

KEY WORDS:

Social Change, Spatial Justice, Architecture & Social Change, Cape Town

Architecture and Urbanism in Cape Town: Displacement and Dehumanisation.

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ABSTRACT

Cape Town, South Africa is known globally to be one of the most naturally beautiful cities in the world. Yet looking more closely, it is an Apartheid city, and it is a postcolonial city. Understanding the architecture and urbanism of Cape Town in terms of *displacement* and *dehumanisation*, two terms theorised by Frantz Fanon, helps to locate the urban problems of Cape Town in the postcolonial discourse. South Africa has undergone over three hundred years of colonialism and then a further fifty or so years of apartheid, in some ways a crueller and more intense form of colonialism. Thirty years after the first democratic elections, the gap between rich and poor has increased, and *displacement* and *dehumanisation* seem to be permanent fixtures in the urban experience of most Capetonians. Some hope can be found in the inter-disciplinary work of architects, advocacy groups and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), their work has begun to produce results. But without substantial governmental support, this progress will remain small and slow.



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Introduction

This paper reflects on the architecture and urbanism of Cape Town, from its precolonial beginnings to its growth and development under colonialism, and then apartheid in terms of two distinctly Fanonian concepts: *displacement and dehumanisation*. As a young man recently qualified as a psychiatrist in Lyon, Frantz Fanon began in the late 1940s and early 1950s, to unpack the psychological consequences of colonialism on the colonised, as observed amongst his patients. His patients suffered from a sense of displacement (often being black former residents of the colonies, now in France). He was able to discern the relationships between displacement and the subsequent crises of identity. He was also able to understand more intimately the effects of the dehumanising conditions for people because of their colonisation.

It is not difficult to see the historical development of Cape Town, as well as its current socio-spatial problems in terms of these two terms. The following pages will consider the case of District Six when contemplating the idea of displacement. The establishment of the thriving mixed neighbourhood (in terms of class, religion, race and ethnicity) near the city centre, and then its destruction by the apartheid regime, which led to intense displacement, with all its further psychosocial and spatial consequences.

The paper will then look at the case of informal settlements in Cape Town, how they came about and the dire conditions in which they remain. Displacement and dehumanisation are profusely prevalent as consequences for inhabitants of informal areas, because of the lack of basic services and amenities, the overcrowding, the lack of permanence and poor sanitation. Finally, by understanding Cape Town in terms of displacement and dehumanisation, and in terms of what architects and urban practitioners have already tried to do to help alleviate some of the problems, we will attempt to leave the discussion with some hope.

Displacement

Displacement has occurred in Cape Town and all South African cities as a consequence of both colonialism and apartheid. This displacement has been both literal or spatial, and figurative. The displacement that has happened to people in Cape Town whether by colonialism or apartheid, has led to many social problems, many of which at least in part can be understood by the psychological crises of identity and self-determination as described by Fanon (Bhabha, 1986). The implementation of displacement, by those in power in colonial contexts is common. It begins with their very arrival. Cape Town, being the oldest city in South Africa, has been the site of displacement as a tool for power since the mid-1600s.

The Cape, at the very tip of Africa, has been identified as one of the earliest locations of the human species (Wikipedia, 2025). Human inhabitation here goes back a long way. The indigenous Khoi and San peoples who lived here, lived as many first nations' peoples did: lightly and nomadically. They were a small population. They didn't build permanent structures as far as we know, but marked the landscape with footpaths and routes, and paintings on cave walls.

While Europeans first landed at our shores as early as the 1400s, the first to settle were the Dutch in the mid-1600s. The Dutch would rule the Cape of Good Hope (as it was known then¹) until the British arrived in 1795. South Africa would remain under British colonial rule until 1910 when the country began to gain some sovereignty with unification of the four provinces. Further independence was gained in 1931. Final and full independence from Britain achieved in 1961 with the adoption of a new constitution and the establishment of the Republic of South Africa. A significant year, however, was 1948 when the ethnic Afrikaner nationalist party known as the National Party took over the government and began to legislate the segregationist policies of Apartheid. Apartheid would last until the first free and fair democratic elections in 1994 (South African Government, n.d.).

For South Africa, unlike many other former colonies, gaining independence did not mean an end to oppression or any kind of freedom for indigenous people. To understand the post-colonial condition in South Africa, one needs to understand that there were two major periods of time when the majority of the population, the indigenous, African, Indian and mixed-race people were exploited, oppressed and effaced by European colonialism, first the Dutch then the British (roughly 1652 to 1910), and Apartheid (roughly 1948 to 1994).

Architectural and Urban History of Cape Town

Pre-colonial patterns of settlement in South Africa were sparse and rural and could mostly be found towards the north and north-east of the country (**Figure 1**). In the Cape, where the Dutch first settled, the indigenous peoples were largely nomadic. They would share their

¹ The term "Cape of Good Hope" was coined by the Portuguese after first stopping there in the 1400s. (Noble, 1886)

knowledge of the region with the colonisers, and as a result many of the main roads in Cape Town have their roots in pre-colonial times.

