



Design Education Forum of Southern Africa

#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

14th National Design Education Conference

27-29 September 2017

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Hosted by
Tshwane University of Technology &
Inscape Education Group



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Dr Susan Giloi
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Introduction

Conference overview and publication of proceedings

The 14th National DEFSA Conference was hosted by Tshwane University of Technology and Inscape Education Group at Freedom Park Pretoria from the 27th to the 29th September 2017. The theme of the conference #Decolonise! Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education, challenged design academics and postgraduate students to scrutinise their educational practice in relation to calls for the decolonisation of higher education.

The initial call for abstracts published on the DEFSA web site and circulated to member institutions resulted in the submission of 64 abstracts of which 40 were accepted. Over the two days of the conference 38 presenters representing eleven institutions presented papers. The third day of the conference was dedicated to a workshop addressing practice-based research and the evaluation and funding thereof. Over the three days 95 delegates and presenters attended the conference and workshop.

All abstracts and papers for the conference and subsequent publication were selected using a double-blind peer review process. The double-blind review process ensured that both authors and reviewers remained anonymous during the process. Prior to the conference the submitted papers were peer reviewed by a group of academics drawn from 16 institutions representing the disciplines of Architecture, Communication Design, Education, Fashion Design, Fine Art, Graphic Design, Jewellery Design, Interior Design, Photography and Visual Studies. A list of the peer reviewers is included in the Conference Proceedings. Authors received feedback in the form of peer review reports and corrections to papers could be implemented for the Conference Proceedings. Ultimately 26 papers have been published in the 14th National DEFSA Conference Proceedings.

Forward by Editors Herman Botes and Susan Giloi

As reflected in the presentations at the DEFSA conference and the papers selected for these proceedings, #Decolonisation offered a fertile theme, concept and related theories for authors to debate and engage with. The calls to decolonise higher education that have emerged over the past few years across the world and especially in South Africa provided academics with a critical point from which to reflect on design education as it has been, and to look forward to what design education might become. Authors provided positive interpretations of how the decolonisation concept could be applied to their own design education practices, as well as institutional practices, in order to strengthen the practice and make it more open to students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Through the lens of Decolonisation authors considered curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment as well as the broader role and objectives of higher education structures and systems. For instance, is it enough to educate graduates who are employable in a highly commercial industry, or should graduates have more holistic skills that will equip them to make a positive impact on a world plagued by complex problems. In scrutinising their own educational practice authors clearly illustrate that education is never neutral and that current education systems skew access (both physical and epistemic), accentuate the gap between school and university level design studies, and emphasise employability in a highly commercial industry rather than addressing local needs for entrepreneurship and innovative problem solving. The impact of the colonial past on access and equity as well as the entrenched power dynamics within institutions and faculties are part of the looking back at where design education comes from. Many authors used the Decolonisation of education as an opportunity to offer alternate objectives for design education that align more strongly with community, empathy, social responsibility, emancipation, collaboration and intentional design. With this shift in focus for design education, comes the potential for design students to learn to become ethical, empathetic, critical and moral co-designers rather than mere operators of technology driven by a profit motive.

Authors clearly see part of their responsibility in introducing a decolonised curriculum, as an approach that would equip graduates to transform the existing professional design practice to incorporate socially and environmentally responsible objectives.

One theme that was emphasised by the keynote speaker, Pro Dei, and echoed in a number of papers, was the consideration of a variety of forms of knowledge, accommodating multiple perspectives, histories, origins and cultures as opposed to a purely Eurocentric understanding of knowledge. Equally significant was the acknowledgement that it is not sufficient to superficially address these form of knowledge, but educators and students need to build an understanding of African indigenous knowledge systems, the history, origins, traditions, practices and principles that have formed and informed these systems.

Ultimately the DEFSA conference and papers included in the proceedings create a platform for discussions and suggestions that enrich design education and individual practices.

Keynote Speaker

Prof Dei is considered by many as one of Canada's foremost scholars on race and anti-racism studies. He is a widely sought after academic, researcher and community worker, whose professional and academic work has led to many Canadian and international speaking invitations in the US, Europe and Africa. Currently, he is Professor of Social Justice Education and Director of the Centre for Integrative Anti-Racism Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto and was named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2017. Professor Dei is the 2015 and 2016 Carnegie African Diasporan Fellow. In August 2012, he received the honorary title of Professor Extraordinaire from the School of Education, University of South Africa (Unisa). He received the 2016 Whitworth Award for Educational Research from the Canadian Education Association (CEA), awarded to the Canadian scholar whose research and scholarship have helped shape Canadian national educational policy and practice. In June 2007, Professor Dei was installed as a traditional chief in Ghana, specifically, as the Gyaasehene of the town of Asokore, Koforidua in the New Juaben Traditional Area of Ghana. His traditional stool name is Nana Adusei Sefa Tweneboah I.

Peer reviewers

The 2017 DEFSA Conference peer review group have more than 700 years of combined experience in Higher Education. The peer review process for the 14th National DEFSA conference and publication of the conference proceedings followed two phases. In the first phase abstracts were submitted and peer reviewed in a rigorous double-blind peer review process. The peer reviews and reports were verified by the peer review committee and based on the outcomes approved abstracts were accepted into the conference and authors received feedback. In the second phase, full papers were submitted by authors and again went through a double-blind peer review process before the conference. The papers selected and approved through this process, and which were presented at the conference, are then published in this conference proceedings.

The double-blind peer review process ensures that each abstract and paper is reviewed by two people, and that authors and reviewers who are experts in their field, remain anonymous.

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Rudi	de Lange	PhD	TUT	Associate Professor
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Past + Present = Future? The Potential Role of Historical Visual Material and Contemporary Practice in De-Colonising Visual Communication Design Courses

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Abstract

This paper suggests two possible approaches to researching and conceptualizing aspects of a decolonized design education for Graphic Design/Visual Communication Design (VCD). Concepts from Post-colonial theory, such as Ngugi wa Thiongo's decolonization of the mind, Afrocentrism, Homi Bhabha's hybridity, and appropriation, along with aspects of Social Identity theory are drawn on as means of investigating these approaches.

The first approach suggests that knowledge of visual communication content from pre-colonial and colonial African societies (African Graphic Systems) can be employed as a means of contributing to a sense of both collective and individual identity, and either as African and/or as South African. Enabling such a sense of identity requires a greater inclusion of these indigenous visual traditions than may be common in South African VCD courses, and necessitates a re-definition of visual communication and the researching and construction of its history in this continent. In this regard examples will be introduced of visual communication traditions from the over eighty indigenous alphabetic and graphic systems identified in literature. This approach can enable South African students to broaden the definition of History of Graphic Design and contest the existing canon, which has been defined almost exclusively in Europe and America, in terms of scribal writing and typography, and for print. Recovery of these visual traditions is thus advocated as a means of validating and re-developing an independent identity.

Moving from the historical to the contemporary, a second approach discusses some separate and tentative steps towards such an identity. Examples of recent BTech projects in the Graphic Design Programme at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) suggest ways in which students can progress towards a post-colonial relationship with the hegemonic Graphic Design culture. These examples consider, amongst other aspects, the experience of young black designers in the commercial white-dominated design world; their concern about the loss or deterioration of aspects of indigenous culture; and the role of VCD in non-Westernized life and culture; as experienced by black students. Further development of these students' approaches to their projects, as an explicit teaching strategy, could enable students to appropriate Graphic Design processes and technologies, and use these Westernized forms to articulate the perceived post-colonial realities of their lives.

The intention of the paper therefore is to suggest that rootedness in historical knowledge, combined with contemporary tactics, can enable students to construct design identities that are authentic yet capable of engaging with globalized industry, and of contesting a hegemonic disciplinary discourse through a South African-centred approach.

Keywords: *Identity, appropriation, African graphic systems, visual communication, postcolonialism*

Introduction

Recent South African student protests against university fees (the "Fees Must Fall" movement) have incorporated demands for the "de-colonization" of university curricula. What these demands entail for design disciplines needs clarification, given the European origins of not just design curricula, but virtually the whole tertiary education system. Colonial period aspects include the qualifications, the scientific method, and the concept of universal education as a social good, so demands for de-colonization may have far-reaching consequences.

Tertiary education for Graphic Design, or Visual Communication Design (VCD), has also developed from colonial models of vocational and technical education. Consequently, VCD is conceptualized as having at its foundation explicit preparation for employment in the design industry. At the author's institution, the discipline's links with industry are considered fundamental: the National Diploma Course in Graphic Design is substantially integrated with industry, and the BTech in Graphic Design emphasizes employability, integrated with personalized design projects. De-colonization of the curriculum should preferably therefore be balanced against enabling students to achieve employability. This balance is of course skewed by the pervasive influence of globalized technological capital on the industry.

The paper therefore briefly discusses globalization and some responses to it from Post-colonial thinking. It then offers two possible approaches to researching and conceptualizing aspects of a de-colonized design education for Graphic Design/Visual Communication Design (VCD). The first suggests that knowledge of indigenous, historical, visual communication content (African Graphic Systems) can contribute to a sense of both collective and individual identity. The second discusses some tentative individual steps towards such identities and approaches, using examples from recent BTech projects and one MTech in the Graphic Design Programme at the institution. These examples suggest ways in which students can construct post-colonial relationships with the hegemonic Graphic Design culture. Together the two components may contribute to a decolonized curriculum in Visual Communication Design.

The Context of De-colonization

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define Globalization as *"the process whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate world-wide"* (2007, 100), a process enormously accelerated and empowered by the recent revolution in electronic technology.

Globalization may be included in the older concept of Neo-colonialism, defined as:

any and all forms of control of the ex-colonies after political independence ... [but] in a wider sense the term has come to signify the inability of developing economies... to develop an independent economic and political identity under the pressures of globalization (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2007, p. 146),

and first coined by Nkrumah (1965). Post-colonial critique of neo-colonialism can therefore still be substantially applied to globalization.

Post-colonial concepts were first articulated by Edward Said (1978), when he discussed the relationship between the West and the "Orient" (as defined by the West), and its construction, over hundreds of years, of the inhabitants of the Orient as European culture's "deepest and most recurring image of the Other" (Said 1978, p. 1). He defined the "other" as a negative stereotype projected on to another society, in opposition to Western positive self-stereotypes:

On the one hand, there are Westerners, and on the other, there are the Arab-Orientals: the former are, in no particular order, rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things. (Said 1978, p. 49)

This kind of stereotyping or 'othering' has equally been used to devalue African cultures and people during and since colonial times (Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* being a commonly used example).

Post-colonial theory particularly developed in literature, to contest Western authors' dominance of the field. The Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o argued for an Afrocentric approach, demanding that literature in Africa "establish the centrality of Africa" (Ngugi 1972, p. 441) in its studies, albeit "without rejecting other cultural streams, especially the western stream." (Ngugi 1972. p. 439). Calling the process "decolonizing the mind", Ngugi argued that former colonial writers should free themselves from writing in colonial languages:

Language carries culture, and culture carries, [...] the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (Ngugi 1986. p. 16)

The argument for indigenous language as a valuable cultural inheritance can be extended to visual languages, and thus enable designers not only to maintain their own cultures, but to assert their cultures' value and individuality in the face of the homogenizing influence of globalization. This paper therefore proposes the recovery and revaluation of historical visual communication material as a cultural carrier, as part of decolonizing the VCD curriculum. Examples of such material are discussed in the next section.

Two further concepts from Post-colonial theory are relevant to this paper. Firstly, appropriation, which consists of:

the ways in which post-colonial societies take over those aspects of the imperial culture – language, forms of writing, film, theatre, even modes of thought and argument such as rationalism, logic and analysis – that may be of use to them in articulating their own social and cultural identities. (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffin 2007. p. 15)

Any kind of cultural form imported from the imperial or globalized centre can be appropriated, from advertising to packaging to cartoons and graphic novels, from websites, apps and games to environmental graphics. Any of these forms may be adapted to a use that contests, directly or indirectly, the neo-colonial hegemony of globalization.

The second concept, which seems to ally quite neatly with appropriation, is hybridity. Bhabha (1994) redefined the concept of the hybrid for the post-colonial context to suggest that all cultures are hybrid, that none are pure and 'sui generis', and thus superior to others more obviously mixed:

hybridity, Bhabha argues, subverts the narratives of colonial power and dominant cultures. The series of inclusions and exclusions on which a dominant culture is premised are deconstructed by the very entry of the formerly-excluded subjects into the mainstream discourse. The dominant culture is contaminated by the linguistic and racial differences of the native self. (Ben Beya 1998)

Reference to hybridity must further acknowledge that a return to a "pure" original pre-colonial condition is practically impossible. The concept can advocate rather that formerly colonized peoples engage with globalization and neo-colonialism; appropriate any useful forms, concepts, and practices; and adapt, develop and turn them to their own purposes, including contesting and resisting globalized power structures. Hybrid forms may integrate colonial, indigenous and completely novel elements in physical structure, purpose, and/or meaning, to produce new and vibrant results. The forms would also differ from one such society to another, depending on the individual history and circumstances of each.

Hybridity and appropriation in this way have the potential to address both pragmatism about the post-colonial situation and control over cultural destiny. Post-colonialist analysis and criticism offer useful means of interrogating the colonial heritages of fields such as VCD; of reconstructing, retrieving and revaluing the pre-colonial; and developing what may come next: in other words, of de-colonizing design. This process benefits both the designers themselves and the broader society and culture.

Within a society and culture, identity is central to the post-colonial project: how do people see themselves, and what value do they give their self-perceptions? Stets and Burke (2015, p. 225) refer to the concept of social identity as a process of identifying oneself as a member of an 'in-group', by means of desirable criteria; and identifying 'others', not like the self, as the 'out group'. By identifying a range of 'in-groups' in society each self feels part of, a social identity is built up. This identity is defined as much by the 'out-groups' the self rejects, as by the 'in-groups' it embraces.

In this instance the aim would be that local designers self-identify as confident members of an 'in-group' of African cultures, and not so much as 'out-group' individuals excluded from and trying to join the 'in-group' of Western society and culture. For this identification, it would be necessary to demonstrate substantial indigenous material, relevant to the discipline, that students and designers could take ownership of, so they might feel they were meeting external colonial and technological influences on equal terms, rather than merely absorbing them. Mafundikwa has commented that African designers tend to look to Western examples rather than within the continent:

Designers in Africa struggle with all forms of design because they are more apt to look outward for influence and inspiration. The creative spirit in Africa, the creative tradition, is as potent as it has always been, if only designers could look within. (Mafundikwa 2013)

Unfortunately, education for Visual Communication Design in South Africa pays little attention to African visual communication history. Most courses include art and/or design history: San Rock Art is occasionally covered, and contemporary South African Fine Art or Design practice, but it is unusual to cover visual communication content from the rest of Africa.

The canon of History of Graphic Design and current practices and techniques are all heavily Western-centric, and so devalue African visual traditions. So do all forms of colonization, skewing the colony towards the colonial centre and away from its neighbours. This attitude also shows a hangover from apartheid, that "countries to the north of us", had at best nothing to offer and at worst were a threat to the country.

To counter this situation, indigenous visual communication content, pre-colonial and colonial, can be used to build an independent sense of both collective and individual identity in design students, as African and as South African. Greater attention to these indigenous visual traditions could promote the confidence to appropriate and hybridize colonial forms and turn them to local advantage.

This discussion has argued for the relevance of concepts from Post-colonial and other areas of theory, to the proposition that de-colonization of the design curriculum can be supported through study of both past African visual traditions, and current student-driven projects.

Framing the Past: History of Visual Communication in Africa

This section describes the visual communication functions of selected African visual traditions, and their similarities to Western visual communication models. It suggests the comparability of communication value between the two traditions, and thus the potential relevance of African

material to VCD. This process accepts a wide understanding of visual communication and its functions.

Extremely rapid recent developments in electronic technology have revolutionized current practices in Visual Communication Design and hugely expanded the discipline's scope. Design for print has diminished in importance, and may even disappear from a brief entirely. A designer may now employ and be expected to understand communication through not just text and image for print; but also human gesture, expression, drama; ergonomics and position in space; sound and time. In other words, they need to consider a time-based visual-gestural-aural matrix in which the audience's preconceptions, history, and experience in the communication, must be considered, even while the emphasis of the project remains visual.

Visual communication traditions in Africa have included many of these aspects of communication (if without electronics) for hundreds if not thousands of years. African Graphic Systems and traditions of visual communication present numerous parallels to this range of designed communication by visual means. Over eighty indigenous alphabetic and graphic systems and visual communication traditions from across Africa are identified in the literature, a figure almost certainly incomplete. However, the literature almost always stems from other disciplines, such as Anthropology or Art History. Very little from a Visual Communication Design perspective could be found. Mafundikwa (2003) is one of the few.

Geographically these systems occur across Africa. Chronologically they range from prehistoric and pre-contact societies, through slavery and colonialism to the present day. Some are represented in the literature by a few glyphs or symbols, whereas others may include hundreds of characters and extensive analysis. At least twenty indigenous phonetic systems (alphabets and syllabaries) are documented, in addition to the Roman and Arabic alphabets and their adaptations. At least sixty symbolic systems have also been documented, in which the visual symbol represents an idea or concept, rather than a sound in a given language. All of these systems and symbols merit study and analysis from a visual communication point of view, with a view to understanding what they may offer to culture, identity and visual language. The following examples briefly describe some functional similarities between indigenous traditions, and relate them to Western design.

Example 1: Visual identity

Amongst the Ndengese people, part of the Kuba grouping in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the roles, actions and status of a chief or king embodied values of political and social authority (Faik-Nzuji 1992). These values were communicated by, amongst other means, bodily scarification and wood sculpture, two visual media seldom considered by Graphic Designers. Westernized viewers may regard scarification as ugly or barbaric, but the issue here is the communication enabled by it. Conventionalized geometric patterns and shapes communicate information regarding the qualities and attributes of the king, by their depiction and placement on the body (see Figure 1.). Such meaning cannot be communicated beyond the king's presence, but this limitation is overcome by the representation of his personal composition of symbols and patterns on wooden sculptures. These can then be transported to remote areas to communicate the king's values and authority. They function as texts, conveying visual information relating to the king's authority, and validating and certifying the messengers who accompany them. They function in the same way as a corporate identity, a logo on a letterhead or a billboard: as visual representations of authority. We see these devices and accept them as official, as representing the authority of the company or organization. We see them on packaging, and believe that we have a genuine product. Western corporate identities are constructed using systems of semiotics culturally appropriate to the society. Thus, they are comparable to the communication functions of scarification and sculpture in the Ndengese tradition. The difference is that a piece of visual communication such as the wooden representation of kingship carries with it broader and deeper and more specific cultural content than the semiotics of Western corporate identity.



Figure 1: Ndengese Statue of a chief (c.1890)

Source: Online: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_-_Ndengese,_West_Kasai,_DRC_-_Royal_Museum_for_Central_Africa_-_DSC06670.JPG. Accessed 10 August 2017.

Example 2: Social inclusion and exclusion

Most precolonial sub-Saharan societies were oral, and used visual communication systems in a contextual way: their systems could convey information as accurately as alphabetic writing, but each symbol or glyph might convey a range of concepts.

In many of these societies religious or spiritual knowledge is considered intrinsically dangerous. Only initiated elders may access it, and use it to communicate permitted details about history, beliefs, and culture. Members of the *Mbudye* society of the Luba people of the DRC employed a carved wooden “Memory Board” or *Lukasa*, approximately rectangular, which bears a pattern of attached beads or engraved geometric figures or pictographs (See Figure 2.). Such patterns represent meaning by their position on the surface and relative to other beads or marks, including:

the spatial paradigm of the Luba royal court... a mental geography that maps and orders the universe, the kingdom, human relations, and the mind. The physical and conceptual layout of the court ... Luba cosmology, ... the beaded studs positioned upon it allow for the passages, contours, random excursions, exits, entrances, rebounds, ricochets and thresholds that characterise the active social processes of memory. (Roberts & Roberts 1996, p. 41)

This meaning is also contingent on when, how, where and to whom the *Lukasa* is 'read'. Despite this contingency, it is a fixed record of cultural memory, and as such functions as a text. The 'visual grammar' of the *Lukasa* represents information in a continuously contemporary process that can reinterpret history and knowledge for each re-telling. Because of the secret and dangerous nature

of this kind of knowledge part of its function must be that the visual language is not easy for the uninitiated to understand. Forbidden knowledge is also discussed in one of the student projects below (Example 6).

This example also illustrates the role of literacies in inclusion or exclusion within a society: the Luba limit their literacies to an initiated elder elite. In our own society, those excluded by any factor from either scribal or computer literacy are now excluded from many forms of engagement with the world.

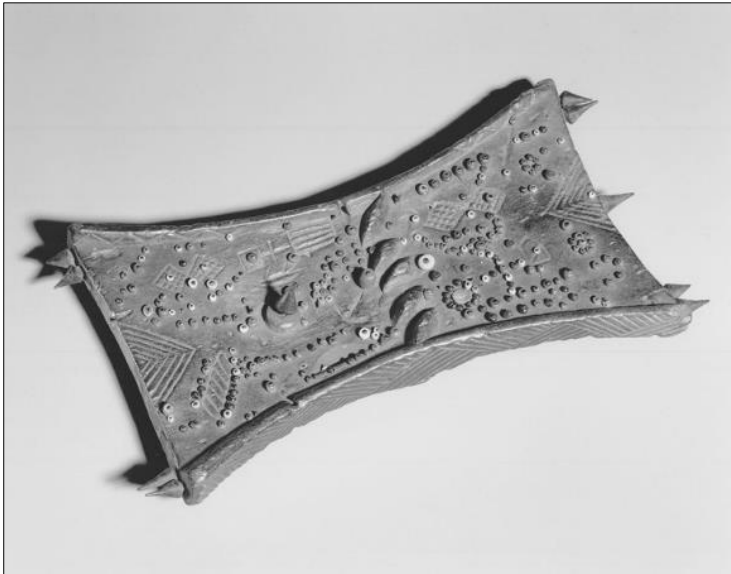


Figure 2: Luba "Lukasa" memory board.

Source:online:[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lukasa_\(Luba\)#/media/File:Brooklyn_Museum_76.20.4_Lukasa_Memory_Board.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lukasa_(Luba)#/media/File:Brooklyn_Museum_76.20.4_Lukasa_Memory_Board.jpg). Accessed 10 August 2017.

Example 3: Alphabetic writing in Africa.

Alphabets and syllabaries in northern Africa (Egypt, Ethiopia and the Maghreb) pre-date the colonial period by thousands of years, but most of the alphabetic systems in sub-Saharan Africa stem from contact with external influences, including colonialism. Some e.g. the "Africa Alphabet" and the "Pan-Nigerian Alphabet" (Coulmas 1996), adapt the Latin Alphabet, and others the Arabic alphabet, to African languages. Others are completely new systems, such as the Bamum or Vai alphabets.

Either adaptation or origination of writing systems would be a positive response to inadequate alphabets: many of the hundreds of African languages incorporate significant sounds and tones omitted from the Latin or Arabic alphabets. Those alphabets' functionality may be criticized for inexactness of correspondence between sound and letter, providing one impetus for the development of Coulmas' alphabets above.

Given the inexact correspondence between letter and sound in English, this may not seem important, but any new alphabet must be seen to represent an improvement over the Latin alphabet for English. The role of the designer would be to make such an alphabet as visually functional as possible. Again, this issue is paralleled by a student project below (Example 2).

Furthermore, the development of indigenous alphabets for indigenous languages can be seen as a strategic response to colonial and other outside influences. Dalby (1967, p. 9) describes how Momolu Duwalu Bukele, the inventor of the Vai script of Liberia:

was much impressed by the way in which [Europeans] were able to communicate over long distances by letter, and he became consumed by the idea that the Vai people should have their own form of writing. It seems almost certain that the main impetus behind the ... Vai script was the desire to acquire the power and advantages that were seen to belong to the literate Europeans, Afro-American settlers and Mandingo Muslims with whom the Vai came in contact. (Dalby 1967, p. 9) (See Figure 3.)

Thus either the adaptation or development of alphabets can be seen as a move towards cultural resistance, independence and de-colonization, even while making use of a concept (writing) introduced by colonial forces, in a prime example of appropriation.

Based on examples such as these, this paper argues for the research, recovery, revaluation and dissemination of largely ignored aspects of the history of African visual communication. Such efforts would contest the exclusion of indigenous visual communication and visual identity from a discipline still largely defined by globalized powers. Given the apparent scarcity of literature, huge potential exists to research and analyse these systems in Visual Communication Design terms.

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Figure 3. The Vai Syllabary. Momolu Duwalu Bukele.

Source: Redesigned from Coulmas 1996, p. 538

The next section presents a selection of student projects from the author's institution, some of which, as mentioned, offer parallels to the examples discussed, but with the added relevance that the students are working in contemporary design.

Framing the Present: up from below

The BTech Graphic Design course at the institution consists of a single self-generated and self-motivated student project, in which students conduct research and develop a body of design work in response. This self-motivation has enabled and encouraged significant numbers of formerly disadvantaged students to develop very personal projects, addressing various aspects of their culture and life experience through the medium of graphic design. Students have developed a range of approaches in their projects, but these examples focus on projects researching social and cultural concerns, often influenced by globalized pressures. One MTech student's work is included because of similarity in approach.

Example 1: The MTech student investigated the breakdown of transmission of isiZulu as a first language to children. Her initial intention was to research early language learning and develop material to encourage and assist the child to learn and speak isiZulu, and promote the language's value to the child. Her research indicated, however, that the problem lay with parents encouraging their children to speak English, as the language of status and 'development'. It can be considered a feature of cultural Neo-colonialism that indigenous languages are de-valued in the minds of their speakers to the point that they see no value in retaining them. This behaviour also matches precisely the early stages of 'language death', the process by which speakers of one language abandon it for another, to the extent that their original language dies out (Crystal 2000). I first observed this devaluation personally in Zimbabwe in the late 1980s, when an indigenous language speaker described his mother tongue as a "rubbish language". To change these beliefs, the student's project turned to an attempt to revalue the language in parents' minds.

Example 2: Similarly, one BTech student investigated the shortage of graphic or visual material in the sePedi language, despite government policies and institutions promoting all official languages. Research in her home area resulted in the discovery of only two billboards, a few school readers and government documents, a print newspaper she couldn't find a copy of, and no online material in sePedi at all. This paucity suggests firstly, that importance is not given to visual or graphic material in this language, to anything like competitiveness with English in terms of social, educational or cultural status or usefulness; and secondly that few business or social entities consider it worth producing visual material using the language. The project therefore developed prototype sePedi graphic material, including a font for sePedi characters and a publication promoting the use of the language to home speakers.

Example 3: A third student researched the Venda culture, intending to promote it in Durban. As a Venda speaker, he was shocked by his Zulu-speaking peers' ignorance of one of the official languages and cultures of the country. Fieldwork led him to realize that he himself was substantially ignorant of many aspects of his own culture, which strongly influenced the resulting design work. His conclusions suggested that the Venda language and culture had simply been overwhelmed by English, Afrikaans, and international popular culture.

Example 4: This project investigated the *izikhothane* sub-culture of conspicuous consumption amongst South African youth, out of concern for what the student felt were skewed social values regarding status and competition. Her research indicated the role of contemporary international influences in manipulating the youth to feel that they can only validate themselves through consumption. Specifically, in this sub-culture the consumption must be of expensive and high-status branded products, to an extent that can entail the deliberate destruction of the desired consumables.

These four projects are notable for their engagement with the damaging effects of globalization in the South African context. The students have attempted to investigate and address these

effects, and to contest them through promotion of alternative attitudes, viewpoints and material. In doing so, it is suggested that they are taking ownership of the visual communication process, and contesting the dominance of globalized influences and concerns. Two further examples are discussed in slightly more detail, as they raise more contentious issues that may be encountered by students, lecturers, and practitioners of VCD in the 'de-colonizing' process.

Example 5: This BTech student has developed her project around design employment and professional practice. She originally intended to investigate the gap between existing Graphic Design curricula and what graduates need to know to enter the advertising industry, but her experience as a design intern has radically changed her focus. She works at an agency apparently still heavily influenced by the past: she is the only black creative in an office in which the other creatives are all white, there is one black copywriter, and the technical staff are all Indian. Other agencies have achieved considerably more progressive social attitudes in their workforce integration and management behaviour.

This agency is having difficulties because their creatives appear so unfamiliar with the local mass market that their campaigns are failing to reach and persuade their intended audiences. In particular they are not reaching the lower economic levels of society, black consumers and first-language isiZulu speakers. As a result, although only a junior creative, this student has unofficially been made the representative of, and authority on, all black society. She has been shocked at the basic levels of ignorance displayed by her co-workers, such as what kind of clothing township children wear. Consequently, her project now aims to identify the most important areas of knowledge her colleagues need, and to develop materials explaining these issues in ways that they can accept.

Her project has identified an intersection of race and class issues in the design industry, and an apparent inadequacy of standard practices to deal with resulting professional problems. The company's management supports progressive industrial relations, but the office has not succeeded in moving beyond the neo-colonial bubble and addressing or integrating what changes might be required in employees' thinking, working and creative habits.

The project demonstrates the clear challenge of how an integrated society can develop, and how citizens of this country can understand each other, when they understand so little of each others' lives. It indicates the gulf between sections of South African society, and the need to engage with the 'other', whether in the rest of the continent or next door. This gulf indicates a moral or societal need, but it is more likely to be addressed for business reasons than from any moral or societal impetus. Here, perhaps, the profit motive can be used to 'decolonizing' ends.

Example 6: In a last example a student investigated the development of clear, accurate and informative packaging for traditional healers. Her intentions were to develop packaging that would protect the medicines and provide information about their contents and proper use comparable to that provided with westernized medicines. Her lecturers considered this a valuable project, given a recent source claiming that some 80% of the population preferred to consult traditional healers over Westernized doctors (Tshabalala-Msimang 2005). The student investigated packaging and information design for such purposes, and developed excellent prototypes incorporating both instructional illustrations and text. However, she ran into a number of difficulties stemming from cultural differences.

Chief amongst these was the attitude towards professional information: the healers she worked with were extremely reluctant to include information about their ingredients, as required in Western medical packaging. Here was a prime example of the need for a revision of designers' assumptions about a basic difference in attitude between two sections of South African society: one which assumes that health information should be freely available (at least if paid for); and another which takes it equally as automatic that some such information should be secret. This view of information is common outside Westernized societies, as the above examples from West

Africa illustrate (Section 3). Secondly, the healers resisted the introduction of purpose-made packaging as being too expensive. Finally, there was a preference for reusable forms of packaging such as glass bottles. In order to enable this re-cycling of bottles and jars, the student proposed the application of a wide strip of matt black paint which could be written on with chalk.

This project was problematic for lecturing staff. In hindsight, our assessment over-emphasized how 'good design' should look and function for a Westernized, English-speaking audience fully acclimated to the Graphic Design canon (i.e. ourselves), not the successful functionality of the student's solution, given the context and the predispositions of the intended audience, i.e. sangomas. The final work appeared to reject successful Western information design in favour of less legible hand-written information, but the point was that the latter would have been acceptable to the clients (sangomas), and would have successfully communicated publicly permissible information to end-users. The project thus took a step away from a colonially-defined norm of 'good' design towards a form appropriate to its context.

Conclusion

These students have not all consciously engaged in projects explicitly theorized to de-colonize BTech or MTech curricula, but it is suggested that their projects are a step in that direction. They have sought to balance producing marketable work in an almost entirely Western-dominated or globalized industry, with investigating and re-valuing aspects of their lives and cultures which exist outside the norms of Western graphic design.

The projects and students mentioned therefore embody, in my view, the appropriation of western graphic design and the development of hybrid forms, for purposes and in ways appropriate to a de-colonized curriculum, along with investigation and implicit critique of the colonized situation in which they live. The first three examples critique and oppose the loss of cultural identity, language and other aspects of culture, making use of current practices in graphic design to do so, and appropriating these techniques to use them against the effects they have caused. The fourth and fifth examples likewise appropriate current graphic design thinking and techniques to critique and oppose social consequences of globalization, in these instances as consumerism and patronising work behaviour. The last example has applied design research techniques to a question outside Westernized society, with the result that the design work itself has had to incorporate non-Westernised thinking about knowledge and design. Here the appropriation was of design thinking, hybridising with indigenous priorities and views of knowledge.

These projects represent an early stage of the development of new and de-colonised visual communication forms, which have yet to demonstrate the full range and depth that could emerge from processes of research, acceptance of different cultural values and visual traditions, and hybridisation with existing Westernised approaches and techniques. The potential role playable by content from indigenous visual traditions in this process has barely been touched, owing primarily to the shortage of literature dealing with such traditions from a Visual Communication Design perspective.

Students have shown interest in these directions for themselves, through the concerns addressed in their projects. These types of approaches can be encouraged and expanded, and explicitly theorized. Such an approach has the potential to contribute to a curriculum and vision for research and design that can best embody hybridity and appropriation: incorporating the strengths of different traditions to produce a richer, more appropriate, and more grounded form of design, that acknowledges the traditions of the continent, that accepts the needs and values of all its audiences, and aims to communicate effectively with them in their own terms.

The students' work cannot be considered 'pure' Western graphic design, because the canon for that discipline is only beginning to acknowledge the kind of differences in culture, language, audience and context with which these students have engaged. Likewise, it is not a pure

"unWestern" or de-colonized form of visual communication, because that is unlikely to result in employability in the current globalized industry. These students have thus in their projects taken ownership of what they consider relevant design issues. The agency shown indicates the viability of the approach, and its potential to expand in both depth and complexity in the future.

'De-colonizing' the curriculum has here been addressed with reference to two possible strategies: the use of history for identity, and student agency in designing their own studies. The paper has presented examples from both history of indigenous visual communication, and recent student projects, with brief indications of commonalities. A 'de-colonized' curriculum is bound to encompass a much wider range of strategies: but the suggestion is that these strategies can contribute to its eventual development.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

A Decolonised Approach to Developing Training Materials for Low-Literate Participants of Rural Sewing Income Generating Projects

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Abstract

Whilst training materials can be effective tools for addressing skills training needs, inherently colonised approaches undermine their anticipated benefit and use. Developers of skills training materials are customarily highly trained professionals, academics and practitioners who are often culturally and otherwise separated from the population for which their materials are intended. As a result, they may overestimate their end-users' abilities to read and understand textual information effectively. In the instance of the conventional training materials developed for income generating projects (IGPs) within rural communities, the disparity between the reading abilities of low-literate project participants set against the level of the informational materials exposes inherent difficulties that individuals face when trying to use such sources. Due to such specific and technical problems as the use of incomprehensible language, too many and subject specific words, and overall seemingly cognitive overload, the materials may be perceived to be user-unfriendly, rendering much needed training resources underutilised.

In this paper, an attempted decolonised approach towards the design and development of two sewing training instructional pamphlets is reported on. Motivated by the need to empower low-literate project participants, a user-centred approach supported an understanding of their sewing training material needs and challenges within the unique setting of rural sewing IGPs, enabling pamphlet designs that are informed by the perspectives of such participants. As a primary factor influencing implementation, the literacy level and acknowledged predilections of low-literate individuals are considered. Necessitating an indigenous framework, factors related to the culture and language are applied throughout the development. Upon completion, an empirical research inquiry was undertaken to determine the IGP participants' satisfaction with the developed pamphlets as employed in a field-based intervention. Pilot testing (in the Northern-Cape Province [NCP], South Africa [SA]) prior to the main investigation (within the North-West Province [NWP], SA) provided valuable feedback for improvement. Overall, the IGP participants expressed positive reaction towards the pamphlets, with a particular preference for the use of visual materials. While this research endeavour is not the first to produce sewing training materials for rural sewing

IGPs, it is the first attempt to adopt a decolonised approach. Additionally, it is the first to assess and affect user satisfaction during development.

Keywords:

income generating projects, low-literacy, rural communities, sewing training materials.

