

Introduction

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African Perspectives. Two words with all possible pitfalls present in them. What to say about a continent one was not born in? Being white, not black. Perspectives, but coming from where and from whom? From 'the West'. From within. From those who came from Africa, who were (partially) raised there. Then went North or West. And came back. Or not. And stayed. But remain 'African' after all. Like Lesley Lokko, half-European, critically and vocationally trained in the West, speaking and writing in a European language, not an African one, but partially living in Accra, Ghana. She formulates this dilemma of the 'African Perspective' quite well, 'implying vision or viewpoints in a double sense – both inward and outward, looking from Africa towards the rest of the world and of course the rest of the world looking at it. At us'. She is careful in framing the invitation to come to speak at the event in Delft, 'to have the opportunity to speak out, speak back. Speak at all'. And from our side in the Delft School of Design, to deal with these pitfalls of compiling a book on Africa; sailing around the cliffs of 'white urbanism', 'post colonial architecture' and a European dichotomy of 'culture versus African tradition'. It is indeed a 'vision' in the double sense as the two introductory contributions by AbdouMalique Simone and Edgar Pieterse explain. The African city and its very physicality has been largely disjoined and deprived of an overarching institutional logic or public discourse capable of tying its heterogeneous residents together in a sense of common belonging, as AbdouMalique Simone argues. Lesley Lokko's vision or viewpoint is present in Simone in what he calls 'Black Urbanism'; a device for affirming and engaging forms of articulation amongst different cities and urban experiences that otherwise would not have much of a chance of conceptualization. Pieterse's starting position is not much different, African cities are in a permanent state of crisis, unfathomable levels of deprivation, cruelty and routine dispossession. And like Simone, Pieterse argues that urban theorists and practitioners should not abandon the task of thinking through some form of an agenda for urban development. The third more general introductory contribution from M. Christine Boyer discusses what is new in the process of urbanization in the 21st century. Until the 1980s, poverty was mostly associated with rural areas, but today this is an urban problem. The process of urbanization is much more rapid and the size of cities far larger than everything experienced in industrializing cities of the 19th century, she writes. In a recent report from the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, *The State of the World's Cities 2004/2005*, we find a sketch of pervasive and persistent urban problems. Problems that include growing poverty in many regions, deepening inequality and polarization, widespread corruption, high levels of crime and violence, and deteriorating living conditions with inadequate sanitation, unsafe water etc. Nonetheless cities also function as engines of economic growth and an examination of promising practices around the world shows examples of low-income communities who mobilize successfully, to improve difficult situations, the Report states. In describing the characteristics of today's urban world, the Report describes the specific character of globalization. At least three out of the four are well known.

Global connections function at a much greater *speed* than ever before, globalization operates at a much larger *scale*, leaving few people unaffected, and third, the *scope* of global connections is much broader, it has multiple dimensions such as economic, technological, political, legal, social and cultural dimensions. These characteristics refer to the Western world and Asia, but for the African continent we might need other categories. Economic relations with the rest of the world have recently changed. The main trade partner of Africa today is no longer the United States or Europe, but China. China's demand for raw materials, Dowden writes, drove prices up and in 2000 African economies began to grow quickly. In 2006 seven of the world's twenty fastest growing economies were in Africa.¹ Since 2009 Guangzhou is the main hub due to its biannual Canton Fair (China Import and Export Fair) held every spring and autumn, with a history of 53 years since 1957. African traders, many of them women, travel to the fair, where they can buy anything they ever wanted to import. Prices are lower and air tickets to China are the same price as to Europe. The real advantage is in the combined shipping: Chinese allow containers to be filled with different goods, and traders can get the pick of everything they wish to sell in one container. An economy of scope, but in a wide diversity, cut-throat prices, much like an African market. It is supported by Africa's fast growing mobile phone market: between 1999 and 2004 the number of mobile subscribers jumped from 7.5 million to 76.8 million, an average annual increase of 58 percent. The pay-as-you-go cards solve the problem of billing. Landlines never worked properly, you don't need them anymore, pre-paid phones have taken over.