The architecture built by the early colonists was simple. Cape Dutch architecture, as it would come to be known, was initially characterised by long narrow buildings with double-pitched thatch roofs, thick white lime washed walls, small windows and a front porch known as a *stoep*, veranda as it is known in Indian subcontinent (**Figure 2**). This humble longhouse was essentially a known traditional form of building-making imported from rural northern Europe. This European vernacular was then adapted out of necessity to the local climate and material conditions of the Cape. In time they developed this typology to much grander versions with more ornate gables (**Figure 3**). Within the centre of the settlement at the Cape, the Dutch established a gridded street pattern based on a Bastide grid pattern (**Figure 4**). The earliest houses began as single storeyed longhouses made up of simple rooms along the street edge. Soon enough restrictions on plot widths would result in the simple plan being extended to an L or U-shaped plan, and then to a double storeyed building (Fransen, 2004). These buildings would have been white lime-washed mud and clay brick, with sash windows and a front *stoep*. The street elevations would show parapet walls, hiding flat corrugated iron or cement roofs behind (**Figure 5**). These building typologies would be more elaborate for wealthier merchants or settlers, or very simple for the slaves who built their own houses below Signal Hill (right next to the city centre), in the area still known as the Bo-Kaap.



Figure 1: Early illustration of a typical Khoisan settlement at the Cape in the 17th Century (Bezzoli, 2002).



Figure 2: Photograph of typical modest Cape Dutch cottages in the Moravian Mission Station named Elim (founded and built in 1824) (Municipality, 2022).



Figure 3: Example of an elaborately articulated Cape Dutch house. Manor House at Old Nectar farm outside of Cape Town (oldnectar.com, n.d.).

The British arrived, settled and gradually took control from 1795 onwards (Niekerk, 2005). The French Revolution, Napoleonic wars, and later the Industrial Revolution in Europe, would directly impact Europe and Britain's interests and activities in South Africa. With the discoveries of diamonds (1867) and gold (1884) in South Africa, it would experience an influx of Europeans (Badsha, 2011). The early colonial period of the British was marked by industrialization which included the building of railway infrastructure, and the development of towns and cities on a much grander scale.



Figure 4: Photograph of Cape Town 1877, taken from Signal Hill by Barnard-Murray. The low-lying urban fabric of attached Cape Dutch parapeted buildings is clear to see (Facebook, 2025).



Figure 5: Long Street in central Cape Town, showing the famous Palm Tree Mosque, c1915 (Fransen, 2004).

Cape Town harbour was the predominant entry point to South Africa. As a result, the steady influx of opportunistic settlers from Britain and Europe would result in Cape Town growing rapidly. Relatively quickly it became a thriving hub of grid patterned neighbourhoods with small blocks of narrow row houses (**Figure 6**). Speculative builders developed the city centre towards District 6, usually a block at a time, using building plans and materials ordered by catalogue and shipped from Britain. The settlement at the Cape was fast becoming a city.

Culturally speaking, the population of the Cape, from almost as soon as the Dutch settled at the Cape, was a melting pot of people from Europe, the Far East, and those indigenous to the Cape (**Figure 7**). The first slaves were to arrive from Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1653. By the time the British arrived in 1795 the population was made up of people from Bengal (now India), Batavia, Mauritius, Madagascar, Europe, Nguni tribes to the north and indigenous peoples from the Cape, as well as their mixed descendants.



Figure 6: Map of Cape Town 1884, showing the Castle, Table Bay Port, The gridded street pattern and the surrounding mountains of the central city: Being the maps of 1884, revised and corrected to date, under the superintendence of the City Engineer, T.W. Cairncross, Esq., A.M.I.C.E., (by permission of the Town Council) (Planners, 2003).



Figure 7: An early 20th Century photograph showing a rare moment of celebration for a group of people of mixed heritage. Protea Village, Kirstenbosch in the early 20th century. Image: E 15148, Western Cape Archives and Records Service (Museum, 2025).

Urban History

By the early 1900s a city like Cape Town could have been characterized as a typical British colonial city (**Figure 8**). Probably not unlike some cities in India, or Australia or the US. The city had a functioning tram and train system. Shopping occurred in shops along the streets. The train station was a major public place. The City Hall, a Victorian civic building was well resourced and the seat of power. Most people lived in Victorian row houses, or Cape Dutch styled houses which were sometimes connected (**Figure 9**).

When the National Party began their apartheid project, they adopted modernist planning strategies as a tool for developing their new ideal country. For them this was an important way of distinguishing between modern developed and independent South Africa versus British colonial South Africa. The suburban planning model characterised by a separation of land-uses fitted very nicely with their ideas of separating people. The socialist egalitarian motivations of early modernism were perverted by Afrikaner Nationalists who sought to develop South Africa into a successful and thriving country for White people, keeping people of colour separate, invisible and oppressed.



Figure 8: Adderley Street, the main street of the old city centre, showing the Main Train Station, Trams, Victorian architecture and streetscape c.1890 (Unknown, 2025).