Introduction

This paper forms the second part of a broader research investigation into the development of training materials for rural sewing income generating projects (IGPs). Adopting a user-centred approach, part one explored the sewing training material needs and practical sewing challenges within the unique settings of the rural sewing IGPs. The findings indicated that: (1) training materials that had been previously developed for these IGPs have not been implemented, (2) not only were these training materials found to be inappropriate in terms of literacy level (developed at Grade 10 level), they did not align with the acknowledged cognitive predilections that low-literate individuals hold for concrete (basing meaning on the literal meaning of single pieces of information) and pictographic thinking (the preference of information presented as pictorial elements) (Viswanathan, Rosa & Harris 2005, p. 21), (3) other commercially available sewing training materials also failed to address sewing training needs owing to challenges associated with reading as experienced by low-literate group participants, and (4) two prominent sewing training needs were identified during this investigation, namely the task of taking body measurements, and accurate pattern layout (Coetzee 2017). In this second part of the broader intervention research (IR) design, the research aimed to address the following research question: *How can appropriate sewing training materials for low-literate participants of rural IGPs be designed and developed, taking into consideration their most prominent sewing training needs?* The following specific objectives of this study were to design two sewing training instructional pamphlets, submit the designs for expert review in line with early development, complete pilot testing for further development, and to analyse the results of the user satisfaction questionnaire following the main investigation.

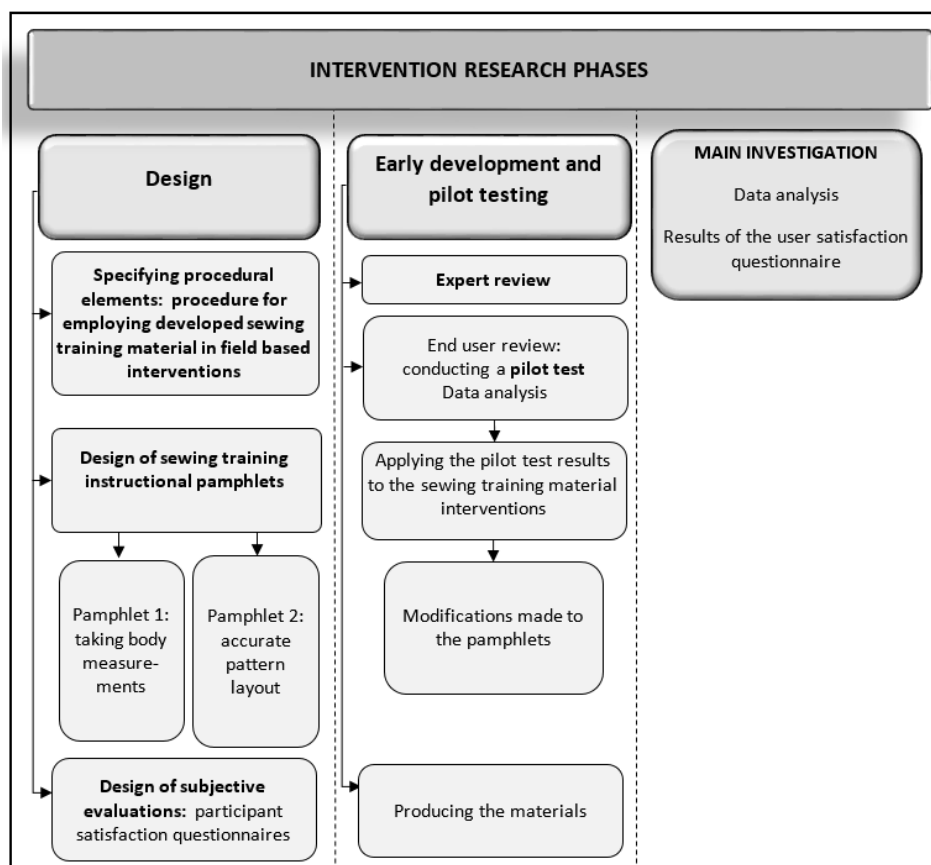


Figure 1: IR phases and activities for this phase of the research investigation (adapted from Rothman & Thomas 1994, p. 28)

Designing sewing training instructional pamphlets

The popular use of pamphlets by government (to convey information pertaining to, for example, elections and health awareness) renders it one of the most familiar forms of textual communication within rural areas. Pamphlets were therefore selected as an appropriate medium for communication in this study. Other South African research findings also support the use of pamphlets (Dowse, Ramela & Browne 2011, p. 508). Due to the nature of the sewing training materials having to be as practical and applicable as possible (Van Niekerk 2006, p. 80), the pamphlets were designed to function as job aids. Job aids present an economical and efficient substitute for training, or training enhancement (Eittington 2002, p. 587) to prevent post training relapse (Merriam & Leahy 2005, p. 8). The latter use is based on the assumption that the memory of an individual is too fragile to be relied upon, and necessitates tools to be used for reinforcement (Eittington 2002, p. 587). This aspect holds particular importance for low-literate IGP participants, whose limited cognitive abilities may impede training or instructional sessions. The use of job aids further coincides with just-in-time training, namely the provision of training aids when they are actually needed, rather than repeating the training on an annual or deferred basis (Eittington 2002, p. 588) rendering trainees more open to the training itself. This factor is also particularly relevant as the composition of IGPs is not stagnant. Participants in IGPs enlist and leave voluntarily, causing members to be trained at different intervals, or to attend different training sessions, and to have vastly different levels of experience and practical skills. As is customarily used in support of learning, a step-by step instructional format was used as it more easily engages learners, better facilitates the modelling of tasks, and encourages the application of knowledge and skills (Ramos 2013; CARDET 2014), even when no training programme is available.

Considerations regarding the literacy level

It was crucial to ensure that the sewing training material pamphlets aligned with the literacy level of the rural IGP participants (Dowse, Ramela & Browne 2011, p. 508). Low-literacy amongst group participants has been reported to constitute an obstacle and barrier to skills development (Niesing 2012, p. 3). The internationally applied term 'low-literate' refers to adult individuals (aged 18 years and older) with the highest completed grade level lower than Grade 7 (Adkins & Ozanne 2005, p. 93). This description is similar to the nationally applied term 'functionally illiterate', which also refers to a person (aged 15 years and older) with no education or a highest level of education of less than Grade 7 (StatsSA 2012, p.34). Research towards the design of informational materials for low-literate populations recommends that text should be developed at a level equivalent to 5th to 6th grade (Choi 2012, p. 374). However, upon entering the research setting (during phase one of this study), the researcher found that, even though some IGP participants had obtained Grade 12, some had attained only a very low level of education (as low as Grade 2).

As a repercussion of the longstanding colonialism in education prior to the initiation of the new democratic government, many residents from rural areas experience literacy challenges. The lack of educational services in these areas is evidenced by the lack of classrooms, textbooks and qualified teachers, which has detrimental consequences. National statistics indicate an admittedly high drop-out rate, noting that almost a quarter of rural children in primary schools drop out (SA 2008, p. 59), leaving many farm dwelling adults without basic literacy and numeracy skills (Kruger et al. 2005, p. 833). Additionally, individuals from rural communities do not foster a culture of reading (Gardiner 2008, p. 12). This, coupled with concerns pertaining to the quality of education in some farm schools, prompted the researcher to develop the reading level of the pamphlets below Grade 3 level (as per the Flesch Kincaid acknowledged readability formula) (Choi 2012, p. 374). A grade level lower than Grade 3 was applied.

Acknowledged cognitive predilections of low-literate individuals: pictographic and concrete thinking

Due to the acknowledged cognitive predilection for pictographic thinking that low-literate individuals hold (Viswanathan & Gau 2005, p. 193), the use of visual materials is not only recommended, but also emphasised in literature as an integral component of communication when developing materials for low-literate individuals. The term 'visual materials' coincides with the notion of visual literacy, and thus with an individual's ability to decipher, recognise and interpret images (UNESCO 2006, p. 149). To facilitate low-literate individuals' preference for pictographic thinking, the sewing instructions were planned by considering a range of actions, visually depicted and presented in steps. Each step of the process was carefully planned, as visual materials that are poorly designed (by way of being too technical, abstract, or obscure) may have opposing effects for low-literate individuals (Ngho & Shepherd 1997, p. 267), thus complicating rather than clarifying the instruction.

In addition to pictographic thinking, low-literate individuals also engage in concrete thinking (Viswanathan, Rosa & Harris 2005, p. 15), that is, the tendency to process single pieces of information without deriving higher level intellectual abstractions (Viswanathan & Gau 2005, p. 189). To simplify cognitive demands, they often resort to making decisions habitually. While the aforesaid may be effective coping behaviours, these may be limiting factors when having to perform more complex instructions consisting of multiple actions. To counter cognitive overload when using the instructional pamphlets, a minimum number of specific topics was identified and prioritised (Zimmerman et al. 1996, p. 27; Viswanathan & Gau 2005, p. 192), visual material relating to what the low-literate readers would know and understand was used and foreign or abstract images, symbols depicting gestures, images requiring a specific perspective, and the use of images that convey multiple steps in a process were avoided (Ngho & Shepherd 1997, p. 267). A professional graphic designer was appointed for the composition of the pamphlets. Unlike designs commissioned for universal audiences, the researcher was actively involved during all the stages of development ensuring the appropriateness of the materials for the low-literate participants within a rural context.

Culture and language

Additionally, culture presented an important consideration (Dowse, Ramela & Browne 2011, p. 513). Depending on the cultural background of an individual, visual materials may be understood with limited clarity, or interpreted differently than intended. The materials developed for the predominantly Tswana IGP participants had to be culture-specific, as cultural familiarity plays an important role in the perceived comprehension of low-literate individuals (Houts et al. 2006, p. 180) and therefore the materials had to be culturally acceptable and not display any foreign symbols (Mansoor & Dowse 2003, p. 1006). As an extension of cultural relevance, the home language of the low-literate individuals was incorporated (Zimmerman et al. 1996, p. 26) in the form of familiar Setswana wording and diction. Some of translated wording included descriptions of materials: *diphini* (pins), *theipi ya go meta* (tape measure) and *letsela* (fabric) as well as instructions including *kgato 1* (step 1) and *fae beile, tthomela diphini* (when in place, put pins). The development of text followed a personalised approach (Dowse, Ramela & Browne 2011, p. 509) by adopting an active voice within the message content. Text and corresponding visual materials were positioned in close proximity to one another. Limited cognitive ability could cause low-literate individuals to devote their available cognitive resources to search for corresponding words and pictures, thus diverting them away from the act of learning. Comprehension of the intended message would therefore be enhanced when corresponding text and visuals were presented within the same border (Mayer 2001, p. 81).

Early development of the sewing training instructional pamphlets

Materials developed for low-literate individuals require thorough evaluation to determine their appropriateness (Viswanathan & Gau 2005, p. 195). Thus the newly developed pamphlets were submitted for expert review before undergoing pilot testing within a user population (Kripilani et al. 2007, p. 375). An art expert was consulted to confirm the intended message of the visual materials. A sewing expert was consulted to confirm correctness of the step-by-step instructions. An expert in the field of low-literacy was consulted to ensure the relevance of materials for low-literate end users.

Pilot testing of the sewing training instructional pamphlets

Pilot testing was undertaken to obtain feedback from the IGP participants for further development of the sewing training instructional pamphlets. Both pamphlets were implemented in a field-based intervention within a sewing IGP in the rural community of Jan Kempdorp, NCP, SA. This project unit presented a sample displaying similar characteristics to the population for the main investigation, as well as a similar setting. All the participants at this unit (four participants) were purposely selected to participate, were willing to participate and volunteered their participation. Although a limited sample, the pamphlets were specifically developed for these rural sewing IGPs based on their practical sewing training needs and literacy challenges and could therefore not be generalised to other populations within domains or backgrounds of other IGPs.

Procedure for implementing the sewing training instructional pamphlets in the field-based interventions

Completing practical tasks provided the opportunity for the implementation of the sewing training instructional pamphlets, and enabled end-user review. A one-group pre-test post-test design was employed (Creswell 2014, p. 170). The pamphlet for taking body measurements was implemented first. As a pre-test measure, each participant was required to measure a fitting doll at four (4) key body dimensions (namely the shoulder, bust, waist and hip) without having any exposure to the sewing training pamphlet, or any other instructions or assistance. Each participant then received the body measuring pamphlet and read/reviewed it in private in their own time. Once completed, the participant was asked to complete the same measuring task as before, as a post-test measure. To ensure that no undue anxiety was caused, the researcher emphasised that it was not the skill level of the IGP participants being tested, but rather, the appropriateness of the pamphlet for assisting with sewing tasks. Finally, each participant completed a subjective evaluation in the form of a questionnaire (administered verbally) in order to determine their satisfaction with the pamphlets as users thereof.

The procedure for the implementation of the pattern layout pamphlet followed in a similar manner.

Measuring instrument

An interviewer administered questionnaire was developed to determine the perceived readability, understanding, usefulness, learning of the participants and quality of the pamphlets. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. In Section A, the demographic details of the respondents, including their age, educational attainment and home language, were recorded. Section B was related to readability, understanding, ease of use and learning. As a factor impacting the implementation, Section C explored the perceived quality of the pamphlets by determining their preferences for size of text, the incorporation of pictures, length of material, and preferred visual material and language. A three-point Likert scale using pictographs developed by Van Staden (2012, p. 78) and specifically aligned with the cognitive predilections of low-literate individuals, was employed. The questionnaire was limited to 16 questions.

Data analyses

Statistical analysis was completed using IBM SPSS® Statistics Version 23. Descriptive statistics were applied to all the variables of the satisfaction questionnaire in the form of frequency distributions (presenting the number and percentages of times that variables were observed) (Rubin & Babbie 2010, p. 290).






Results and discussion following pilot testing

Demographic details of the pilot test respondents

The pilot test involved 4 respondents. They were between the ages of 18 and 65 years old. While two of them had attained Grade 12, the other two had very low levels of schooling (namely Grade 2 and Grade 5).

Results of the user satisfaction questionnaire following pilot testing

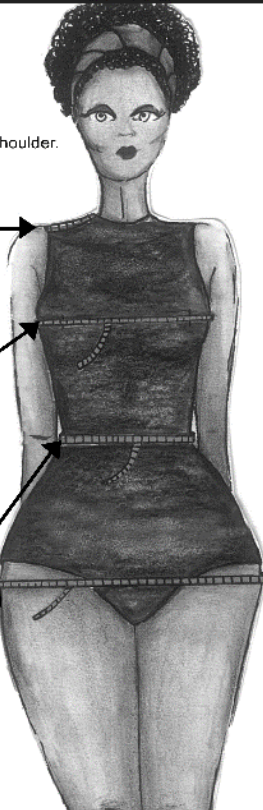
The pilot test results indicated an overall positive reaction towards the use of the pamphlets. Three of the four respondents indicated that the pamphlets were easy to read and easy to understand. While two respondents did not understand all the words, all four indicated their comprehension of the visual materials. Three respondents responded that they learned much from the pamphlets and will use them often in future. Most notably, three of the four respondents indicated that the pamphlets should be shorter. From previous research a correlation was found between individual working memory and cognitive abilities, and that any elements within the training materials not deemed necessary for learning may deter low-literate individuals from the learning process (De Jong 2010, p. 106). Additionally, instructional materials that are too long may cause reader disinterest and hinder concentration span (Mansoor & Dowse 2003, p. 1007), consequently rendering such material user-unfriendly. To counter for negative effects, the researcher shortened the body measurement pamphlet by 16 words to a total of 121 words, and the pattern layout pamphlet by 67 words to a total of 266. Additionally, bullets were added to make multiple points easier to read (Dowse, Ramela & Browne 2011, p. 513). Figures 2 and 3 below present the modified pamphlets.

<p>O tla thoka</p> <p>Theipi ya go meta</p>  <p>Pampiri ya dikarabo</p> 	<p>Take note/Ela tihoko</p> <p>The tape measure has two sides. The one side shows measurements in inches.</p>  <p>The other side shows measurements in centimetres (cm)</p>  <p>We use cm </p>
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How to take body measurements

Shoulder length

- Measure from bottom of neck to the edge of the shoulder.
- E kwale.



Bust

- Measure across fullest part of the bust.
- Measure all around.
- E kwale.

Waist

- Measure around the slimmest part of the waist.
- Measure all around.
- E kwale.

Hips

- Measure where the hips are widest.
- Measure all around.
- E kwale.

Ensure the tape is not skew

Figure 2: Pamphlet for taking body measurements



















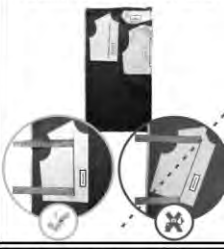

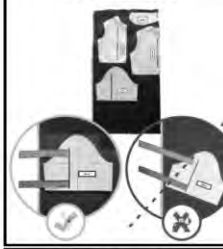

<p>O tla thoka</p> <p>Diphini</p>  <p>Theipi ya go meta</p>  <p>Letseia</p> 	<p>1/2 scale Pattern pieces</p> <p>Collar</p>  <p>Bodice Back</p>  <p>Bodice Front</p>  <p>Sleeve</p> 	<p>Know your Pattern Symbols</p> <p>The 'grainline' Lerumo leno le kaya go: align the pattern with the fabric edge.</p>  <p>The 'place on fold line' Lerumo leno le kaya go: place on the fold of the fabric.</p> 
<p>PELE O SIMOLOLA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fold fabric lengthwise. •Bring together and match raw ends. •Ensure there are no folds. •Pin in corners to keep in place. <p>Fabric that is folded lengthwise</p>  <p>Ensure there are no folds</p>  <p>Pin in place</p> 	<p>Take note/Ela thoko</p> <p>We fold the fabric double when we lay down pattern pieces (one for the left, and one for the right side of the body).</p>  <p>When the fabric is opened</p> 	<p>KGATO 1:</p> <p>Collar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Place the collar on the fabric fold. •When in place, pin at all corners. <p>Placement of collar on fabric</p>  <p>Fa o e beile, thomela diphini</p> 
<p>KGATO 2:</p> <p>The Bodice Back</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Place just below the collar. •Also on the fold of the fabric. •When in place, put pins. <p>Placement of bodice back on fabric</p>  <p>Fa o e beile, thomela diphini</p> 	<p>KGATO 3:</p> <p>Place the Bodice Front in the open space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Align with the fabric's raw edge. •To ensure this, measure both ends of the grainline (if the one point is 10 cm from the raw edge – then the other must also be 10 cm from the raw edge) <p>Placement of bodice front on fabric</p>  <p>Fa o e beile, thomela diphini</p> 	<p>KGATO 4:</p> <p>Place the Sleeve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Align with the fabric's raw edge. •To ensure this, measure both ends of the grainline. <p>Placement of sleeve</p>  <p>When in place, put pins</p> 

Figure 3: Pamphlet for pattern layout

Main investigation

The main investigation followed in the same manner as the pilot testing. The revised sewing training pamphlets were implemented during interventions within the sewing IGPs in the rural communities of Rysmierbuilt and Castello, NWP, SA. All the participants at these units (thirteen participants in total) were purposely selected to participate, were willing to participate and volunteered participation.

Data analyses followed in the same manner as the pilot testing.

Results and discussion of the main investigation

Demographic details of the main study respondents

The demographic details of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic details of the respondents

Demographic characteristics	Main investigation		
	N	n	%
Age	13		
18-29		5	39
30-39		3	23
40-49		2	15
50-59		3	23
Level of schooling	12		
Grade 4		1	8
Grade 7		3	23
Grade 9		1	8
Grade 10		2	14
Grade 11		2	14
Grade 12		3	23
Invalid response		1	8
Home language			
Setswana	13	13	100

The respondents in the main investigation were between the ages of 18 and 59 years old. Their highest level of schooling ranged between Grades 4 and 12. One respondent did not report on her educational attainment. Low-literate individuals are known to use dissimulation or avoidance as a coping strategy when they feel embarrassed about their literacy status (Viswanathan, Rosa & Harris 2005, p. 24). All the respondents were Setswana speaking.

Results and discussion of the main investigation

The user satisfaction questionnaire

Table 2 presents the results of the perceived readability, understanding, use, and learning of the respondents and the quality of the sewing training pamphlets.

Table 2: Perceived readability, understanding, use, learning and the perceived quality of the sewing training pamphlets

Question	Main investigation (N13)			
	Body measuring pamphlet		Pattern layout pamphlet	
	n	%	n	%
It is easy to read the pamphlet				
Yes	13	100	12	92
No	-	-	1	8
I don't know	-	-	-	-
It is easy to understand the pamphlets				
Yes	11	84	11	84
No	1	8	1	8
I don't know	-	-	-	-
No response	1	8	1	8
I could understand all the words				
Yes	13	100	13	100
No	-	-	-	-
I could understand all the pictures				
Yes	13	100	11	85
No	-	-	2	15
I will use other pamphlets like this one				
I will use it a lot	12	92.3	11	84
I will use it sometimes	-	-	1	8
I will use it a little	1	7.7	-	-
No response	-	-	1	8
I learned from the pamphlet				
I learned a lot	11	84.6	12	92
Average	1	7.7	-	-
I learned a little	1	7.7	-	-
No response	-	-	1	8
I liked the pamphlet				
I liked it very much	12	92	12	92
Average	1	8	1	8
I liked it a little	-	-	-	-
I liked having pictures in the pamphlet				
I liked it very much	13	100	13	100
Average	-	-	-	-
I liked it a little	-	-	-	-
The writing is big enough				
Yes	13	100	13	100
No	-	-	-	-
The pictures helped me to understand the pamphlets				
Yes	13	100	12	92
No	-	-	-	-
No response	-	-	1	8
The pamphlet should be shorter				
Yes	2	15	2	15
No	11	85	11	85
Do you prefer				
Line drawings	4	31	6	46
Photo's	9	69	7	54
In which language should the pamphlet be written				
Setswana	8	62	8	62
Afrikaans	-	-	-	-
English	5	38	5	38

The majority of respondents indicated that the body measurement and pattern layout pamphlets were easy to read (100% and 92% respectively) and easy to understand (84%). While all the respondents indicated an understanding of all the words, two (15%) did not understand all the pictures within the pattern layout pamphlet. In general, the pamphlets were considered to be useful (92% and 84%) and the respondents indicated that they learned much from them (85% and 92%). Shortening the content of the pamphlets and conveying only the smallest amount of information to complete the tasks may have ensured that the working memory capacity was not exceeded (De Jong 2010, p. 106). It may also have increased the likelihood that the users connected with and retained the informational material (Viswanathan & Gau 2005, p. 193). The respondents indicated a strong positive reaction towards the pamphlets (with a 92% response for liking it very much). Prior research has indicated that satisfaction with informational materials increases as familiarity increases (Dowse, Ramela & Browne 2011, p. 512). The incorporation of cultural elements within the pamphlets (such as sketches rendering a more Africanised figure; incorporating Tswana indigenous dress) may therefore have been a contributing factor. The link between low-literacy and pictographic thinking was emphasised as all the respondents not only liked having pictures in the pamphlets, but also reported that it helped them to understand the instructions. This may be ascribed to the fact that visual materials aid the opportunity for cognitive learning to occur (Ngoh & Shepherd 1997, p. 266) and facilitate the understanding of step-by-step procedures which would be otherwise incomprehensible to low-literate individuals (Choi 2012, p. 374). These results support the findings of Dowse, Ramela and Browne (2011, p. 511) and Kripilani et al. (2007, p. 375) that visual materials are considered valuable by low-literate users for enhancing their comprehension of written information. The vast majority (85%) of the respondents were satisfied with the length of the pamphlets.

While prior research has indicated that home language significantly relates to the success of informational material (Mwingira & Dowse 2007, p. 180; Dowse, Ramela & Browne 2011, p. 513), five respondents (38%) indicated a preference for English. This may be due to the minimal amount of Setswana print material available, rendering them more accustomed to reading English text.

Conclusion

This is the first research paper to attempt a decolonised approach towards the design and development of training materials for implementation in rural sewing IGPs. Based on identified sewing training needs, two sewing training instructional pamphlets were developed. The appropriateness of the pamphlets for low-literate users was ensured by a comprehensive process (incorporating a low grade level and factors enabling pictographic and concrete thinking) to empower participants of rural IGPs to use training materials within the constraints of low-literacy. Overall, the respondents indicated satisfaction with the pamphlets. They found it easy to read and understand, they learned a lot from it and will use it in future.

Limitations

While the limited sample size prohibits generalisability of the study results, it could form the basis for other research towards the design and development of instructional pamphlets for low-literate users.

Recommendations for future developments

A further phase of empirical research should be undertaken to objectively assess the sewing training instructional pamphlets for their effectiveness in achieving skills training outcomes. Additionally, a vast number of skills training shortfalls need to be addressed within the rural sewing IGPs. Future developments could also advance ways in which instructional materials could be shortened, and could further explore the dual text/visual and home language

/English approach. These principles could be applied to an array of multidisciplinary rural IGP endeavours including glass recycling, crafts, and woodwork.

Ethics: This study was approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University (NWU), reference NWU—00043-16-S1. Complete informed consent was obtained from each of the research respondents.

Competing Interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Axis Mundi: A Pedagogical Exploration of the Decolonising Potential of Mythology

Courtney de Villiers

Inscape Education Group

Abstract

The postmodern condition is such that economies, globalisation, technologies and societal norms have undergone drastic changes and rapid progressions. All of which has made an undeniable impact on the state and function of contemporary education. In a world now orientated towards a “knowledge-based economy”, it becomes ever more pertinent to grapple with not only how knowledge is defined but also how knowledge is constructed and acquired. The #Decolonise movement makes a call for a knowledge based economy that can be understood as vernacular in nature – knowledge structures that are relatable or relevant to specific regional or cultural origins.

This poses an immense challenge to educators. How do educators equip learners with an educational foundation that incorporates vernacular wisdom in the form of site-specific social, psychological and cultural character as well as prepares students to successfully and meaningfully navigate an increasingly globalised (life)world? One of the significant challenges posed to education by #Decolonise is that of establishing a balance which generates and maintains pedagogical value.

This paper proposes a theoretical exploration which offers potential resolve in the form of Mythology. Mythologies function as cultural narratives which are rife with vernacular wisdom used to gain insights into abstract conceptions and provide pragmatic guidance towards courses of action. Mythologies across cultures manifest similar motifs and morals and in this way mythology may also hold the potential to bridge the gap between vernacular wisdom and universal value.

As such mythology is established in the paper as a socio-cognitive constructivist pedagogy in accordance with the developmental learning theories put forth by Piaget (1977). Through a framework of dialectic and analogy, mythology is employed to explain how decolonised knowledge may be created and acquired. The argument presented further suggests that this mythological pedagogical approach is possibly already internalised by design practice. This in turn situates design education at the forefront of a decolonised knowledge ecology.

Keywords:

Mythology, Constructivism, Socio-Cognitive Pedagogy, Design Practice, Knowledge Boundaries, Imagination

Introduction

One of the most commonly recurring motifs in world mythology is that of the *Axis Mundi* – a cosmic “Centre”. Mircea Eliade (1991, p. 39) notes that “Every Microcosm, every inhabited region, has a Centre; that is to say, a place that is sacred above all”. The centre is the locus of divine intervention, where opposing planes meet, intersect and can be transcended. The *Axis Mundi* serves as a connective thread along which communication between higher and lower realms are (re)established and disseminated. As such, the *Axis Mundi* is most often represented as a vertical axis in its various symbolic cultural iterations: the Caduceus or Rod of Hermes in Greek Mythology, various mountain summits in Eastern religions, architectural structures of ancient civilization like the pyramids of Egypt and the ziggurats of Mesopotamia, the leather braid or spiders web that bind together heaven and earth in Nilo-Saharan mythology, the Yggdrasil or World Tree in Norse Mythology, the Bodhi Tree in Buddhism and the Tree of Knowledge in Eden from Judeo-Christian tradition (Cirlot 1971). This recurring mythological symbol serves as a useful metaphor for the linking power of mythology itself, as is to be explored in this paper. The decolonising potential of mythology lies in its ability to connect the personal to the collective, the vernacular to the global, the old to the new and the sacred to the profane. Thus, mythology is situated as centre around which the arguments here are presented as well as a pillar or axis with which to bridge conceptual divides in decolonial discourse within the field of education. As such vertical imagery occurs in both the explanations and diagrams that inform and support the content presented here. The aesthetic and execution of the diagrams relate to the argument put forth in the paper - to use fantasy/imagination drawing from vernacular knowledge (mythologies) to re-imagine new learning in a way that transcends the existing limitations of colonial productions.

This paper aims to address the question of decolonisation by proposing a tri-reciprocal model for higher education in creative fields. This model can be envisioned as a triangular diagram (figure 1) in which each corner of the triangle represents a particular aspect of the model. The proposed aspects of the model are *Socio-Cognitive Constructivist Pedagogy* (as informed by the works of Jean Piaget (1977) and Lev Vygotsky (1962).), *Mythology* (as defined by Joseph Campbell (1972, 1978), Roland Barthes (1957) and Jordan B. Peterson (1999) and *Design Praxis*. The links between each corner or node of the triangle are multidirectional rather than hierarchical. The proposed model intends to establish a theoretical structure in which there is a continuous and reciprocal flow of information and value between each aspect and meaningful knowledge is both acquired and created in the centre. The intention of this paper is to situate decolonised education as accommodative. Accommodation in this context, in a Piagetian sense, does not refer to coddling. It refers to the transformation of students’ internal knowledge structures and adjusting ideation and conceptualisation in order to make sense of the world (Schunk 2012). It is asserted that a decolonised social ecology, particularly within the field of design, is formulated in a loose framework – loose not because it is undeveloped but rather because the boundaries are permeable. This is what #Decolonise calls for: an opening or loosening of physical, social and ideological borders particularly within higher education.

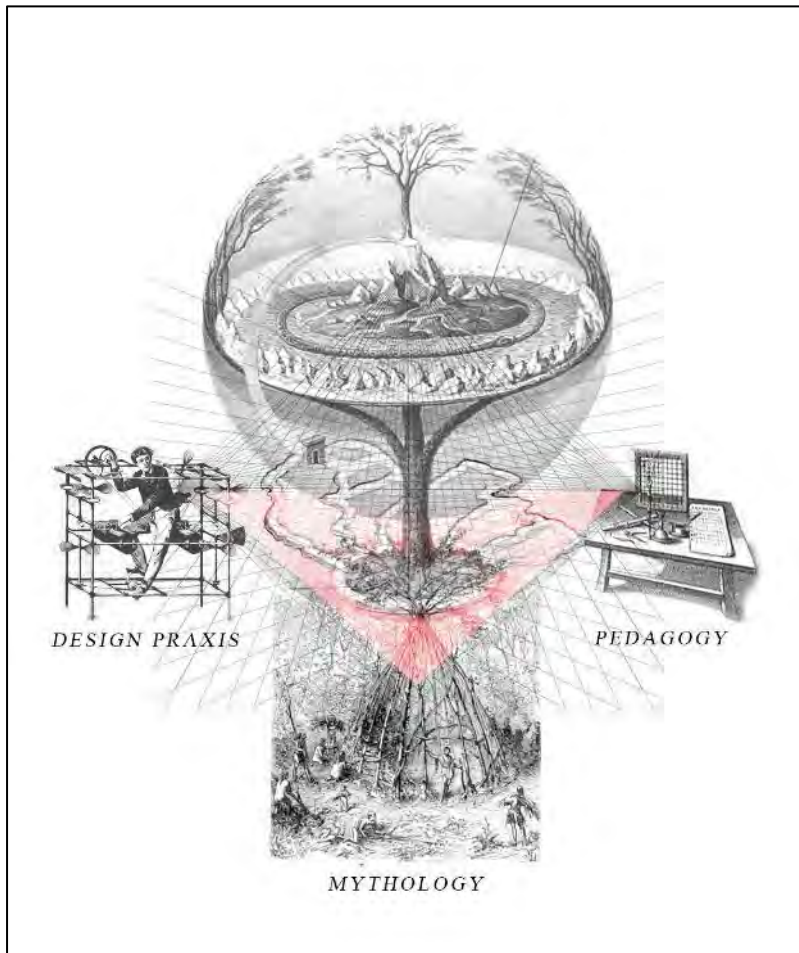


Figure 1 Tri-reciprocal Model: Mythology, Pedagogy & Design Praxis (Author, 2017).

Background (Defining the Challenge of Decolonisation)

I take my starting point from the now infamous student panel discussion which occurred mid October 2016 at the University of Cape Town. The most memorable moment to emerge from the two hour meeting is a viral 4 minute video clip in which a member of the “Shackville TRC” makes several assertions which form the foundation of the overarching call that “Science must fall” (Henderson 2016).

The video clip was met with widespread debate and largely dismissive and often sarcastic responses most evident in the slew of posts across social media platforms bearing the #ScienceMustFall hashtag. However, when certain postulations made by the speaker are isolated, several points of entry emerge through which we can begin to access and unpack the larger #Decolonise discourse. Below I highlight the soliloquy that speaks to issues faced by global perspectives in education.

There is a place in KZN called Umhlab'uyalingana. They believe that through the magic, you call it black magic, they call it witchcraft, you are able to send lightening to strike someone ... Western knowledge is totalising ... So western modernity is the problem that decolonisation directly deals with. It's to say that we are going to decolonise by having knowledge that is produced by us, that speaks to us and that is able to accommodate knowledge from our perspective. (Henderson 2016)

The above calls attention to the current state of education and highlights the impacts and challenges posed by globalisation and the internationalisation of academic curricula. Slabbert et al. (2009) highlight the fact that the world we currently live in has undergone drastic changes and the new conditions and perspectives posed by the postmodern era manifest themselves within the education system. Shifts in broad cultural frameworks such as economies, globalisation, technologies and societal norms filter down to classroom level and impacts on both the purpose and functioning of education. The post-modern era has produced a “knowledge-based economy” (Slabbert et al. 2009). When the #Decolonise discourse is sympathetically unpacked, particularly within the realm of higher education, one is able to discern a call for such an economy that incorporates vernacular knowledge and wisdom - ‘vernacular’ in terms of knowledge structures that are relatable or relevant to specific regional or cultural origins.

The challenge posed to us as educators today is that of finding balance. How do we as educators equip students with an educational foundation that incorporates the social and psychological character of their cultures, vernacular wisdom as well as prepares students to successfully and meaningfully navigate an increasingly globalised (life)world?

This challenge is perhaps even more pertinent to those in the field of art and design education. As educators and practitioners in the field of art and Design we hold an advantage over our peers in less creative disciplines and that is a familiarity (and perhaps even a preoccupation) with breaking from previously established traditions, overhauling strict canons that have outlasted their relevance and reimagining aesthetic vocabularies when we find dead visual languages no longer function as appropriate modes of communication. Art and design history illustrate the creative compulsion toward reinvention and reimagining (Groys 2009). Each movement altering its definitions, ideologies and productions, consciously unravelling its own ontology through its praxis and subsequently threading itself back together in reformation. Observations of the (r)evolution of stylistic and ideological movements within art and design praxis underscore the fluid and cyclical tenets the field (Groys 2009).

Defining Mythology

Myth is often denounced as fallacy and this is, to my mind, a most unfortunate mis-categorisation as it undermines the wealth of value one can begin to derive from this particular cognizance. Within the context of this paper and the argument put forth, it is crucial that myth is situated as a form of knowledge rather than as a form of untruth. Mythologies can be understood as cultural narratives – embodiments of cultural wisdom, wisdom that is more phenomenological than it is empirical. These narratives often contain clearly recognisable patterns and motifs across a diversity of cultures. The identification of these patterns speaks to Jung’s (1968) theories of collective conscious, collective memory and inheritable memory and while the content of these narratives may differ, the underlying structure and purpose of these social narratives remain fairly universal as is substantiated by the following assertion:

We have spent hundreds of thousands of years watching ourselves act, and telling stories about how we act, in consequence. A good story has a universal quality, which means that it speaks a language we all understand. Any universally comprehensible language must have universal referents, and this means that a good story must speak to us about those aspects of experience that we all share (Peterson 1999, p. 83).

It is exactly these commonalities within diversion that situate myth as an ideal mechanism to address the call for a model of education that is both culturally specific and globally relevant. With this understanding in place one can begin to view myth as more than just

literary production. Instead, this paper proposes that mythology can be seen as a multiplicity of meaning and thought. Mythology therefore functions simultaneously as both system and tool. These functions are not exclusive, rather they operate in a symbiotic manner.