In many African countries 'urbanism' gets a completely different meaning, no longer related to colonial logics. Unhindered by any kind of formal industrialization or economic development, De Boeck writes on Kinshasa that the city has bypassed, redefined or smashed the (neo)colonial logics that were stamped onto its surface. It has done so spatially, in terms of its architectural and urban development, as well as in terms of its sociocultural and economic imprint. 'Today, aided by an unending political and economic crisis, the city is undergoing a large scale process of informal *villagization*, in which a new type of agrarian urbanity and even a new type of ethnicity is generated.'² The problem De Boeck is raising here, is that not only are we unable to understand Kinshasa with Western notions of urbanism and planning, but that terms and concepts such as state, administration, government, governability, democracy, army, citizenship, law, justice, and even education and healthcare no longer seem to apply unequivocally to the realities usually covered by those terms. In many important ways, Simone argues elsewhere, 'the city' fails to exist, a notion we also find in De Boeck, and to a certain extent in Gerhard Bruyns who argues for an additional urban list to understand the informal, the ethnic and social structures in South Africa. Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg certainly are cities, but they have many scars left from apartheid. Bruyns writing about his native Pretoria discusses the changes in the urban landscape: South Africa is echoing an American urban planning model. What we encounter today, he writes, is a swathe of urban development at both the formal and informal levels. An exceptional increase in housing demand, a higher number of business related activities, with an ever higher number of high-end leisure facilities. Zoning, sprawl and infrastructure represent

three quintessential aspects that play a significant role in South Africa's urban landscape. In discussing two of his childhood boroughs in Pretoria, Arcadia and Sunnyside, he explains how social transformations changed these residential areas. Very few white families still reside in Sunnyside. Both boroughs saw a mass exodus of white residents to peripheral neighbourhoods. And it has not become safer in Pretoria. During the apartheid years, crime in Johannesburg for instance, and indeed in most of South Africa, was confined to black townships, Lindsay Bremner writes.³

White South Africa was immunized against crime by the state security system, whose strategies and tactics were designed to protect it. Ironically this has now positioned whites as uniformly privileged, racialized targets, as 'the enemy' in relation to those for whom state security meant oppression, exploitation and denial. The rate of increase in levels of crime peaked in 1990, the year in which political transition began, and then showed absolute increases over the following years, with increases in the recorded levels of all crimes except murder (because of declining levels of political violence). While the murder rate declined by 7 per cent to 14,920 in 1994, assault increased by 18 per cent, rape by 42 per cent, robbery by 40 per cent, vehicle theft by 34 per cent and burglary by 20 per cent. No accurate figures exist, but it is certain that commercial crime, concentrated in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, also increased.⁴

A recent mapping of the Johannesburg's crime indicates that the areas most disadvantaged or least protected under apartheid are now most vulnerable to murder, armed robbery, rape and violent assault – Soweto, Alexandra and Orange Farm, she explains. Households install ever more sophisticated physical security measures. 'They raise their low, picturesque garden walls by two, three sometimes four metres, and top them with spikes or glass chips; they unfurl razor wire [a particularly cruel form of barbed wire developed in South Africa for counter-insurgency purposes] along their perimeters; they add electric fencing, designed to shock when touched; they install automated driveway gates and intercom systems.' Prison-like dimensions we find also in the house, she writes, layer upon layer of security gates; to pass from sleeping to living to kitchen areas may involve unlocking three security gates. Security has become a way of life, she writes. But it has also become the fastest growing sector in the South African economy. Private security firms outnumber the police by two to one. 'They have contributed significantly to the militarization of space and society in recent years.'⁵ The incidence of murders in Cape Town is still extremely high, with a total of 2016 murders in 2006 and 2007, representing an annual murder rate of 62 per cent per 100,000 people – an average of six murders every day, the *Five Year Plan* tells us. Drug related crime has tripled in the past five years. As in Johannesburg, property related crime (residential burglaries) has also increased over the same period, possibly reflecting a connection between drugs and property crime. Like any other city in the world, this has its effects on international and national investment, quality of life, the retention of human capital, as well as on the successful hosting of the 2010 World Cup Soccer event in Cape Town.⁶ Besides CCTV networks and law enforcement, urban design is mentioned as

one of the objectives to fight this. Boyer's focus is on what we often call the 'informal sector' in the economy and the housing needs; a concept that emerged in the early 1970s. But what to do with a country where the 'informal sector' is the main form of income, and thus bypassing government tax regulations? Moreover illegal settlements have become so pervasive that they outnumber legally planned developments, Christine Boyer writes. The agenda for development she discusses in the work of the English architect John Turner, who worked in Lima, Peru from 1957 to 1965 and who qualified squatter settlements as highly successful solutions to housing problems in urban areas of developing countries. But a lot has changed since Turner's active involvement in Lima: governments became interested in self-help in order to avoid adequate housing, which complicates the agenda for development. This agenda of social change in urban life is no easy task, as the book will show. AbdouMalique Simone argues that the very heterogeneity of black urban life certainly does rule out collective action based on notions of shared cultural, economic, historical, or physiognomic identity; it does not, however, rule out the use of 'blackness' as a non-essentialist means of articulating heterogeneous political demands. Black urbanism is thus a *device* for engaging the heterogeneous flows of cultural materials, money, ideas and apparatuses across specific materializations of the urban, whether it is in Europe, the USA, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean or Latin America. His ideas might be seen to correspond with another recent study by Filip De Boeck on Kinshasa, inspired by Calvino's invisible city, Venice, with its reflecting water mirrors. De Boeck writes:

