. Max Liboiron's brilliant recent book *Pollution is Colonialism* (2021) has done especially important work in this regard to help us reckon with some of these intersections. What Gabrielle Goliath does so captivatingly in focusing on the breath, for instance, is to harness the body's capacity to regenerate and to rework its positioning within a larger whole. Her work basically offers a reparative aesthetic alternative to corporate and neoliberal ways of responding to the expression of civic frustrations with a past not fully past.

LH: Thank you for that extensive response! Would you also like to talk to us about Chapter 4, which I believe is a really important chapter in the book? In Chapter 4, you write about the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall student movements which shook South Africa's universities in 2015 and 2016. In this chapter, you analyse performance pieces that were central to these movements. Can you tell us more about these performance pieces, why they resonated with you, and some of the key ideas that you put forward in relation to them?

HS: The most well-known piece discussed in this chapter is the protest by Chumani Maxwele, who threw human excrement onto the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT in 2015, setting into motion the so-called #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall era. A lot has been written about this particular moment, but I struggled to find anything that focused primarily on its affective dimensions. I wanted to focalise Maxwele's performance of affective alienation specifically through the lens of infrastructure and sanitation history, and here I found the work of Shannon Jackson and Steven Robins especially valuable. They helped me to understand the affective complexities surrounding the so-called 'toilet wars' in Cape Town, and the history of relegating certain kinds of bodies and forms of bodily expression to the margins. There's an instructive history to the racially skewed allocation of access to sanitation infrastructure in South Africa on the part of the colonial and apartheid states. This legacy is far from having been addressed, and we see it of course also in the energy infrastructure problems we all experience now, but by which populations in historically marginalised communities have long been disproportionately affected. Maxwele's protest was particularly interesting to me because of how it thrust the corporeality of disgust into the centre of whiteness, as it were, into white galleries and the white university, to expose this history of bodily discomfort that was so central to apartheid engineering.

But, as I point out in the chapter, Maxwele was hardly an uncontroversial figure, and so feminist interventions were crucial to correcting some of the gender blindness and sexism that characterised so many male-centric protests at the time. The work of Sethembile Msezane, which inspired much of my thinking in this chapter, was key in this regard. Her performance of 'Chapungu'—who was a Zimbabwean spiritual medium considered to have been a messenger of God and the ancestors—at the moment when Rhodes was taken from its plinth in front of the UCT rugby fields, was vital in highlighting the need to listen to historically maligned ancestral wisdoms, and to recognise that these wisdoms in fact live on in the bodies of people like Msezane and the feminist activist

groups that she's been part of. Much pioneering work is currently being done to re-energise some of those knowledges, by theorists such as Hugo ka Canham, in his amazing book *Riotous Deathscapes* (2023), which I so wish had been out in print prior to me completing my manuscript. The book powerfully re-maps the history of embodied suffering resulting from colonial and apartheid violence, routes these histories through indigenous knowledge systems, and locates the embodied sensorium within Black-centric theory and creative production (via what he calls Mpondo theory). His work is part of an exciting body of knowledge that has recently been reinvigorating academic thinking around historical violence from specifically Black, indigenous, and Black/indigenous feminist and queer perspectives. Msezane has long been bringing these knowledges into the embodied present in a performative way, through live art, and through her refusal to let archives remain confined to stone, statue, or museum.

LH: You submitted the manuscript for this book just as Covid-19 hit in 2020, and as South Africa was entering its first lockdown. In your preface, you reflect on this inadvertent but significant timing, as you mention that the book's concerns were suddenly 'amplified' (Strauss, 2022: x) by the context of the pandemic. Can you tell us a bit more about this?

HS: Yes, I completed the manuscript in March of 2020, and wrote the preface at the end of that year after it had passed peer review. Several events indeed coalesced that year to throw the book's primary preoccupations into sharp relief. Both the Covid-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd, for instance, brought questions surrounding struggles for breath—especially on the part of Black citizens in South Africa, the U.S., and elsewhere—anew to the forefront of international attention. While working on the preface I further came across the news that Fikile Ntshangase had been assassinated. Ntshangase was a leading environmental activist for the Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation (MCEJO), who worked towards blocking the planned expansion of Tendele's mining operations in the area near the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi nature reserve in KwaZulu Natal. Tendele's plan to enlarge the Somkhele opencast coalmine is guaranteed to exacerbate air and groundwater pollution in the region, not to mention to worsen human and nonhuman health. And so, concerns about the impact that the expansion of existing extractive projects in South Africa would have especially on respiratory health, were echoed in the book's focus on the inequitable distribution of access to breathable atmospheres across a range of sites. These concerns are of course central also to how I came to think about waywardness—with the help of Saidiya Hartman and others—as a methodological, epistemological, and affective-embodied anchor for the text.

> "The preface and conclusion of Wayward Feeling reflect in part on this longstanding diminishing of our capacity to breathe (and I use the pronoun 'our' here advisedly, knowing that not all of us are included in the 'our' of extraction in equally destructive ways). For those whose labour and affective resources are extracted in service of racial capitalism, the assault on airways is further heightened by the inequitable distribution of access to green space along racial lines."