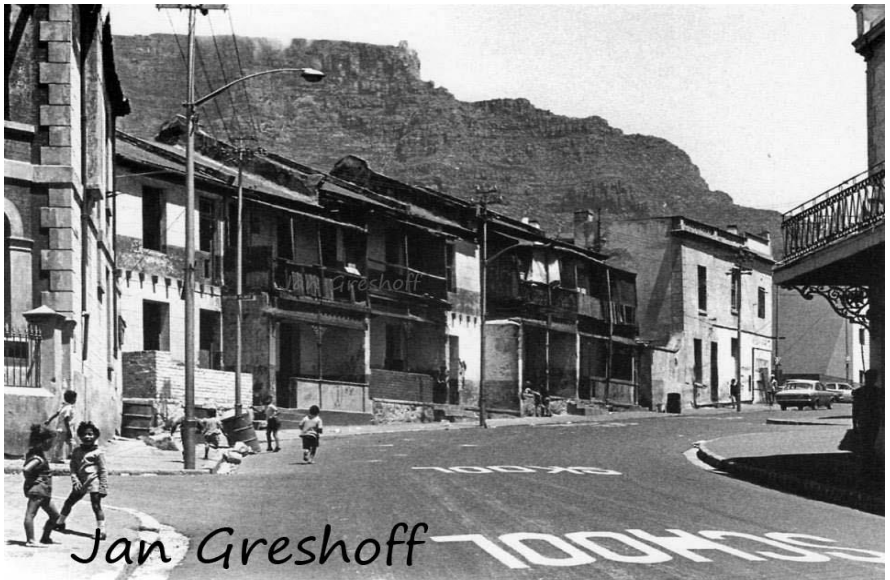


Figure 9: De Villiers Street in District Six. Photo by architect & photographer Jan Greshoff c.1970. (Greshoff).

Apartheid

As early as 1913 the *Natives Land Act* was passed, restricting black African people from owning land, they could only occupy land that was owned by a white landowner. The *Group Areas Act* of 1950 made it illegal for people of different races to live together. The *Mixed Marriages Act* of 1949 forbade people of different races marrying. Education began to be segregated in 1953 with the *Bantu Education Act* and this continued for the next decade to the point where all schools and universities, along with their curricula were segregated and ranked (Badsha, 2025). We still live with the legacies of these horrific laws. Today, in our thirty-year-old democracy, we are faced with a multitude of sobering problems

The Apartheid City

With a national population of some sixty three million people, where unemployment is at around 30% (Government, 2025), and an estimated population of around six million living in informal settlements (Partnership, 2025), the architectural profession cannot deny a social responsibility in its practice and education.

The urban planning of South African cities contributes greatly to the segregation of people, and to the marginalisation of the vast majority of the population, helping to deny access to economic opportunity, to adequate education and health services, to safe open spaces, and in Cape Town, the majority of the population is denied easy access to the vast natural beauty of the mountains and the sea. Like most countries of the global south, our cities are growing at an unsustainable pace, where the ever-growing informal parts of these cities have had to develop over time their own housing systems, economies, ways of living and healthcare.

The Case of District Six

There are few examples that can so aptly be used to understand Frantz Fanon's theory of displacement, as that of District Six. District Six was a part of Cape Town that began to develop as early as the late 1800s. As the population of Cape Town rose the gridded street plan of the city expanded towards the east. Land that was previously used as farmland on the lower slopes of Devil's Peak was subdivided and developed into a tight collection of differently angled grid patterns.

Speculative builders rapidly developed the area one block at a time, using the predominant idiom of the time of Victorian urban housing (row houses, single and double-storeyed, as well as some apartment complexes). With the discovery of diamonds and gold in the second half of the 19th century, many opportunistic Europeans began to arrive at the port in Cape Town. Many of them chose to stay in the city instead of traveling north for the mines, and as a result Cape Town's population grew rapidly. Almost all of this growth was absorbed into the urban landscape of District Six (Planners, 2003).

The area developed into a thriving hub of people from many ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds. The diversity and inclusivity of the district represented a threat to those in power. Forced removals began as early as 1901 with the government “resettling” African black residents to an outlying area known as Ndabeni. There were subsequently a few more moments when small groups of people were moved out due to major clean ups and the introduction of infrastructure. District Six was in parts overly dense and adequate sanitation had not been built through-out the area. The major and most important moment of displacement happened in 1966, with the legal declaration of District Six as an area for whites only (Badsha, 2025).

All residents of the district needed to move out to designated areas on the Cape Flats (the flat low-lying areas of the city which were then undeveloped, windswept and sandy. District Six, being in the centre of the city, was on land that was very valuable. The cosmopolitan, poor, and mostly mixed-race working-class residents didn’t fit into a desirable image for the city. Families were split up, and people who for generations had lived, worked and gone to school in the city centre, at the foot of the mountain and close to the sea, were now moved to a barren landscape.

Life for most of the people who had been displaced became one of increased poverty, lower levels of education, higher rates of unemployment, and higher levels of crime. Almost all of the built fabric of District Six was demolished, except for Mosques, Churches, Schools, and some housing which was deemed good enough (not too delapidated) to remain. The government then installed a completely new road network with new civil infrastructure (**Figure 11**).