Barthes (1957) posits mythology as a semiotic system into which individuals are born(e). Similar to language, mythology exists in historical and social contexts - as such the language of mythology or 'mythical speech' (Barthes 1957, p. 110) and its construction thereof is bound to its particular socio-historic moment. Mythology in this sense systematically orders individual and collective experience. It dictates what is normalised and how metaphysical, societal and pedagogical landscapes are navigated. Mythology as a systematic entity becomes evident in conscious and subconscious knowledge of and integration into spontaneous social order, popular culture and dominant ideology. In the context of this paper, mythology as system becomes a point of entry. It encapsulates what is familiar, that which is intrinsically or inherently known in the vernacular.

The process by which mythology transforms from system to tool is described as a continuous unfolding (Neumann & Hull 1989). Mythology as a consciously constructed system of the known expands beyond the boundaries of its own awareness, increasingly subsuming the unconscious - that which is unfamiliar, only partially known or entirely unknown. Beyond the boundaries of the vernacular known, mythology dissolves from existing as culturally or linguistically specific system into an omnicultural referent. That is to say that emphasis shifts from the acknowledgement of group differences to recognition of human commonalities. The mechanism which allows the transition from system to tool is analogy. When describing mythology as a tool, it becomes useful to refer to the interpretations of mythology put forth by Jung (1968) and Campbell (1972, 1988). While both regard mythology as a very particular type of speech or language (myth as system) both are acutely aware of the functional aspects of myth. Mythologies are vernacular in so far as they are reflections of the cultures from which they originate, they express the concerns and core values of that culture and provide reassurance and guidance in the form of familiarity, however, it is well documented that despite changes in vernacular characteristics, overarching mythological narratives remain fairly similar across cultures and time periods (Campbell 1988). This familiarity, perhaps even universality, situates mythology as a type of lens through which one, regardless of cultural specificity, can begin to engage with aspects of the unfamiliar or unknown, broadening the boundaries of one's knowledge. Active conscious and unconscious recognition of that which can be considered the universal commonality of human experience is an essential part of bridging the gap between vernacular wisdom and global perspectives in education. This recognition also provides greater insights and sensitivities in how new knowledge territories are structured, ordered and navigated as will be illustrated in the exploration of mythology as pedagogy to be addressed later in the paper.

This dual understanding of mythology as both system and tool provides not only the most beneficial definition in the context of this paper but also highlights far broader poetics and potentiality of mythology in a cyclical sense. Campbell (1972, p. 14-15) expands on this premise originally put forth by Jung in saying:

Myths, states Jung, when correctly read, are the means to bring us back in touch. They are telling us in picture language of powers of the psyche to be recognized and integrated in our lives, powers that have been common to the human spirit forever, and which represent that wisdom of the species by which man has weathered millenniums. Through a dialogue conducted with... a study of myths, we can learn to know and come to terms with the greater horizon of our own deeper and wiser, inward self. And analogously, the society that cherishes and keeps its myths alive will be nourished from the soundest, richest strata of the human spirit.

It is with much consideration that I choose not to refer to specific cultural mythologies in this paper save for the brief allusion to the world tree reference in the title. This decision is made in the interest of keeping the paper decidedly unspecific, actively avoiding 'site specific' exemplars of mythology in order to speak to the premise of loosening (narrative) borders in the interest of situating thought at the core of the #Decolonise discourse. It is also impossible to address mythology of any culture with any amount of meaningful substance in a paper of this length. Even a narrowing of the topic to purely indigenous African mythologies does not allow for sufficient exploration of such immensely diverse cultural and linguistic productions as well as the intricacies of the overlaps between them. It is useful to acknowledge the fact that Africa has no singular mythological system (Lynch 2010), as Africa is not represented by a singular people, language or culture. In this way African mythology serves as a mirroring device to any other region contemplating the dialectic between what is vernacular and what is global. Similarly, on a global scale, the mythologies, ritual and cultural practices between different groups may differ, however, comparable motifs and connections can begin to be drawn. This is exactly the potentiality of mythology this paper aims to address.

Constructivist Learning Theories & Mythology as Pedagogy

Campbell (1988, p. 50) asserts that myth always serves at least one of four functions, namely: mystical, cosmological, sociological and pedagogical. On the latter he proclaims,

...there is a fourth function of myth, and this is the one that I think everyone must try today to relate to -- and that is the pedagogical function, of how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances. Myths can teach you that.

Before it is possible to explore the potential educational value of myth it is important to establish a theoretical framework in which to situate mythology as a pedagogical tool in accordance with traditional learning theories.

Constructivism is an interesting base from which to start in so far as it operates as a learning theory but this is perhaps subordinate to its functioning as an epistemology. In this way the theory allows itself a fair degree of self-reflexivity. Constructivism asserts that the world can be cognitively constructed in a multitude of ways and as such no lock on knowledge is absolute. Instead of situating singular knowledge as absolute truth, constructivism regards knowledge as a working supposition or a continual process of becoming rather than a fixed state (Piaget 1977). This concept is perhaps best illustrated in the image of a spiral (figure 2). Each person exists in a present in which their insights, cognitions and frames of references are supported by the prior (formal or informal) learning of the past. New knowledge is acquired/generated and existing ideas and conceptions gain complexity through reflection. A synthesis between old and new knowledge then occurs. This is a continuous process and as such constructivist learning theories can be seen as encouraging of the practice of life-long learning. This speaks to Vygotsky's concept of 'scaffolding' (Schunk 2012, p. 245-246). The concept of scaffolding will be returned to in the practical explanation of mythology's pedagogical potential. Constructivism acknowledges that beliefs and experiences vary and are therefore subjective. This is then extended to the recognition that if knowledge is to be understood as a product of cognition it too is equally personal and subjective.

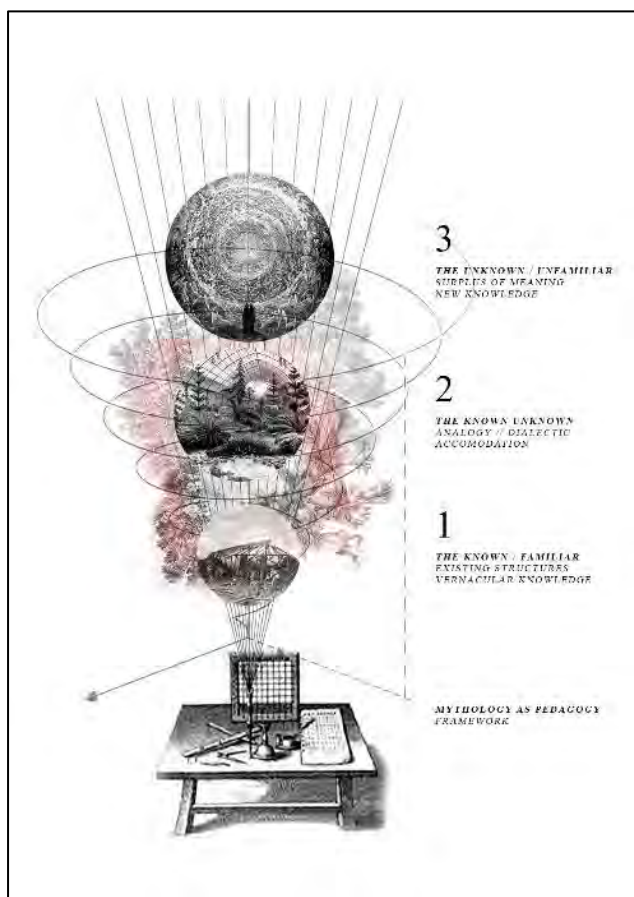


Figure 2 Piagetian Constructivist Knowledge Spiral (Author, 2017).

Constructivist pedagogy is most commonly divided into three perspectives namely: exogenous, endogenous and dialectical. Each of these perspectives offers insight into how the process of knowledge acquisition occurs (Schunk 2012). The exogenous perspective suggests that “knowing” can only be represented as internal reconstructions of the perceived external world. These reconstructions are influenced by subjective experience and modeled teaching and learning strategies. Endogenous perspectives draw from prior learning and not directly from situational contexts. In this way endogenous knowledge is not a representation of an externalised world but rather it is the development of cognitive abstraction. The dialectical perspective situates itself at the intersection of these two approaches in its suggestion that knowledge emerges from both subjective interactions between people (students) and their environments. Knowledge in this case is the result of cognitive paradoxes that occur throughout one’s interactions with the contextual environment. Dialectical approaches to constructivist learning align themselves closely with Vygotsky’s (1962) theories regarding the significant cognitive influence the cultural environment has on the acquisition and creation of knowledge, resulting in a blend of social cognitive constructivist pedagogy.

With this understanding of dialectical constructivist learning theory in place, a port of entry is opened through which to explore pedagogical potential of mythology. In practical terms the manner in which learning occurs would be structured as follows: students arrive with prior knowledge intact. These previously established knowledge structures are informed by mythology that is vernacular to them (myth as system). These knowledge structures (the known) are then challenged through dialectical pedagogy. In dialectic scenarios conceptions meet their opposite. This opposition is unfamiliar and moves learners beyond the boundaries of the known into the realm of the unknown. At this point Piagetian (1977) accommodation needs to occur. Internal knowledge structures must be reformed in order to accommodate

this new knowledge. Accommodation, however, is not a spontaneous process. In order for it to occur, learners must return to mythology in form of analogy (myth as tool) in order to make sense of newly perceived realities. Analogy serves as the core of both cognition and creativity in so far as fantasy is employed to order the unknown once learners arrive at the periphery of their (known) knowledge (Peterson 1999). Latent truths revealed through mythology bind dialectic oppositions and in this way analogical thinking transcends dialectic. Through this scaffolding process students arrive at a surplus of meaning which can be understood as the abundance of new knowledge, ultimately ascending to a higher level on the spiral of their cognition.

Framing Mythology within Design Praxis

The term *practicum* refers to the supervised practical application of previously acquired theory within a course of study. This notion is employed in many academic disciplines but is particularly pertinent to the field of design. This strategy within design education encourages learners to scaffold on prior (abstract) knowledge and in the process create new (experiential) knowledge – ultimately combining the two to meaningfully increase both cognitive abilities and situational insights (Eastman et al. 2001). *Design Praxis* within the context of this paper will refer to both the above mentioned supervised design practice of students as well as general practice - the ‘doing’ of design at the level of both education and industry.

For the purposes of this paper, the discipline of design is situated at the intersection of science and humanities. This assertion in turn suggests certain parameters in terms of areas of focus, application of relevant methodologies and the subsequent values of the field. These are key aspects to defining any type of pursuit which may be considered educational (Cross 2006). Where the sciences study the natural world and humanities concern themselves human experiences: design makes its focus the construction and navigation of both these entities. Science favours controlled and methodical experimentation and analysis while humanities employs more abstract methods in the form of analogy and qualitative evaluation: design finds synthesis between the two in the form of both literal and figurative modeling and pattern identification. Ultimately each discipline seeks to attain certain ideals. Science values objectivity, rationality and the pursuit of a singular truth while the humanities give weight to subjectivity and imagination: Again design reconciles these seemingly antithetical concerns in so far as valuing pragmatism, ingenuity and empathy.

While academia holds clear and divisive vocabulary to describe notions of what it is to be scientific and what it is to be creative, it begins to emerge that the discipline of design and all its subcategories is less easily reduced to such polarities. This combined knowledge in both its acquisition and construction is what Cross (2006) calls ‘Designerly ways of Knowing’. Another useful approach to defining design praxis or ‘Designerly ways of Knowing’ is in questioning what it does or how it manifests. *What is Design? What exactly do designers do? What is it we evaluate our students on their ability to do?* These musings all provide a point of entry through which one can begin to explore the immense complexities of the design discipline. A report issued by the Royal College of Art (1979, sp) encapsulated the issue, by stating that ‘Design with a capital ‘D’ articulates the collected experience of the material culture, and the collected body of experience, skill and understanding embodied in the arts of planning, inventing, making and doing’.

Based on the above it becomes discernible that Design, both at the level of education and industry, manifests an overarching concern with ‘the new’ and its material manifestations. The designerly preoccupation with the new brings us to a point of return to mythology’s pedagogical potentiality. The process through which prior knowledge meets dialectic and is resolved through mythology ultimately resulting in discovery, can be further expanded

through design. Design extends discovery to in(ter)vention. Cognitive gains manifest creation and/or derivation which bind new and old knowledge in a manner that is analogous to the process of accommodation described previously. Groys (2014) poses a theory of the *new* which comprises of two opposing aspects of cultural and artistic production. In this way dialectical thinking can once again be seen at work in the construction/acquisition of knowledge. The first aspect described is that of the 'cultural archive', similar in essence to the collective unconscious memory Jung (1968) described. The second, opposing aspect is that termed 'the profane' (Groys 2014, p. 64). The profane poses an irreconcilable opposition to the familiarity of the nostalgic recollection and in this way consolidates its newness. Between the realm of collective memory and the profane new exists only a permeable veil which can be understood as a value boundary (Groys 2014). As value boundaries shift so too does the perception of strangeness and newness resulting in a mode of adaptation or accommodation.

It is important to note that profane in(ter)vention occurs at the boundary of the known (existing knowledge). To transgress beyond the value boundary of what is known or understood is to become subject to archetypes of the collective unconscious. That is to say, in a classroom context, once students are pushed beyond their realm of competence they begin to use fantasy (myth as tool) to create and scaffold new knowledge structures. Upon reaching the periphery of what is already known, fantasy provides a path upon which to navigate and make sense of the unknown where the in(ter)vention of the new can manifest. In this way artists, designers and those engaged in creative disciplines already occupy the perimeters of existing knowledge structures as through their production they are able to transform absolute unknowns into multitudes of potential knowns. Mythology is therefore already internalized within design praxis because of the desire to produce/ reproduce/ create from referents, compelled by the drive to explore the unknown (myth as tool); this then also gives traction to how myth is congruent to cognitive development of the individual and collective unconscious (myth as system).

Conclusion

This remains a purely theoretical exploration of the potentiality of myth and does not address practical concerns such as how such a framework would be incorporated within higher education design curricula. In this way this research is limited but is in no way limiting. The call to #Decolonise education is not necessarily validated in mythology, rather mythology offers a means to rationalise the challenge differently. Mythology offers the #Decolonise discourse a locus of intervention in which thought is at its centre. Mythology as pedagogy facilitates shifts in educational interpretation rather than identification. That is to say, the inclusion of mythology in a decolonised education is not the dogmatic absorption of (vernacular or other) cultural knowledge but rather the reinterpretation and reimagination thereof. Mythology provides for us a frame to inhabit and be nurtured by. It is limited but not restrictive. It is a structure upon which one can expand and build boundlessly, the home from which we depart to begin our exploration as well as the place to which we ultimately return - 'a house is an instrument with which to confront cosmos' (Bachelard 1969, p. 46). With the tentative epistemological foundation mapped out in this paper and the dialogues between mythology, pedagogy and design highlighted, a limitless potential for the construction and acquisition new knowledge begins to emerge. To my mind, the above allows for #Decolonise to become meaningfully manifested both abstractly in philosophical explorations as well as practically in implementation.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Role with the Students: A Social Constructivist Decolonising Teaching Strategy for Visual Literacy in Fashion Design Programs

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Abstract

Visual literacy is a core competency required to express and reinforce cultural identity through clothing in the realm of fashion, and is therefore important within the context of decolonising fashion design education. Traditionally, curricula focused on the Euro-centric concept of fashion and accordingly, teaching methods and design products expected from students were mostly applicable within this context. Nevertheless, in South Africa, due to political and educational reform, the demographics of students in fashion design programs in Universities have changed radically over the past two decades to include diverse African and South African cultures. This changed situation increasingly challenged the relevance of conventional teacher-centered visual literacy teaching applied in the past. In this regard, the author of this paper supports the global argument that it is imperative for educators in their fields to transform teaching approaches fundamentally in order to be more inclusive and relevant to a diverse student body, as a critical aspect of decolonising of knowledge in tertiary education. This paper represents a starting point of a process to address the decolonisation of fashion design teaching approaches, by proposing a conceptual framework for a teaching strategy that aims to facilitate principles that enable students to construct visual literacy competencies that are rooted in the cultural and personal perspective of an individual. Viewing the proposed teaching strategy through the lens of social constructivism acknowledges the context of students, which in this paper relates to respect for the roots for others. To inform the teaching strategy, the discussion reviews pertinent literature that explores the dimensions of a decolonising visual literacy teaching strategy. Guiding principles from a social constructivist teaching perspective, relates to the learning environment that includes the roles of the instructor and students, and assessment of contextual authenticity of students' visual literacy in their design work. Implementing the proposed teaching strategy is an attempt to work towards an enhanced student-designer with visual literacy knowledge and skills that are rooted in the personal and cultural perspectives of the individual.

Keywords:

Fashion design education, decolonisation, conceptual framework, visual literacy teaching strategy, social constructivist teaching approach.

Introduction

Clothing in the realm of fashion is a powerful means to express and reinforce cultural identity (Rovine 2009), and is therefore important within the context of decolonising fashion design educational approaches. In this regard, visual literacy abilities to use, understand and create visual information to express personal and cultural perspectives are core competencies to consider in student training programs. Traditionally, fashion design education in South Africa at undergraduate level focused on the Euro-centric concept of fashion that places emphasis on knowledge and skills development according to the European haute couture model (Lavelle 2013; Smal & Lavelle 2011). Accordingly, teacher-centered educational approaches and methods, and design products expected from students were mostly applicable within this context. Nevertheless, in South Africa, due to political and educational reform, the demographics of students in fashion design programs in Universities have changed radically over the past two decades to include diverse African and South African cultures (De Wet 2017). This changed situation increasingly challenged the relevance of conventional teacher-centered visual literacy teaching practices applied in the past (De Wet 2016), to adopt an approach that accommodates a diverse body of students. Teaching visual literacy within varied cultural contexts, though, presents several unique challenges for facilitators in the field to address that concern the roles of students and the instructor in the learning environment and the assessment of contextual visual literacy knowledge and skills in students' design work. Although there is an indication of awareness regarding the need to change educational fashion design approaches within a South African context, there is extremely limited available literature in this regard (De Wet 2017; De Wet 2016). To this end, the author of this paper supports the global argument to transform teaching approaches, fundamentally, in order to become more inclusive and relevant to a diverse student body, as a critical aspect of decolonising of knowledge in University tertiary education (Keet 2014; Sefa Dei 2016; Todorova 2016).

As a starting point to address decolonising fashion design teaching approaches, this paper proposes a conceptual framework for a teaching strategy that aims to facilitate principles that can enable students to construct visual literacy competencies that are rooted in the cultural and personal context of an individual. In this regard, the strategy employs a social constructivist approach that encourages, respects and rewards the uniqueness (roots) of a student. The underlying assumption in this paper is therefore that all students comprise a valuable set of existing visual knowledge that can develop and enhance their design abilities. Acknowledging the contextual authenticity of students relates to respect for others and the context of the student, which in the context of this paper represents a decolonising approach. Implementing the proposed teaching strategy is an attempt to work towards an enhanced student-designer with visual literacy knowledge and skills that are rooted in the personal and cultural perspectives of the individual.

To inform the proposed visual literacy teaching strategy, the discussion in this paper reviews pertinent literature. By means of introduction, the concept of a decolonising visual literacy teaching strategy initiates the discussion. Following this, social constructivism is presented as the underlying approach of the strategy. Thereafter, the dimensions of the approach are deliberated in terms of, the learning environment, roles of the student and the instructor, and assessment of the contextual authenticity of students' visual literacy. The conceptual framework diagram presented as figure 1 then consolidates the information as a means to illustrate how the aspects within the teaching strategy relate. Lastly, final thoughts and recommendations are made that may be valuable to others in the field of fashion design education with similar challenges to address decolonisation in the learning environment.

The following section explains the proposed teaching strategy that can be implemented in a tertiary education context, as a starting point to address the decolonisation of visual literacy teaching in the field of fashion design.

Decolonising visual literacy teaching strategy

The full extent of the concept of decolonisation is extremely complex and not within the scope of this discussion. In an attempt to address and contribute to the decolonisation of fashion design education at tertiary level, the proposed teaching strategy implements the belief that a student best constructs visual literacy knowledge, based on personal and cultural contexts, in a process facilitated by an instructor (Wright & Grenier 2003). Visual literacy for fashion design students includes a set of competencies to develop in order to understand, interpret and produce visual messages through design work that originates from the context of an individual. In this regard, Bleed (2005) confirms that students who are visually literate: 1) understand basic design principles, techniques and media, 2) are aware of emotional, psychological and cognitive influences in perceptions of visual information, 3) understand the representational and symbolic power of visuals, 4) are informed critics and viewers of visuals, 5) are knowledgeable producers of visuals, and 6) are innovative visual thinkers and problem solvers. The teaching strategy aims to develop these abilities through a decolonising approach that appreciates the aesthetics of diverse cultures that contain deep meanings, representing group and personal identities of a student. Embedding existing visual-related knowledge of students as an integral aspect of the strategy can foster a collaborative learning situation that according to Pear, Darlene and Crone-Todd (2002) enriches the instructor and student, and so could bridge possible cultural and social differences between the two parties. The question is what would be an appropriate teaching approach to facilitate a decolonising process that can enable students to become active creators of their own visual knowledge and skills?

Social constructivist teaching approach

Social constructivism as a decolonising paradigm for the proposed strategy not only acknowledges the cultural uniqueness and complexity of a person, but also encourages students to form their own version of knowledge actively, by building on personal background and embedded culture and worldview (Demir, Bay, Bagceci, Vural & Avci 2015). Demir et al. (2015) further explain that the student as a member of a particular culture inherits historical symbol systems, in this case, visual information that encompass specific meaning upon which to build visual competencies. In this paper, 'social' constructivism also points towards the interaction with peers in order to learn about and from the constructed knowledge of others (Boud, Cohen & Sampson 2014). Sharing individual perspectives can result in students creating understanding collaboratively that may not be possible alone (Stevens & Van Meter 2000). This teaching approach therefore encourages students in deriving their own solutions to problems, interactively with others in the learning environment, rather than accepting information as a passive participant (Demir et al. 2015; Pear et al. 2002). Therefore, in this paper, decolonisation, applied from the perspective of self-ownership relates to a social constructivist approach. Nevertheless, in order to enable students to become social constructivist learners, it is important to consider the broader learning environment.

Learning environment

The complete learning environment for students that optimises the ability to learn and create knowledge include several aspects to consider in a teaching strategy (Demir, et al. 2015; Stevens & Van Meter 2000). Bates (2015, p. 445) states that these matters generally relate to physical locations, contexts and the ethos in which students learn. This paper focuses on the ethos aspect, which in this case, is based on respect for cultural diversity and

the uniqueness of an individual. The ethos of respect for diversity, in this discussion, points towards two specific dimensions. The first is collaboration, to encourage tolerance for the differences of others, amongst students and between students and the instructor. Furthermore, meaningful interactions between the parties can create a learning environment where the instructor and students learn from each other (Wright et al. 2003). According to Vygotsky's (cited in Stevens & Van Meter 2011) socio-cultural teaching perspective, a student first build knowledge in a social context, then internalise and appropriate the information individually. The second dimension relates to a democratic environment, which here, implies that students are regularly involved in interactive problem solving discussions and shared decision-making, where individual opinions are valued and so increasing the possibility for self-determination within a community of equals (Demir, et al. 2015). The ethos of the learning environment manifests in three scenarios of the teaching strategy, namely, the role of the instructor, role of the students, and assessment methods of contextual authenticity of students' visual literacy.

Role of the instructor in the learning environment that optimises students' ability to construct visual literacy knowledge

The primary role of the instructor in a social constructivist setting is that of a facilitator of the learning process who guides and supports students in constructing their own knowledge, as opposed to a process where students merely memorise and reproduce provided information (Demir, et al. 2015; Wright & Grenier 2003). Wright and Grenier (2003, p. 255) describe the instructor/student interaction in this context as "guided participation" that helps to bridge the gap for students between familiar existing knowledge and skills and those required to solve new problems and learn new information. Within the role as a facilitator in a decolonised classroom, in this paper, the interaction builds on respect, equality, and choice of options and opinions in order to accommodate diversity. From a teaching perspective, students are provided with fundamental visual literacy principles that then need to be applied through experimentation and solving design problems relating to actual end-users. Exploration and engaging with real-world design issues are means to help students shift from passive to active learners and participants in order for them to make sense of the learning experience (Demir, et al. 2015). Throughout this process, the instructor guides the learning activities through discussion and inquiry to understand students' preexisting conceptions, and support problem solving and reflection on the process and design work. According to Wright and Grenier (2003, p. 263), knowledge constructed in this way can encourage teaching and learning that are "dynamic, interactive, and expanding rather than static and prescribed". Since decolonising appropriate fashion design skills can be acquired during a collaborative process, students play a major role in the visual literacy teaching process.

Role of the students in the process of constructing visual literacy skills

While the instructor facilitates the process of learning, students have the primary responsibility of building on personal perspectives and pre-existing visual knowledge through a process of sense-making (Demir, et al. 2015). Guided by Klein, Moon and Hoffman (2006), sense making in the context of this paper relates to the ability or attempt by which students draw on their existing visual knowledge to give meaning to new instructional information, by making cognitive connections that lead to the recreation of a new enhanced network of visual literacy. In the process of seeking meaning to form new knowledge, students need to purposefully reflect upon and evaluate provided instructional principles, concepts and facts from their own perspectives and interpret the information in a way that seems appropriate to the individual (Demir, et al. 2015; Stevens & Van Meter 2011). The argument can therefore be made that through the sense-making process, the authenticity of students' visual literacy can be enriched, as it now consists of personal perspectives integrated with new information that results in reformulated principles. A challenging question to address in view of the

above, is how to assess the contextual authenticity of a students' visual literacy in a responsibly way that aligns to a social constructivist approach?

Assessment of contextual authenticity of students' visual literacy

In order to reflect the democratic and collaborative ethos of the learning environment, an alternative approach to assessment is required to shift the power and control, often associated with conventional evaluation, from the instructor, to a shared responsibility between instructor and student (Demir, et al. 2015; Pear et al. 2002; Stevens & Van Meter 2011). In terms of decolonisation, the indicators of respect and the roots of the students relate strongly to the shift of control in assessment, by considering a person's background and way of making sense to construct knowledge. This discussion focuses on the assessment of students' process and progress made to construct visual knowledge that encapsulates the contextual authenticity of an individual, not the achieved level of learning in the end design product. Possible questions to ask in this regard relate to whether a student was able to reflect and derive an opinion, did they actually make sense and construct the knowledge, was the student able to cope with peer criticism, could the student work with what was facilitated, how did they make it their own? In this regard, students' ability to reflect upon and respond to these issues are the indicators of achievement. However, to enable a collaborative evaluation process that represents a social constructivist intention, implementing the appropriate assessment principles are essential.

Holt and Willard-Holt (2000) emphasise the importance of dynamic assessment principles that involves assessing progress continuously throughout the learning process to assist students in constructing their own knowledge. The author of this paper further applies the view that assessment involves an interactive process of dialogue between lecturer and students in order to mediate an individual's level of understanding and achievement on any task, rather than it being an activity carried out by the instructor only (Sardareh & Mohd Saad 2012; Stevens & Van Meter 2011). The role of the instructor in assessment is essentially to share expert feedback as triggers for further development (Holt et al. 2000), as well as identify and share students' insights with peers. Pear et al. (2002) emphasise the importance for an instructor to reject the absolutes that are common in conventional assessment and to recognise that often there is no single correct result to demonstrate constructed knowledge. Since assessment is part of the learning process, students play a key role of taking responsibility to monitor their level of progress to make sense and reformulate individual visual literacy principles. As recommended by Sardareh and Mohd Saad (2012), learning and assessment are here viewed as inextricably integrated, rather than separate processes. This implies that students need to apply the same active engagement and participation by constantly assessing their own understanding of the learning process and knowledge created when interacting with others (for example peers). Nonetheless, a collaborative approach that is essentially student-centered requires specific supportive assessment methods.

To reflect a social constructivist view of assessment, self and peer assessment methods are means for students to formulate and test ideas, draw conclusions and implications and examine knowledge collaboratively and individually in a student-oriented environment. These assessment methods are also tools for the instructor to take into account at the stages of evaluation, in order to acquire deeper insight from the students' perspectives and so increase the relevance of feedback (Chang, Tseng & Lou 2012). Peer assessment as a process whereby students rate each other's design work, based on project criteria, can be a way to enhance students' understanding of the learning process by "learning with and from each other" (Boud et al. 2014, p. 4), and in doing so, encourages a sharing culture between students. Self-assessment of knowledge, on the other hand, occurs when a student self, evaluates the level of his/her current knowledge against parameters (Sitzmann, Ely, Brown & Bauer 2010; USW Australia 2014). Rust, O'Donovan and Price (2010) emphasize though, that for students to understand and participate actively in the assessment process, explicit knowledge of project outcomes, criteria and the standard to apply is critical. Implementing

peer and self-assessment as a strategy for students to take ownership of their own learning process, reflects a social constructivist-learning environment, which represents the decolonising intention of the visual literacy teaching strategy.

Figure 1 below demonstrates the above-discussed decolonising teaching strategy that facilitates principles to enable students to construct visual literacy competencies that are rooted in the cultural and personal context of an individual.

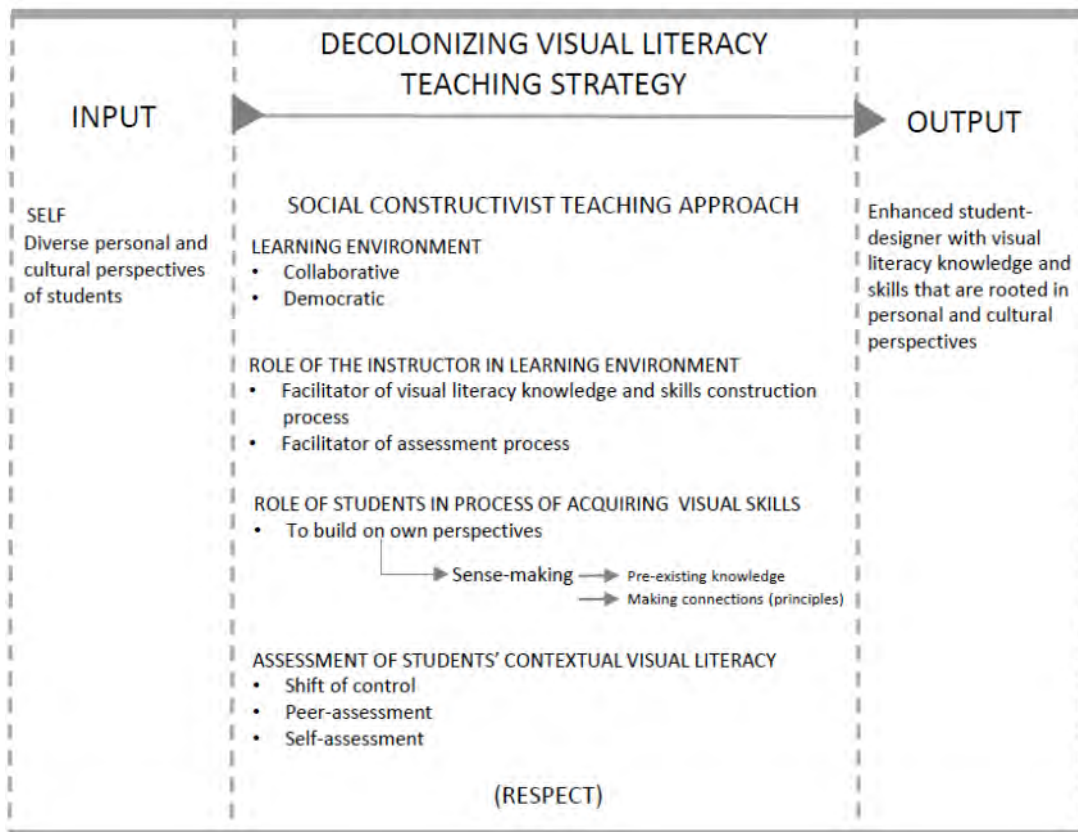


Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of the proposed decolonising visual literacy teaching strategy (self-constructed)

The proposed strategy presents opportunities and challenges for educators in the field to consider in the process of decolonisation. Clearly, a strength is the social constructivist teaching approach that places students in control of their own learning process and allows alternative teaching and assessment methods, to accommodate a diverse body of students. Possible challenges are that this approach requires agile instructors who are able to constantly think on their feet, are able to operate organically, and most importantly, have empathy to accommodate diverse ideas of students. An opportunity for students are that the learning experience and assessment of design work concerns their process and progress, rather than focusing on the end-product only. For the facilitator, the shifting of traditional teacher/student roles presents an opportunity to learn about, with and from the students, and he/she can therefore assist students more effectively to construct own knowledge from personal perspectives. The changing roles, though, can pose a threat to instructors concerning the loss of control in the classroom.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this paper, the need to decolonise knowledge in South African University structures, increasingly challenges the relevance of conventional teacher-centered instructional approaches in fashion design education. This discussion addressed this issue, by proposing a conceptual framework for a teaching strategy to facilitate students with principles to construct visual literacy knowledge and skills from personal and cultural perspectives. Viewing the proposed strategy through the lens of social constructivism, the crux of this paper suggests that there needs to be a shift of control in the learning environment, particularly, in the assessment process of students' contextual visual literacy, from teacher-centered, to shared responsibilities between instructor and a student. The changing roles, raising concerns of who is actually in control in the classroom, is a matter that needs to be addressed.

This paper presents a viable starting point for further investigation and development, and an opportunity for fashion design educators to pursue and adapt to their situations. In terms of decolonisation, it is important to emphasise that teaching and learning methods that facilitate this transition, need to be built into the entire curriculum and adopted by all educators within a department on an ongoing basis. If this is not considered as a strategic objective, isolated pockets of application could cause uncertainty and even confusion. One can therefore argue that decolonising teaching principles, such as these presented in this paper, have to become the core of curricula of a department, not simply be an extension or component of existing curricula. Furthermore, implementing the proposed teaching strategy addresses University requirements regarding how to transition into decolonisation of knowledge and, more specifically in this case, is a starting point of the process of transformation towards decolonising the way in which fashion design is taught. In conclusion, the control of conventional teacher-orientated teaching approaches needs to be reconsidered in favour of elevating the 'role' of students so that they have a voice in their own learning experience and knowledge construction.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

A Holistic Approach to the Decolonisation of Modules in Sustainable Interior Design

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Abstract

This paper stems from the need to develop and deliver a new module in sustainable interior design (BASD6B2) at a 2nd year level within a new Degree programme at the University of Johannesburg, in 2017. This module's development however relies on a reflection on another sustainable interior design module (BASD6B1) in the curriculum, offered at a 1st year level. The paper also secondly arises from the national call for the transformation and decolonisation of education programmes in South African tertiary institutions. This new BASD6B2 module thus needs to demonstrate a deeper connection with African roots, rather than make use of over-emphasised Eurocentric ideals. Like the global Ubuntu education approach, decolonisation requires an advancement of indigenous knowledge, expertise, teaching and learning. Thirdly, there is also a need for interior design education, worldwide, to align itself with changing notions of sustainability, which requires educators to embrace a new, emerging ecological paradigm. In this paradigm, regenerative thinking seeks to push sustainable design from merely sustaining the health of a system, towards more holistic, systems thinking, reconnecting us to place and the rituals of place (Reed 2007, p. 677).

A reflection on both the sustainable interior design modules' designs reveals several gaps. Firstly, there is no specific requirement that the emerging ecological paradigm, and the notion of regenerative thinking, be taught within the module. Secondly, one of the module outcomes requires that students be taught about sustainability through the use of a rating tool, the Green Star SA (GSSA) Interiors Rating Tool, which, while valuable, is too mechanistic and does not support holistic thinking. Thirdly, another gap is that the Green Building Council of South Africa's (GBCSA) Green Star SA – Interiors v1 Technical Manual includes little to no reference of African studies, methods and skills in the technical manual. This issue is revealed in my ongoing PhD study, which uses a constructivist grounded theory approach. Fourthly, the tool is based on an Australian tool which is, in turn, based on an American tool, and it thus deploys western constructs. The aim of this paper is thus to develop a teaching strategy that can complement the design of both modules, with a focus however on the new module BASD6B2, in order to teach students about sustainability more holistically, while celebrating and advancing African building methods and skills. The main findings reveal that the sustainable interior design modules (based on the given outcomes) do not support a holistic and decolonised approach to teaching and learning. A holistic teaching strategy is thus necessary to promote an African identity. The paper concludes that this pro-active teaching strategy can augment the sustainable interior design modules. Firstly both modules can include a holistic introductory lesson. A second tactic in the strategy could be to include diverse curriculum content and regenerative design concepts into the BASD6B2 module. This

strategy generally aims to advance students' mindsets about sustainable design, while encouraging them to be co-creators of local knowledge, while designing sustainably, for an African identity.