Paradigms of resistance against the hegemonies of state, money and market fail to fully capture the complexities of the realities lived by many in Congo today, nor do they manage to seize the dynamics of subversion by means of which the metaphor of the mirror becomes alive in the urban world of Kinshasa. Both literally and figuratively, Congo's capital constantly smashes its own mirrors. At the same time, it never stops piecing itself back together. In ways that often leave the observer perplexed, the city constantly activates and undergoes the effervescent push and pull of destruction and regeneration. The incessant and chaotic crossing of the borders between these two forces somehow seems to generate the energetic source from which Kinshasa taps the power to embody, animate and sustain its own eidos, its own ongoing attempts at societal creation. In its most essential form, this power is operated by a frontier logic of mutation. It is, in a way, the power of the fetish. Like the fetish, the city of Kinshasa is a constant border-crossing phenomenon, resisting fixture, refusing capture. And like the fetish itself, like the magic activated through the mirror in the bellies of Congo's power objects, the city's moving force of mutation is generated in 'the slippage between the dominance and the subordination of the surface'. Mentally and materially, the city emerges in unstable space. It is a product of a profound mixture between different cultural itineraries and sites.⁷

The difference between AbdouMalique Simone and Edgar Pieterse is that whereas the former is more comparable to De Boeck's description of Kinshasa's 'logic of

mutation', the latter is more involved and concerned with the dynamic character of governmentality. Pieterse is a strong advocate of promoting transformative interventions through the institutions and interventions of the state. His contribution stresses the pivotal role of the state and its programmatic focus. There is an infinite array of opportunities to refuse, undermine or subvert the dominant governmentalities, but oppositional efforts must always return to institutionalization, he argues. It does not mean an abstract unifying notion of 'the state', however. On the contrary. Like Simone his focus is on *process* rather than outcome, *contingency* versus homogeneity. Pieterse is very explicit in his ideas about the workings of governmentality; the normative anchors of his alternative urban development model are situated in a rights-based approach and the importance of radical democracy. What this struggle means in the South African context is extensively discussed in one of the final contributions by Patrick Heller and Bongani Ngqulunga who analyse the remaking of the apartheid city, in particular the relation between local government and civil society in Durban. This theme directly relates to Boyer's contribution on economic and urban 'informality', which opens with Henri Lefebvre's urban revolution and his right to the city. Lefebvre's concepts however need to be reformulated. De Boeck for instance shows how Lefebvre still depended on the modernist tradition which underpinned the creation of difference in the colonial period.⁸ Lefebvre believed that tendencies of modernity would never be discovered either in Kenya or among French peasants. That might be so, but concepts are never finished as Lefebvre already stated at the time. Urban conditions have changed quite a lot, and the greater part of the world is urbanized as he foresaw in the 1960s. Local conditions vary per region, country or even per continent. In Cape Town the situation is definitely not the same as in Kinshasa; South Africa in a way stands apart from many other African countries, such as the Congo. But correspondences in the informal economy are there:

[T]he desperation for jobs [in South Africa] has cultivated an enormous industry of fake employment agencies and shakedown schemes. Residents are conscious about displaying any weakness and continuously watch what they say about themselves, what they wear, the routes they travel, and the company they are seen with. Even in cursory relationships with neighbours or associates, a person cannot be construed as having significant relationships in the event that others to whom these associates may owe money or are perceived to have been harmed in some way decide to hold that person as somehow culpable.⁹

What kind of urban citizen is constructed here, Simone asks, what kind of 'right to the city' is implied here? Spatial segregation and inequalities in Cape Town for instance are only increasing. The number of people living in informal settlements is growing (23,000 families in 1993 to 115,000 families in 2005), overcrowding is increasing, and household size is declining; the Five Year Plan is telling in that sense.¹⁰ They contribute to an increasing housing backlog (an increase from 150,000 in 1998 to approximately 300,000 in 2006). What this means for the city's housing programme we will see later on in the last section of this book.