The struggle for District Six began in the mid-1980s, when various community civic groups came together to form the *Hands-Off District Six* campaign. This campaign was specifically aimed at preventing the redevelopment of the district (now that all buildings save for some schools, Churches and Mosques, had been demolished). The campaign wanted the district to remain the scar in the landscape of the centre of Cape Town that it was, until all the people who had been displaced from it, were able to return. The *Hands-Off District Six* campaign was successful in halting most plans to develop the area into a whites only city centre area. In 1990 the central group of this campaign went on to establish the District Six Museum, which until today remains an active living museum where ex-residents come to discuss and remember together (**Figure 12**).

District Six and its stories and struggles remain within the imaginations of most South Africans. While it was not the only area to be a victim of the *Group Areas Act*, it has become the most famous one, partly because of its size, the violence of its demolition, and the campaigns for restitution.

After the first democratic elections in 1994, twenty one hectares of land in District Six were set aside and given to the *District Six Beneficiary Trust*, for the purpose of redevelopment for restitution. Architect Lucien le Grange, himself one of the founding members of the

Hands-Off District Six campaign and the District Six Museum, was tasked with preparing the *Heritage Impact Assessment* and *Urban Design Spatial Framework* for the redevelopment of the district for returning residents. As an act of defiance of the slow governmental processes of management and funding, the first ten houses were designed by Lucien le Grange Architects & Urban Planners and built without government approval. These houses were so well loved and appreciated, that the same consultant team was awarded the project to design a further one hundred and twenty houses in subsequent years. On the 11th February 2004, President Nelson Mandela himself handed a new set of keys to two elderly people (**Figure 13**), the first recipients of the newly constructed houses for formerly displaced residents of District Six (Archive, 2025).

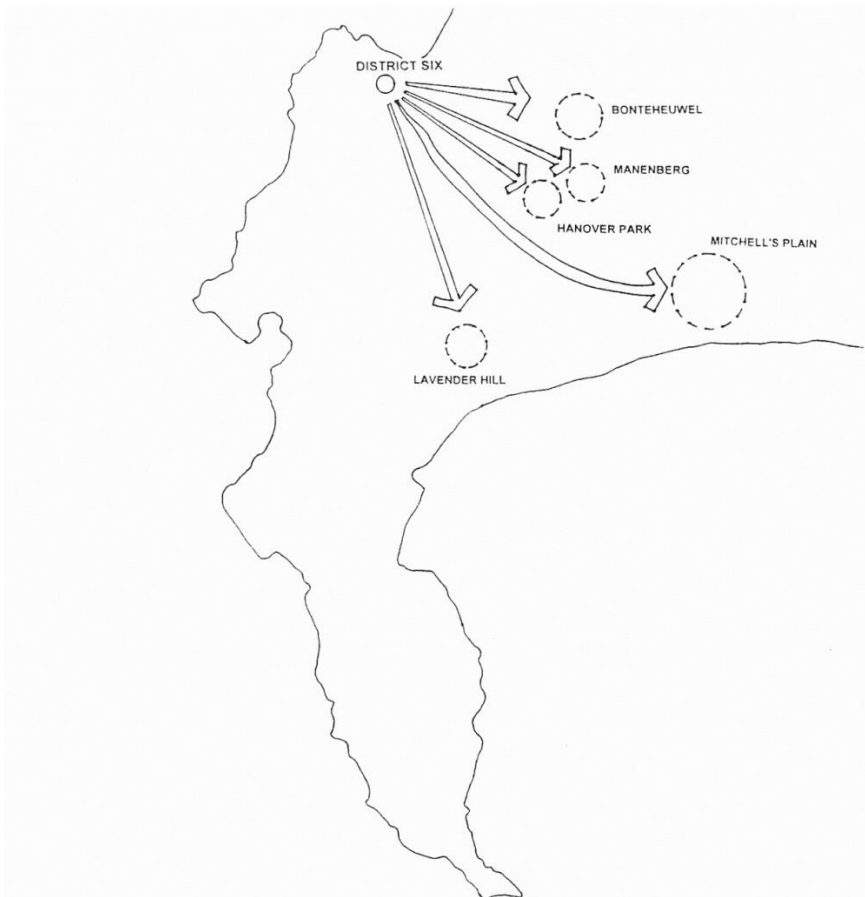


Figure 10: Diagram showing forced removals of people from District Six (le Grange).