Keywords:

Decolonisation of education; sustainable interior design; regenerative design; GBCSA's GSSA Interiors Rating tool

Introduction

While preparing for the new Sustainable Interior Design 2 (BASD6B2) module at the University of Johannesburg, there was a simultaneous need to 'decolonise' the module. The structure of the paper is such that it begins with a presented methodology, followed by a review of the curriculum's sustainable interior design modules, and their outcomes, as issued to the facilitators. The subsequent subsection provides a review of the literature pertaining to the concept of decolonisation of education, *sustainability* and the new emerging ecological paradigm. Thereafter, a literature review regarding the concepts of *place* and *story of place* in *regenerative design* is presented. Next, a review of gaps in the modules is presented, which is then followed by a proposed holistic teaching strategy to advance the teaching of *sustainability* in design, while celebrating Afrocentric education.

Methodology

This study falls in the constructivist paradigm, and uses a qualitative research design. It is ontologically interpretive and epistemologically subjectivist. The authenticity and quality of the study is supported by the presenting of my research bias and of self-reflection as facilitator. The aim is not to provide absolute truth, but valid truth. An earlier on-going PhD revealed gaps in the GSSA – Interiors v1 Technical Manual which also needed to be taught in the new BASD6B2 module. This became the catalyst for writing this paper. In the PhD there is also an exploration of the concept of sustainability, the new ecological paradigm, and regenerative design, which are also lacking in the BASD6B1 and BASD6B2 modules' designs. The research method used in this paper is a review of the modules' design, as well as a review of research (as a guidance to situate the study in the current knowledge base of the field regarding sustainable design and a decolonisation of education). The CGT method used in the PhD will be explained briefly.

A review of both modules' information was done to uncover the gaps that a new proposed teaching strategy can address. Next, a review of literature followed relating to the concepts of decolonisation and Ubuntu education, needed for curriculum transformation. The next review of various research was done to realise theoretical underpinnings of the new whole/living systems ecological paradigm, sustainability, and its complementary approach called regenerative design.

The CGT method, was one deployed within the PhD study. It is an interpretive and theory-building method. Access to the technical manual is only made possible to Green Accredited Professionals and design educators (of which I am both). Of the thirty-five credits in the manual, only 26 were analysed and coded, using a content analysis programme called Atlas.ti. These included: Indoor Environment Quality 1 to 9; Energy 1 and 2; Transport 1, 2 and 3; Materials 1-7; Land Use and Ecology 1; Emissions 1 and 2; and Innovation 1 and 2. This revealed a lack of reference to local studies, building methods and skills. A proposed teaching strategy was then developed. This is based on these reviews of literature explained above, on personal research interests into sustainability, the ecological paradigm, and regenerative design, and also on the on-going PhD.

Sustainable interior design modules in the curriculum

There is a continual need for colleges and universities to teach students about sustainability issues (Corcoran & Wals, in Wahr 2010, p. 1). Many academic programmes worldwide have incorporated sustainability into design education (Gürel 2010, p. 185). The University of Johannesburg introduced a new degree programme in interior design in 2016: the Bachelor of Arts degree was instituted in 2016, with the first cohort now in 2nd year in 2017. The three-year degree course includes only two sustainable interior design modules. Sustainable Interior Design 1 (BASD6B1) takes place in the second semester of the first year, and

Sustainable Interior Design 2 (BASD6B2) takes place in the second semester of the second year BASD6B2. It is required that students who undertake the BASD6B2 module have completed the BASD6B1 module, which is offered by the architecture department, as part of a multidisciplinary approach to the programme. In order for the instructor to develop the BASD6B2 module, basic module information was provided about both BASD6B1 and BASD6B2. This includes qualification details and codes, details about assessments, the module purpose and outcomes. Both module purposes and outcomes are presented below.

The purpose of the BASD6B1 module, as stated in the module information document, is to “introduce students to fundamental concepts of sustainable building construction.” (unpublished source). The expected module outcomes are listed below. They require students to:

- demonstrate an understanding of basic concepts of ecology and of human settlements;
- discuss climatic implications on macro and micro climates;
- describe the implications of orientation, building form, landscaping;
- select materials that are appropriate in terms of embodied energy, recycling and environmental impact; and
- select appropriate energy sources and service installations.

The purpose of the BASD6B2 module, as stated in the module information document, is to “refine the students’ knowledge of sustainable design through focusing on interior design principles, requirements and application within the built environment” (unpublished source). The expected module outcomes are listed below. They require students to:

- demonstrate an understanding of sustainable design principles that impact on the interior design environment;
- understand and apply the *GSSA Interiors Rating Tool’s* categories and associated principles; and
- examine and evaluate sustainability requirements and reflect on the impact on the ecosystem.

This paper will later present a reflection on gaps uncovered within these abovementioned modules, their purposes, and outcomes, in order to formulate a holistic teaching strategy that can augment the teaching of both modules.

Review of literature

Introducing decolonisation of education into sustainable interior design modules

There is also a global call for transformation of education in previously colonised countries. In 2016, the notion of Ubuntu in education was explored within a special journal issue titled *Ubuntu! Imagine a Humanistic Education Globally*. The issue emerged from the 59th annual conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, held in 2015 in Washington D.C. The word Ubuntu is a southern African word for expressing “solidarity and togetherness” (Oviawe 2016, p. 5). An Ubuntu approach to education aims to be less positivistic, Eurocentric and individualistic, and instead more holistic, transformative and emancipatory (Oviawe 2016, p. 2). This approach can also be infused into design programmes. Chmela-Jones (2015, p. 49) notes that the philosophy of Ubuntu should specifically shape future curricula within design programmes at institutions of higher education in South Africa.

Concurrently, on a national level, South African students and academics are appealing for a similar concept of transformation in education, a concept called ‘decolonisation’. According

to the University's 2017 Draft Charter on Decolonisation, this need arose from years of suppression of indigenous knowledges and practices, with preference for, and over-reliance on, Eurocentric ideas, this even after colonisation ended in Africa (Assié-Lumumba 2016).

Some of the principles of Ubuntu in education can be seen to parallel those presented in the national approach to decolonisation of education. Importantly, both concepts require a holistic approach towards transforming education (Oviawe 2016). The University's Draft Charter on Decolonisation shares many similarities with the literature on Ubuntu, including the aim for:

- cultural inclusiveness (Biraimah 2016, p. 51);
- culturally-responsive instruction and assessment methods (Biraimah 2016, p. 51; Brock-Utne 2016, p. 41);
- culturally diverse curricular content that advances indigenous knowledge and expertise (Assié-Lumumba 2016, p. 22; Biraimah 2016, p. 55; Piper 2016, p. 109);
- rootedness in the community, the country and the world (Biraimah 2016; Assié-Lumumba 2016; Brock-Utne 2016; Oviawe 2016; Piper 2016); and
- quality education in the global South (Oviawe 2016, p. 2; Piper 2016).

These similarities above offer insightful principles that can aid the development of a holistic teaching strategy, a main aim of this paper.

Sustainability within an emerging ecological paradigm

In order to develop the BASD6B2 module, it is important to understand that the concept of sustainability within design is varied and multifaceted (Wals and Jickling 2002, p. 222; Gürel 2010, p. 185). The concept refers to an approach to building that benefits the environment, society and the economy (termed the triple bottom line). Within this approach, progress should meet the needs of "the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (Brundtland, in Stieg 2006, p. viii; Jones 2008, p. 54). However, within sustainability, terms like sustainable design, sustainable development, and green design have all been used to explain the built environment's responses to the call for environmentally responsible design. Due to the variations that exist, this paper makes use of Cole's preferred definition of sustainability as an "overarching globally scaled, evolving aspiration" (Cole 2012, p. 47), while incorporating "community-based thinking that integrates environmental, social and economic issues in a long-term perspective" (Robinson 2004, p. 381).

Sustainable design is currently experiencing a shift towards a new, emerging paradigm. Since 2007, an ongoing failure to move toward the goal of sustainability was reported (Fischer et al. 2007). Sustainable design has been criticised for being neutral, in that it is simply aimed at sustaining the health of the planet's organisms and systems, rather than improving it (Reed 2007). From this has emerged an ecological worldview of wholeness, and values that oppose the earlier, mechanistic worldview. One of the important focus areas within this holistic ecological worldview is for humans to be "seeing the whole world" (Hes & du Plessis 2015, p. 29). This requires humans to view the self as part of a community, and not separate to it, and that a person exists in relation to others (Hes & du Plessis 2015). Many other values underpin this worldview, and many approaches are also used in this view, such as, regenerative design.

Within an ecological worldview, regenerative design is one of the various approaches that can be used to achieve an overarching sustainability or environmentally responsible design. To illustrate the meaning and position of regenerative design within this worldview, it is helpful to examine Reed's trajectory of environmentally responsible design (2007, p. 675), as depicted in Figure 1. In this trajectory, sustainable design is placed in the middle, and is

positioned as a neutral approach. Regenerative design is placed at the top (a positive approach), whereas conventional practice is placed at the bottom (a degenerative approach). The difference between the terms used in the trajectory (green, sustainable and regenerative design) is “doing less harm, doing no harm, and doing some good, respectively” (Cole, in Svec, Berkebile, & Todd 2012, p. 82). The regenerative design approach to the built environment complements the goal of sustainability, and is not separate from it. It aims for design and construction that heals the whole system by using a deeply integrated worldview (Reed 2007, p. 675). Regenerative design views constructed projects as having the capability to build natural and social capital (Cole et al. 2012, p. 100).

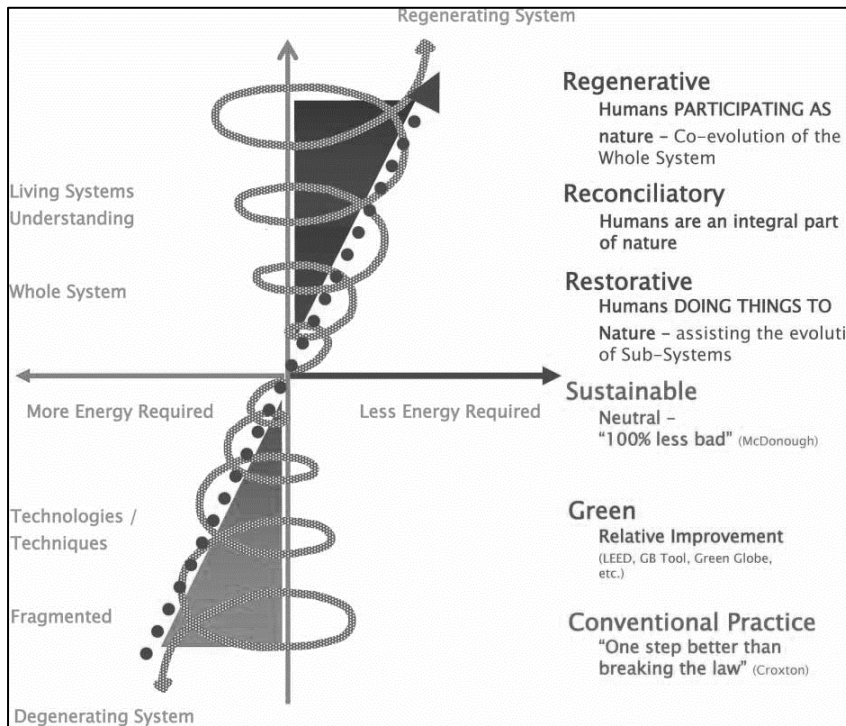


Figure 1: Reed’s trajectory of environmentally responsible design (2007:676).

The importance of regenerative design’s place and story of place

It is important to next reflect on the importance of place and story of place within regenerative design. Place includes “far more than topography, climate, light and tectonic form. It is a construct which emerges from the entire network of ecological and cultural systems and their interactions within a geographic area” (Hes & du Plessis 2015, p. 117). A sustainable design project requires fundamental research into the context (Heine 2012, p.6), and physical information about the site must be defined early in order to help understand the site’s reach and context in a design project. However, place also refers to a system of interactions and stories in this place. Stories are historically known to shape and maintain relationships that exist between a place and its people for past and future generations (Hes & du Plessis 2015, p. 119). They also reveal core patterns and complex relationships of activities, and the co-creative interplay between nature and culture in a particular place, further giving a place its recognisable character and nature (Mang & Reed 2012, p. 32). Story of place thus illuminates the importance of geological, natural and cultural aspects of a place that have interwoven through time (Mang & Reed 2012, p. 32). It helps to reveal the historical and contemporary patterns in the place’s natural, social and economic areas. Place and story of place are both important concepts in regenerative design that encourage systems thinking.

A review of non-holistic gaps in the modules

Literature suggests that institutions need to address sustainability issues in their modules from a holistic perspective (Urbanski and Filho, in Hooey, Mason, & Triplett 2017, p. 280), and to re-examine the traditional way that courses are delivered (Blackburn, in Hooey et al. 2017, p. 285). Upon reflection on the modules' purposes and outcomes, and concepts of decolonisation, the ecological worldview, regenerative design, and its focus on place and story of place, I identify gaps that could be addressed when developing a holistic teaching strategy in these modules.

First, there is no clear reference made to teaching about neither the new ecological paradigm, nor the regenerative principles in the BASD6B1 or BASD6B2 module designs, even though sustainability needs to include holistic, whole/living systems thinking. A regenerative approach to design is represented in the shift from mechanistic and anthropocentric worldviews towards ecological and eco-centric worldviews (du Plessis & Cole 2011; Mang & Reed 2012). My interest in regenerative thinking stems from an ongoing PhD study exploring the regenerative approach within sustainable interior design. A personal interest to supplement both modules with regenerative thinking supports Wahr's statement that successful academic development may rely on reflective facilitators (2010).

Secondly, the second of the listed BASD6B2 module outcomes requires that students are taught to understand and apply a national rating tool. Sustainable design rating tools are devices that designers use to measure the environmental performance of buildings. Some examples include LEED (US); BREEAM (UK); CASBEE (Japan); Green Star Australia (AUS); and Green Star SA (RSA). Recent research, however, suggests that these global assessment tools can be mechanistic rather than holistic in their approach, and that they represent reductive and fragmented thinking (Reed 2007, p. 674). Du Plessis and Cole (2011, p. 445) also note that the tools are too building-performance focused, reductive, measurable, and replicable, which does not support whole/living systems thinking. Rating tools are however also valuable in promoting "the selection of sustainable interior surface materials" (Deminey 2017, p. i). Their value in reaching sustainable design goals can therefore not be denied, but there is a risk associated with teaching a measurement tool, and its technical manual, without supplementing this with a more holistic approach.

Thirdly, an ongoing PhD study of the GSSA – Interiors v1 Technical Manual reveals an overemphasis on references to, and guidance from, western standards, studies and organisations. The technical manual exists as a guide for users to understand how to apply and complete the rating tool itself, and it also explains the credits used within the tool, as well as the criteria used to measure these credits. The manual thus needs to be taught in the BASD6B2 module in order to understand the tool. This on-going coding shows an overemphasis on international standards, studies and organisations. It exposes a lack of references to local studies, and to traditional building methods or skills; as such, an African identity is compromised.

The last gap identified relates to the BASD6B2 module's reference to a tool that is based on Western precedents. Education can be seen as the "primary instrument of enculturation" (Assié-Lumumba 2016, p. 14) and, because the identity of South Africa may be lost when education focuses only on colonial contexts, these losses of identity should be addressed. A decolonised approach is thus needed in the teaching of the BASD6B2 module - one that entails cultural inclusivity in teaching and learning. This is currently not the case because, the GBCSA's GSSA Interiors Rating Tool is based on an Australian rating tool which, in turn, is based on an American system; it is thus lacking in applicability to an African identity. Academic programmes need to be critiqued insofar as they fail to redress colonising attitudes (Wahr 2010, p. 5) and this module thus requires innovative educational reform.

A proposed holistic teaching strategy

A holistic teaching strategy, which includes two tactics, is proposed to address these abovementioned gaps in the modules.

The first proposed tactic is to supplement the introductory section of the BASD6B1 module with information about the new ecological paradigm, the position of sustainability within it, and the need for other complementary approaches such as regenerative design which aims to surpass simple sustainable design. This introductory overview can then be repeated in the beginning of the BASD6B2 module to reinforce the concepts, however at a deeper level. Teaching sustainability is impossible without regeneration (Reed 2007, p. 112), and institutions need to re-assess what sustainability is in order to ensure commitment (Bertel et al., in Hoey et al. 2017, p. 290).

Although in 2016 the facilitator of BASD6B1 already included local examples to explain orientation, building form and landscaping, diverse curriculum content can be added in greater complexity in the BASD6B2 module in 2017 by introducing an appreciation for place and story of place into the teaching of the manual and the tool. The second tactic can therefore include assignments in BASD6B2, whereby students can research and evaluate local African building methods and skills both in literature, and in stories from their respective communities. By encouraging students to explore local stories of place, they may understand the importance of the community in that place, which may anchor them in their own context (Assié-Lumumba 2016, p. 23). This tactic also supports Biraimah's idea of Ubuntu, wherein culturally responsive instruction should be implemented, such that it reflects students' own cultural experiences (Biraimah 2016, p. 52). Assignments can further assist in building local knowledge about African building methods and skills related to the specific criteria within the GBCSA's GSSA Interiors Rating Tool and its technical manual. Due to the fact that colonial systems in Africa in the past did not accommodate the type of education that existed before colonialism (Assié-Lumumba 2016, p. 14), local content is lost; and such assignments could help advance Afrocentric course content, supporting a holistic decolonisation goal.

Conclusion

This paper recognises the facilitator's need to develop and teach a new sustainable interior design module (BASD6B2), while adhering to an institutional request to decolonise the curriculum. First the methodology used in this paper was explained. Next, both sustainable interior design modules in the curriculum were explored. Thirdly, a review of the concept of decolonisation, the new ecological worldview and its complementary approaches was provided, followed by discussion of the principles of place and story of place within regenerative design. From this discussion, it became clear that a more holistic approach to culturally inclusive teaching and learning is required in the development of the module. Fourthly, upon review, certain gaps were identified which were seen to hinder holistic teaching. The first of these is that the new emerging ecological paradigm, and regenerative and systems thinking is not explicitly required within the two sustainable interior design modules in the curriculum. The second gap relates to a BASD6B2 module outcome that requires that students be taught about sustainability through the use of a rating tool that does not support holistic thinking. The third gap shows a lack of reference to African studies, methods and skills in the technical manual. The last gap identified relates to the fact that the GSSA Interiors Rating tool can be seen as a colonised construct proposed holistic and pro-active teaching strategy to supplement both modules, especially BASD6B2. The strategy can offer a holistic perspective in line with the principles of Ubuntu and decolonisation in education, and in sustainable design education. The first tactic of teaching students about the ecological paradigm, the position of sustainability within it, and regenerative design can

alter their values, and surpass the notion of sustainable design as the end-goal. Tactic two proposed includes introducing a deep exploration of place and story of place in teaching the module, which can help shift the mind set of students away from design as an exercise in box-ticking. The holistic teaching strategy proposed can assist them in becoming co-creators of knowledge, and reflective practitioners in the new paradigm, that deploys holistic thinking about context, reach, stories and patterns of a place, in order to make their place healthy, and ignite an interest in African method and skills.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

A Decolonial Academy? Addressing the Oxymoron: How a Series of Performative Art-Science Creative Encounters Might Serve as a Toolbox of Ideas

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Abstract

Disciplinary practitioners are challenged to respond urgently and positively to calls to decolonize the academy. There is an expectation that the learning experience as well as the curriculum content needs to be fundamentally reshaped in response to the socio-political-economic realities of this century. To add to the complexity, as daily newscasts confirm, outside the ivory towers there is a growing sense that all is not well with the world, and that there is a need for radical social change.

So what toolbox of possibilities is there to draw on as we set out to collectively re-imagine the future, as we attempt to envisage the oxymoron – the Decolonial Academy? As de Sousa Santos phrases it, how do we address ‘the paradox of urgency and civilizational change’ and at the same time make a hope-filled ‘wager on another possible world’.

Writing from an Autoethnographic perspective, we describe an ongoing cross-disciplinary project that has seen artists, scientists, students and academics, community activists and disciplinary practitioners engaging with one another in a series of place-focused off-campus encounters. In these various configurations of the ‘un-like-minded’ have set out to see the world through one another’s eyes and address vexing problems.

We have made use of both arts-based and scientific methodologies – whatever best allows us to explore, think, share, and express our ideas and solutions. We do not meet in plush conferencing surrounds - our locations are intentionally discomfiting. In the course of the encounters we have been exposed to a multiplicity of unsettling realities but we have also rekindled our embodied connections with the real world, away from the ivory towers, and established new and vibrant networks with one another and across disciplinary divides.

In the paper we position the art-science-place encounters within a performative-research paradigm, as situated practices integrally connected to socio-cultural contexts and to place, and we map them against the literature. We maintain that this immersive embodied approach provides a positive and flexible model for participatory engagement, one that shifts the ownership of knowledge away from the ‘disciplinary knowers’ and places it in the hands of the entire collective of explorer-participants. We suggest that the approaches that we espouse in the encounters are transferable, and we hope that they will be of use to colleagues in the creative disciplines, as we all set out to ‘wager on another possible world’.

Keywords: *art-science; place; performativity; decolonial; transdisciplinary; pluriversity*

Introduction

Disciplinary practitioners are challenged to respond urgently and positively to calls for the decolonization of the academy. There is an expectation that the learning experience as well as the curriculum content needs to be fundamentally reshaped in response to the socio-political-economic realities of this century. To add to the complexity, as daily newscasts confirm, outside the ivory towers there is a growing concern that all is not well with the world, and that there is a need for radical social change.

So how can the dual curricular transformation and emancipation project be moved forward creatively? What contribution can people like ourselves legitimately make, people who operate from within the university as it exists at present, and who, despite our sharp criticisms of its failings, have to acknowledge our possessive investment in the places in which we work?

As we are part of the 'old system' we have to ask ourselves: What is our agency as social actors? (Archer 2004, p. 12). What can we bring to the process of re-visioning and reshaping the academic world that we inhabit? How can we engage purposefully, and how do we navigate the terrain between academic rigidity, compliance, and chaos, without us having a reassuringly predetermined destination clearly identified for us prior to our departing on the journey?

It is a given that we need to share innovative ideas and resources as we set out to *facilitate the paradigm shifts* that will be required if today's universities are to be repurposed as pluriversities that can serve a different tomorrow, if disciplinary programs and curriculums are to be re-conceptualized, if disciplinary hierarchies and silos are to be challenged and dismantled, and if that oxymoron, *the Decolonial academy*, is to become something more than an elusive pipe dream.

There are increasing numbers of academics whose thinking we can draw on, people who are adopting insightful and alternative ways to approach curriculum renewal and inter- and transdisciplinary practices, or who challenge their fellow academics to think differently and, like Nomalanga Mkhize (2015 online), explore the possibilities that are to be found in 'disruptive' pedagogies and the 'delicate combination of teaching through nurturing and teaching through disruption'. We hope to add a creative contribution to this growing body of work.

We write from an Autoethnographic perspective, which, as Ellis, Adams and Bochner tell us (2011, p. 3) means that we 'retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity'. They explain that this approach, whilst it acknowledges and accommodates the researchers emotionality, subjectivity and influence on research, 'rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist' (2011, p. 2), also requires us to write analytically as we use 'personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make [the] characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders' (2011, p. 3).

We describe an ongoing inter- / transdisciplinary Art meets Science meets Place project that we are part of. This is a project that has seen artists, scientists, students and academics,

community activists and disciplinary practitioners engaging with one another in a series of discomforting and place-focused off-campus encounters, with various configurations of the 'un-like-minded' setting out to see the world through one another's eyes. Our hope is that in so doing, the participants, ourselves included, will begin to see the world differently, with new understandings of its enormous complexity and of the multiplicity of ways of knowing and being that are possible, and that this will empower us all to address our challenges creatively, and differently.

We draw on the writings of the decolonial theorist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, and on those of Catherine Odora-Hoppers and Howard Richards, whose focus is on the radical 'rethinking' of academic thinking, and we take a position regarding our own agency as participant-facilitator-learners, when we express our commitment to collectively exploring the world outside our own narrow disciplines in order to find ways to contribute to a different, decolonial and pluriversal academy. We consider how the project continues to evolve to accommodate new participants and different contexts, and we endeavor to frame the emergent practice and its methodologies in relation to the literature, mapping it to a range of writings focused on performativity, participation, arts-based methodologies and embodied presence in relation to place.

Exploring the rethinking of the academy

We are interested in the question of how to address the academic oxymoron and we hope that our encounter methodologies might serve some purpose as people set out to address their disciplinary dilemmas, therefore, before we reflect in any detail on the project it makes sense for us to pause and draw briefly from the theorists who have informed our understanding of the crisis of the present, and who have provided insights to us.

Sabelo Nhlovu-Gathsheni sees decoloniality as the future of Africa. He states (2013, p. 16) that he, along with like-minded thinkers, focuses on foundational questions around power, epistemologies and ontologies as he looks forwards towards a future pluriversality. Achille Mbembe, writing from a postcolonial position, also espouses the notion of a pluriversity, visualizing an academy that supports a process of knowledge production that is open to epistemic diversity and that facilitates the re-founding of teaching practices in a way that transcends the current disciplinary divisions. As a way of moving forward he suggests that we should be imagining alternative ways of constructing knowledge in a reinvented 'classroom without walls in which we are all co-learners' (Mbembe 2015, p. 19). In their embrace of pluriversality and the pluriversity, both Gathsheni and Mbembe acknowledge Boaventura de Sousa Santos, and it is to the writings of Santos, and those of Hoppers and Richards, that we turn here for theoretical understanding.

Thinking about 'Rethinking Thinking'

Hoppers and Richards (2012, p. 4) focus on the need for a radical rethinking of thinking. They observe that cultural and epistemological alienation appears to be the order of the day, and they suggest that the status quo is untenable and unsustainable in enumerable ways. They propose a 'transformation by enlargement' (2012, p. 35) within the university, with the opening up of the traditional knowledge paradigms. Referring to the intractable challenges that face society, they point to an irony – the fact that the enormous accumulation of

different knowledge that has been accrued over time and that is readily available to us simply does not provide solutions to humanity's problems (2012, p. 39). So how can the status quo be overturned? As a way to embark upon the process of rethinking thinking they recommend the formation of what they refer to as a meta-methodology, one that involves 'forming discursive coalitions' (2012, p. 40) that restore the knowledge connections that history has shattered and that put forward ways to move from the uneasy present toward new territories.

Reappraising our own positions: acknowledging our 'learned ignorance' and recognizing our need to 'wager on another possible world'

Boaventura De Santos, addressing the possibilities of epistemological change, points out that over the centuries, despite the seemingly monolithic nature of the Eurocentric canon, there has been a range of knowledge paradigms, concepts, theories, arguments and ways of constructing understandings of the world that have been discarded, marginalized or ignored. This, as he points out, is because ways of thinking simply did not fit the socio-political agenda of Western modernity, with its twin narratives of colonialism and capitalism. He focuses our attention on four interlinked concepts: Nicholas of Cusa's 'learned ignorance', the 'ecology of knowledge', the 'artisanship of practices' and Blaise Pascal's 'wager on another possible world'. These are concepts that we believe will help us as we set out to question and reappraise our assumed wisdom as 'disciplinary knowers' (Santos 2009, p. 103).

Santos (2009, pp. 114-118) explains the concept of 'learned ignorance' and suggests; 'to be a learned ignorant in our time is to know that the epistemological diversity of the world is potentially infinite, and that each way of knowing grasps it in only in a very limited manner'. This leaves the learnedly ignorant one with something of a dilemma. How do you know enough to know what you do not know, and how, having realized your ignorance, do you set about addressing it, carrying the new knowledge that there is an infinity of ways of knowing the world? Santos suggests that the only way to grasp both 'the possibilities and the limits of understanding' of each way of knowing is by comparison, and that this requires the construction of what he refers to as 'ecologies of knowledge'. The learnedly ignorant one has to engage in what Santos describes as an 'artisanship of practices'. Through acts of crafting and construction an 'epistemological dimension' is established, one that creates understandings and 'new kinds of solidarity among social actors or groups'.

Finally Santos (2009, pp. 119-120) looks, as we do, towards the uncertain future, and how we can best approach it. He refers to Pascal, who, wagering on God's existence despite having no concrete proof of it, elected to lead a contributive life, whilst accepting that there was no guarantee of a passage to Heaven and the hereafter. Santos presents the wager as a metaphor – we have to start from a radical uncertainty, and work to contribute to a future that will be better than the present or the past, with no guarantees provided as to what that future might bring with it, in terms of possessive benefits for us. What we have in common with Pascal, as Santos tells it, are the limits of rationality, the precariousness of calculations, the awareness of the risks and the willingness to make a hope-filled 'wager on another possible world' (2009, p. 103).

Drawing from these writings our understanding is clear: there are other ways of doing things, other ways of constructing knowledge, and we should not remain shackled to the past, despite the fact that the future trajectory is uncertain. For us as academics operating from within different disciplines, determined to assume some form of responsive agency as social actors (Archer 2004, p. 12) in a precarious time of change, our consistent point of reference in this project as it moves forward, has to be the acknowledgment of our own 'learned ignorance', our admission of what we do not know or understand about the world beyond our disciplines and outside our campuses, and our willingness to acquire new understandings, to work to 'see' the world differently, through the eyes of others, through the eyes of students and members of the wider communities, and to engage with its challenges in new ways.

Positioning the Art meets Science meets Place Project

The beginnings

In 2013 we met for a discussion, two practitioner-theorists from the Visual Arts, a prominent research-seasoned Botanist, and a postdoctoral fellow from the Department of Botany. We agreed that we are living in discomfiting times, ecologically, socially and epistemologically, and that humankind, is in a 'bit of a jam'. Our thinking was clear and simple, and not at all original: these challenges would not be solved if the disciplines, including the sciences, the humanities and the arts, keep working in isolation. We agreed that establishing a creative working connection between our two disciplines was a starting point, however small.

We were aware of the literature, of the established art-science collaborations operating across the globe, and of Art-Science focused publications like *Leonardo*. But there were none of those collaborations in existence at our institution, and where there had been any interest in cooperation expressed over the years, it had tended to revolve around offers to allow visual arts students to 'illustrate' science.

Our initial discussion focused around our understanding that whilst artists and scientists may share the same underpinning curiosity, and harbor the same concerns about the state of the world around them, the routes they take in their investigations seem to lead them to widely different and discipline-locked constructions of understanding of that world, and widely differing ways of addressing its challenges. Despite knowing that not all our colleagues saw the same value that we did in this newly forged alliance of the disparate, we embarked upon our planning, and we envisaged our project as a small step in the right direction.

The project trajectory

Since 2013 we have facilitated four 'formal' Art meets Science meets Place encounters. In addition we have been able to apply our methodology and facilitate adapted encounters in other spaces, including at an institutional level Teaching and Learning Retreat focused on curriculum renewal and transformation held in June 2017. We have a further two activities planned for the second semester of 2017.

Thus far over 160 people have contributed to the four 'formal' encounters, in different disciplinary permutations. These include both under-graduate and postgraduate students drawn from the visual arts, media studies, architecture, education, the humanities and the

natural and social sciences, along with academics, visual arts activists, community members, botanists, historians, environmentalists, architects, urban planners and international scholars and students.

An outline of each encounter presented thus far is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Details of Art meets Science meets Place Encounters, 2013 -2017

2013: Encounter One: Kaboega Journals: The presence of absence (Pilot project)	
Programmatic approach:	Pilot cross-disciplinary encounter with place - 'Seeing with new eyes'
Focus:	Semi-structured lecturer-driven site-specific art and science activities, experiments, discussions, 'performative' activations and collective and individual art-making in response to place
Place and duration:	6 Biome wilderness area with adjacent degraded thicket restoration project 4 days on-site stay accommodation in a rudimentary barn
Participants:	Academics: 2 Visual Arts, 2 Botany, 1 Historian, 2 International 1 Visual Arts practitioner-activist, 1 documentary photographer, 1 writer
Outputs:	Students: 19 Honors, 9 Masters (Visual Arts, BAS, Botany, Zoology, Social Sciences, International) Curated institutionally-sponsored exhibition of creative and academic research outputs Generation of ideas and research questions for honors, masters, and doctoral projects
2015: Encounter Two: Mapping Kaboega: Journeys back in time	
Programmatic approach:	Experimental, open-ended cross-disciplinary encounter with place –addressing ecological and social challenges, and the notion of deep time and its relation to the histories of place
Focus:	Semi-structured student-driven site-specific art and science activities, experiments, discussions, performative activations and collective and individual art making in response to place
Place and duration:	6 Biome wilderness area with adjacent degraded thicket restoration project 4 days on-site stay with accommodation in a rudimentary barn
Participants:	Academics: 2 Visual Arts, 1 Science, 1 Historian 2 Visual Arts practitioner-activists
Outputs:	Students: 14 Masters, 2 PhD (Visual Arts, Botany, Zoology, Sustainable Development) Generation of ideas and research questions for honors, masters, and doctoral projects Planned cross-disciplinary exhibition of outputs could not be staged due to lack of funding
2016: Encounter Three: Baakens Valley Urban Exploration: Bringing nature back into the city	
Programmatic approach:	Open ended cross-disciplinary walking encounter with place - seeing with new eyes - area of civic, historical, ecological significance, plagued by crime, at risk ecologically - followed by full day collective making workshop, with feedback from student facilitators
Focus:	Semi-structured student-driven site-specific art / science activities, discussions, performative activations, conceptualization, designing, collective and individual art making in response to place
Place and duration:	Inner city: civic precinct and adjacent indigenous green lung nature reserve 2 days: 1 day encounter and 1 day workshop
Participants:	Academics: 2 Visual Arts, 1 Botany, 1 Historian 1 Visual Arts practitioner-activist, 2 Visual Arts community activists, 1 urbanist
Outputs:	Students: 23 first degree, 5 Honors, 4 Masters students (Visual Arts, Architecture) Community: 25 artists Generation of artworks. Presentations of design ideas focused on the re-centering of nature and the indigenous in the inner city. Video
2017: Encounter Four: Deconstructing the Square: People, place and time	
Programmatic approach:	Walking encounter with place -- dialogues around the relationship between humans and nature - human settlement and its consequences, the natural environment pre- colonial to the present.
Focus:	Semi-structured student-driven site-specific art / science activities, discussions, performative activations, conceptualization, designing, collective and individual art making in response to place
Place and duration:	Inner city square: Park civic precinct and adjacent indigenous green lung nature reserve Half day: presentation, encounter and workshop
Participants:	Academics: 2 Visual Arts, 1 Botany, 2 Mathematics, 1 Education
Outputs:	Students: 24 first degree, 5 Honors, 2 Masters, 1 PhD student (Visual Arts, Science, Education) Collective drawing using lime chalk, cardboard. Workshop: Collective scribing of reflections on the experience of 'being in place'. Video

Some detail on the places and the processes

The two earliest encounters were staged in a unique six biome tract of land where the natural wilderness environment has been harshly impacted upon by human activity, and where there are now ecological restoration projects in process. There, with diverse groups of participants from the sciences and the arts, we focused on issues related to land, ecology, history, human migration and creativity. We explored 'place' in an embodied way, walking, observing, conducting 'experiments' that drew on one another's methodologies. We shared conversations about our different ways of understanding and we engaged in collective 'art' making processes, (and all of this in a geographic location where there is no cellphone reception, which changed the group dynamic in multiple interesting ways).