A basic urban driver for Pieterse is effective political voice through formal participatory democratic systems. The struggle for the 'right to the city' is only likely to arise in a context of radical democracy. Simone's contribution in this respect might be a bit more restrictive: 'blackness' as a device embodies a conceptual solidarity, but it is a highly problematic one. It is at the same time the constant awareness that one is always playing with fire. Blackness for him is a commitment to make something without clear maps or certainties. The 'right to the city' for Simone will be messy and inconsistent, and might look disordered. What ties the two contributions together is that the role of local knowledge and practices is vital for this type of urban development. Operating in a (South) African 'landscape', both culturally and materially, asks for an understanding of 'local knowledge', it asks for an understanding of cultures basically 'foreign' to the European mind. And although 'the woods are full of eager interpreters', as Clifford Geertz writes, urbanists also will have to come up with some form of understanding of the 'context' they are working in.¹¹ Like AbdouMalique Simone, Clifford Geertz uses the concept of 'constructions':

[T]he manner of these constructions itself varies: Burckhardt portrays, Weber models, Freud diagnoses. But they all represent attempts to formulate how this people or that, this period or that, this person or that makes sense to itself and, understanding that, what we understand about social order, historical change, or psychic functioning in general. Inquiry is directed toward cases or sets of cases, and toward the particular features that mark them off; but its aims are as far-reaching as those of mechanics or physiology: to distinguish the materials of human experience.¹²

Lesley Lokko in the next section links three different but interconnected issues; the distinction between culture and civilization, the notion of place, and architectural education. Like AbdouMalique Simone she is half-European, critically and vocationally trained in the West, speaking, writing and thinking in a European language, not an African one as she makes clear, but dealing with Accra, the capital of Ghana where she lives right now, grew up, left and returned to. She struggles with a Western distinction, trying to find a place for African Ghanese 'tradition'. Culture and civilization progress from 'civility' to the modern sense of a general process of intellectual, spiritual and material progress, a fundamental given, as she writes, within the framework of 'development', particularly in Africa. In line with Norbert Elias, she equates civilization with the idea of manners and morals. Beginning with the Renaissance, the rules of everyday intervention required a high degree of self-scrutiny and self-repression. These prohibitions, which concerned table manners, sexual conduct and bodily functions, became increasingly strict. Lokko stresses the importance of the shift from the rural to the urban existence, from pig-farming to Picasso, as she puts it. It is all related to city life or urban civilization. But 'culture' and 'civilization' in relation to Africa reveal a deep ambivalence about the precise meaning of either. Culture in Africa largely means tradition, which by definition cannot perform in the same way. It leaves us with a notion that tradition is not enough: important as it may be, Lokko argues that something else needs to happen that brings us closer to a more speculative critical understanding of culture. She

shows this in a project she more or less intuitively started some years ago. *A Fine Line*, its starting-point the Accra Mall, a new shopping centre in Accra. The entrance to the mall runs directly off the Tetteh Quarshie Interchange, the largest roundabout in Africa. The traffic chaos starts at 6:30 am and lasts for almost fifteen hours a day. Over the years this kilometre-long strip has turned into a roadside market which takes advantage of the fact that the average speed of traffic is slower than a man can walk. Most of the car drivers are relatively wealthy expatriate Ghanaians, ready to buy from their car window all possible kinds of goods offered to them by the Spintex Road traders who actually have set up home close to the Spintex. But the Western style shopping mall at the end of the strip has changed things in an interesting way. The traders cleaning up after a day of work walk down the length of the Spintex Road, dressed in their Sunday best to enter the mall. Once past security guards, they walk amongst the newly opened shops, admiring the goods, but never buying anything. They are not new consumers in waiting, nor are they typical of the urban poor. Articulate, ambitious, and aggressive, they navigate laterally across what the West calls the 'informal economy' in order to create wealth, she writes. Unlike the West however where shopping needs some additional entertainment in the retail sector, no added value to experience is needed here, shopping *is* the entertainment. It is after all a new experience. The complex issues Ghana is facing in its relationship with modernity and the new urban culture, which is different from both the West and the outdated African tradition, is also present in architectural education. Lokko briefly discusses two colonial approaches: French and British, the British promoting science and industry, the French promoting the arts. The Anglophone tends to favour the vocational over the creative, the result being that architectural education has suffered greatly from this dangerous dichotomy, she argues. Her contribution ends with a plea for another new idea in which modes of thinking, being, and doing are integrated in a specific place. Something new needs to happen, certainly in Anglophone West Africa.