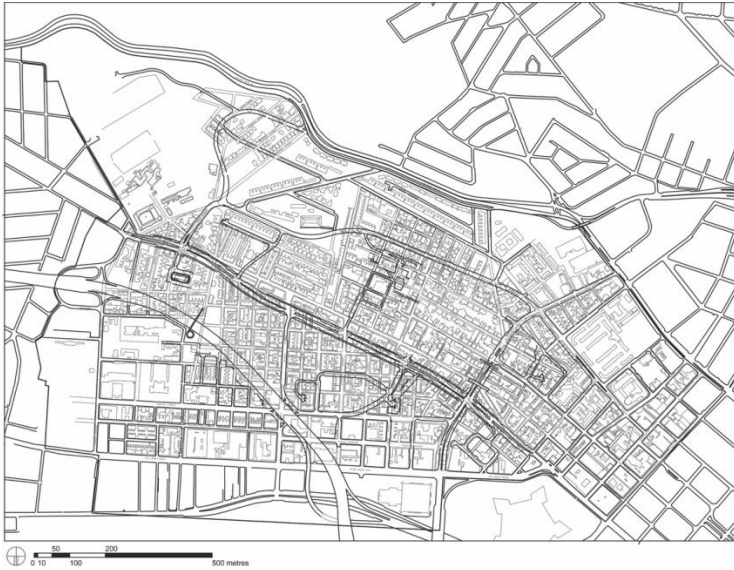


Figure 11: *Overlay of the new and old street layout, from the District Six Urban Design Development Framework, Lucien le Grange Architects & Urban Planners, 2004 (Planners, 2004).*

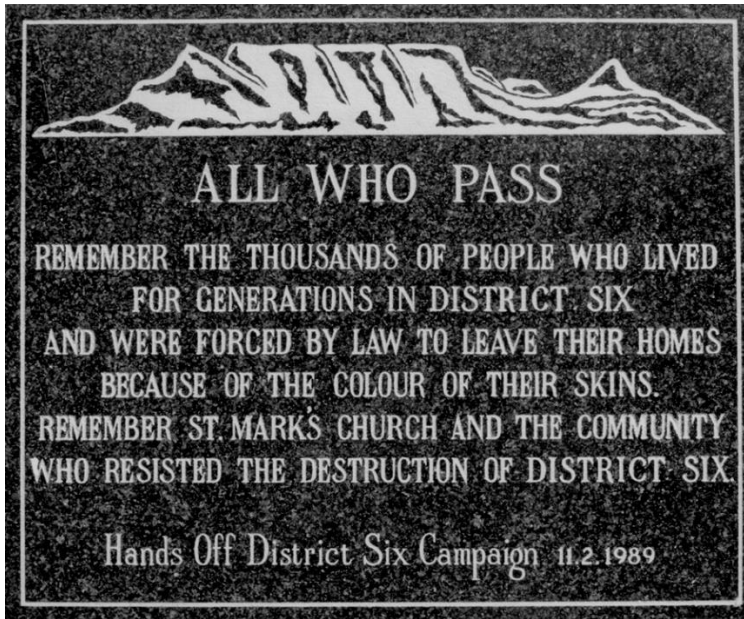


Figure 12: *A plaque that was fixed to the wall of one of the remaining Churches in District Six, by the Hands-Off District Six campaign in 1989 (Trotter, 2025).*

Dehumanisation

Cape Town, like all South African cities is a victim of apartheid urban planning. The Group Areas Act was one of the apartheid laws that had a profoundly spatial effect, and a resultant dire social effect. As explained earlier, the apartheid government's philosophy was to establish the supremacy of the minority white population. This superiority could not exist without the inferiority of black majority. An elaborate series of laws and policies would ensure this hierarchical segregation in all aspects of life: healthcare, education, transport, commerce, sports, housing and so on. These policies were so successful in their intentions that today, thirty years since the first democratic elections in 1994, save for a relatively small elite wealthy black class, not much has changed. In fact, it is worse. South Africa today has the highest Gini coefficient globally (Review, 2025).

The urban project of modernist town planning, with its establishment of freeways and designing for the private motorcar, and with its emphasis on zoning and the separation of land-uses, suited apartheid planners very well. Cape Town (like all South African cities) planned for expanded growth by reserving and claiming (through forced removals and displacements) the most picturesque, and easily accessible neighbourhoods for white people, and setting aside the windswept sandy Cape Flats for people of colour (**Figures 14 and 15**).



Figure 6: In 2004, one of the first claimants to be given keys to his new house in District Six by then President Nelson Mandela. Dan Ndzabela was one of the first residents to be forcibly removed from the District in 1959. He had always wanted to return (le Grange L.).