More recently we have focused our attention nearer to home, and closer to the 'real world' that exists as an uneasy parallel reality immediately adjacent to our academic spaces. Thus far our encounters have taken us into inner city streets and besieged green spaces, into

places that enjoy 'bad reputations', places that many of the participants have acknowledged they usually drive through with their car doors locked. There we have walked and engaged with place performatively, not as academics and students gathering data, not as scientists making observations about the 'terrain', or social scientists examining the behaviours of its inhabitants, but as Autoethnographers, immersing ourselves in the collective experience of being *in* place and at the same time being *out of* place, scrutinizing and acknowledging our own disciplinary and subjective ignorance and bias.

Each encounter with place has culminated in an intensive participant-driven collective workshopping process, with the emphasis being placed on the sharing and visualising of ideas and understandings, drawing on arts-based and participative methodologies.

Positioning the Art meets Science meets Place Project in relation to the literature

There is a flexible methodological underpinning to the project, one that has emerged over time and one that we think aligns with the literature. What is common to all the encounters is an enormous energy, as we set about the business of participative, collective and creative engagement with the materiality of places, the 'handling' of material and some form of process-based art making that is *not about the creation of pretty artworks*, as part of an active process of connecting disparate groups of people. What is also common to the encounters is a degree of unease, and discomfort, and the acknowledgement of 'not knowing'. Carolyn Palmer, Reinette Biggs and Graham Cumming (2015, p. 52) draw attention to the positive generative potential of the discontinuities, discomfort and unresolved tensions that participants' experience when engaged in research across and beyond the disciplines, as well as the 'aha' moments and the insights and the learning opportunities that these projects afford them. This has been our experience.

Explorations of transdisciplinarity and pluriversality

The project had its origins in our desire to explore interdisciplinarity. Allen Repko and Rick Szostak (2016, p. 26) explain the approach as one that draws on and integrates different disciplinary insights in order to facilitate the consideration of complex and mega problems. Transdisciplinarity, they tell us, extends that integrative approach, and involves the participation of social actors and agents from spaces outside the academy. By now, as the project continues to develop, we prefer to position the encounters in the space of transdisciplinarity, as tentative explorations of the pluriversal, with the writings of Santos, Hoppers and Richards, Gathsheni and Mbembe informing our understandings. Our interest lies in the expansion of the project into the world beyond the university, not just in terms of its sites, but also in terms of its engagement with members of the multiple communities of knowledge that operate outside the orthodox paradigms of the academy. By engaging with social actors from outside of the academe, we are striving to create an epistemology that transcends the multitude of borderlines that we humans have created.

Challenging the disciplinary optics through performative, process-focused and participatory creative engagements

Students who enter the university do not usually arrive as fully formed disciplinary actors. They are inducted into their chosen area of study through an engagement with its conventions. Over time they learn to understand the world through a particular disciplinary

'lens' or 'prism', and in doing so they may very well leave substantial aspects of their own identity out of the equation, and be disinclined to acknowledge the possibility of ways of knowing other than those within the disciplinary canon. Academics, as the 'disciplinary knowers', are somehow complicit in this process of enclosure, acting as both gatekeepers to and fellow prisoners within the disciplinary silos.

We have attempted to position the art-science encounters within a performative-research paradigm, as democratizing and situated practices that are integrally connected to socio-cultural contexts. Brad Haseman (2006, pp. 8-9) explains performative research 'as that which is initiated in practice'. In the case of our encounters, it is initiated in the field, as questions, problems, and challenges are identified as an outcome of the engagement between practitioners; and where 'the research strategy is carried out through practice' using re-purposed established methods from diverse research traditions. In our case the collective of researchers used visual journals, cellphone cameras, scientific observation methods, and reflective discussion and the sharing of personal experience, 'to complement and enrich their investigations'.

We maintain that this immersive embodied approach provides a positive and flexible model for participatory engagement, one that shifts the ownership of knowledge away from the 'disciplinary knowers' and places it in the hands of the entire collective of explorer-participants.

Encounter participants engage in creative dialogue with 'others' and with the place in which they find themselves. In theorizing the project's approach, we draw on and repurpose Judith Butler's writings (2007, pp. 192-193) on performativity and identity. She focuses on how gender identities are constructed, maintained and accepted (by the actor her / himself and by the societal audience), through 'a stylized repetition of acts'. She points out that the 'phantasmatic' affect of an abiding identity', is actually 'a politically tenuous construction'. Identity, she suggests, is in reality not fixed at all. It can be reconsidered, realigned and re-performed. She proposes performative configurations that operate outside restrictive *gendered* frames.

Art-science participants are invited to 'disrupt' their own *disciplinary* optics and to challenge the supposedly fixed frames of their *disciplinary* identities, through participatory and process focused 'creative play' that draws on both sets of disciplines for inspiration. The focus is placed on seeing differently, on re-considering and re-engaging, on immersive participation and on exploration. In his writing Lesley Le Grange (2016, p. 9) proposes an emphasis on the performative side of *knowledge creation*, (along with a related de-emphasis on the representational side), arguing that 'this focus on the performative decentres dominant knowledge systems and produces third spaces (spaces in between) where seemingly disparate knowledge's can be equitably compared and function to work together'.

There is ample literature that supports our understanding that collaborative, creative participatory practices contribute to the establishment of new social dynamics; so, for example, Claire Bishop (2006, pg. 12) points to the possibilities, observing that that the approach both emerges from and produces a positive and non-hierarchical social model, one

that can help to restore social bonds through a collective elaboration of meaning. Paul Carter (2004, p. xiii) states that working in creative collaborations fosters a unique set of inter-subjective collaborations, that lead to changes in the social relationships of the groups concerned (Carter 2004, p. 11).

Over time we have accumulated an archive of 'visual evidence' from the encounters, including photographs, videos and artifacts. However it is in the performative creative process itself that the richness of the experience seems to reside. As Barbara Bolt (2006, p. 5) suggests, in the process of art-making, the *handling* and the engagement with the materials becomes a means to an end, with the process creating 'an opening, a space of tacit knowledge in which we are forced to consider the relations that occur in the process or tissue of making life'.

The encounter with place

When we meet in site-specific locations tailored to each encounter context, we consider the question: what does *this* place want from us? Place in all its complexity, as a trans-temporal discursive nexus, in its intangibility as well as its materiality, is central to the encounter processes. For the majority of participants the collective engagement with place appears to provide a critical point of connection with the other people in the encounter, with their differing viewpoints and different life experiences. But conversely place it is also the point where we have found ourselves furthest apart from one another in terms of our 'disciplinary' constructions of understanding of the world around us. So having found the human connection we have been challenged to address the disciplinary and conceptual divides and acknowledge our 'learned ignorance'.

In setting out to understanding why it is that the experience of being *in place* and being *out of place* plays such a pivotal role in the encounters we turn to Bruce Janz, (2017, pp. 27-28) who proposes place as a text, suggesting that whilst we construct meaning from it, it is also the context in which meaning happens. Like a written text a place is open to interpretation, so the same place one person experiences as being sinister or exclusionary, another person might read as being welcoming and benign.

Tim Cresswell (2004, p. 8) says that when we *engage with place* we learn 'a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world. When we look at the world as a world of places we see different things. We see attachments and connections between people and place. We see worlds of meaning and experience [...]. To think of an area of the world as a rich and complicated interplay of people and the environment - as a place - is to free us from thinking of it as facts and figures'. Irit Rogoff (2000, Kindle edition, place 554), who researches in the transdisciplinary area between human geography and cultural studies, suggests that 'there is a mediation required between the concrete and material and the psychic conditions and metaphorical articulation of relations between subjects, places and spaces'. She cautions that although place is always viewed from a particular position, this is often a 'positioned spectatorship'. She recommends an alternative 'active unlearning' about place, suggesting that the mobilization of 'unease' should be the driving force behind the need to arrive at new articulations and understandings.

Participant reflections

What has become clear, based on informal conversations with and unsolicited feedback from our fellow participants, is that the creative encounter approach and the moving out into the uneasiness of the 'real world' has struck a chord with them. There is a welcoming of the opportunities to think differently, to engage with place and to connect across the disciplines, that this project has afforded. So a participant (2013, pers. comm. 23 June) writes: 'The experience made it very apparent that only through inter-disciplinary engagement out in the real world are we able to realise the true complexity of the forces at play in a particular context, be it physical, cultural, socio-economic or historical. It challenged us realise that often our particular discourses are incomplete in allowing us to fully realise the complexity of the factors which we are all required to respond to, whether directly or indirectly'. A second participant (2017, pers. comm. 25 July) speculates positively on the juxtaposition of different ideas and the possibilities for new approaches to learning that this dissolving of the classroom walls and this integration of the disciplines brings with it.

So, as participant-facilitator-learners, what lessons have we personally drawn from this series of encounters?

The scientist

'As a scientist I am conditioned to perceive space in a deterministic paradigm of ecosystem decline. My experiences on our encounters of how different disciplines and individuals perceive contested space, have stripped me of my comfort: there is more to perceiving space than quantitative and qualitative relationships between the myriad of ecological drivers (fire, soils, herbivory) that shape pattern in nature. My exposure to diverse perceptions and epistemologies has kindled new curiosities, which likely transcend disciplines. Out of this messy space I have emerged more humbled, more aware of my own emotional constraints on how I view the world, and hence, more able to 'wager on another possible world', one we desperately need for our survival.

The visual-arts activist

'The act of engaging in different disciplines and space through a participatory intervention is a way of researching that has afforded me new insights into the reflections of others on that space and into our diverse approaches. This acknowledgment of the personal conditions that bring about the way one reads a place is often more important than the teachings of a discipline, and yet it is often the last approach that is given status. By experiential engagement and personal affirmation of each other's unique perspectives, the layered experience we share becomes a powerful tool for learning'.

The visual arts practitioner-theorist

'The aspect that continues to intrigue me is the significance of place in all of the encounters. So much of the experience seems to hang on our willingness to be 'present', to be 'mindful' and to immerse ourselves in the places we find ourselves in. The actual lived experience of being out and about in disconcerting spaces, engaging with people who have different ideas from me, leaves me with a sense of being out of my comfort-zone and immersed in a 'real' world that is outside my 'ken' and outside my 'control,' be it disciplinary or psychological'.

Positioning the Art meets Science meets Place Project in relation to the theme of this conference - so where to from here?

As participants in these encounters we have rekindled our embodied connections with the real world, in places away from the ivory towers, and we have established new and vibrant networks with one another and across disciplinary divides. We have operated in what is essentially a classroom without walls (Mbembe 2015, p. 19). Along with our fellow participants, we have reaffirmed our roles as social actors, (Archer 2000, p. 253). In community, we have co-created a series of 'moments'. We hope to take the encounter approach further, and into new spaces, at our own institution. We think that an expanded project could serve the transformative and decolonial agendas of the university well, in terms of teaching and learning, research and engagement.

What are the takeaways we can offer to people who are interested in exploring our approaches?

We suggest that the approaches that we espouse in these creative encounters with the materiality of place are transferable, and that projects such as this one, which operate in the real world, can serve as a useful 'toolbox of ideas' for the range of people from across the academy who are challenged to 'wager on another possible world' (Santos 2009. p. 103) and embark upon a radical rethinking of the academic status quo. Our thinking is that the project methodology is adaptable to suit *different* sets of encounters with *different* groups of people setting out to engage with *different* sets of issues and challenges.

On both a micro (disciplinary level), and at a macro (institutional) level, creative place-based encounters between un-likeminded participants can serve as a means of surmounting hierarchical barriers and facilitating difficult conversations, be these about minor curriculum shifts, or about the more fundamental transformation of approaches to knowledge creation within the disciplines and the university that is being called for at the present time.

Visual arts practitioner-academics, with their disciplinary knowledge of arts-based and process focused creative methodologies, are well placed to step up and play powerful and meaningful facilitative roles at the very centre of academic transformation initiatives, and in doing so, they will be assuming responsive agency and acting to help realize 'another possible world'.

We can envisage encounters offering new pluriversal possibilities, ones that move beyond the current engagements between art and science; ones that, drawing on the approaches we have referred to in this paper, set out to explore the interconnections between students and lecturers, between 'outsiders' and 'insiders', between indigenous knowledge systems and science, philosophy and human geography, mathematics, ethics, liberation theologies, human rights, feminist theory, mysticism, law and lived experience....the list of possibilities seems endless.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Student Perceptions on Curriculum Change: Art and Design Theory within a New Bachelor of Visual Arts Degree at Nelson Mandela University.

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Abstract

This paper seeks to describe changes made to the Visual Studies course at the Nelson Mandela University in light of calls for the decolonisation of curricula, and to assess the impact of these changes by reviewing student responses to the revised curriculum. Using this course as a case study, the paper reflects on students' experiences of attempts at decolonisation, and seeks to contribute directions for further change.

Following requests from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2009/2010, the Art and Design National Diploma and B.Tech programmes in the School of Music, Art and Design were re-curriculated. The first year of the new Bachelor of Visual Arts (BVA) degree ran in 2015. Fine Art and Applied Design history and theory subjects were combined in the new degree to form Visual Studies, which spans Photography, Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Fashion and Textiles.

In addition to the need to become interdisciplinary, the planning of the Visual Studies curriculum was influenced by socio-political and educational imperatives, including the University's Vision 2020 policy; #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015 and 2016, and the 2016 Decolonising Working Group forum at our school. As a start, the re-visioning of the Visual Studies course involved an attempt to focus on African and South African content, and to shift from a timeline-based to a thematic structure, foregrounding overlapping critical cultural concepts such as race, gender, nationhood, theories of identity, the ideology of capitalism and consumerism, environmental concerns, and the impact of technology and social media.

This study used anonymous feedback questionnaires, adapted from the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning, to elicit written responses from students to the changes to content, and mode of delivery within Visual Studies.

By means of student feedback and critical self-reflection, we identify the further action needed to create an authentically affirmative and empowering educational experience.

Keywords: *Art and design education, decolonisation, student perception*

Introduction

The need for change

Students country wide have been vocally critical of the eurocentrism and alienating teaching methods of many humanities courses. #RhodesMustFall highlighted the way that many students of colour experienced the stubbornly entrenched institutional cultures of universities as dehumanising and alienating, and #FeesMustFall at Nelson Mandela University in 2015/2016 involved a critique of the curricula as eurocentric. In 2016, students from Art and Design shared their experiences of the School as a whole in a Decolonisation Working Group forum facilitated by lecturers, Margot Muir and Nii Botchway, in light of the issues raised by student protests. The critique of our course helped inform changes underway to the new second year (introduced in 2016) and the new third year curriculum (2017).

As may be the case at many other institutions, for us the attempt to re-centre the history and theory of art and design in Africa did not begin in 2015. Africanisation has been approached in various ways in some discipline streams prior to this, hence the backlog of frustration with the slow pace of change. The university embraced the concept of humanising pedagogy as part of their “Vision 2020”, and held a number of workshops in which staff were encouraged to take up this approach.

Humanising pedagogy challenges educators to see all students as rich in cultural, social and linguistic resources and to value the “funds of knowledge” that students have as a result of their culture, communities and families (Salazar 2013, p. 123, p. 136, p. 139). A humanising pedagogy involves engaging with students’ lived experiences in an educational context. Salazar uses the metaphor of the “permeable curriculum” – a space of dialogue between “official” knowledge and the cultural “funds of knowledge” students bring (Salazar 2013, p. 139). However, this is not an end in itself – Freire stresses that the goal of engaging in the development of mutual critical consciousness between teacher and student is to identify, and work towards changing those aspects of society which are dehumanising (Freire in Salazar 2013, p. 127). Humanising pedagogy involves a “problem posing” method of teaching, which would engage both student and lecturer in the co-creation of locally relevant knowledge that is aimed at increased social justice (Salazar 2013, p. 133) and is opposed to the “banking” model that sees students as passive receptacles of knowledge, to be filled by the lecturer (Freire in Salazar 2013, p. 129). Crucially, humanising teaching involves the holistic, not just the academic, growth of the student (Salazar 2013, p. 128). These ideas influenced some of the teaching approaches adopted by staff in both the old and new programme.

What the student protests did in 2015 and 2016 was to show up the flaws in that effort – to highlight the problems with the various strategies of inclusion that had been and were being tried. The idea of inclusivity through the addition of African examples to an existing structure was problematised. In *What is an African Curriculum?* Garuba (2015) outlines two approaches to transformation of curricula: one a “content-driven additive approach” that expands existing curricula, and the other the re-consideration of “how the object of study itself is constituted, what tools are used to study it and what concepts are used to frame it”. He suggests that the second is a necessary complement to the first. Student protests highlighted the fact that what was being called for was the de-colonisation of curricula, as opposed to the accommodation of Africa within a eurocentric version of art and design history.

Implementation of changes

The second and third year of the new Visual Studies curriculum have been both arranged around themes that can be applied to all the disciplines. The second year is divided into four

topics: approaches to the analysis of South African material culture; the construction of national identities in art and design; graphic resistance; and gendered identities in art and design. The intent was to centre the second year on South African historical contexts and examples, with references to international contexts. The third year is divided into: art, design and ideology; sustainability and alternatives to consumerism; the diffusion of ideas – artists and designers using technology and social media; ‘high’ culture meets ‘low’ culture; and space/place. The thinking was to ground the second year in South Africa, and then in the third year to look at international issues that have local relevance.

Attempts to embrace the principles of humanising pedagogy are evident in the teaching methods tried, and the assignments set. More group and class discussions are included in lectures, the use of student feedback mechanisms increased, and including questionnaires and ‘café conversations’ in lectures, where students are prompted to unpack their experiences of Visual Studies. In many of the assignments, students have been encouraged to link the course material to their lived experience: for example, in a third-year assignment, students conceptualised and executed a ten-day intervention in which they identified and disrupted one of the dominant daily ways in which they related to various aspects of consumer capitalism. These interventions were documented, analysed and presented to the class. Although not without their difficulties and flaws, such projects stimulated the connection of concepts taught in the course to students’ lived experiences.

Tracking the impact of changes

What we want to find out with this study is how the redesigned and expanded material is being received by students and are they are finding it empowering. Are students perceiving themselves as becoming independent and critical thinkers? How relatable are they finding the material? Given that most of second year and portions of third year explicitly focus on South Africa, are students still experiencing the course as eurocentric? How much of a barrier is English as a medium of instruction in this course? The aim of surveying the students is to find out to what extent the changes implemented are experienced as humanising by our diverse range of students.

The anonymous questionnaire used a seven-point Likert scale to gauge student attitudes towards the following aspects of the course: humanizing teaching methods, eurocentrism and the africanisation of content, and the implementation of various critical cultural concepts (nationhood, class, gender, and race) within the current curriculum. Open-ended questions were asked to probe student’s responses further. The data has been analysed and interpreted using the theoretical perspectives drawn from Salazar (2013), Mbembe (2015), Delpit (2006), and Garuba (2015).

The survey was voluntary and was administered during the last two weeks of the second term. Out of a pool of 110 students, 30 respondents chose to answer the survey, and 26 chose to provide demographic information.

The demographics of our respondents were:

- *Gender*: Female 22, Male 4, Chose not to be identified/classified 4;
- *Race*: Asian 1, Black 4, Coloured 3, Indian 1, White 17, Chose not to be identified/classified 4;
- *Language*: Afrikaans 4, Bi-lingual (English/Afrikaans) 2, English 14, isiXhosa 4.

Black students therefore made up 13% of the respondents, but according to the university’s statistical records constitute 33% of the Visual Studies course’s registrations. White students, by contrast, made up 57% of the respondents, and constitute 59% of course registration. As such, our sample is not representative of the demographics of the course, and black students are under-represented, making it unwise to draw conclusions based on this data alone.

The high proportion of white respondents could be due both to the method of surveying students, and to student perceptions of the effectiveness of lecturer-led surveys as a tool for change. The survey took place in the last week of the first semester when some groups of students had deadlines. Students were informed that their usual class would be replaced with a feedback session. The class venue being on a separate campus from the Fashion and Textiles, and Ceramics courses required students to come in to North campus specifically for the survey. There are many students of colour in these groups. Another notable reason may be the lack of trust in the system’s ability to self-correct that was expressed by students in the pilot study – black students in this group expressed a sense of disillusionment with the effectiveness of surveys which may be linked to wider scepticism about internal review processes within the university. Although this survey is the first to focus on issues of curriculum content and method of delivery as they pertain to de-colonial questions, there have been other forums (such as the Decolonisation working group) for students to voice their concerns, and there may have been resistance to repeating critique. However, the students who did participate offered valuable feedback, particularly in the open-ended feedback.

Analysis of student feedback

Student perceptions of critical thinking and holistic growth

In the first part of the survey, focussing on the idea of humanising pedagogy, we sought to understand to what extent the course enables students to: a) engage with various aspects of the world as independent critical and creative thinkers; and b) “grow as a whole person”, that is, as “social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons who participate in and with the world” (Freire in Salazar 2013, p. 126). When asked whether Visual Studies develops their critical and creative thinking, 63% of students answered “yes”, 33% answered “somewhat”, and 3% answered “no”. However, when asked whether the course helps them to “grow as a whole person”, 34% answered “yes”, 48% answered “somewhat”, and 17% answered “no”. These responses indicate that students feel that they are developing as critical and creative thinkers, but are more ambivalent about whether the course facilitates holistic growth and participation (see Figures 1 and 2).

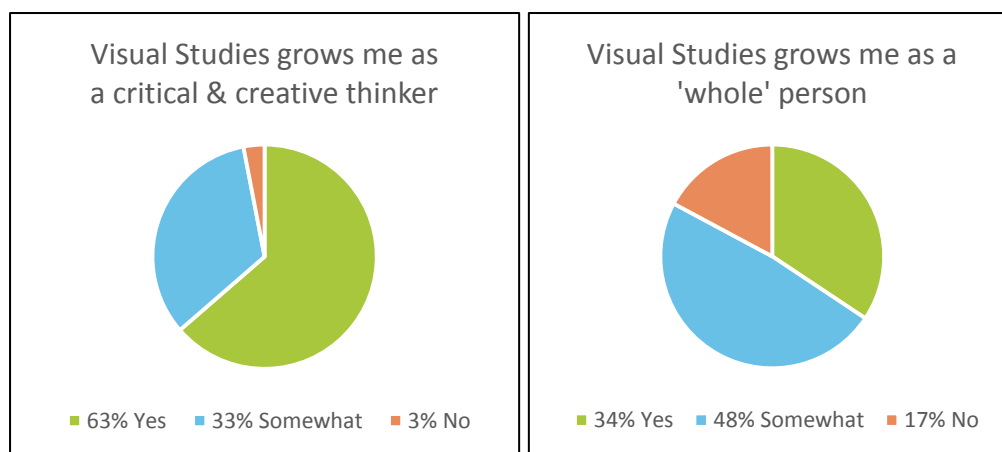


Figure 1 (left) and Figure 2 (right)

In response to being asked whether they get value from ideas and perspectives within the course that challenges their perspectives, some students wrote passionately about ‘enlightening’ experiences of moving from a world of not knowing to knowing: “I never really questioned or thought critically about the things around me. This course has opened my eyes to so many things I was oblivious to before” (s23); “visual studies has definitely opened my eyes to the world around me and has challenged me to think critically” (s17); “It is good to have debates within the class and see things from a different perspective. It enriches you

and teaches you to be open about every topic, even controversial ones. Your viewpoint doesn't necessarily mean it's the only right one" (s13). Importantly, one student highlights critical thinking and engagement as an important stepping stone towards contributing ethically to society, "Some of the content could make you rethink certain aspects about society and how we contribute to it. e.g. Gender roles, stereotypes etc." (s29). Sensitised awareness to difference is also evident "because most of the information is new and explained I became more aware of these topics and more supportive..." (s1).

Similarly, in the positive responses to the open-ended question about holistic growth, students stress increased knowledge and awareness (s1, s7, s15, s16, s22, s27); the ability to better understanding difference (s6, s15, s16, s18); increased critical thinking (s7, s28, s29); and growing independence (s16, s18).

Students who are less positive about their holistic growth focus less on critical thinking and more on their personal relationship to the content. What this points to is that, although the course may facilitate critical thinking through helping students place themselves in the world, students need to personally connect to the material in order to experience personal as well as intellectual growth, and this requires a sense that their identity is accepted and welcomed in class, as well as adequately reflected in the course material.

Acknowledging students' cultural identity and lived experiences

When asked whether students' culture (and lived experience) is present in the course, 20% answered "yes", 37% answered "somewhat", 33% answered "no", and 10% answered that they do not see themselves as part of a culture (see Figure 3).

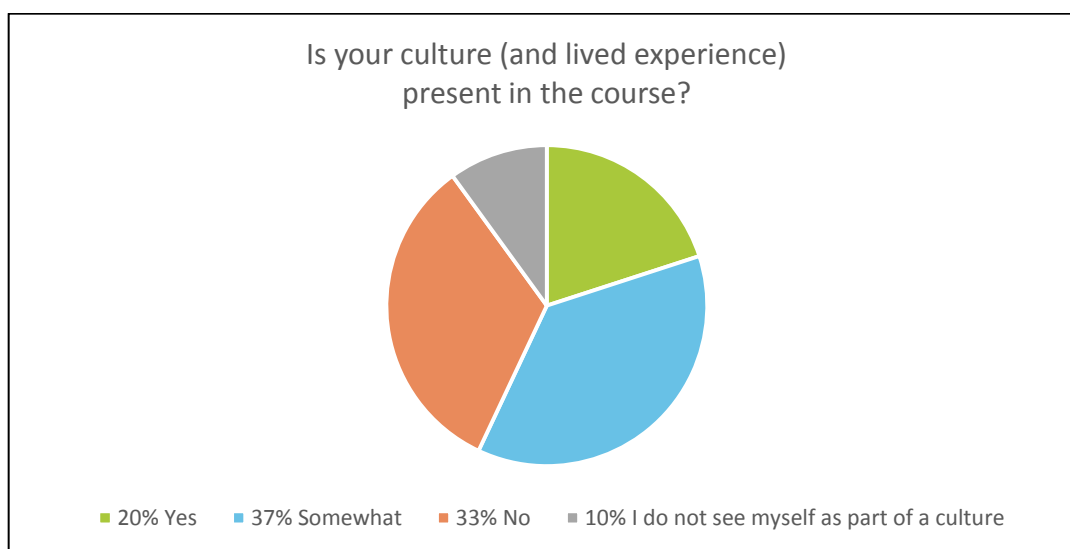


Figure 3

Students feel strongly that Visual Studies *should* acknowledge and reflect students' identities and culture, but are ambivalent about whether the course is in fact achieving this (see Figure 4). A theme that reoccurred is that, while students indicate that they are able to make better sense of the 'worlds' in which they live through critical and creative thinking, they are more ambivalent regarding whether their identity, lived experience, and culture is being affirmed in the course content.

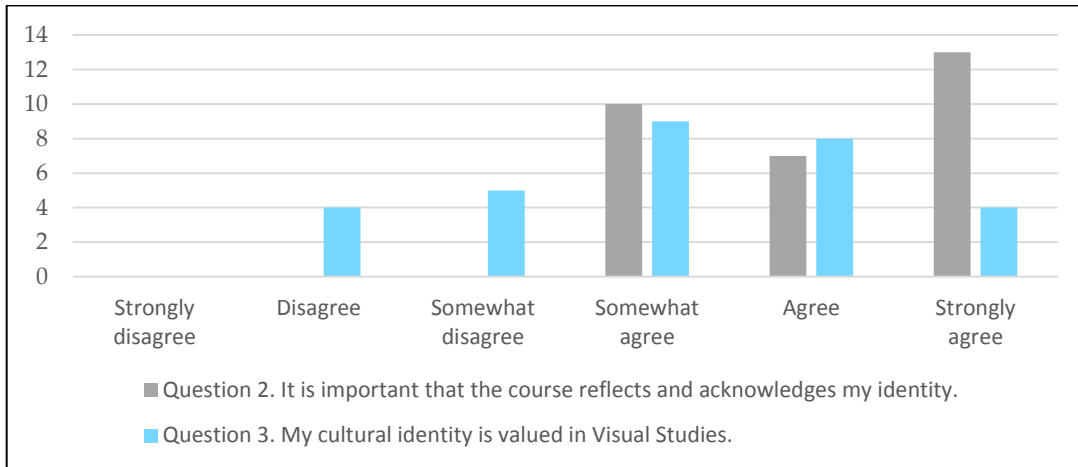


Figure 4

Considering that 70% of students indicate that their identity, culture and lived experience is reflected and valued in the course only to an extent or not at all (see Figure 3), it is worth highlighting four thematically linked barriers that emerge as themes in student feedback, as follows:

1. Pressure to succeed producing conformity:

55% of the respondents indicated that they did not have to give up important aspects of their identity in order to succeed in the course, but 45% indicated that they did experience this, even if for some only to an extent (See Figure 5). In a pilot study, which had more racially diverse respondents, the majority of students answered “yes” to this question.

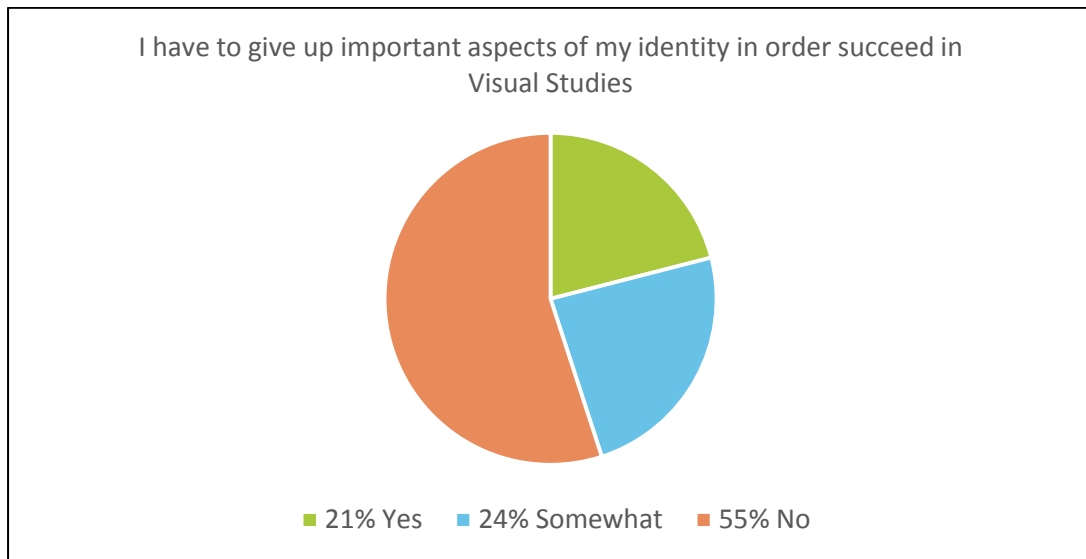


Figure 5

Students who answered “no” indicated that the course is ‘open’ and encourages students to contribute ideas freely: “expression is optional and any options/views are accepted” (s17, s27). Other students confidently express that they are able to assert themselves without reserve: “I don’t care this is me” (s25) and “I stay myself whenever we have lectures or assignments” (s17), or expressed that the ability to be challenged was part of their cultural identity (s3). However, countering this, other students highlight the pressure to succeed and work strategically, echoing Mbembe’s (2015, p.7) warning that old systems of “measuring, counting and rating” lead to students and teachers “substituting this goal of free pursuit of knowledge for another, the pursuit of credits”. The pursuit of marks is a barrier to authentic

engagement in some students' comments (s24, s20, s27): "I have adopted concepts I don't believe in, in order to get a good grade and had to sacrifice parts of my cultural identity" (s24) and "I write for the sake of passing not necessarily as a form of self-expression" (s7).

2. Academic protocols and formal teaching methodology:

For some students, formal and academically sanctioned knowledge and systems are experienced as discounting students' personal identity and lived-experiences. One student explains that while they understand the value of referencing systems, having to "seek answers [to] critical questions 'outside' rather than within your own experiences" (s11) and use research to validate their ideas, reinforces a value hierarchy that affirms academically validated theory over student 'knowing' and experiences.

Linking to this, students call for more personal teaching and learning approaches as a way of affirming student identity and lived experience, asking for a classroom culture where student voices can be heard. Students want to be considered "as individuals with different backgrounds and interests" (s23, to "have room to speak your mind" (s13) and "toss [around] ideas" (s12). Students feel that in this way, individual lived experiences can be emphasised, and course content can become more interesting, relatable and understandable. This aligns with Salazar's vision of official curricula being "permeable" (Salazar 2013, p. 139). One student suggests lecturers share personal connections to the subject matter and allow students to do this too (s13) – echoing the need for "mutual vulnerability" (Salazar 2013, p.135) within humanising pedagogy.

3. Generic course content not able to cater to unique identities:

When asked about how students' identities could be better affirmed within Visual Studies, a number of students expressed the idea that the course is too 'generic' to affirm their identity and lived experience (s11, s16, s2, s4, s3, s23, s24, s25). While students indicate that their identities are highly unique, complex, cross-cultural and fluid – not easily categorised, nor generalised – they do express the need to explore their identities and lived experience (see figure 4). One student explains that the lived experience is multi-layered and not reducible to racial identity: "That is my life, a mix of this and that according to experience. Do not put me into a box I do not really fit into, but maybe because of the colour of my skin, you assume that I should know about it or live it the most" (s11). Interestingly, a few students deny the concept of culture in their lived experience (s2, s20, s1) and one student says for example, "I never consider culture to be mine or really consider it... I am not invested in culture as to feel part of one" (s1). In response to the feeling of content being generic, students also ask for more contemporary content, which can reflect their current lived experiences (s2, s25).

Some students experience the course as focussing too heavily on other cultures rather than their own, and as such are not able to relate. Students also caution against a dichotomising focus on white and/or black identities (s3, s29, s9, s12, s13, s15, s24) as diminishing the realities of racial and cultural diversity in South Africa. Students highlight that their cultures are not adequately represented in the course, referring specifically to Coloured, Indian and Asian cultures (s13, s19, s15). One coloured student emphasises, "Sometimes I don't relate to the work. Being the minority in the class and the art school there is little representation and so there are harmful stereotypes that are difficult to break for this reason! I need representation please. Right now I'm a lone woman (at least I feel like it) standing up for my race and I'm frankly getting tired of the debates and insensitivity in this. Please hear my voice!" (s13).

4. Silencing of voices, racial conflict, and course content experienced as traumatising:

Topics that investigate South Africa's past can be painful for students. In dealing with South Africa's racial history in the course, issues such as colonisation, apartheid and white

nationalism, students may identify (or feel that they are being identified) as perpetrators, or as victims, and as such may experience a range of potentially traumatic and stressful emotions, including guilt, shame, anxiety, fear, anger, self-doubt, inferiority, resentment and/or defensiveness.

A theme that emerges from students who answer that they have to give up aspects of their identity in order to succeed in Visual Studies, is the 'silencing' of their viewpoints in class due to their perception of potential racial victimisation. While two students of colour highlight the need to be able to speak completely freely, even at the risk of being considered "insensitive" – to not have to "sugar coat" sensitive subjects when challenging inequality, some white students feel afraid to let their voices be heard, having been, or concerned that they would be, "victimised" or "labelled" (s3, s8, s16). One student explains: "The lecturers may make the class safe but have no control over what happens outside. I don't want to be alienated so I keep quiet" (s8). Both students of colour and white students experience their identities as being diminished and silenced in this context.

A few students experience aspects of the course as traumatic, as 'reliving' racism through retelling. One student, expresses that the lecturing environment can be a contributing factor, "Some topics bring up unwanted past events, personal events such a racism, these events should be discussed individually instead of in a presentation form" (s10). Related to this, the student emphasises the need for more focus on achievements and breakthroughs of black culture and new "methods of interpreting and analysing" (s10). This is supported by the pilot study.

Student perceptions of language

Questions of decolonisation are related to questions of the language of instruction. Mbembe writes: "A decolonised university in Africa should put African languages at the centre of its teaching and learning project" (2015, p.17). Delpit (2006) and Salazar (2013) also consistently emphasise valuing the use of a student's home or primary language as an important aspect of a humanising pedagogy.