The Francophone approach is not without problems either. This colonial approach plays a role in Johan Lagae's contribution on Lubumbashi in the Congo. French colonial practices are captured with the concept of '*patrimoine*', concerning the city's architectural heritage. Like Lesley Lokko, Lagae analyses Western conceptions where built heritage is analysed in terms of 'monumentality', 'durability' and 'history'. Such were the terms used by colonial architects and urbanists to define Central Africa as an architectural '*terre vierge*'. Lagae argues that it comes as no surprise that the attention has been oriented almost exclusively towards the buildings in the former *ville européenne*, while the large built production in the cities has hitherto largely been neglected. Very much in line with Henri Lefebvre's ideas on monument and society, Lagae argues for cultural heritage as a 'social construct' to which multiple values can be and are ascribed. Like Lokko he is interested in an alternative reading of culture, built heritage and the history of colonialism. He shows how transnational and local perspectives get interwoven: architectural influences may for instance follow railway lines, running from Central Africa to Cape Town in South Africa. Building components of early colonial bungalows erected around 1910 should be sought in South Africa and Rhodesia rather than in Belgium. Local influences and intentions

can easily become overruled by colonial civilization, as he shows in the former *Athenée Royale*. Built in the late 1940s by the colonial government in a monumental classicism, it also shows local influences coming from educational institutions built ten years earlier. Although built in a Beaux Arts style, the young local architects working under the name *Yenga* had set out to invent a contemporary African architecture. It was built with financial aid from the Union Minière du Haut Katanga and the railway company as a strategic tool of colonization. And also here 'civilization' was to be understood as a cultural expression coming from the *métropole*. The white metropolis to be precise. During the inauguration evening in 1956 the Théâtre National de la Belgique performed for an exclusively white audience. In 2006 after many other changes the building became the seat of the Assemblée Provinciale of Katanga, the most southern province of Congo with its capital Lubumbashi. All the way up in the north we find Gbadolite, that collection of bizarre presidential palaces that Mobutu built for himself in a 'European' style, a city more or less dropped in the African Bush as Richard Dowden writes.¹³ Gbadolite compromises virtually everything Lagae is writing about; Kawele Palace was Mobutu's private home, the entrance a triumphal arch, and at the back there is a vast swimming pool on two levels and a banqueting hall of royal proportions. Then there is State House, an attempt to build Versailles in the jungle. The classical frontage is pink and white marble, with inside a grand ballroom lined with mirrors and lit by enormous chandeliers, the ceiling delicately moulded rococo plasterwork.¹⁴ The Congolese perception of the colonial past is indeed complex as Lagae writes, being neither a mere nostalgic longing for nor a radical rejection of colonial order. But for sure Gbadolite is beyond this complexity.

What we need is a multilayered concept of architectural heritage including notions of *memory* as Lagae argues for and Ena Jansen so beautifully describes in South African literature, constructed along racial and social lines and hierarchies that might have a completely oppositional take on the same heritage and memory. Jansen develops this idea of memory in her Johannesburg characters of Sophiatown, the kind of *palimpsest* place that, for her, literature is made of. Like Lagae she argues that without a certain kind of space, a certain kind of story is simply impossible. Referring to Marlene van Niekerk's novel *Triomf* (1994) (Sophiatown used to be called Triomf), she describes Sophiatown as a symbolic centre of black culture in the 1940s and '50s.¹⁵ Lagae, rather than trying to invent new concepts, opts for the idea of a guide to write his story, using individual entries to communicate information with equal legitimacy within an overall survey. Post-colonial scholarship has made clear that the canon itself is a *construct* in Clifford Geertz's sense, one that demands an ongoing critical inquiry and reassessment. Jansen checked the map of the town, and there is no Martha Street where the dysfunctional Benade family lived: van Niekerk is actually remapping notions of memory Lagae is referring to. Memory seems to go on foot, from *Triomf* to Louis Greenberg's *The Beggars' Signwriters* (2006) to what Jansen calls the ultimate walker in recent Johannesburg literature, Ivan Vladislavic's *Portrait with Keys. Joburg & what-what* (2006) — blacks, in contrast to whites, all walk. Phaswane Mpe (*Welcome to our Hillbrow*, 2001) and Niq Mholongo (*Dog Eat Dog*, 2004) constitute a new kind of South African author: writing from the heart of the kwaito generation,

both record the huge changes that have transformed the inner city of Johannesburg over the last years.

Which brings us to the next contribution where Hannah le Roux describes her project on Sophiatown with her students at Wits University, the same institution that Mpe and Mholongo often described in their love-hate relationship, called 'that great institution of learning'.