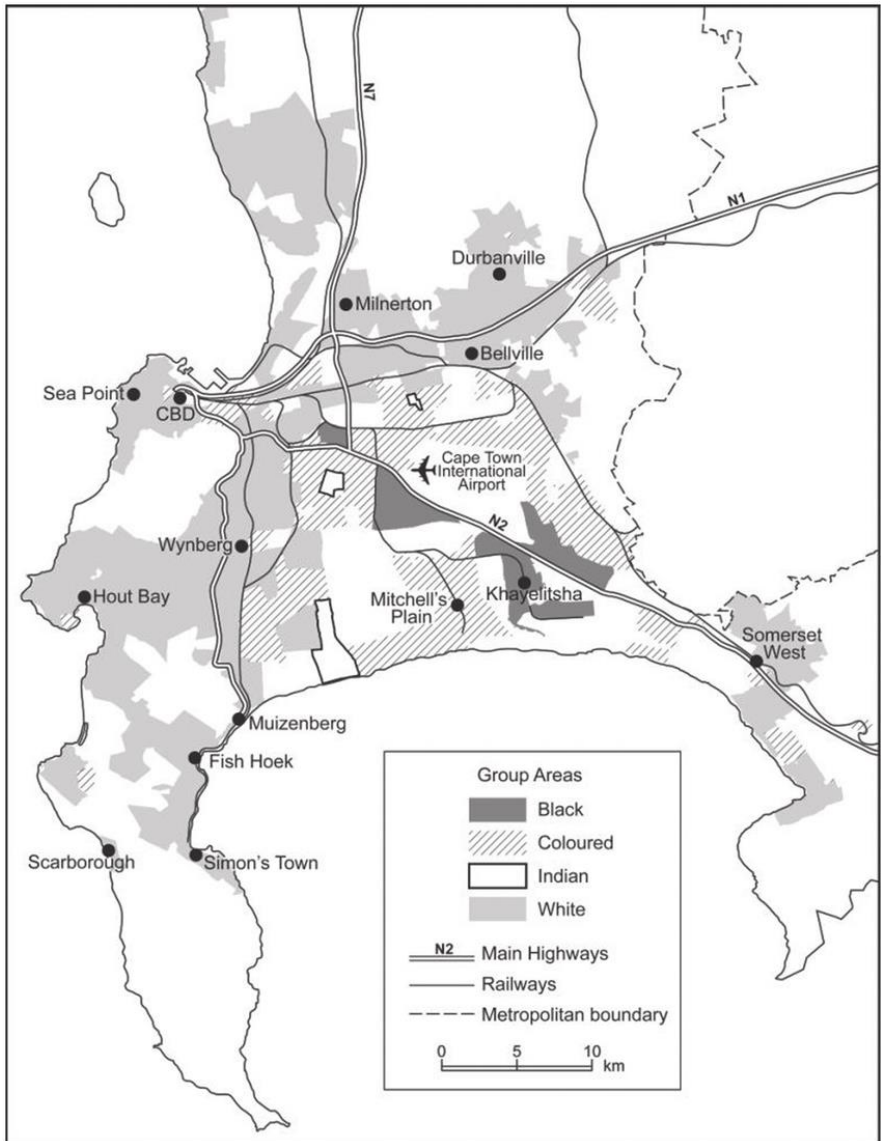


Figure 14: Cape Town the apartheid city, as it was just before the first democratic elections in 1994. White group areas are located alongside the mountains and sea, while the non-white areas are located in the less desirable flat area known as the Cape Flats (Crankshaw, 2012).

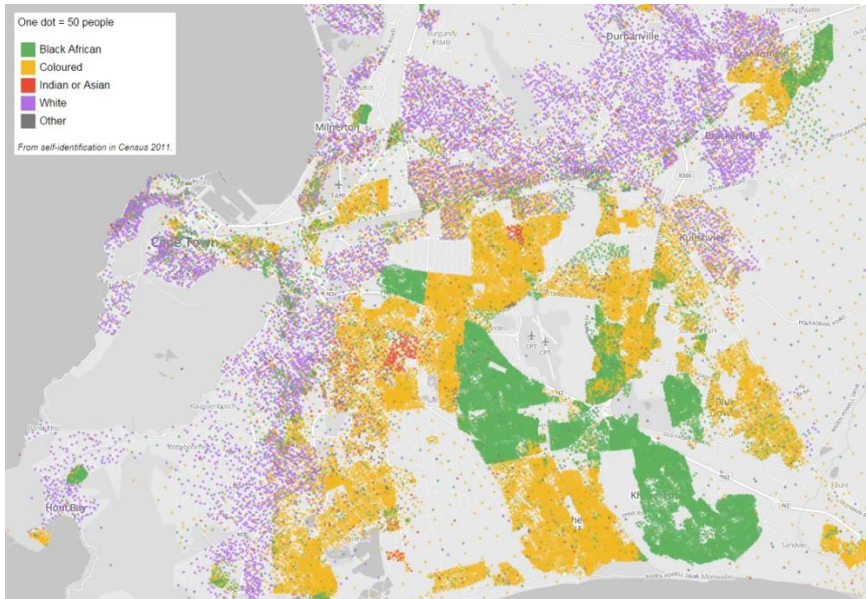


Figure 7: Racial densities in Cape Town, 2011 (Firth, 2011).

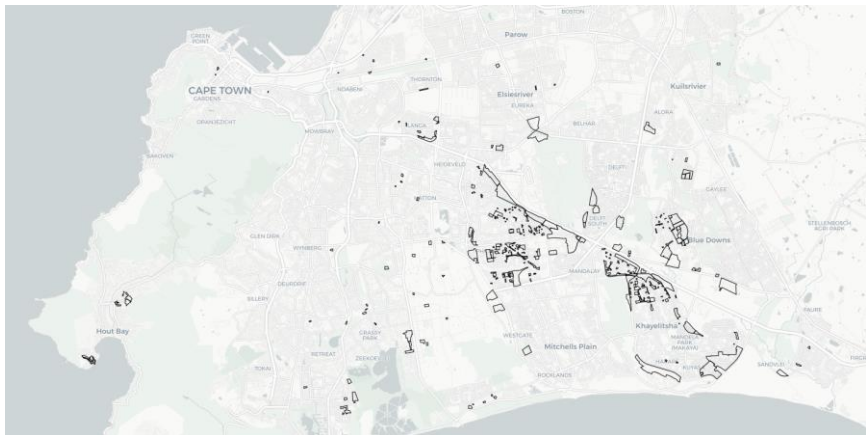


Figure 16: A map showing two hundred and four recognised informal settlements in Cape Town today (Maps, 2025).