This interest in racial capitalism's theft of breath has also stretched into my current research on bad relations, including the bad chemical and atmospheric relations caused by South Africa's mining histories and related forms of environmental racism and pollution. I recently submitted a paper on the documentary film *Dying for Gold* for a book on 'The Ruptured Commons,' in which I bring together the long-standing pulmonary pandemic resulting from South African gold mining with histories of botanicide that have long characterised industrialisation's relationship to the earth. The project brought the struggle of the 'Living Limpopo' movement to my attention, and specifically the work they've been doing to halt the absurd plan to relocate over 109,000 trees in the Limpopo's Northern Vhembe district—a district which includes the environmentally-sensitive Unesco Vhembe Biosphere Reserve—to make way for a massive new metallurgical zone. The so-called

Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone (MMSEZ), a multi-billion-dollar South Africa-China bilateral economic initiative driven by President Ramaphosa already since 2017, is set to have devastating environmental consequences. And so, at the same time as we've seen minor gains in the fight for breath—most prominently in the landmark victory in the #DeadlyAir case, which found the South African state to be in breach of its constitutional obligation to clean up toxic air in the Mpumalanga Highveld—new threats continue to emerge alongside ongoing histories of environmental plunder. The preface and conclusion of *Wayward Feeling* reflect in part on this longstanding diminishing of our capacity to breathe (and I use the pronoun 'our' here advisedly, knowing that not all of us are included in the 'our' of extraction in equally destructive ways). For those whose labour and affective resources are extracted in service of racial capitalism, the assault on airways is further heightened by the inequitable distribution of access to green space along racial lines. And so, while the Covid-19 pandemic to an extent equalised the struggle for access to breath in unexpected ways, people in the service industries and Black and indigenous people around the globe continued to be disproportionately affected.

LH: In the book, you write that your concern is 'less in disappointment itself than in that to which it gives rise' (Strauss, 2022: 13). Although the subject of your book is audio-visual texts that grapple with feelings such as disappointment, rage, and despair in response to the contemporary South African moment, you concurrently explore how these texts are ultimately concerned with defiance, and even with hope. How do you understand the texts as expressions of defiance, and as pointing towards realms of possibility beyond the problems of inequality, racism, and sexism that continue to define present-day South Africa?

HS: I think it's no longer controversial to characterise the contemporary structure of feeling in South Africa as marked by disappointment. And yet, even as we sit with daily and new configurations of disappointment, we've seen a lingering investment in some of the aspirational ideals of the anti-apartheid struggle that resistant publics in South Africa continue to carry with them. Indeed, the very fact of our disappointment speaks to a melancholic attachment to desires that remain unmet, in turn powering creative new modes of surviving—perhaps even thriving. As Sara Ahmed phrases it, 'disappointment can be experienced as a gap between an ideal and an experience that demands action' (2010: 41). If some of what remains at the root of our disappointments could be described as hope, this hope issues from what Donna Haraway calls 'the thick present' (2016: 1). To stay 'with the trouble' (2016: 1) in the way Haraway conceptualises it, is to relinquish our attachment to linear teleologies of progress, and to what I call in the book 'the prolepsis of the promise', as though the promise already brings something into being, as though it's performative in that Butlerian way. In the post-Mandela, post-Mbeki present, we've had to learn to live with the fact that the 1996 Constitution, for instance, did not in fact bring into being all the forms of justice that it so aspirationally tried to write into South African law. This work remains to be done, but we keep getting distracted if we attach our activist energies to these overdetermining futures.

It's important further to remember that doing this work is experienced as utterly exhausting or even crushing for many. So, in my second chapter, 'Moody, Expectant Teens', I consider some of the often-draining strategies of defiant endurance in which young people in South Africa invest to make lives more bearable. I found in the visual autobiographies of young filmmakers such as Evelyn Maruping and the late Sarah Chu particularly inspiring creative experiments in life-making amid difficulty. These young women refused to be crushed by the hopelessness of the environments in which they live. This is conveyed, for instance, in Maruping's exploration, in her film *Where is the Love?*, of early reproduction, which is such a heavily regulated site within patriarchy. Zayleen Elwing, one of the women in the film, went against the grain of conventional expectation here in particularly revealing ways. Despite the demand for her to be disappointed and unhappy and ashamed of herself for having fallen pregnant at an early age, this woman found in her connection with her young child these beautiful moments of sustenance, joy, and healing. So, in these moments of improvisation—the improvisation of multiple futures on the edges of global capitalism, as Anna Tsing and Rita Barnard might phrase it—we find some powerful lessons in how to 'survive disappointment,' as I define it in conversation with theorists including Lauren Berlant,

Lee Edelman, Nthabiseng Motsemme, and Dia Da Costa. And this again brings us back to Hartman's point about breathing, finding breath, in the face of extreme hardship. I call this 'wayward agency', which requires a considerable deal of energy and tenacity. But there is a kind of qualified hope to derive from this, which we find, for instance, in the examples of women such as Elwing, but also in the work of the many creative cultural workers who are helping South Africans reach towards something other than the stuckness of post-rainbow disillusionment.

LH: Thank you so much again for your time, and for these really detailed and insightful answers. Before we wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add or say about the book?

HS: Thanks so much, Leila, for engaging so thoughtfully with my work, and for asking such incisive questions. If there's one thing I would like this book to achieve, it would be to highlight the incredible work South African filmmakers, audio-visual activists, theorists, and creative cultural workers have been doing to distil ongoing South African moments of emotional difficulty—whether quotidian or spectacular—into animate expressive form, and, by extension, to steer us towards more socially just ways of inhabiting the present and connecting across difference. We will need this guidance as we must learn to confront an accelerating climate crisis without retreating into isolation, fear, and violence.

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