Le Roux sets out for a strategy to mediate between existing spaces and tourism. There was actually very little to see in Sophiatown. While students were documenting the lost spaces of Sophiatown, the memory of its music invoked another space in the present, it allowed for an element of performance. Discussing the Yeoville Market she describes the market as in transition, space has become temporal. Chairs are set out each morning for the hairdresser, the chicken cages are rolled out and create their own zone. A truck rental has sprung up, displacing vegetables stalls. The social spaces of the market are temporal, changeable and multiple. Most of the earlier built spaces were internally segregated, different spaces for different races. Many school designs were literally rubber stamped into planning schemes. While apartheid buildings were often autonomous, more recently built architectures respond to context. Part of the challenge of contemporary social architecture is for its designers to become readers rather than authors, Le Roux argues. They should be able to recognize the flows and nodes communities produce. It might mean a more specific interest in a pedestrian way of practising architecture, comparable to what Ena Jansen is writing about black literature. This is all quite close to what in the USA is called 'Everyday Urbanism', an interest in urban issues initiated by Margaret Crawford and John Kaliski in the 1990s dealing with everyday life in our cities.¹⁶ Everyday Urbanism has little pretence about the perfectibility of the built environment. Urban design teachers like Le Roux and Bruyns are interested in social equity and citizen participation, especially for disadvantaged populations. This more pedestrian way of practising architecture will be a slow change for South Africa; of the 2000 registered architects, fewer than five per cent come from African communities. The problems lie deeper than racial redistribution, Richard Dowden explains in his book on Africa.¹⁷ South Africa's education system is not producing sufficient numbers of skilled people, especially black skilled people, he writes. The better jobs go to other Africans; Zimbabweans, Mozambicans, Nigerians have the better paid jobs, skilled jobs as well as low paid jobs. In 2007 four out of five maths teachers in South Africa were Zimbabwean. The more pedestrian way of teaching seems to pay off. Le Roux discusses seven projects realized after the apartheid period, from very modest ones to Red Location, an ambitious regional project of apartheid's history. The project includes housing and public infrastructure. The absorption of everyday technologies runs through nearly all of the projects she describes. At the moment education is slowly changing: Le Roux in her teaching is following lines of thought which indeed come close to the everyday, she brings students in direct contact with the areas they work in. Performative research can give new depths to urban design. Gerhard Bruyns' contribution is another example of this line of work. His description of the 'formal' and 'informal' economies tells us about Le Roux's informality as well as the many shopping malls of contemporary South Africa. The

mall cuts through racial barriers: the recently completed malls in Soweto and Soshanguwe have proven this phenomenon. The mall is not an urban characteristic dedicated to the rich and wealthy, Bruyns explains, but has become part of South Africa.

Like Le Roux and Bruyns, Iain Low in the last section argues for involvement of the local community in the design process. Here too notions like 'local knowledge' in the 'reading of the context' are central. For Low it means interpreting the context through active engagement with the multiple forces at play, translating it into models that are capable of transforming the urban world in South Africa. Transforming will not be an easy task, and disillusionment is a recurring characteristic of the African continent, Low writes. Ordinary people feel abandoned by their governments. Dowden's comments on education and the frustration of South Africa's poor illustrate Low's comments; in May 2008 xenophobic youths attacked Zimbabweans, Mozambicans and other immigrants for taking 'their jobs'. The police could not cope and in two weeks some sixty foreigners were killed, some of them burned to death, while more than 30,000 were driven from their homes. Next to the appalling human tragedy it showed that the ANC government was out of touch with the people it claimed to represent: the poor. In housing the poor the ANC post-apartheid government has focused on quantity only, the result being a monotonous environment predominantly located on the urban periphery. While individual units have been delivered en masse, the social fabric has been neglected. ANC's housing policies have failed, the colonized have become colonizer, Low writes. Only more recently considerations of security and comfort are being incorporated into more sustainable housing schemes. He opts for a reconsideration of the Western notion of 'open plan' in relation to locally defined solutions. As an example he describes the 'maximized envelope': by maximizing enclosure, all interior walls are left out, with the exception of those for ablutions. But the 'social fabric' is not all that easy to change either. The Rapid Land Development Project for alternative housing in Johannesburg after the apartheid period failed. Both the civic community and the ANC Councillors alike preferred to stick with the apartheid type of planning principles. Politically speaking, the ANC has rapidly consolidated its power by either incorporating or marginalizing the popular movements that brought it to power. The imperatives of a top-down vision and strategy of transformation have resulted in the increasing centralization and isolation of the institutions of municipal governance. In their case study on Durban, Heller and Ngqulunga show how Durban, one of the most prosperous and well-managed cities in South Africa, has failed to develop the governance structures because of the struggle between technocratic and participatory ideas of transformation that have been settled in favour of the technocrats. The ascendance of what they call the technocratic faction of the ANC has resulted in the consolidation of a bureaucratic, top-down and centralized model of governance. Their contribution shows how complex AbdouMalique Simone's 'blackness' as civic device actually is. In many cases this has resulted in Iain Low's critical assessment that the colonized have become colonizer. Desmond Tutu was currently one of the few to criticize Jacob Zuma; he is deeply disappointed in the development South Africa is taking. The townships are