When asked whether the emphasis on correct academic English language and grammar in assessments disadvantage students whose first language is not English, 73% of the group indicated that they somewhat agreed to strongly agreed. Responding to the statement "The predominant use of English language as a medium of instruction in the Visual studies course disadvantages students whose home language is not English" in Likert-scale questions, 70% strongly to somewhat agreed (see Figures 6 and 7). However, when asked whether the language used in class by lecturers was easy to understand, 80% of students agreed to some extent – this number was even higher for the tutors, at 93%. Respondents simultaneously affirmed that they are able to follow the language used, and that the medium of instruction nevertheless still privileged English speakers. This may be partially explained by the high number of English speaking respondents, but may also be explained by the difference between following in class and producing written work in English.

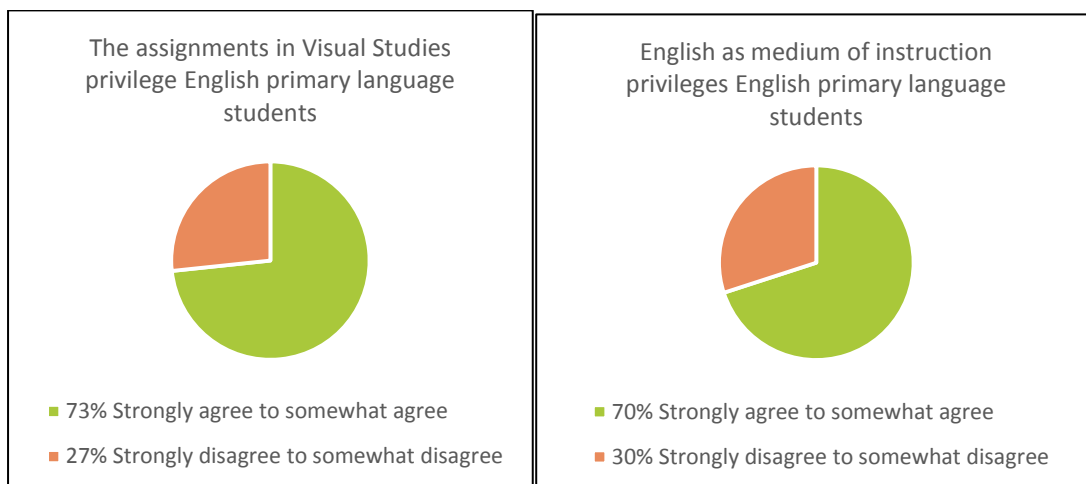


Figure 6 (left) and Figure 7 (right)

Students describe the challenge of ‘language being in the mind’ (s11, s7, s8). One second language English speaker writes about the difficulties formulating her thoughts and ideas in English (s8), and another indicates that for English students, writing may be “more intuitive” (s7). The time necessary for the extra steps in the process emerges as a difficult reality for students not writing in their mother tongue (s17, s8) and, furthermore, that there is no differentiation made in marking systems despite these challenges faced (s9).

Students make a definite distinction between being the ease of simply conversing in English versus the expectations of ‘academic’ English at university level, noting that a high level of fluency and language skill is required in order using the “formal register” or “proper English” (s11, s13, s19). Oral presentations are not necessarily better (s11, s2, s4). One student explains that orals become particularly challenging and stressful for non-English students, as proper pronunciation of words can challenge a student’s confidence (s4). Similarly, she commented that students who are not at ease speaking in English may also find it difficult to participate in class (s4). One student expresses that relatively straightforward assignments are unnecessarily complicated in their wording (s29).

93% of respondents were tentatively to strongly in agreement that multilingual tutoring as an extra class would be beneficial to students whose first language was not English, while 73% of respondents were in agreement that more spaces should be created in lectures for students to discuss ideas in their home language.

Student’s perceptions of Eurocentrism

Respondents were asked to estimate the number of examples in the course from Europe and America, Africa, South Africa, International, and “other”, and to say where the philosophies or worldviews that informed the course were grounded. The responses varied widely, with some students locating as much as 75% to 85% of the examples and 75% to 97% of the worldview in Europe and America, another group seeing the examples and worldview as fairly evenly spread, and another group seeing bulk of the examples and the worldview, 70% to 90%, as centred in Africa and South Africa. The range of these responses could, however, be due to a number of factors, including whether students are in second or third year, and whether they take the first year, which has a broader global scope, into account. It is worth noting that the pilot study with 4th year students stressed eurocentrism as a major issue.

On the whole, students respond more positively than negatively when questioned about whether they find local content empowering: 41% said “yes”, and 56% said “it depends” and only 1 student said “no” (see Figure 8).

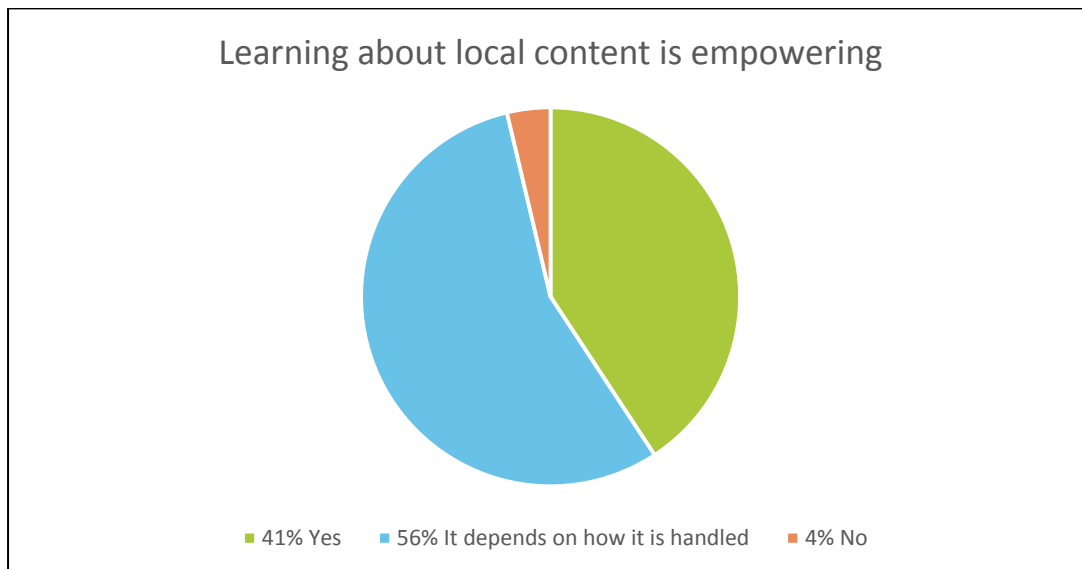


Figure 8

Students throughout highlight relatability and relevance as justification for local content in the course (s2, s24, s27, s9, s7). A student emphasises local content as assisting in contextualising oneself better: “it allows us to gain an understanding of our country and the people living in it along with the history etc.” (s16). Students astutely deduce that the ability to identify locally can stimulate creative studio practices that are more personally authored: “It helps inform your work through a unique identity, which will help you enjoy it more, relate to it more and apply it better” (s24). The argument is made that because local content is easier to relate and more applicable to students’ lives, it is easier to understand and more relevant (s2, s24, s27, s9, s7). Students relate this to business success (s23, s22) and explain that it is useful to learn from success stories of local creatives – “we can see what other locals have done and how they have grown and survived” (s22).

Students who answer “it depends” remain largely open and positive about the value of local content, whilst relating some concerns. A few students highlight interest and relatability as a potential barrier to experiencing local content as empowering – relating this to issues of taste and personal interest (s1, s25, s15). Some students caution against a narrow focus on local content, and argue that a balance needs to be maintained between local and global focus (s3, s26). Similarly, the following potential barriers are highlighted as important: Saturation – students becoming tired of similar local content (s30, s18) and marginalisation – content not catering for cultural diversity, as such, disregarding one culture at the cost of another/others (s29, s13). A black student mentions that sensitive awareness is necessary in teaching local content, and that single stories or generalisations must be avoided (s12).

It is clear that sensitivity to the complexity of African and South African content, and its global interconnectedness is needed.

Conclusion

Through the self-reflective process of this survey, we acknowledge that we are not able to fully achieve what is envisaged by humanising pedagogy – we have adopted only a limited form. There are limitations to the curriculum development and teaching methodology in terms of resources, time, organisational structure, and other obstacles, which are a sobering reality.

Based on our findings, we can outline the focus of our continued efforts in the development of the Visual Studies course, as follows:

Course Content:

- The “additive approach” (Garuba 2015) of incorporating South African and/or African examples to an existing curriculum is not effective as a de-colonial tool on its own. This approach does not authentically shift focus and worldview, but yet again ‘others’ the local by placing it in a secondary comparative position to a privileged centralised position of a sanctioned westernised worldview.
- We need to collaborate to build local content and resources. Salazar (2013, p. 133) stresses that teachers and students can work together in the generation of locally relevant knowledge that is aimed at transforming existing structures – this collaboration can be extended to other institutions.
- Identities of students from minority cultures need to be reflected in course material, and dichotomising approaches to content, focussing narrowly or in generalised ways on black and white identities, avoided.

Teaching Methodology:

- A vital message from student feedback has been that active engagement in the classroom between student, course material, and lecturer/facilitator – as a key moment in learning is missing for many students. Finding ways to engage students as ‘whole persons’ and acknowledging their lived experiences in the course needs to be prioritised. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the course with large student groups, the fall-back to a traditional top-down approach of ‘lecturer delivering information and students listening’ has proven to be an obstacle to the holistic, as opposed to merely academic, growth of students. The need for lecturers to develop skills to facilitate student learning in more personal and active ways within the classroom is evident.
- There is a need for some acknowledgement by lecturers of the highly complex and fluid ways that students as individuals occupy cultural and personal identities. At some level students seem wary of being related/reduced to one of the collective identities covered within course material. These, and other similar expressions, highlight the need for lecturers to be explicit about various possible subject positions for students in relation to the course material.
- Similarly, *who* facilitates/lectures is important. The lived experience of the lecturer does matter. Diversity of staff is crucial. As Delpit (2006, p. 45) stresses, white teachers working in isolation will not be effective. Additionally, teaching and learning specialists, counsellors and/or psychologists may prove to be invaluable consultants and curriculum reviewers – able to provide insights that can facilitate student engagement with course material in highly meaningful ways.
- More use can be made of students’ home languages.

Sensitivity to local content and lived experience can be facilitated through greater diversity of teaching staff, and an expansion of the knowledge base of current teaching staff. Without resources (time, energy, and money) put towards this end, this will not happen. Institutional support of this process, in terms of the rewarding and validation of staff time spent on re-curriculation, is vital.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

The Benefits of Incorporating a Decolonised Gaze for Design Education

Susan Giloi

Inscape Education Group and Rhodes University

Abstract

Although calls to decolonise education can be seen as threats to replace existing curricula they can also be seen as an opportunity to scrutinise what is valued in design education and how this might be impacted by calls to decolonise. In this paper, which makes use of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton 2010a, 2014) to identify the underlying knowledge-knower structure of graphic design assessment, the significance of a specialist gaze for disciplines such as design is outlined. The gaze (Maton 2014) provides knowers with access to the valued knowledge of the discipline and in disciplines such as graphic design is essential to being able to recognise good and bad design and to make the decisions required in the design process.

As design education and the valued knowledge and knower are influenced by factors outside of academia including technology, industry, practice and national education initiatives such as the internationalisation of curricula, design education is particularly vulnerable and open to change. This openness and the challenges of designing for complex problems in today's world, encourage the cultivation of multiple gazes that value different forms and sources of knowledge, knowing, doing and being. This paper therefore presents the decolonised gaze as a gaze with the potential to strengthen the design knower in acquiring "multicentric ways of knowing/doing/being" (Dei 2013, p. 1) which better equip them to create designs that address complex real-world problems and contribute to positive social change.

Keywords:

Graphic design, Legitimation Code Theory, decolonisation, knowledge, gaze, assessment

Introduction

The decolonisation of education is a complex and charged topic which questions the very nature of higher education, universities, curricula, pedagogy and assessment. This paper offers a tentative first step in contributing towards the decolonisation of design education by providing a description of the existing underlying knowledge-knower structures found in graphic design education and how these structures relate to the potentiality for decolonisation. The approach taken has a narrow focus but is necessary because “as long as our everyday expectations, embedded as they are with unexamined assumptions, are normalised, it can be argued that we are implicated in the reproduction of class divides” (Boughey & McKenna 2016, p. 4). The aim of this paper is therefore to explicate the underlying structures of what is valued in graphic design assessment in order to consider how such structures might be impacted by calls to decolonise. This provides a basis for suggesting how decolonisation might contribute to design education.

The paper is informed by a case study in which Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), a conceptual framework devised by Karl Maton (2010a, 2014), was used to frame and analyse data from the graphic design assessment practice at one Private Higher Education Institution. The data included a lecturer survey, study guide documents, observation of internal panel marking and external moderation sessions on multiple campuses at both the formative and summative assessment stages, as well as a member check focus group. The case study was limited to the assessment of discipline-specific Graphic Design Studio 1, 2 and 3 and Web Design 3 subjects as part of a Bachelors Degree in Graphic Design (Giloï 2016). Although LCT expands on concepts proposed by Bernstein (1986, 1999) and Bourdieu (1990, 1995) and thus emerges from the Global North, the interpretation of data using LCT makes the unseen yet active structures that create phenomena more open to critique and consideration. Thus, through revealing the valued disciplinary knowledge and knower, and who may make the claims that define success and achievement in graphic design, the underlying structure of the discipline is made more explicit (Giloï 2016). Although the research was limited to the field of graphic design assessment, the approach and findings may inform the broader field of design education.

In the following four sections, I firstly, consider how the graphic design curriculum is influenced by contexts outside of the academy. These contexts influence the selection of knowledge to be used and valued in design education and contribute to the external logic, or what Muller (2008) refers to as the ‘contextual coherence’ of the discipline. In the second section, I outline the Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) dimension of Specialisation (Maton 2014) which provides the language of description and conceptual tools used to identify the specialist knowledge and knower valued in the case study of graphic design assessment. The third section considers the decolonised gaze, and in the fourth section, I propose certain benefits that a decolonised gaze might offer design education.

The construction of graphic design curricula

As vocations or professions, design disciplines align with Bernstein’s (1996) description of ‘regions’. A region is where knowledge is recontextualised for use in education. Here existing and new knowledge is selected and adapted for use in curricula, textbooks and the like (Bernstein 1986, 1996). Regions face inwardly to disciplinary knowledge and outwardly to the influences of the vocation or profession (Bernstein 1996). These two sides impact on the knowledge selected and recontextualised for use in curricula and the further selection that occurs when knowledge is reproduced in the classroom and assessment (Bernstein 1986, 1996). Although there is a growing body of graphic design knowledge, it is recognised that graphic design, along with most forms of design, draws knowledge from multiple sources and disciplines (Buchanan 1992; Christiaans and Venselaar 2005; Feast 2013; Popovic 2007).

For instance, in graphic design lecturers might select knowledge from disciplines such as Psychology, or from other regions such as Marketing and Business Studies.

The more direct outside influences on the graphic design region include practice, technology and industry (Giloï 2016). The practice of design along with its strong ties to technology and industry shape the inclusion and exclusion of certain knowledge. Broader influences on Higher Education in South Africa include calls to ensure graduate employability as a contribution to the economy (Griesel & Parker 2009) and more recent proposals that the curriculum be globalised or internationalised (Department of Higher Education and Training 2017). National proposals such as these ultimately impact on the knowledge selected for use in education.

Because disciplines such as graphic design do not have a body of knowledge that is highly codified, well-defined and agreed on (Armstrong 2009; Margolin 2010), they lack what Muller (2008, p. 21) refers to as “conceptual coherence”. Instead, the outside context or ‘real world’ dominates and provides the “contextual coherence” for the discipline. All disciplines have elements of both conceptual and contextual coherence but are dominated by one or the other (Muller 2008). Problem-solving, derived from practice and industry, might be seen to provide the contextual coherence for graphic design (Giloï 2016). This is illustrated by the problem-based (Ellmers & Foley 2007) or project-based (Lee 2009) approaches to pedagogy, and the use of authentic assessment, such as briefs that mimic those found in industry. Design education aims to equip students with the decision-making capacity to draw on a range of appropriate knowledge(s) at each stage of the design process, this being necessary to identify complex design problems and produce viable solutions that are often positioned within real world scenarios (Giloï 2016; Steyn 2012). In addition, it is common practice in summative design assessments to include industry practitioners as external moderators who are tasked with evaluating final portfolios. The approach to pedagogy and assessment reflects the significance of the industry’s influence on design as a region.

As indicated previously, graphic design derives its contextual coherence from outside influences, and these influences change over time. Initially, graphic designers dealt primarily with image and text in printed form; now graphic design includes moving images and designs are built and viewed on digital sites (Harland 2007). Technology, such as computers and software, have altered the knowledge that designers need, how they work and what skills they need to acquire. Furthermore, Dorst (2008, p. 7) indicates that the design industry transforms itself not only in response to technological advances but to meet the demands of society, the economy, global contexts, sustainability and changing value systems. These exterior influences contribute to the evolving contextual coherence of the discipline which impacts what is included and valued in design education. With rapid change comes the expectation that design graduates should have the knowledge, skills and attributes to function within diverse and changing contexts and that education should be “flexible and responsive” (Triggs 2011, p. 125).

In a region such as graphic design, practice, technology and industry have significant influence (Giloï 2016), however, Clegg (2016, p. 458) suggests that we need to look beyond the traditional influencers on regions to consider “geo-political and social movement dimensions”. This is particularly relevant in disciplines such as design that have a largely ‘hidden curriculum’ (Morgan 2011; Rowe 2007) selected by a dominant social group (Heleta 2016). To this end, in the following section, I will briefly describe LCT(Specialisation) and how the theory bridges the divide between epistemic and social.

Legitimation Code Theory and the dimension of Specialisation

Design disciplines, as with all disciplines, have their own procedures and ways of doing, a pool of knowledge that they draw from and their own definition of success or status. Maton

(2004, 2014, 2016) offers Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) as a theory, language of legitimation and conceptual tool which accommodates both the object of the discipline, that is knowledge and its related procedures, and the subject, or knower and their disposition. The LCT dimension of Specialisation enables a discipline or practice to be analysed in terms of epistemic relations (ER) and social relations (SR) (Maton 2004, 2014).

In graphic design the principles of design, technique and methods, industry practices, sustainability and multidisciplinary knowledge are included in epistemic relations (Giloi 2016; Giloi & Belluigi 2017). Social relations appear in graphic design as aesthetics, concepts, the design process, professional and/or scholarly behaviour and the ability to integrate “concept, aesthetic, technique and function for effective communication” (Giloi & Belluigi 2017, p. 13). Bernstein’s (1996) concepts of classification and framing assist with identifying the relative strength and weakness of epistemic relations and social relations (Maton 2004, 2014) in order to gauge and plot these as illustrated in Figure 1. The limits of this paper do not allow for detail, but in graphic design epistemic relations are relatively weak (ER-) primarily because the discipline has no agreed on, cohesive and explicit body of knowledge. In graphic design, social relations are more significant and stronger (SR+) as students at the higher levels of study have a large amount of control over what they learn and when they learn it, framing becomes weaker demanding a specialist design disposition of the student. In order to participate in such a discipline, the student as a specialist knower must cultivate a valued disposition or gaze (Maton 2014). I will discuss the gaze in more detail later in this paper.

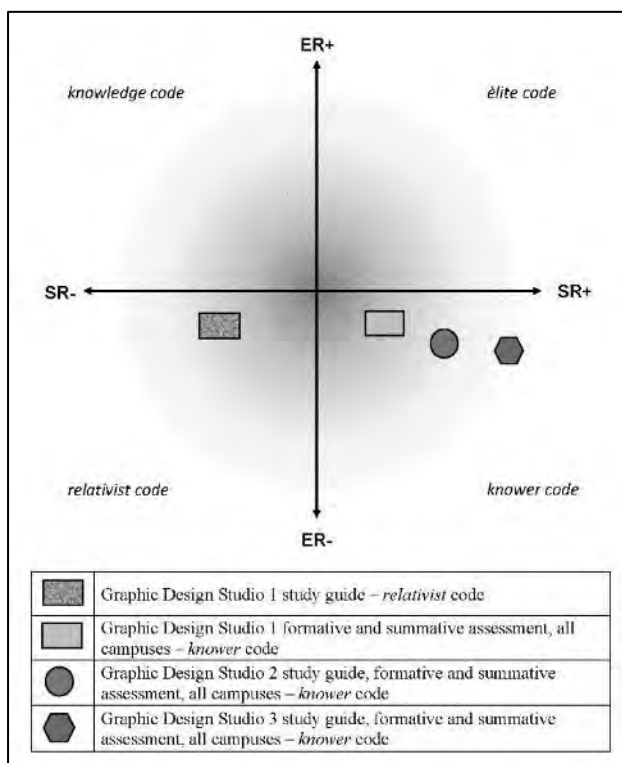


Figure 1 Identifying the relationship of specialist codes in undergraduate graphic design (Giloi & Belluigi 2017, p. 16)

By considering disciplines as combinations of epistemic relations and social relations and their relative strength and weakness, knowledge-knower codes categorised as: *knowledge*, *knower*, *elite* and *relativist codes* can be identified (Maton 2014). In Carvalho’s (2010) research she establishes that Fashion design demonstrates a *knower code* (ER-, SR+), Architecture an *elite code* (ER+, SR+) and Engineering a *knowledge code* (ER+, SR+). In the case study that this paper is based on, and illustrated in Figure 1, what is valued in graphic design assessment is predominately a *knower code* (ER-, SR+) (Giloi 2016). The valuing of a

knower code in graphic design is likewise identified by Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo (2013) in an analysis of graphic design curriculum and lecturer’s perceptions.

Codes may shift at different stages of education and between different fields of design. The knower code valued in graphic design assessment varied in strength across the three years of study. Figure 1 illustrates that at second- and third-year levels the courseware indicated the valuing of a knower code (ER-, SR+) and this matched what assessors and moderators valued. However, in analysing the first-year courseware, which included learning outcomes and assessment criteria, a relativist code (ER-, SR-) was identified. These shifts and clashes have significance in education (Maton 2014) as they are unseen and therefore not made explicit (Giloi 2016).

The valued gaze

In knower code disciplines students must develop a gaze in order to recognise what is “authentic” to the discipline (Bernstein 1996, p. 164). The valued gaze, which is often tacit, provides insight into the discipline and its rules of engagement and success (Luckett 2012). A specialist gaze in design and design education enables the designer to describe, discuss and debate design, recognise good and bad design and is equally essential for making decisions during the design process (Giloi 2016).

Maton (2010b) relates the strength of the gaze to how difficult it is to acquire. He defines four forms of gaze: born, social, cultivated and trained. The strongest and most inaccessible gaze is the born gaze (Maton 2010, 2014). If it is believed that designers must possess an innate creativity or “God-given talent” (Rand 1987, p. 65) this would require a born gaze. A social gaze is a slightly weaker form of the gaze and is “determined by their social category, such as standpoint theories based on social class or on race, gender and sexuality” (Maton 2010b, p. 166). The social gaze can therefore only be possessed by certain groups of people. Other weaker forms of the gaze include a cultivated gaze and trained gaze. The cultivated gaze is acquired through education which requires immersion in practice and exposure to recognised knowers (Maton 2014). This educational approach requires students to spend extended time in practice under the instruction of experts, which aligns with traditional and existing forms of design instruction (Logan 2006; Manchado-Perez, Berges-Muro & Lopez-Fornies 2014). The aim of such forms of education is to cultivate a certain type of knower who is initiated “into ways of knowing rather than explicit states of knowledge” (Maton 2010b, p. 171). In other words, in design a specialist gaze becomes part of the professional identity. The trained gaze can be acquired by almost anyone and is, therefore, the weakest and easiest to acquire (Maton 2014).

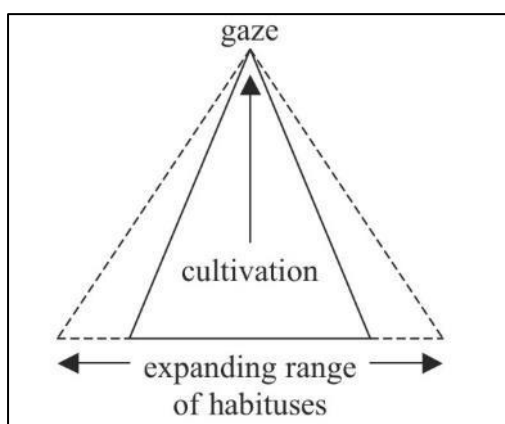


Figure 2 Growth of hierarchical knower structure with a cultivated gaze (Maton 2014, p. 99)

As discussed above, Maton (2014) indicates that in knower structures the valued gaze can be cultivated through education. He goes on to describe how the ideal knower develops the valued gaze through the integration and inclusion of many habituses into the smallest number of gazes (2010, 2014). The Bordieuan 'habitus' is defined as "our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances, and how we then make choices to act in certain ways" (Maton 2008b, p. 52). As illustrated in Figure 2 Maton (2014) represents the progression of integrating habituses to become the ideal knower as a hierarchical knower structure. In this structure, many knowers situated at the base of the triangle cultivate dispositions and gazes in order to ultimately be recognised as an ideal knower at the apex of the triangle. The valued gaze builds on the existing canon of what was valued before, rather than replacing the previous canon. A broad range of knowers can cultivate the ideal gaze, even though it is socially and historically situated (Maton 2010b). Using theories such as LCT makes the gaze, which is often tacit, more visible and therefore in education it may become more accessible (Maton 2014).

Graphic design education often relies on students spending extended time in practice where they are exposed to experts or knowers who already possess the valued disposition and gaze. These knowers may be fellow students, design lecturers or designers encountered in industry settings during work integrated learning opportunities. The valued graphic design gaze is thus a gaze that can be cultivated (Giloj & Belluigi 2017). As the cultivated gaze builds on previous examples and practices, it may be more, or less accessible to individuals and groups from different cultural backgrounds. Where the gaze is linked to a narrow Eurocentric canon, some students may "experience a cultural system and curriculum that devalues and negates their home languages, cultures, histories and identities – thus positioning them as culturally deficient" (Lockett 2016). Access to the gaze and becoming a knower, therefore, has significance for design education, not only in terms of inclusion and exclusion, but in providing the opportunity to challenge and influence the valued code and gaze (Giloj 2016, p. 220).

The decolonised gaze

In the previous section, I established that the current valued graphic design gaze is a cultivated gaze that can be acquired through education. However, given the various influences on design education, there is ongoing competition over defining the valued knowledge and gaze and what defines good design, or a good designer, and who may make these claims (Dong, Maton & Carvalho 2014). The calls to decolonise education present additional claims regarding what and who should be valued in design education. These claims encompass demands to consider "cultural assets [that] are not recognised or valued as 'capital' by the academy" (Lockett & Shay 2017, p. 4).

As calls to decolonise education vary in strength they can be considered to communicate the valuing of either a social or a cultivated gaze. The range of stances on decolonisation and the Africanisation of the curricula are reflected in Jansen's (2017) definition of three approaches used in articles that make up the book *Africanising the Curriculum*. He identifies these as calls for replacement, addition and re-centring of the curriculum (Jansen 2017). Stances that demand the replacement of Eurocentric curricula with for instance an Africanised curriculum reflect a social gaze, as the decisions on what knowledge is valued and selected for use rests with a social group; Africans who have experienced the violence of colonisation. However, if decolonisation calls for the imposition of a social gaze, the danger of creating another "monoculture education" (Morrow 2007, p. 193) exists. The decolonised gaze, as a social gaze, would have limited power to influence, change and build the discipline, as exclusion means that some are "denied access to the means of creation and circulation of symbolic products and their experiences often excluded from the shared library" (Maton 2010b, p.

171). Those who are not Africans who have not experienced the violence of colonisation cannot be included in the hierarchical knower structure represented in Figure 2.

Although addition may be seen as an option, where “African knowledge should simply be added onto what already exists” (Jansen 2017, p. 1) it does not accommodate calls for the pluralisation of knowledge (Fataar and Kruger 2017) or the recognition of different forms of knowledge and ways of knowing and doing. Re-centring provides an accommodative approach (Jansen 2017) demonstrated in calls “for knowledge pluralisation, incorporation of the complex ways of knowing of subaltern and all previously excluded groups, in other words, an expansion and complete overhaul of the Western knowledge canon” (Fataar & Kruger 2017). Re-centring does not “require removing white men and women, both foreign and local, from the curriculum. However, they cannot be seen as the all-knowing and all-important canon upon which the human knowledge rests and through which white and Western domination is maintained” (Heleta 2016). Thus, re-centring would require the ideal design knower to cultivate an expanded gaze that includes a greater range of knowers and their habituses and to acknowledge that no one form of knowledge or canon is more powerful than another. In this light decolonisation as a cultivated gaze

originates with the experiences of particular subordinated or marginal groups and the legitimisation of their voice and the view that society is unjust; but it is not exclusive to people positioned in these categories. Any knower can learn to see social reality from the standpoint of the oppressed, provided they adopt a certain normative and empathetic position. But the novice knower also needs to be initiated into the specialised vocabulary and theory of diversity literacy; there are particular ways of knowing as well as particular sensibilities and dispositions (Lockett 2012, p. 15).

If a decolonised gaze is seen as a gaze that values different forms of knowledge, ways of doing, being and knowing that have been ignored or devalued in the past and that all students would benefit from understanding that no “one’s own knowledge system is superior and thus sufficient for complex living” (Fataar & Kruger 2017), then acquiring such a gaze may better equip the ideal knower in dealing with our complex world, and as a designer, designing in and for this complex world.

Potential benefits of a decolonised design gaze

A cultivated specialist gaze is necessary for designers to integrate different forms of knowledge from a range of disciplines in order to address complex problems (Giloi 2016). In the design process, designers can seldom only focus on aesthetics or commercial considerations, they must consider ethical and moral obligations as well (Akama 2012; Hernández 2013). The responsiveness of decision making required during the design process speaks to Santos’s (2009) challenge to the tunnel vision of Western scientific knowledge and a narrow positivist view of knowing, which has limited power to address complex problems. Complex problems positioned in divergent contexts require multiple ways of knowing that access multidisciplinary sources of knowledge as the problem “determine[s] the ways of knowing” (Santos 2009, p. 117).

With a decolonised gaze as an integral part of being an ideal design knower, the designer or design student can access a range of knowledge(s) and ways of doing and apply these in a range of contexts. Designers are increasingly being challenged with what are referred to as ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel & Webber 1973). These problems and the even larger “strong questions” that require “strong answers” (Santos 2009) cannot be approached using only one paradigm, procedure, form of knowledge or one group’s experience and way of knowing. In the case of design education, students would have to cultivate the dispositions and gazes that allow them to work within these complicated and ill-defined scenarios and to design for

and with groups who have different experiences to their own. In adopting a decolonised gaze, design students would not only gain a better understanding of diverse experiences and perspectives, but would gain access to multiple forms of knowledge, knowing and ways of doing.

How this might be achieved is not in the scope of this document, however part of the process of acquiring a decolonised gaze might require students to cultivate empathy and compassion qualities that are already receiving attention in the design discourse (Akama 2012; Kerkos 2016; Rojas 2013). In decolonising design education curriculum, pedagogy and assessment would all need to be addressed, as what is valued in one does not always carry through into the others. If assessment focuses on “narrow, highly competitive, individualised cognitive performances, framed in hegemonic discourses” (Lockett & Shay 2017, p. 11) it would negate changes to the curriculum. It might be more advantageous for assessments to ask ‘strong questions’ (Santos, 2009) which would require multiple ways of knowing. With such an approach come challenges to pre-define, evidence and measure the cultivation of the valued gaze and the transformation of the knower (Giloï 2016). However, progress in decolonising design education could only be made when all three areas of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are addressed.

Conclusion

Design and those disciplines categorised as knower codes offer opportunities for decolonisation. In identifying underlying knowledge-knowers structures and the specialist gaze, assumptions regarding curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are made more explicit. As a starting point, this presents a way of viewing design education as a form of education aimed at the cultivation of a valued gaze which provides students access to knowledge. The expansion of the valued gaze to incorporate diverse and previously unrepresented knowers may provide the opportunity of widening access and success, as well as providing students access to multiple forms of knowledge. By acknowledging that no one form of knowledge is superior to another, what becomes valuable is for the ideal knower to be able to use multiple forms of knowledge and ways of doing that are appropriate and effective in a context. A decolonised gaze therefore strengthens design education in providing students with access to working with multiple sources of knowledge and ways of knowing, doing and being.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Don't Touch Me on My Discipline! Decolonisation, Disciplinarity and the Problem of Curricular Coherence.

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Abstract

Since the mid 1990's, re-acculturation efforts in South Africa have been marked by ideological complexity. Although there is general agreement, post-apartheid, that curriculum should contribute to the construction of a just, equitable and democratic post-apartheid society, the question of how to get there is not straightforward. Broadly speaking, in the new South Africa, curriculum reform has been oriented around a liberal democratic notion of transformation. Within this framework, social justice is imagined in terms of equal opportunity and here, the notion of access key. Arguments have been made that curricular coherence and thus disciplinarity are essential to various forms of "access". Well-designed curricula are said to facilitate epistemological access (Morrow 2009), promote deep learning and foster academic development). Coherent curriculum promotes learner-centeredness, increases social mobility and individual empowerment. The question that remains unanswered is how the liberal-democratic social justice agenda of redress, inclusivity, epistemic access squares with the radicalism of decolonisation (Tuck & Yang 2012, Patel 2015). Using two seminal reports produced in 2013 as departure points – "The Report of the ministerial committee for the review of the funding of universities" and (Nzimande 2013) and "A Proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa I argue that that although disciplinary access is a social justice issues is vital to transform in when this encounters decolonisation tensions and contradiction emerge. This may be because decolonisation is a discourse that is fundamentally and paradigmatically disruptive and decentering of Western rationality. Decolonisation might be said to fundamentally challenge progressive social justice This means making a long-term commitment to experimenting with novel forms of curricular coherence and inventing new approaches to teaching and learning.

Keywords:

Disciplinarity, curricular coherence, design, decolonisation, social justice, re-acculturation, South African Higher Education.

Introduction

This paper grew out of insider reflections on two processes taking place in our Faculty. The first was the review of the Undergraduate Design Studies programme offered at the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture to design departments. The other source of reflection was a series of formal Faculty functions whose purpose it was to responding to the call to decolonize.

I gathered from the observing interactions in these events, that many, although identifying as progressive educators saw access to their discipline as *the* key social justice issue. Design academics committed to social justice put access to their discipline first, arguing that it was from gaining access that marginalised and excluded groups, gain mastery in their disciplines so that they come to be creatively and economically empowered. I noticed that progressive educators would “decolonise” on the condition that the integrity of their discipline remain intact. Decolonisation is important, but only in so far as it made what the discipline stronger and enabled educators to align their pedagogies more strongly with facilitating access for marginalised students. Decolonisation might be incorporated into progressive courses, but only if it was seen to facilitate the achievement of mastery *within* the discipline itself. It is acceptable to introduce material into courses that challenge the canon but only if it could be established that these additions enhanced access *in* the discipline.

Why is notion of access in social justice problematic? Decolonial theorists are at pains to emphasise that decolonisation is not just a political project of delinking (Mignolo 2011), inclusion, disruption or destabilisation. Nor is it a tokenistic process of transformation. Rather decolonisation means entertaining a deep *paradigmatic* challenge to Western thought itself. Decolonisation means deliberately challenging the very notion of disciplinarity itself as a Western construct. As a result of the depth and directness of the decolonial challenge, transformation must necessarily be difficult and involve careful and long-term reform of the disciplines. Because decolonisation challenges the fundamental structure of the discipline itself and often its social purpose, it is inevitable that it will sit uncomfortably with many progressive academics who prize epistemological access, curricular coherence of central concerns in their practice.

In what follows I problematize this view and argue that encounters between social justice, access approaches in higher education there is bound to enter a politics of recognition and misrecognition.