For the apartheid government to achieve this racially divided city plan, much pain was caused. The Group Areas Act and its associated forced removals created social problems that we all live with today. Many families living in desirable neighbourhoods were told to sell (at very low rates) their properties and to move to the newly classified coloured, or Indian or African group areas. Very often families and friends were displaced and split apart.

In his most famous work *Wretched of the earth*, Frantz Fanon refers to the dehumanisation of the colonised person in relation to the two very different spatial conditions in which the coloniser and colonised lives;

“The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other.” (Fanon, 1961)

The description above, written in 1961, could still very easily be used to describe the living conditions of the poor in South Africa. Cape Town’s informal settlements are home to around one lakh forty six thousand households (Maps, 2025). They are largely constructed and inhabited by African Black people, (according to the apartheid government’s systems of categorisation) (**Figure 16**).

Part of the apartheid government’s agenda was to isolate and remove the threat of the very existence of the black majority population. The *swart gevaar* (translated from Afrikaans to mean black danger) as it was known colloquially, needed to be removed and dehumanised as far as possible. A series of laws went a long way to this end. The *Native Land Act* of 1913 was the first law which started this process (incidentally long before the apartheid government came in to power). This law prohibited any black person from owning or renting land in South Africa. Geographically this would come to mean that 97% of the land was reserved for whites, while 7% of the land was set aside for black ownership (Badsha, 2021).

Soon after the *Land Act* was passed, so-called *Reserves* were set up around the country. These *Reserves* would later become the homelands (or Bantustans as they were known). These were the places where African Black people could own land. Land in the Bantustans tended to be unfertile and fallow, and there were little to no employment opportunities in these homelands. As a result, most African Black people needed to leave their homelands in order to find employment. Every Black person needed to carry a *dompass*, an identity document showing that they had permission to be in the non-African areas of South Africa.

Generations of African men would come to cities like Cape Town to work and send money back home to their families in the homelands. In Cape Town they lived in migrant labour dormitories in areas such as Langa and Nyanga. These laws, the Land Act, and the Pass Laws, as well as other policies would all fall under the blanket term of the apartheid government’s *influx control*. Influx control would have dire socio-spatial consequences for this majority sector of the population. Family structures broke down, fragmenting Black

society. This was all part of the colonial (and Apartheid) project of dehumanisation (Figure 17).

One of Cape Town's oldest informal settlements was Crossroads, which was established in the early 1970s. This shanty town would rapidly grow and would soon be the target for many police raids. In 1983, the government announced that all legal black residents of the Cape Peninsula, who presently lived in informal settlements, would be housed in the newly proposed township on the far east edge of the city, to be called Khayelitsha. Illegal people were to be moved out of the city and back to the Transkei (one of the homelands established for Xhosa-speaking people) (Badsha, 2013)(Figures 18, 19 and 20).



Figure 17: People fleeing a police raid on Crossroads in Cape Town, date unknown (Archive, 2009).

Living conditions in most informal settlements are harsh. Even today infrastructure and services are at a minimum, if there at all. Every year in the cold and wet winters of Cape Town residents fall victim to terrible fires which spread from one shack to another. The direst issue is the lack of access to clean running water, toilets, adequate health facilities and schools. Conditions are further exacerbated by the remoteness of these townships in relation to places of work or economic opportunity. Residents pay substantial portions of their meagre earnings towards transport on the informal or partially regulated mini-bus taxis. Small victories have been achieved with various NGO projects to upgrade the informal settlements. There are quite a few NGOs that work in this sector, some of them with government assistance.

The VPUU (Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading) projects have been shown to have some success with their urban acupuncture insertions into townships, to provide light, and minimal infrastructure to help bring some safety and dignity. The VPUU has successfully inserted 9 of their *active boxes* into various informal settlements across Cape Town. These *active boxes* are multi-functional buildings that provide permanent solidly constructed places for community activities, and in so doing provide much the needed perception of security (Upgrading, n.d.) (**Figure 21**).

One of the oldest NGOs (non-governmental organisations) in Cape Town is DAG (Development Action Group). Founded thirty seven years ago by concerned architects and professionals of the built environment, this NGO has assisted poor people to access basic services, tenure security, and to organise themselves into co-operative governance structures to augment community agency. DAG has been active in assisting communities' access social housing and has worked with civic organisations and local government to address inequalities in the access to well-located land and housing in Cape Town.