everywhere, the gap between rich and poor is worse than in Brazil. ANC is great in rhetorics, the *struggle* seems to be everywhere, but economic growth is 3.5 per cent and crime rates are going up, as Bremner shows. Economic growth is lower than many other African states. South Africa supports Robert Mugabe's repressive policies in Zimbabwe, it supported Gaddafi almost to the very end, and it withdrew support for the UN resolution concerning Bashar-al-Assad's repression in Syria. The cult of *the struggle* also affects the internal political relations in ANC. But in many cases assertion of civic autonomy also marks a revival of participatory democratic traditions as a counter-reaction to this increasing centralization and isolation of representative structures. Heller and Ngqulunga also show that the anti-apartheid movement put down deep and broad roots, producing one of the most vocal, mobilized and sophisticated civil societies. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RPD), the ruling alliance's comprehensive manifesto for transformation, sketched a broad agenda of development in which civil society would play a key role. However in 1996 this policy was moved to the side by the introduction of the Growth Employment and Redistribution plan (GEAR), characterized by the authors as a fairly orthodox package of neo-liberal prescriptions that emphasized markets as the engine of transformation, in fact a dramatic break with the RPD. In Durban as in many other cities it meant a centralization of governance functions and resources, accompanied by aggressive moves by the ANC to assert control over civic organizations.¹⁸ Centralization did produce results however as the authors show: the electrification programme met 90% of the need, excluding informal settlements, however. Water provision reached 76% of the population. Between 1995-2000 over 100,000 new housing units were built. Five years later community-level development in Durban came back in the Area Based Management (ABM) structures; the planning department called for decentralization and revitalization of civil society groups. The planning department in Durban was deeply embedded in civil society. Durban in that sense is an interesting case that demonstrates that we have to go beyond the rigid models of state versus society, as Heller and Ngqulunga show. The dichotomy ignores the significance of the interstices of state power and civil society.

Iain Low's contribution is close to Heller and Ngqulunga's. What South Africa needs is an empowerment of ordinary people enabling them in their choices about their everyday lives, he writes. Perception of what constitutes 'housing' will have to change too. As with apartheid where (binary) space played a central role, today's post-apartheid policies need to develop new forms of agency where design will again have a central role, be it in a drastically different social political form. But the reality of this sometimes seems far away, as Alta Steenkamp shows in her contribution. She discusses the N2 gateway Project in Langa, Cape Town. The project is part of South Africa's policy on *Breaking New Ground*, in many respects a realization of Iain Low's plea for a different social and political urban form. Referring to David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre, Steenkamp discusses the project as a constant re-negotiation of urban transformation. Nothing really is stable here, the buildings turn out to be way over budget, the initial residents of the area — the Jo Slovo informal settlement — had little or no chance to get a house here, rents became excessively high, and struggles about who was going to live here and who not were never resolved. Langa is the

oldest surviving former black township in South Africa. It was established in 1927, way outside the city borders and next to the sewerage works. The black population working in the city were seen as visitors: under the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 they could only be there for work, not for living. Transportation to and from the city is, as in many (South) African cities, a major problem. The development of N2 Gateway is a succession of failures, a political conflict between the ANC and the Democratic Alliance, the mayor Helen Zille who refused to pick up the bill for 35 million Rand overrun for phase 1 of the project, and the occupants who were confronted with a doubling of their rent the moment they moved in during September 2006. Residents from the area were moved out to other locations, 'temporary' sites, which turned out to be permanent, and further away from the city where they mostly worked. The conclusion can only be that the project achieved the opposite, as Steenkamp shows. Despite the good intentions in *Breaking New Ground*, harsh reality and economic conditions left no possibility for 'sustainable' social housing in Cape Town. The immediate future of Cape Town doesn't look too good either.¹⁹ This might even be true for the whole of the country, once again Richard Dowden writes, an African country with immense potential may be compromised by its politics (of Thabo Mbeki or currently Jacob Zuma). Another South African miracle is needed.