Context and background: disruption through the “perpetuation of misrecognition”

The student protests of 2015 might have forced the academy to recognize that apartheid is not an abstraction left to the past but something that continues to be experienced as an oppressive, lived reality for youth participating in higher education. Student activists pointed out that social justice has not been realised under the conditions of a negotiated settlement, that the so-called dividends of liberal democracy have not materialised. Two decades after the first democratic elections the poor, working class black population remains as much a concern as ever. Student activists often remarked that the broader national problem is reflected on an institutional level and in the higher education (HE) system itself. Student activists reminded us that South Africa is not an integrated nor reconciled society and demonstrated this by “inventing” (Brown 2015) new communication contexts on campuses whilst debunking from dominant academic narratives.

Arguably, the resurgence of student dissent, the entrance of the EFF onto the political scene, and the spectacular corruption of the ANC have foregrounded a politics of both recognition and misrecognition in South African public life. It was armed with this kind of politics that

black students, especially at historically white university campuses such as the University of the Witwatersrand, Rhodes University, the University of Cape Town, The University of the North-West and others confronted what they considered to be an untransformed academia.

With a university management on the one hand insisting on “due process” (Rensburg as cited by Jansen 2017, pp. 91, 93-94) and academics erecting notions of discipline, scientificity, objectivity, universality and progress as a defense against them on the other hand, we had, in 2015, a recipe for further and ongoing campus conflict. As Brown rightly observes, “tensions between the university and students tended to decline when the administration engaged within ‘invented’ spaces, but ratcheted upwards when it sought to bypass them”. In heated exchanges that took place between management, academics and students, the terms of misrecognition were perhaps reversed so that it was the academic and managerial habitus itself that was now out of sync with the new forms of legitimacy student activists were “inventing” on the fly, feeling what it means to be alienated.

In staging face-to-face conflicts between themselves, university managements, state officials, academics radical students were able to make a spectacle of their concerns resulting in a mushrooming of student activism across the country over the course of 2015 and 2016. By combining a suite of disruptive tactics and by successfully launching a strategic decolonisation campaign, students activists arguably subverted taken-for-granted “categories of thought” (Bourdieu 1990, p. 141) privileged in the academy. Arguably misrecognition played a key role here in student activism. Through a strategy of deliberately “perpetuating misrecognition” Bourdieu students were able invent spaces in which existing categories of thought might be subverted

By modifying the classifications in which they are expressed and legitimated, and those who have an interest in perpetuating misrecognition, an alienated cognition that looks at the world through categories the world imposes, and apprehends the social world as a natural world. This mis-cognition, unaware that it produces what it organized, does not want to know that what makes the most intrinsic charm of its object, its charisma, is merely the product of the countless crediting operations through which agents attribute to the object the powers to which they submit. The specific efficacy of subversive action consists in the power to bring to consciousness, and so modify, the categories of thought which help to orient individual and collective practices and in particular the categories thought which distributions are perceived and appreciated (Bourdieu 1990, p. 141).

The irony in this was that two years preceding student action, two reports had been published that might, if implemented might have averted mass protest. I believe that if the Ministry of Higher Education had taken two reports published in 2013 seriously the student protests the 2015/2016 might have been averted.

Access and success as social justice issues in South African Higher Education.

The reports identified the key problems that have been plaguing the higher education sector for the past two decades in South Africa and are exemplars of a social justice approach to transformation. The first is the “Report of the ministerial committee for the review of the funding of universities” (Nzimande 2013). The second is “a proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa: the case for a flexible curriculum structure (Ndebele et al 2013).

Taken together, the recommendations from both reports, if implemented, might have transformed the higher education sector for the better. The first report is concerned with issues of material and financial access to HE whilst the second is more concerned with

academic success in the undergraduate HE. Both reports are concerned by the inability of the higher education sector to broadly transform and be transformed in terms of notions of access and success. The first report argues that “of great concern is the fact that the participation rates of African and coloured students in higher education remain low compared to whites and Indians” (Nzimande 2013, p. 3). The second report ties this failure of access to various structural material problems (Ndebele et al. 2013, p. 32-38) which when combined with the “differentials in students’ educational backgrounds” (Ndebele et al. 2013, p. 152) makes realising social justice in the higher education system exceedingly difficult. However, neither report shies away from these problems in their recommendations.

The recommendations of the first report is for a revised funding model that would see the full cost of study for poor families covered by a grant, similar to Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (Steyn, 2017) and the funding for the so-called missing middle increased along with increased subsidy to public universities and the development of more efficient mechanisms to achieve this. Key to this would be,

[...] revising the NSFAS allocation formula to reflect actual levels of financial need [...] This will not only benefit increased numbers of deserving students – including the so-called ‘missing middle’ – but will also assist in addressing the unacceptably high levels of student debt especially in the HDIs (Nzimande 2013, p. 27).

The recommendations of this report covering the material and non-material problems in the HE system would go some way in dealing decisively with the problem of a chronically underfunded higher education system (see Jansen 2017). The recommendation put forward by the second report was for the duration of the undergraduate degree to be increased by one year (Ndebele et al. 2013, p. 20) so that it might be made more coherent, flexible and additional content space found for the development of foundational academic literacy. According to the report, the basic problems of success in the system cannot be addressed by access alone (as is addressed in the first report), for the majority of student intake in a massified HE system are unprepared for the demands of university. Despite this, their findings have generally been overlooked by policy makers and university leadership since they were published. What neither report does is interrogate why reform must be about access and success and why within this social justice framework, the discipline remains untouched.

As both reports rightly point out, a central problem to the lack of transformation in the HE sector is the “articulation gap” (Ndebele et al. 2013, p. 60) between secondary school subject competence and the disciplinary competences demanded from tertiary education and this certainly has serious curricular and ideological implications. This is not a new problem. Since the mid 1990’s, re-orientation efforts in South Africa, certainly at secondary school level, have been marked in their conceptualisation by ideological complexity (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2007; Christie, 2006; Cross, Mungadi & Rouhani, 2002; Jansen, 1998). Although there is general agreement that curriculum should contribute to the construction of a just, equitable and democratic post-apartheid society, the question of how to get there has been messy. Broadly speaking, curriculum reform in South Africa has been oriented around liberal democratic notions of transformation centered on access meaning that the discipline as a construct has remained valorised. Interestingly, decolonisation never really featured as a key ‘imperative’ in post-1994 re-orientation debates. Was this because, as a sub-imperial power in its own right (Bond 2013) in geopolitical terms South Africa is in no position to decolonize. Or was decolonisation overlooked because it has been “arrested” (Omoyele 2017) by nationalist elites.

Commentators such as Tikly (2003, p. 171) and Muller and Young (2014) point out that “skills-based”, technocratic, globalisation, human capital neoliberal discourse that foregrounds access has been the most dominant voice in curriculum reform efforts in the new South Africa and have ostensibly crowded out other imperatives such as that for

decolonisation. Outcomes-based education, the National Qualifications Framework are good expression of an access and competency understanding of education in which disciplinarity features strongly and access is foregrounded.

The neutral instrumentalist-behaviourist underpinning of such approaches to access (see Gray 2006, 2011) sideline tricky questions of ideological conflicts and paradigmatic contestations. This might mean that *colonial legacy of the disciplines, as Western constructs*, are left interrogated and thus left in place. So when reports such as these speak of “access” and “success” we might be skeptical and ask, following the line of a decentering and delinking decolonial thought: access and inclusion into what (Patel 2015, p. 93), and how would we organise success as such, and whose version of success are we talking about? How are notions of access and success tied to settler colonial ideologies?

Although a most compelling approach in a context of need such as South Africa, access even if it is a problematic term, is not an uncomplicated affair and not easily realisable, because access is multidimensional. It has a material, epistemological (Morrow 2009) and semiotic dimensions (Muller & Young 2013, pp. 57-72). And as Patel (2015, pp. 34-40) has argued, in contexts of settler colonialism ideas of access to resources, knowledge and research are shot through with territorialism and settler logics. Who decides what counts as knowledge and valuable knowledge at that? A further complication is that resources exist in contexts of mediation and access to the materials are subject to processes of misrecognition. One might argue that the recontextualisation of pedagogical codes and other mediating codes means that knowledge cannot be understood as a resource to be ‘accessed’, pure and simple or invested in in a capitalist sense. If knowledge is organised into structures as constructivism suggests then what gets lost and gained in the process when knowledge is decolonised and vitally what advances in social justice might be lost in the decolonisation process? We might ask why that if knowledge has a structure inseparable from the knower it is treated as a resource to be found, moved, relocated and packaged – – then what are the implications for learning when following settler logic is characterised as a commodity, a service to be acquired and accumulated or a resource to appropriate for oneself? In overdetermining access the discipline remains a site of colonial privilege and one essentially protected from transformation.

Without asking fundamental questions such as these, those that center on the social function of the disciplines themselves, (their structures, origins, bias and so forth design educations) we might not appreciate the true magnitude of practical work that needs to be done in achieving access especially in contexts of radical cultural, linguistic and socio-economic diversity such as are present in South Africa and more to the point the greater challenge of retrieving knowledge from its status as a commodity or resource. The difficulties in surmounting these problems – problems of access, success and decolonisation- are considerable especially in our unique local context of severe poverty, inequality, uneven development. The authors of the second report rightfully make a centrally important recommendation, without which not much transformation work can be done in higher education including the work of decolonisation. The addition of an additional undergraduate year and/or a flexible curriculum would not only allow the university to address conventional social justice concerns but provide the material and organisational base from which it can take place.

But how is realising solutions to problems of access, success and decolonisation possible if the disciplines as already constructed are to begin with as closed entities, closed by the very forms of coherence that make their existence possible?

All these factors work together, as John Dewey (2004) has argued to, to create a complex relationship between teaching, learning, subject and society in which the question of power must be interrogated. The discipline ‘disciplines’ as Michel Foucault suggests. What makes

decolonisation interesting is that it is a political discourse capable of reconfiguring knowledge structures through disruption and thus has the power of misrecognition to unsettle and contest established power. This is perhaps why it will be so difficult for the 'decolonisation of knowledge' to take place. The discipline like the academic habitus might be too resistant to change to every be meaningfully decolonised.

The key issue at stake in the discussions about power in learning is that epistemological access is, as Muller argues, mediated by levels of paradigmicity. In harder and pure applied subjects where paradigmicity is high, knowledge and knower are separate, because there are high levels of consensus whereas in softer subjects, knowledge is held by knower and difficult to separate. Paradigmicity might refer to degrees of codification but it also speaks to issues of cultural consensus (Khun as cited by Muller 2009, p. 210) and thus to the culture and values of societies and communities come to shape what knowledge is, what it means and its value. Regardless of whether its integrity as structures are internally or externally defined hard or soft, applied or not applies, the curriculum always carries and encodes cultural values. Thus as Muller (2009, p. 211) asserts, disciplines might be understood as cultures or perhaps more aptly as "tribes" territorialising learning and knowledge producing their own practices of social closure and so on. There are limits and boundaries drawn around each discipline articulating a community of knowers belonging in the disciplines and rejected from it. This applies to knowledge structures in the design disciplines (Giloj & Belluigi, 2017) – that are already culturally inflected. This is true also of the professions which depending on their quality of instrumentalism construct their 'disciplinary-ness' differently. As Muller remarks,

Professions like teaching, clinical psychology and social work have joined the traditional professions, and have developed their regional knowledge bases, aspiring to the autonomy and stability of the traditionals but not (yet) in their league, both in terms of their social organisation and their disciplinary robustness (Muller 2009, p. 214).

Whether being pure disciplines, professions, areas or trades there are certainly always customs at play in disciplinary access meaning that some areas out of bounds to hot to "touch", taboos and this is no different than when it comes to design.

The problem of decolonisation for a social justice of access and success

"Cultural imperialism rests on the power to universalise particularisms linked to a singular historical tradition by causing them to be misrecognised as such" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1999, p. 41).

The invitation to decolonize design calls on us is to recognise the extent to which the knowledge structures such as it is expressed in discipline is in fact an ideological construct wound up with the exercise of social power. One would be hard-pressed to find an example of one 'discipline' – regardless of its qualities - whose structure was not disciplining in the sense of being linked to the enterprise of colonialism. Design played a key role in entrenching colonial dominance through design of public buildings, symbols. The British empire was successful largely due to the fact that it was able to create systems and structures that consolidated colonial rule. In this designers were indispensable in terms of the imposition of foreign symbols, uniforms, architectural structures. From engineering, to linguistics, to the establishment of English literature and anthropology departments, in the hard pure and hard applied subjects, there are ideological forces at play in the construction of the discipline itself and its application.

Fanon (2007) gives an illustrative example of how the cultural conformity encouraged in disciplinary thinking can lead to racism. In *Wretched of the Earth* he makes the example of

[E]ugenics, where what was taught as a scientific discipline in European universities, only to be found later as a 'discipline' complicit in the exercise and dissemination of racism. The call to decolonise is perhaps asking us to historicise 'the' disciplines and in so doing recognise the role that they have played in the past in dominating certain groups in naturalising dominance of the privileged, the extent to which they are wound up in geopolitical dynamics of imperialism, colonialism. This means admitting on the one hand that there is no discipline pure and simple, a neutral knowledge, construct but rather that knowledge is always wound up with power.

This is usually expressed in paradigmicity. Paradigmicity is wound up by the extent to which a discipline recognises the other whether it be everyday life, the subjects it conducts its upon. The level of recognition a given to a discipline gives to those outside of its ambit has great bearing on its ability to impede or facilitate learning through a denial of participation:

On the one hand, people can be impeded from full participation by economic structures that deny them the resources they need in order to interact with others as peers; in that case they suffer from distributive injustice or maldistribution. On the other hand, people can also be prevented from interacting on terms of parity by institutionalised hierarchies of cultural value that deny them the requisite standing; in that case they suffer from status inequality or misrecognition (Fraser 2007, p. 20).

The discipline seen as a collection of practices and grammars to which students are given entry (Muller 2014, p. 259) can powerfully determine the terms of interaction and thus exclusion as well as have identity forming effects.

The notion of access to "powerful knowledges" (Young 2008) when informed by human capital theory, for instance, might become considerably elitist. Within this framework, social justice is imagined in terms of equal opportunity and here again, the notion of disciplinary access remains key. I have presented arguments that curricular coherence (Muller, 2009) are essential to various forms of access (Ndebele et al. 2013), that well-designed curricula are crucial to facilitate epistemological access (Morrow 2009), promote deep learning and foster academic development. Coherent curricula promote learner-centeredness, increases social mobility and individual empowerment. The question that remains unanswered is how the liberal-democratic social justice agenda emblematised in the idea of access and success squares with the call for decolonisation given the already fraught relationship between these approaches (Tuck & Yang 2012; Pate, 2015). Decolonised curriculum might produce forms of knowledge that are more progressive than those based on redress, inclusivity and epistemic access. Taking on decolonisation demands a long-term commitment to inventing and experimenting with novel forms of coherence.

Decolonisation, decoloniality is a discourse that is fundamentally and paradigmatically disruptive and thus must as is implied by my argument, logically challenge the very idea of the disciplinarity. In its radical critique of Western rationality (Maldonado-Torres 2007), decolonisation theory challenges the settler logic of access. It calls - if such a thing might be possible - for a return to knowledges that have been lost and the creation of new, deterritorialised forms of being in the world (Mignolo 2009). This can threaten both the ontological and epistemological basis for the discipline as well as the teaching and learning strategies developed by teaching academics to enhance what has been termed epistemological access. There is a certain enunciative irresistibility about decolonisation as a fact as (Tuck & Yang 2012, p. 4) suggest:

When metaphor invades decolonisation, it kills the very possibility of decolonisation; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future. Decolonise (a verb) and decolonisation (a

noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks. The easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonisation is yet another form of settler appropriation. When we write about decolonisation, we are not offering it as a metaphor; it is not an approximation of other experiences of oppression. Decolonisation is not a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. Decolonisation doesn't have a synonym.

Conclusion

How is decolonial thinking useful as a social justice approach?

Decolonial theory forces us as academics, educator, students to ask difficult questions about the histories, origins and ontologies of 'our' so-called 'disciplines' - art, design, architecture:

- Whose knowledge is important?
- Whose history is important?
- Whose creativity is important?

Although powerfully relevant a decolonial approach must be evaluated by its ability to make sense of the big problems and struggles in 'our' society regardless of whether it challenges innocence. Is this be adequately done in design through a decolonial approach? Will decolonisation assist design students and academics to solve deep structural problems in South Africa of poverty, xenophobia, unemployment, inequality, domination, racism, sexism, climate-change, land and control, sovereignty, the nature of the state, democracy, the destruction of habitat? Similarly, how do discourses of access and success, as discourses tinged by cultural imperialism, deal with the struggles and problems of our time? I have suggested in this paper that the idea of disciplinarity as a social justice issue must be problematised if we hope to advance decolonial struggles.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

In Your Hands & Self-Portrait: Introductory Spatial Design Exercises in the First-year Studio

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Abstract

This paper considers the discrepancies in the visual literacy of students prior to entering spatial design education at a public higher-educational institution. Because the school subjects Visual Arts and Engineering Graphics and Design provide feeder skills to visual literacy, students with exposure to these subjects tend to have higher visual literacy than students who are unlikely to have received exposure to these subjects. This is problematic because Visual Arts and Engineering Graphics and Design are not on offer in all public South African schools.

As educators from a public higher-educational institution endeavouring to provide equitable learning opportunities, how do we, through spatial design education, relate to first-year students with an awareness of differences in student 'readiness' impacted by schooling opportunities? What role can spatial design exercises play in alleviating these discrepancies while engaging all students in the first-year studio?

This paper focuses on first-year spatial design students and the design exercises In your Hands and Self-Portrait. These introductory design briefs focus on the development of students' three-dimensional spatial design skills with awareness of the impact of students' school subjects on studio outputs. In your Hands requires the creation of a support with wire for stone using stone, wire and pliers. Thereafter follows a group discussion, reflection and iteration. Self-Portrait requires the creation of a three-dimensional self-portrait of the inner and outer being using wire and thereafter, a projected shadow drawing of the portrait using light while drawing with graphite on paper. A selection of projects conducted by first-year spatial design students of architecture, interior architecture and landscape architecture in 2017 at the Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria has been documented.

With the focus of spatial design education in the first-year studio being on the development of three-dimensional design skills, differences in students' schooling backgrounds played a reduced role in impacting project outcomes. The introduction of alternative media, stone and wire, to which most students had limited exposure, provides an even playing field. Communalism as a means of learning together was explored through group discussion and iteration of the exercise, providing students an opportunity for self-review and improvement in their approach. Self-Portrait allows a reflection of self-understanding in a three-dimensional format. The shadow projection reinforces the role of two-dimensional drawings as representational of three-dimensional spatial products as a key skill to spatial design

practice which redefines the two-dimensional drawing from being an artistic output to becoming a representational image.

The two exercises provide a relevant discussion as introductory exercises focusing on skills development in the spatial design fields through the three-dimensional. This approach allows a fairer learning opportunity for students regardless of their school subjects, which could have enhanced their skills in visual literacy. This is a worthwhile case study for spatial design educators in the context of the call for decolonised education.

Keywords:

Spatial Design Education, Spatial Design Exercises, Studio learning, Three-dimensional, Two-dimensional

Introduction

This paper documents the spatial design educators' measures in mitigating the advantageous impact of prior training in visual literacy through the exposure to the school subjects Visual Arts and Engineering Graphics and Design (EGD) in creating disparate learning opportunities in spatial design education in the combined first-year studio at the Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria. The advantage created by exposure to these subjects is considered problematic since Visual Arts and EGD are not subjects offered in all public schools and exposure to these are often a result of advantaged students who are afforded a costlier school education. Since these subjects are not entry criteria to the spatial design courses at the University of Pretoria, non-exposure to these subjects should not impede a student's ability to succeed in these courses. The paper considers the difficulties in transition experienced generally by students from secondary school to higher education and focuses on factors which can ameliorate or exacerbate this transition. The links between disadvantaged backgrounds and higher-education success are established. The first-year is seen as the critical point for predictability of student retention as the transition between school and higher education is a point of heightened vulnerability for students due to their adjustment to a new environment and academic expectations. The argument is made with specific focus on the first-year spatial design student who is confronted with the additional unfamiliarity of the studio environment, which is in contrast to the typical school classroom and their expectations of university lifestyle. The exercises have been formulated with consideration of the responsibility of the spatial design educator in a higher-educational institution to provide fair learning opportunities for all students (whether advantaged or disadvantaged, regardless of their prior exposure to visual literacy) while addressing the impacts of past injustice through the call for decolonising higher education. The exercises *In your Hands* and *Self-Portrait* will be explained, their intentions highlighted and a selection of 2017 student outputs will be demonstrated with reflection on the exercises.

Method

A combination of primary and secondary data sources is used to establish the problem. The exploration of literature relevant to the transition of students from school to higher education and the unique characteristics of spatial design education and cultivating design thinking is conducted. Quantitative data is used to illustrate the visual literacy skills scape in the spatial design first-year studio through the collection of student numbers and their subject histories. The spatial design exercises, *In your Hands* and *Self-Portrait*, are explored through a combination of reflective writing and examples of outcomes are documented through the photographic documentation of selected student work from the class of 2017. The interpretation of these exercises in the context of the identified problem is highlighted.

The first-year student in spatial design education

Transitioning from school to higher education

The transition into higher education places the new first-year student in a vulnerable position. For those transitioning from secondary school, the university environment poses a new and unfamiliar environment (Lowe & Cook 2003, pp. 44-45) in which the student is re-defining their identity (Wilcox, Winn & Fyvie-Gauld 2005, p. 712). The differences in expectation of higher educational lifestyle and reality could be a revelation to students which may be difficult to overcome (Lowe & Cook 2003, pp. 54-55). Those who have relocated from their homes are threatened with the absence of social support previously provided by family, which requires adjustment through establishing new friendships and redefining their individual identities (Wilcox, Winn & Fyvie-Gauld 2005 p. 713). Further, the academic expectation of students to transform to autonomous, self-managed learners (Lowe & Cook

2003, p. 54) in an impersonal environment leaves students feeling unsupported (Briggs, Clark & Hall 2012, p.6, 18). Students who are able to integrate socially adjust easier due to the support of their peers (Krause & Coates 2008, pp. 502-503). Diversity is a factor in inhibiting social cohesion. It is affected by socio-economic backgrounds, which in turn affects a student's ability to adapt to higher education due to reduced familiarity with the higher educational context. According to Leese (2010, p. 243) this difference in socio-economic status can inhibit social interactions and delay the ability of students of contrasting backgrounds to find social support among peers. Students of diverse backgrounds and those who are of poor socio-economic backgrounds are more vulnerable in adapting to the higher educational context (Briggs, Clark & Hall 2012, pp. 5-6). The design student from a poor socio-economic background is particularly vulnerable to incompletion of studies due to the unlikelihood of them being exposed to design disciplines as a result of subject offering limitations in state-resourced schools (Saidi & Nazier 2011, pp. 183, 185). Briggs, Clark and Hall (2012, p. 6) asserts that these difficulties in transition could lead to students deregistering, which is particularly problematic in the case of those students who might have been able to transform their socio-economic status through higher education. The role of the educator in addressing the threats of incomplete studies is therefore crucial. A consideration in the formation and delivery of design knowledge is a key area where positive change can be effected (Saidi & Nazier 2011, p. 83). This is pertinent in the context of decolonised education, which calls to relieve the impacts of historical marginalisation and colonial advantage in higher education. As educators from a public higher-educational institution endeavouring to provide equitable learning opportunities, how do we, through spatial design education, relate to first-year students with an awareness of differences in student readiness impacted by schooling opportunities? What role can spatial design exercises play in alleviating these discrepancies while engaging all students in the first-year studio?

The problem: visual literacy and spatial design education

School subjects can directly affect the student's ability to adapt to the expectations of spatial design education. Visual Arts and EGD both contribute to visual literacy which improves the spatial design student's ability to communicate through enhanced drawing skills. Visual Arts training affords students the ability to work with a variety of artistic media, to communicate through expressive imagery with a knowledge of principles of effective visual communication. EGD enables students to draw with technical accuracy and understanding of the two-dimensional drawing as a to-scale representation of a space or object. According to Saidi and Nazier (2011, p. 185) exposure to Visual Arts is limited to well-resourced schools and the discrepancies in visual literacy between students with and without art training are a reality. Since neither Visual Arts nor EGD are prerequisite school subjects for admission to studies in the spatial design disciplines at the University of Pretoria, it is reasonable to expect of the design course to encompass the teaching of visual literacy skills required of a spatial designer. The obvious differences in students' exposure to the school subjects of Visual Arts and EGD result in a group of first-year students with contrasting aptitudes for visual literacy. This is problematic in that not all public schools offer Visual Arts or EGD. Of the public schools that do offer these subjects, most are inaccessible to financially disadvantaged students, especially those of informal settlement or rural school backgrounds (Saidi & Nazier 2011, p. 185). This poses a dualistic threat to spatial design education in that students from resourced backgrounds may be better equipped to handle spatial design education. Students without prior training in Visual Arts or EGD are less likely to apply for study programmes in design disciplines and those who do get there may have limited chances of success (Saidi & Nazier 2011, p. 185). Conversely, students with prior visual literacy risk boredom and disinterest should skills training be repeated.

A survey was conducted by the authors using data gathered from student selection files of the 2017 first-year students enrolled in ONT 100. Retaining the anonymity of students, we counted the number of students who had completed Visual Arts and/or EGD as school subjects and recorded them in order to determine the impact of the discrepancies in overall visual literacy of the first-year studio.

The table below indicates the percentage of students in the spatial design first-year class (2017) and which of these subjects they took at school:

Table 1: First-year spatial design students and their school subjects. Data collected from 2017 selection files

No of first-year 2017 students with school subject/s:	No. of students (out of 97 in first-year 2017)	Percentage of first-year 2017 class
Visual arts	14	14,4%
Engineering Graphics and Design (EGD)	42	43,4%
Both Visual Arts and Engineering Graphics and Design (EGD)	15	15,4%
Neither Visual Arts nor Engineering Graphics and Design (EGD)	26	26,8%

The contrast in subject background that is evident from Table 1 has the potential to result in a first-year class of contrasting aptitudes in visual literacy, with the majority of students having received training in Visual Arts, EGD, or both. The 26,8% of first-year students having not taken these subjects at school are a minority and may be at a back-foot in commencement of spatial design studies when held to the same standards of their peers with Visual Arts and/or EGD training. Given the collaborative nature of the spatial design studio environment where work is constantly on display, the showcasing of visual communication skills displayed by peers with Visual Arts and/or EGD training has the potential to diminish the confidence of the 26,8% without this advantage. This is a sizeable number that motivates consideration by the spatial design educator. It is a difficult scenario to navigate for the educator who has the responsibility to create a fair and relevant learning opportunity for all. Given the vulnerability of the first-year student in transitioning to higher education, it is critical that the educator address this contrast in literacy with deliberation.

Communalism

Communalism is a social concept which recognizes the interdependence of community members and the individual's responsibility in acting towards the well-being of the community (Boykin et al 1997, p. 409). Although communalism is a transcultural concept (Enslin & Horsthemke 2004, p. 549), it is a key characteristic of traditional African philosophy, referred to as Ubuntu (Boykin et al 1997, p. 410). Ubuntu defines an individual person on the basis of their community (Venter 2004, p. 150). Because communalism in the traditional African context has specific applications to indigenous social structures and roles (Venter 2004, p. 152), finding its relevance in a contemporary, multi-cultural environment is risky, with the most contentious dichotomy occurring between the Euro-centric orientation towards individualism and the African position on collectivism (Venter 2004, p. 152).

Regarded from the perspective of education, communalism places emphasis on collaboration and community as a source of knowledge building (Passi & Vahtivuori 1998, p. 259 in Tella 1998). Venter (2004, p. 152) recognizes communalism as a valuable concept for African education by emphasising its roots in “humanness”. She asserts that there is a need for a unique, meaningful and relevant South African educational identity (Venter 2004, p. 155) and that the concept of communalism should be reconstructed to facilitate the learning needs of a contemporary African context (Venter 2004, p. 156).

Following Venter’s call for interpretation, we acknowledge the strengths of communalism as a contribution to a uniquely African education based on interdependence and community while engaging critically with its traditional roots by re-interpreting its application for the contemporary teaching and learning needs of our spatial design first-year students, their diverse backgrounds and the studio environment. The strengths of communalism in education lie in collaboration, interdependence and co-operation, principles which are beneficial to spatial design exercises, a studio-based education, and our students.

The personal atmosphere of the studio environment encourages dialogue, peer interaction and is a catalyst for socially cohesive class groups. The class group is viewed as a community, with individual students offering the potential to contribute each other’s success. With careful facilitation by spatial design educators, the perspectives of the students as individuals within a community may be broadened and could benefit from the diversity in backgrounds of its students. It is recognised that the design of the introductory exercises in first-year of spatial design education require careful consideration and can play a critical role in equalising the impact of incongruities in prior visual literacy exposure on the transition into spatial design education.

We acknowledge the value that individual students bring to the learning environment based on their unique backgrounds. Through formulating the exercises, we account for prior knowledge and the individual background of each student to build a greater sense of self investment, contribute to the knowledge of their peers and view self- and cross- interest in the work produced (Feigenberg in Dutton 1991, p. 266).

Introductory first-year exercises

Exercise 1: In your Hands

In your Hands was the first exercise presented to first-year students when they arrived in the design studio at the beginning of 2017. It was inspired by the first-class, first-project designed by Stephen Temple (2008, pp. 199-208). Having received instruction to arrive prepared with one metre length of wire, a stone and pliers, students were handed the design brief that required them to design and construct an orderly support for a stone using wire at least one fist away from a table’s surface.

Apart from following Temple’s (2008, p. 199) initiative to introduce the spatial designer to activated thinking and the possibilities of making, the exercise is further intended to introduce the student to the concept of spatial manipulation as a three-dimensional practice. The choice of the materials, stone and wire, is an attempt to “even the playing field” (Botes 2012, p. 133) by providing students with a medium that is not typical to artistic or drawing production. Those students with a background in Visual Arts are unfamiliar with producing art through the medium of wire. Similarly, students with an EGD background are confronted with an introductory exercise that demands spatial manipulation on a three-dimensional level which challenges their training proficiency in visual communication through two-dimensional drawings.

The perception that the drawing of plans or sections as the primary skill informing spatial design is disrupted on day one and the process is reversed, with the student having to first

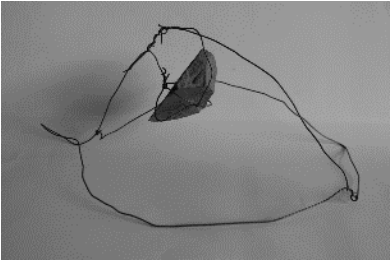
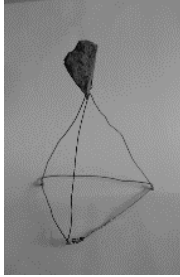
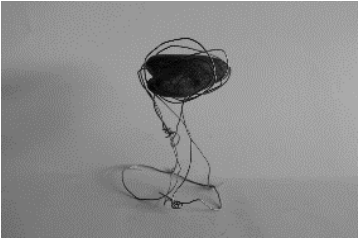
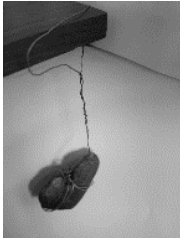
create the three-dimensional object, then two-dimensionally document, as the second part of the exercise, five views of this object with care to capture its characteristic features such as light, shadow, texture, materiality, patterns, markings and the like.

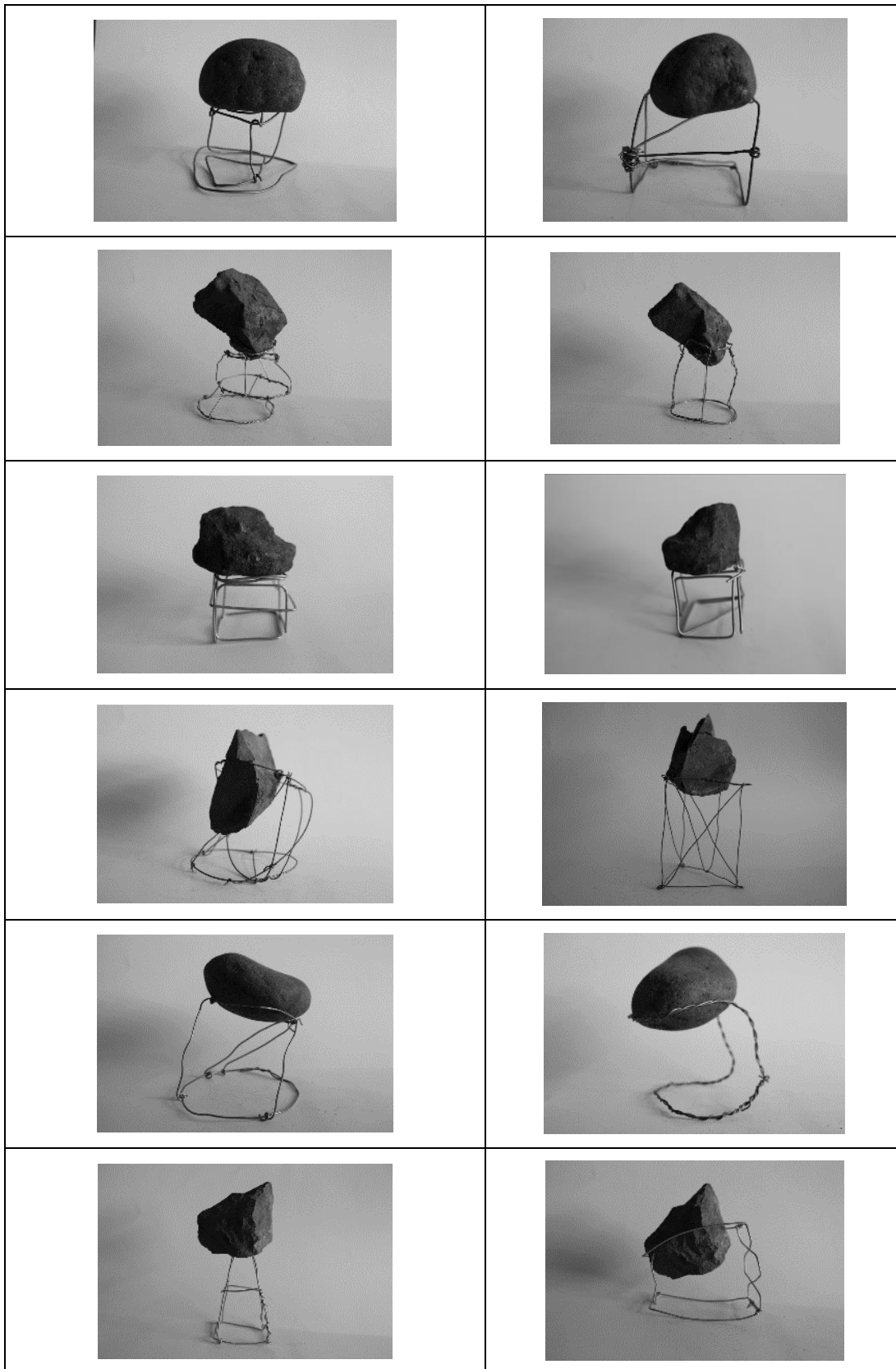
Although the prescribed medium of graphite and paper may be familiar territory to students with a background in Visual Arts and the concept of representation through drawing familiar to those of EGD backgrounds, the requirement of representing a design product in ways which communicate spatial qualities is a call for design thinking which acts beyond an image of visual appeal alone. This exercise is an iteration in spatial understanding. It requires students to reflect on what they have built and to translate and communicate aspects of the object in space in another medium.