In 2016, when it was discovered that the cash-strapped municipality of Cape Town was selling off large tracts of public land to private developers, a public outcry ensued. Out of this campaign emerged the *Reclaim the City* and *Ndifuna Ukwazi* sister organisations. Essentially legal advocacy groups, these organisations have helped raise awareness in the public and within local government of the need for affordable and social housing in well-located central areas. Through their protest and advocacy work they managed to halt the sale of a few sites, notably an old school in Sea Point (a very well-resourced neighbourhood along the Atlantic seaboard) (Kelly, 2016) (**Figure 22**). Today several city-owned sites have been released to be developed into affordable housing. The unoccupied buildings which were occupied by homeless people in 2016 have also been earmarked for renovation, with assurances that the occupiers will be rehoused in these same buildings. These developments have shown the success of advocacy groups, and protest action.



Figure 18: A girl child uses a public toilet in the Khayelitsha informal settlement, 2014 (Bandora, 2021).



Figure 19: A new informal settlement known as "covid" in Cape Town, where residents fled to when they lost their jobs during the Covid 19 Pandemic. Photo: Sarah Johnson at The Guardian (Johnson, 2021).



Figure 20: A portion of informal settlements within Khayeltisha. (Passau, 2021).



Figure 21: An example of the work done by the NGO VPUU (Upgrading).



Figure 22: Reclaim the City protestors on Long Street in Cape Town, 2016 (Kelly, 2016).

Conclusion

There is still a long way to go with a national housing backlog of more than 2.4 million households (Africa, n.d.). It takes a long time, and lots of protracted action and work to find solutions to the urban problems of Cape Town, which are grounded in displacement and dehumanisation.

The case of District Six has shown a positive ending, but this is somewhat misleading. The restitution process has seemed to have ground to a halt in recent years. It is a highly politicised project within the centre of the city. Unfortunately, the ideological clarity with which the early campaigns and protest movements led to the formation of organisations like the *District Six Redevelopment Trust* and the *District Six Museum* no longer seems to be there. It is important to understand that the political campaigns for District Six were forged at the height of the resistance movements against apartheid, both within and without the country. It was a time when the enemy was clear, and it was easy to find unity amongst those who opposed it. Today the political landscape is more opaque, with opportunistic vultures all around. Suddenly everyone wants a piece of the District Six pie, including greedy developers who have no interest in historical injustices or restitution. So, for now District Six remains a slightly smaller scar in the inner-city landscape of Cape Town.

Informal settlements have become permanent and ever-growing features of South African cities, and the attempts to upgrade them, to make them safer and cleaner have been too small and sporadic to make enough of a change, or to put it bluntly, to remove the inhumane conditions in which so many people live. Our townships continue to dehumanise their inhabitants, well into the postcolonial and post-apartheid milieu. One cannot help but think that the solution to the problems of informal settlements and dire need for good, clean, safe housing needs much more political will, and financial planning from the government. We need a national plan akin to the Housing plans of countries like The Netherlands and Sweden in post-war Europe. Housing needs to become one of the primary focus of the government.

It is also critical to recognize that architecture's capacity to truly contribute to the development of a country that ultimately no longer has significant health issues, has low to zero unemployment, very little crime, no more gender-based violence, no more homelessness, no more animal rights issues, and so on, will always be hampered by the neo-liberal capitalist postcolonial conditions in which we find ourselves.

Shortly after 1994 the SA government formulated the *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP). This programme resulted in large swathes of the most terribly designed and built housing for people on the outskirts of cities and towns across the country. The causes of this relate again to a lack of skill and consultation with architects and urban designers at the level of policy making. Despite this though, the RDP was a progressive programme with five major policy programmes which sought to heal, repair and nation-build by providing for the needs of the most marginalised and oppressed (O'Malley, 1994).

Sadly, this programme was soon to be replaced by a succession of programmes, each more conservative and less socially focussed than the next. Without a significant commitment to a more socially focussed meta-narrative which guides policy and governance no matter who is elected, our efforts as architects will always be frustrated. Until then we will continue as best we can. And we can do better. The conclusions reached in the academy are generally working towards the following ideals when contemplating how we can do better. We need...

Bottom - Up - Thinking:

Public participation, working with communities to develop architectural and urban project briefs is critical. Including the people we are working with at all stages, before there is even a project, to developing a brief, and working it through in phases, and finding funding, and building it together with community, and then following up years later to see how the project has fared. The efficacy of this strategy is clear in the work of various NGOs in informal settlements, as well as the work done for District Six.

Top - Down -Thinking:

Small scale *Urban Acupuncture* or small-scale insertions alone will not change our cities fast and effectively enough. The scale of our socio-economic problems is such that we cannot afford to only work from the bottom up. Housing is needed most urgently for millions of people.

As a global south country, we suffer greatly from the effects of climate change and the uninhibited industrial growth and development in the north. We have to find cheap, sustainable and ways to develop using local industry, local renewable resources and local expertise.

Interdisciplinary Work:

Since the challenges faced are so complex, it is imperative that architects with other professionals and thinkers, to share resources and ideas – without eroding the role of design.

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