Notes

- 1 Richard Dowden, **Africa. Altered States, Ordinary Miracles** (London: Portobello, 2009), p. 514.
- 2 Filip De Boeck and Marie-Françoise Plissart, **Kinshasa. Tales of the Invisible City** (Antwerp: Ludion, 2004), p. 34.
- 3 Lindsay Bremner, 'Crime and the emerging landscape of post-apartheid Johannesburg', in Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavić (eds), **Blank___: Architecture, Apartheid and After** (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1998).
- 4 *ibid.*, p. 53.
- 5 *ibid.*, p. 57.
- 6 **Cape Town, Five Year Plan, Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2007/8–2011/12, 2008-2009 Review** (Cape Town: IDP Department, 2008), p. 21.
- 7 Filip De Boeck and Marie-Françoise Plissart, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- 8 Filip De Boeck and Marie-Françoise Plissart, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- 9 AbdouMalique Simone, 'South African Urbanism: Between the Modern and the Refugee Camp', in Martin J. Murray and Garth A. Myers (eds), **Cities in Contemporary Africa** (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 245.
- 10 **Five Year Plan for Cape Town. Integrated Development Plan 2008-2012**, pp. 10ff.
- 11 'It has thus dawned on social scientists that they did not need to be mimic physicists or closet humanists or to invent some new realm of being to serve as the object of their investigations. Instead they could proceed with their vocation, trying to discover order in collective life, and decide how what they were doing was connected to related enterprises when they managed to get some of it done; and many of them have taken an essentially hermeneutic – or, if that word frightens,

conjuring up images of biblical zealots, literary humbugs, and Teutonic professors, an “interpretive” – approach to their task. Given the new genre dispersion, many have taken other approaches: structuralism, neo-positivism, neo-Marxism, micro-micro descriptivism, macro-macro system building, and that curious combination of common sense and common nonsense, socio-biology. But the move toward conceiving of social life as organized in term of symbols (signs, representations, significant, Darstellungen...the terminology varies), whose meanings (**sense, import, signification, Bedeutung...**) we must grasp if we are to understand that organization and formulate its principles, has grown by now to formidable proportions. The woods are full of eager interpreters’. (**Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge, 2000, p. 21**).

12 *ibid.*

13 Dowden, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

14 *ibid.*, p. 372.

15 Sophiatown was removed on 9 February 1955 under the Western Areas Removal Scheme and the government bulldozed Sophiatown by the end of 1963, and rebuilt it as a whites-only suburb hubristically named Triomf. The ANC government restored the name Sophiatown in the late 1990s, although the name change was only completed in 2006.

16 Arie Graafland, ‘An Afterthought on Urban Design’, in Tahl Kaminer, Miguel Robles Duran and Heidi Sohn (eds), **Urban Asymmetries. Studies and Projects on Neoliberal Urbanization** (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2011), pp. 274ff.

17 Dowden, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

18 See for an economic analysis David Hemson, ‘Breaking the Impasse, Beginning the Change. Labour Market, Unions and Social Initiative in Durban’, in Bill Freund and Vishnu Padayachee (eds), **(D)urban Vortex. South African City in Transition** (University of Natal Press, 2002). ‘With an economy characterized by a sharp decline in employment in mining and manufacturing, there has been in the trade unions a certain turn away from the goals of social equity and full employment and instead the complete engagement with the process of enrichment and participation in companies through investment rather than by co-determination through legislation. None of this seems linked to job creation.’ (p. 206)

19 Cape Town faces rising development challenges. During the past decade poverty and unemployment have almost doubled, the housing backlog has more than doubled, drug-related crime has tripled, HIV prevalence has increased tenfold and public transport has deteriorated. This is despite significant economic growth (4% annual increase in GGP), improvements in the provision of basic services (water, waste, electricity) and rising tourist numbers. Cape Town has almost doubled in size during the past twenty years. The transport infrastructure network has become outdated and the major road and rail routes still focus primarily on historic destinations such as the central city. The structure and form of the city generate enormous amounts of movement at great economic, social and environmental cost to the public purse. Traffic congestion is increasing, public transport is inefficient and not available to all parts of the city, and it is difficult to change between modes of transport. The location of the urban poor on marginal land far from places of economic opportunity and facilities (e.g. clinics and hospitals) reinforces the cost of transport for the poorest of the poor.