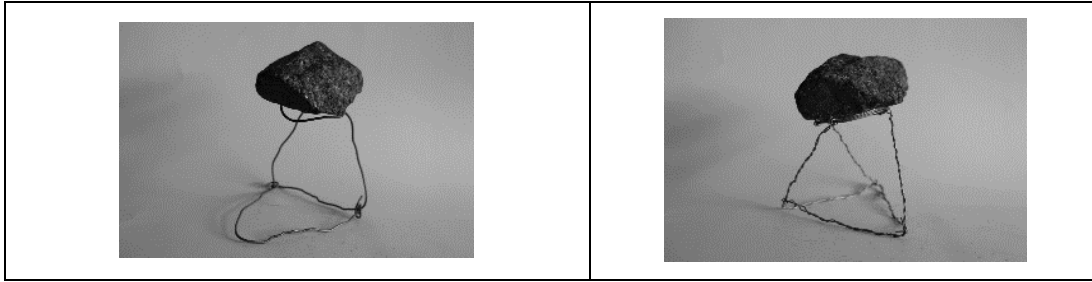
After a studio discussion and exhibition of all three-dimensional products of the exercise, students were asked, as the third part of the exercise, to reflect on their first attempt and approach the exercise of making again. The opportunity for iteration emphasizes the need for critical reflection in the design process, the ability to grow a design product through revisiting decisions and finding discretion in self-reflection. The opportunity to improve can help students who may have struggled with the first iteration to build confidence and prove to themselves that they are capable of fulfilling the brief. The group discussion, apart from stimulating a socially communal studio environment, enables the influence of collaborative ideas on the individual design process, a method which is co-operative with communalism (Higgs 2011, p. 42). The exercise highlights the possibility of multiple design solutions having viability. Moreover, it stresses the notion that there is no one single answer to spatial design. Having seen what is produced by their peers and critically discussing the different design processes and approaches give students the opportunity to process what has been done before and to choose to respond with a design product that is an improvement to their initial iteration and to what they have seen produced by their peers.

Spatial Design Exercise 1: In your Hands, 2017

**Table 2: Selection of 2017 student work from In your Hands – Iterations 1 and 2.
Photographs by authors**

Iteration 1	Iteration 2
	
	





Exercise 2: Self-Portrait

Following *In your Hands*, *Self-Portrait* re-introduces the medium of wire to students with an exercise requesting the design and construction of a three-dimensional, to-scale self-portrait.

Having reflected on the previous exercise and their own identities, students are requested to design and make a three-dimensional self-portrait using wire to convey their outer and inner selves. The portrait requires self-reflection, celebrates the individuality of the designer and asks the students to portray themselves in the process of the design and making of a three-dimensional portrait that is recognisable. The brief has deliberate room for interpretation by the student, allowing them to formulate their own understanding of their identity, and discovering a way in which to tangibly represent this using the forgiving medium of wire (Botes 2012, p. 133).


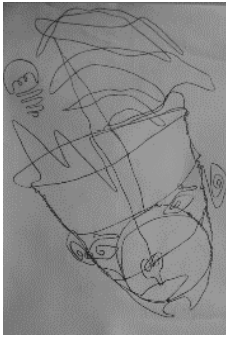
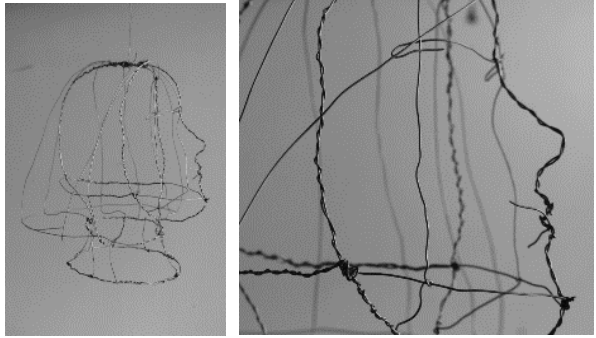
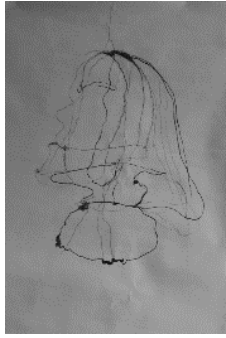
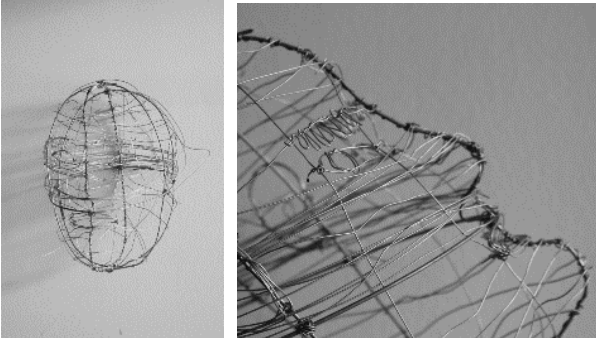
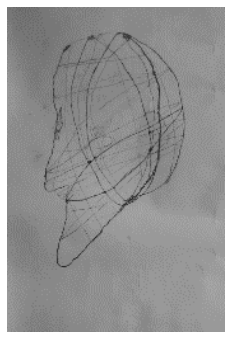
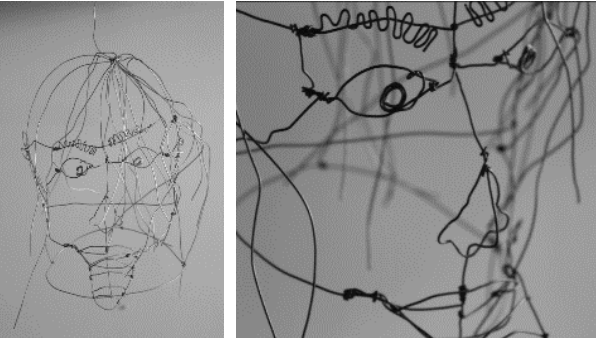
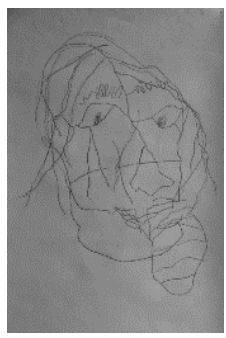
The result of the exercise is some one-hundred self-portraits suspended alongside each other in a gallery venue, with, at completion, the student alongside his or her portrait. The exhibition enhances the collective identity of the first-year students as a community, encouraging interaction under the pretext of a project that requires students to communicate something of their own identities. It generates peer to peer conversations, but also allows for each student's unique self to be acknowledged and valued by their peers and educators.

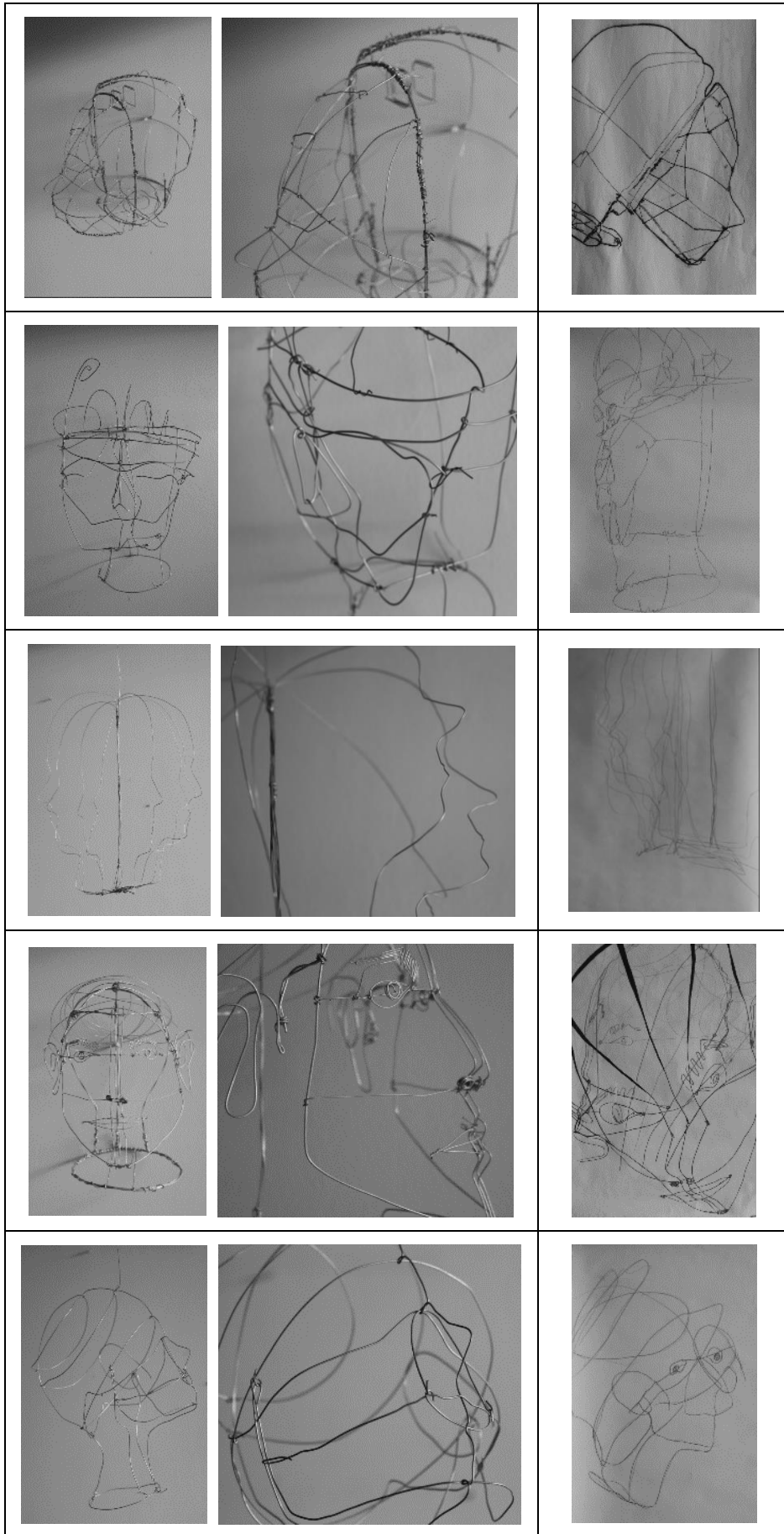
Saidi & Nazier (2011, pp. 187-8) see diversity in student backgrounds as an opportunity to broaden the perspectives of all students by responding democratically to the known and unknown contexts of design students through curriculum design. By relating the self-portrait exercise to the context of the student's self, the first-year commences with what he or she already knows. An opportunity is provided to each student to portray their own self-understanding through a predefined medium. Not only does the exercise embrace the student's self-knowledge, it also places value on their individual input and does this in the context of a group exhibition among the work of their peer community. The role of discourse sparked by the exercise is key to the development of design thinking (Le Roux 2006, p. 98) and promotes an environment which speaks of the concept of communalism (Higgs 2011, p. 42).

The two-dimensional shadow projection of the self-portrait, as the second part of the exercise, requires an iteration of the wire exercise. The reversal of the typical design process – making a three-dimensional product before its two-dimensional representation – initiates the students' understanding of spatial engagement and design as a three-dimensional product for which drawings are a means of representation. The request to display qualities of the portrait from different vantage points offer students an iterative opportunity to develop the narrative of their self-portraits through drawing while remaining true to the projected shadows of the three-dimensional portrait. An opportunity to reflect on the impact of qualities of light, shadow and angle projections all restate the significance of communicating the emotive qualities of space, beyond merely projecting a drawing from which products may be replicated. As with *In your Hands*, *Self-Portrait* challenges the prior knowledge students may have in visual literacy with an alternative medium, reversing the conventional process of design and emphasizing the importance of process in spatial design thinking.

Spatial Design Exercise 2: Self-Portrait, 2017

Table 3: Selection of 2017 student work from Self-Portrait – Iterations 1 and 2. Photographs by authors

Iteration 1 – Wire Portrait		Iteration 2 – Drawing
		
		
		
		



Conclusion

Two exercises, In your Hands and Self-Portrait, introduced the spatial design student to the concept of self-reflection and representation as ways of combining one's identity into the design process. The recognition of the value of individuality and identity of the student in a creative discipline validates each individual student as no single outcome is expected from the entire group of first-year students in these exercises. The value of the student group as a community is reflected in the opportunities for group discussion, group exhibitions and working alongside each other in the studio environment, aspects which are woven into the spatial design exercises. As individuals, students are asked to reflect on their own thoughts, identities, images and frames of reference to explore the making of a product which reveals their identities to their community of peers. The medium of stone and wire reduces the effects that prior visual literacy, through experience with typical artistic media and two-dimensional drawing, may have on the product of spatial design by reinforcing the requirement of self-reflection and iteration and highlighting the prominence of process in design thinking. The use of the students' individual knowledge contexts as informants to the exercises enables all students to approach the exercise, regardless of prior experience in visual literacy. These exercises require students with prior visual literacy to review their knowledge bases by introducing them to concepts of critical reflection while allowing those with minimal training in visual literacy to overcome the jump to design thinking by emphasizing the importance of process in design through self-reflection and iteration. The introduction of alternative media allow students to approach the exercise on an even playing field for which prior experience in working with wire, pliers and stone may have been unlikely. The reflection of self in the Self-Portrait exercise validates the individuality of the student and their identity as a critical factor in informing their own output. The iteration of the self-portrait as a reflection on to a two-dimensional surface (using graphite and paper) introduces students to the key mode of communication in spatial design education – the drawing as a representation of a three-dimensional spatial product without favouring the aptitude for precision from the EGD student or the expert control of media from the Visual Arts student. The process is about reflection and iteration, then representation.

Acknowledgments

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14th National Design Education Conference 2017

Hosted by Tshwane University of Technology & Inscape Education Group

#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Design Education as Woke Work

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Abstract

Ashraf Jamal (2016b, p. 68) regards the work *Us and them, the killer of the world* by artist Simphiwe Ndzube (2015) as an important signifier of the sociopolitical turmoil in the national psyche which openly erupted in the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in March of that year. Jamal highlights the essential work of interrogating social realities such as inequality on a structural level (which he argues this artwork accomplishes). He also reminds us that the dynamic of 'us and them' does not passively play out in institutions such as universities, invested in sustaining neoliberal interests as they are, but is actively replicated in such institutions. The work of dismantling the 'us and them' dynamic that consequently endures in South African (and global) societies and higher education, thus entails critically assessing the complicity of such institutions in reproducing existing injustices. In her academic work, African-Canadian theorist Christina Sharpe **similarly highlights the importance of** scholarship as intellectual activism that advances social justice. Such engagements can be seen as attempts to decolonise social institutions, including universities. **In this spirit, the current paper assesses design praxis as a broader sociopolitical phenomenon reflective of current social biases, and questions whether design can escape the imperatives of neoliberalism (directly implicated in the perpetuation of inequality), not only in terms of individual good will to do so, but structurally. Are there examples of decolonised design suitable for inclusion and validation in a decolonised curriculum?** Such design would have to demonstrate more than an attempt to ameliorate the effects of social injustice, but rather seek to pro-actively dismantle the apparatuses of exclusion. It would have to position itself as 'design by the people for the people' in order to escape the us / them binary, and do its work on the sociopolitical fabric as socially engaged design: design as woke work. A brief overview of initiatives (such as Ecoart Uganda, a community based project which has used recycled junk to create public spaces the community are proud of, and the African Robots project by Ralph Borland, which combines affordable robotics with the wire art of South African and migrant Zimbabwean street artists), facilitates the exploration of design from an alternative perspective which foregrounds social justice and that potentially repositions design praxis, and design education, as woke work.

Keywords:

Christina Sharpe, decolonised design, higher education, socially engaged design, woke work.

Introduction

The DEFSa 2017 #Decolonise! call states: “As design educators, we need to interrogate our role in decolonising design education,” and the call frames such interrogation as a moral and intellectual act. The aim of such praxis (morally directed interrogation of an existing field or discipline, in this case design education), is furthermore forwarded as a means by which to effect actual change. The current paper is a response to this call as an invitation to honest reflection and to action – two terms (reflection and action) not interpreted here as indicating the tired and imaginary theory / praxis divide, but as two kinds of praxis: thinking is a verb. In order to imagine what decolonised design education might resemble (in order to bring it about), it is necessary to clarify what is understood when referring to ‘colonised design’ and design education, at least for the current author. This differentiation between colonised and decolonised design and design education is then applied to a brief critical analysis of examples of current design praxis with a view to demonstrating a possible critical framework for receiving and conceptualising design in higher education.

Critical analysis entails the evaluative appraisal of texts which constitute “the claims made by ... theorists, ‘experts’, official bodies, ... [and] journalists,” as well as by designers, educators, and peers. The outcome is a judgment or conclusion based on “a balanced reading and overview of what other people have written,” in tandem with “experience gained in the field ... [and personal] knowledge and observations” (Gould 2011). Critical analysis is combined here with content analysis, in turn defined as an analysis of texts and examples of visual culture which is interpretive but also systematic and rigorous with a defensible internal logic (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, p. 1277). Lastly, the critical and content analysis applied here draws on (or reacts to) the theory of South African cultural analyst and lecturer Ashraf Jamal, and African-Canadian scholar Christina Sharpe, particularly her work on race and diaspora. The current exploration is written from a visual culture perspective broadly, but it is hoped that the observations made here might be useful in interrogating the status of decolonialism as it is currently unfolding in higher education in South Africa, in the creative industries centered on aspects of design praxis, and in design education.

Us and them

In a June 2016 review of the artwork *Us and them, the killer of the world* (a mixed media work created by artist Simphiwe Ndzube in 2015), Jamal seems to constructively engage with the Rhodes Must Fall campaign,¹ which he describes as “a long-overdue material and psychological struggle against the corrosive suppression of black agency” (Jamal 2016b, p. 68). He furthermore provides a useful framing of the context within which the Rhodes Must Fall campaign unfolded, namely the dehumanisation and instrumentalisation of designated sectors of society that neo-liberal capitalist ideology in tandem with western supremacy enables. In other words, Jamal clarifies the link between current post-colonial protest praxis, the higher education landscape in South Africa, and the meta-framework within which these exist, namely the late-modern manifestation of the Enlightenment project. Jamal highlights the point that Ndzube makes in his artwork, that neo-liberalism is predicated on a deadly othering. I adopt this us / them framing of the current struggle to decolonise higher

¹ The Rhodes Must Fall campaign was launched at the University of Cape Town in March 2015. Protesters agitated for the removal of a commemorative statue of Cecil John Rhodes, which served as affirmation of the lingering validation of western history and culture over African history and culture. This validation was furthermore seen to be perpetuated despite the lingering effects of colonialism in South Africa: Rhodes has been described as “an architect of apartheid” (Castle 2016). The statue was removed on the 9th of April 2015, but the campaign became a symbol and catalyst of the broader drive to decolonise higher education.

education, and society, as a useful if potentially problematic way of conceptualising what a decolonised education and society might resemble, and how it might be achieved.²

To elaborate, Jamal (2016b, p. 70; emphasis added) cogently observes that “at the dark root of our liberalised economy there remains the acute sense that black lives *remain* marginalised, expendable, irrelevant.” In his presentation *Africa will give the world a human face*, he reiterates the question as to what fifty years of decolonialism in Africa and twenty-three years of post-apartheid life in South Africa actually means in the face of such lingering black erasure (Jamal 2016a). Tangible aftereffects of the way in which Africa was carved up into territories parceled out to European sovereignties during the Berlin Conference, relegating these territories to Empire’s “economic depots and ... timeshares,” endure (Jamal 2016a). For instance, existing kingdoms were summarily split apart, and vast territories, utterly unrelated in terms of population, custom, climate or history, were ‘united’ as national territories with regions that are still agitating for independence (Sèbe 2014).³

It thus comes as a shock when Jamal (2016a), in trying to clarify what he means by the term humanism, states “I’m not talking here about the moronic endeavour of decolonising our campuses because that is yet another nihilistic product, a black essentialist dangerous product which is actually destroying the fundament of education ... the current black consciousness movement knows nothing about humanity.” Jamal does not expand on this analysis, and his conflation of nihilism and activism remains mysterious. It ultimately transpires that, for Jamal, the particularity of a resistance position (along the vectors of race, gender, class, etc.) is at odds with ‘true’ humanity, to be understood as a singularity that has the power to unite us all, (as long as ‘we’ cooperate and don’t insist on our ‘identities’). The inconsistency of railing against identity politics for being mired in essentialism whilst advocating for the ultimate essentialism of a global humanism, also evades Jamal. It is here that Christina Sharpe’s interrogation of systematised black exclusion becomes more helpful in thinking through lingering inequalities toward a deeper decolonisation. Engaging with Sharpe’s work assists in probing levels of actual transformation in the ‘post-colonies,’ including South Africa.

On blackness

Sharpe’s work on diasporic slavery is relevant to a consideration of decolonialism in South Africa, which cannot commence without a reflection on apartheid, an anti-black colonial project similarly dehumanising and enduring in its effects.⁴ In her work *In the wake: on blackness and being* (2016), Sharpe uses the term ‘wake’ to refer to several aspects of living as a black person in diaspora, thus in the aftermath of slavery. The term takes on a compound meaning, each iteration a metaphor for aspects of historical and current black experience: the disturbance in water caused by the passing of a ship or the dragging of a body; a vigil for the dead; “air currents behind a body of flight”; an eddy in water or air that marks disturbed flow; but also a mode of consciousness, a state of wakefulness, of being ‘woke’ (Sharpe 2016,

² In adopting this framework, the us / them dynamic is not *endorsed*, but utilised as a means by which to make a point within a context where the stark inequalities that still imbue South African society remain largely normalised. The adoption of a neoliberal stance is complicit in this normalisation of exclusion. Using a racialised framework similarly does not endorse racism, but highlights the fact that it exists.

³ Azawad was declared an autonomous state by Tuareg rebels who conducted an armed struggle in 2011/2012 to secure its independence from Mali. This uprising amounted to the fourth Tuareg rebellion in post-colonial Mali, signalling irresolvable contention between Mali’s Saharan and sub-Saharan populations.

⁴ Prof Anthony Bogues in *And what about the human?: Freedom, human emancipation, and the radical imagination* describes both slavery and apartheid as instances of ‘historical catastrophe,’ and elaborates as follows: “I am reaching for a way to both describe and name a human experience that cannot simply be understood as political domination or various forms of labor exploitation. Colonial power, racial slavery, and apartheid ... were specific forms of domination in which power pressed flesh, in which the spectacle of violence was the everyday ordinary, making the living corpse existence always a ‘state of emergency’. For the ‘native’ ... Being-in-the-world was constituted by a series of repetitive traumas” (Bogues 2012, pp. 37-38).

pp. 3-10; Sharpe, cited in Terreffe 2016, para. 71). The term's layered application, referring, as it does, to slave ships, to the bodies of slaves (alive and dead) tossed overboard, states of flight and agitation, the burden and care of mourning, and the conscious demeanor with which the sum total of these iterations of black life might be borne in order to survive and exceed them, furthermore foregrounds three significant considerations. In formulating the term, Sharpe means to emphasise, firstly, that blackness thus described is not limited to 'those in diaspora,' but is equally applicable to a global ecumene of the exploited: the contemporary collateral damage of neo-colonialism. She notes: "Living in the wake on a global level means living the disastrous time and effects of continued marked migrations, Mediterranean and Caribbean disasters, trans-American and -African migration, structural adjustment imposed by the International Monetary Fund that continues imperialisms / colonialisms, and more. ... Living in the wake means living the history and present of terror, from slavery to the present, as the ground of our everyday Black existence" (Sharpe 2016, p. 15).

Sharpe's second point is related to the first (which clarifies the ubiquity of the wake – its reach), and highlights the all-enveloping, structural *reality* of the wake. She refers to this ontological, deep-structural ground of black existence as the Weather: that is, "antiblackness as total climate," the social engine that drives the ongoing production of "the conventions of antiblackness" presently and into the future (Sharpe, cited in Terreffe 2016, para. 146; Sharpe 2016, p. 21). It is this aspect of the wake (its continuous re-production into the present and future, and its current ontological inescapability), that I want to foreground in this call to decolonisation of higher education 'after' apartheid. Sharpe's writing seems to be an attempt to negate or bypass a specific kind of denial, or escape – a crucial endeavour that constitutes the only foundation from which we can start the work of decolonising our institutions and disciplines as educators, if we wish to do so with intent. She asks: "What happens when we proceed as if we *know* this, antiblackness, to be the ground on which we stand, the ground from which we ... attempt to speak," when we truly "*inhabit* that Fanonian 'zone of non-Being'?" (Sharpe 2016, pp. 7, 20). What is activated by such an acknowledgement of the 'ground' – the ongoing social, structural reality of global and local exclusion of people of colour – is the possibility of proceeding towards its negation: the radical acceptance of the *status quo* as the first step toward its nullification. To live and work in, and against, the wake – to be woke – is "[t]o say I know where I stand, where I am placed, and therefore I can act from there" (Sharpe, cited in Terreffe 2016, para. 73).

The third concept encapsulated by the complex invocation of the term 'wake' of importance to the current discussion relates to my personal, embodied engagement with the task of decolonisation. Sharpe (cited in Terreffe 2016, para. 144) aptly observes that "[w]e can all be said to be in the wake but we are not all in the wake in the same way." It is essential for me to interrogate what it might mean for me, as a white, female educator, to grapple with the legacy of colonialism and apartheid in an education system that is becoming increasingly instrumentalising, professionalised and commodified – centred around issues of financial sustainability and the generation of third stream income in ways which fundamentally threaten critical thought and deflect time and energy away from attempts to clarify (much less live in the spirit of), such thought. These points of reflection demonstrate that, in order to effect decolonisation of any sort, the ground upon which the colonised institution – in the current case, the university – has been built, needs to be brought into focus: where is it that we stand?

On work

Sharpe's work is highly personal, and her accounts of loss and adversity concretise the notion of living in the wake in a way that encourages an equal amount of honesty from her reader. In contrast to Jamal's curious call for a global humanity, Sharpe's is an ability to tell a story "capable of engaging and countering the violence of abstraction" (Sharpe 2016, p. 8). Such abstraction enables the easy dismissal of voices not speaking from the centre, but also facilitates a self-protective denial and amnesia, both 'ours,' and 'theirs,' albeit from contrasting perspectives, and with vastly differing stakes. Both abstraction and amnesia enable ongoing oppression and exclusion. The work of decolonisation hence includes observing specifics in the present, and the courage to remember, and contest.

The observations of fellow black African scholar Keguro Macharia, to whom Sharpe refers (see <<https://twitter.com/hystericalblkns/status/895008146745421824>>), throws some light on work and life in colonised academia. Macharia (2013) recalls "the surprise on some professors' faces when [she] understood what they said," and further lists her reasons for abandoning a career as an academic: "unsubtle comments from academic peers that I had received 'special' favors ... banal and uncomprehending racism of white students who spoke of blacks as 'they' and 'them' and complained about 'their broken English' and 'bad dialect' ... a system that served black students badly, promising an education that it failed to deliver, condemning them to repeat classes, to drop out, to believe they were stupid ... conference panels where blackness was dismissed as 'simple,' 'reactive,' 'irrelevant,' 'done'".

Lest Sharpe's and Macharia's experiences be discounted as irrelevant to the current South African context, I reluctantly endeavour to add some observations of my own: the more or less palpable dismissal of female authority and of women in general; the valorization by peers of a mild (friendly, un-demanding) manner, frequent demonstrations of deference, and a self-censoring modulation of expression, when female-bodied; the dark anger of a critical mass of white colleagues manifesting as contemptuous cynicism, withdrawal, or claims of a generalised social and cultural victimisation; barefaced references to the primitive customs of Africans and Muslims, with a clear understanding of western (white), liberal, secular culture as the only civilised culture; casually shared comments such as "It's very nice in central-Europe, there aren't many blacks"; traumatised reactions to the call for the Africanisation of the curriculum with indignant proclamations such as "what about the Fabergé egg?!" ; my own initial frustration with black scholars and philosophers for constantly problematising race when it was more comforting (and personally exonerating) to believe in a warm and fuzzy but fictional togetherness and equality; conspicuous deficits in empathy – alarming in the context of education; ongoing discrepancies in access to education, funding and basic amenities along the axis of race, conveniently regarded as indicative of a class division; the uncritical demonisation of dissent and of students; the tacit or overt acceptance of race as an unspeakable and unthinkable subject; and the less overt yet unmistakable lack of validation, in and outside the lecture hall, of ways of knowing, self-expression, and being not aligned with western norms.

I voice these experiences in some detail, encouraged by Sharpe's unflinching engagement with the current real, as I have come to the following conclusion: decolonising the curriculum, university, and our respective disciplines as practiced and taught cannot be based on superficial, meaningless, and dishonest lip-service, but begins with a sober assessment of where we are. True transformation entails a kind of principled intervention that can only commence once we acknowledge our respective roles (us / them; denial / amnesia) in endlessly replicating the structural dynamic of the university and the classroom in its current form.

It is, subsequent to the basic recognition of the nature of the university and of its curricula, important to ask whether there are examples of decolonised design that we may hold up as representative of good (and socially relevant) praxis which furthers the aim of social justice.⁵ Design 'by the people for the people' might be able to escape the us / them binary, as well as the machinations of western supremacy, and could be referred to as socially engaged design: design as woke work. The last section of this paper critically assesses examples of praxis in order to sound their decolonising potential.

Design as woke work

The conceptualisation of design as woke work emphasises praxis in a particular mode of consciousness, namely being woke to social inequality and its causes. It also valorises the *work* that goes into design as a form of social deliberation or mode of critique and exploration rather than as an economic enterprise. For this reason, the current discussion focuses on design projects rather than products, and a number of the projects subsequently also span a range of interrelated disciplines such as socially embedded visual art, community architecture, craft and design.

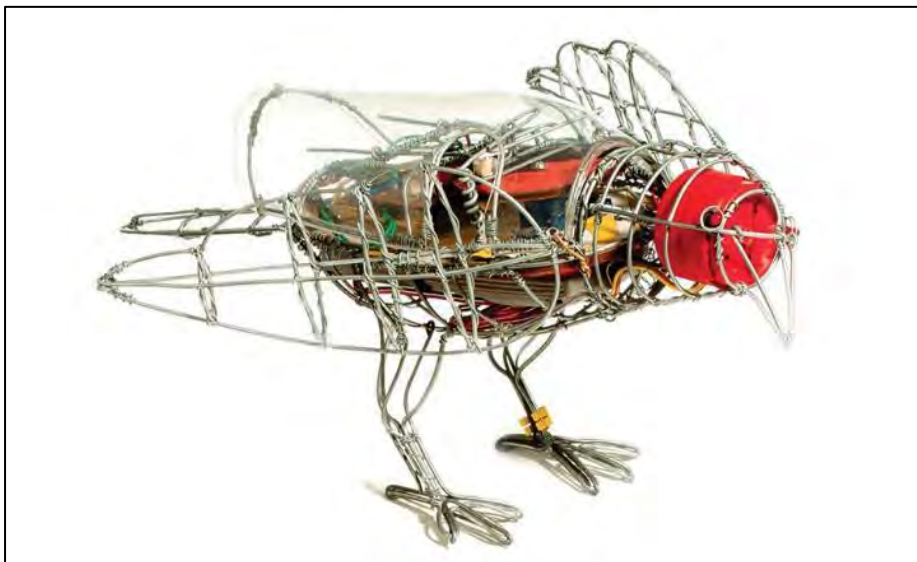


Figure 1: Ralph Borland in collaboration with Lewis Kaluzi, *Starling 1.2*, 2015, wire, found objects, servo motor, toy parts (Cromhout n.d.).

The *African Robots* project by Ralph Borland, in collaboration with South African and Zimbabwean wire artists, claims to address the disparities in access to education as well as the empowerment of street artists and migrants through skills enhancement: Shorkend (2016, p. 170) describes it as relevant for “ground-level social development.” Borland studied Fine Art at undergraduate level and went on to obtain a multidisciplinary PhD from the School of Engineering at Trinity College, Dublin (Cromhout n.d.). Appealing wire figures, mostly of animals such as birds and frogs, are combined with found objects such as plastic bottles. These are audio-visually animated by means of discarded cellphone parts (batteries) and re-used Mp3 players (Borland, cited in Greenwood 2017). See Figure 1. Wire artists can access the electronic parts from informal cell-phone repair networks, making their

⁵ The pursuit of social justice is interpreted here as congruent with the task of decolonisation whilst acknowledging that an actually achieved decolonisation does not necessarily signify the disappearance of inequality. Such injustices can, however, only be addressed once / if they materialise in a verifiably decolonised region, of which there are no current examples.

production of the robots financially viable and sustainable, and obviating Borland's continued involvement or 'support.' This sustainability compares favourably to similar projects aimed at social engagement, such as the *Mapula* embroidery project situated in the impoverished Winterveld. Without its coordinators, who advise the makers in terms of themes, and who market the products on their behalf to galleries, corporations and craft shops, projects such as *Mapula* would in all probability cease to exist. (See Schmahmann 2002 for more information on the *Mapula* project). Borland's work demonstrates the necessity of making use of existing outlets (street art sales) and grass roots networks. However, the paternalistic aspect of the empowerment of unschooled black creative practitioners by white benefactors with formal education, remains. This observation is not meant to cast aspersions on the *Robots* project (clearly beneficial to the crafters and migrants involved),⁶ but to bring into view the reasons for the necessity of a project such as this in the first place, namely the lingering disparity in access to education, finance, and career options along a racial axis.

Somewhat wider in scope, the Basural Foundation (previously known as Junkitecture), hosts a site on which they share environmentally friendly projects (not their own), that make use of recycled and upcycled 'junk.' The term *basural* means 'dump' or 'landfill' (Basural n.d.). Projects hosted on the site range in scale from fashion apparel to the built environment, and whilst some (such as earrings made from 'slices' of colourful wooden pencils), would only nominally contribute to environmental greening and embody the concept of greening rather more symbolically, others seem to earnestly grapple with environmental and socio-economic challenges.

The *PH22* project (Essen, Germany, 2008-2010) by Dratz & Dratz Architects, highlighted on the Basural site, consisted of a terraced temporary structure of just under 190m² built from bales of recycled paper. Comprising an experiment with paper as building material, the frame was able to weather the climate well over its two year existence (Figure 2). The architects plan to apply the technique to more permanent structures, and the prospects seem promising (Espinosa Cancino 2017). The built structure can itself be recycled back into other useable products (Figure 3). The costs are not made available on the project site, but one can presume that clients able to afford the work fall in a niche demographic, and the overall environmental and social impact is still negligible to non-existent.

⁶ Borland has received grant funding from the National Arts Council with which he plans to open an 'academy' for street artists and migrants teaching them the skills he has shared with a handful of street artists, on a broader scale (Greenwood 2017).



Figure 2: Dratz & Dratz Architects, *PHZ2 Project*, 2008-2010, Essen, Germany, recycled paper, wood (Basural n.d.).

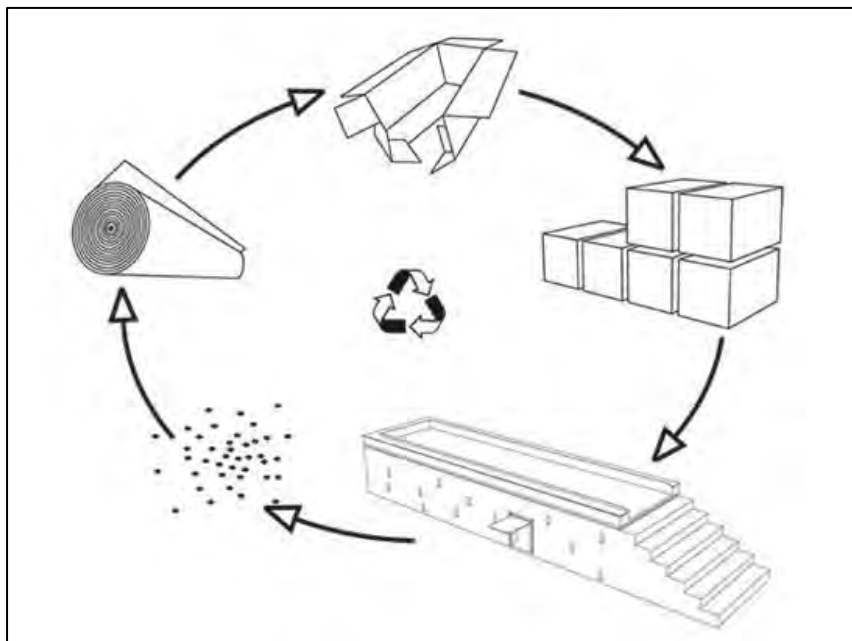


Figure 3: Dratz & Dratz Architects, *PHZ2 Project*, concept sketch (Basural n.d.).



Figure 4: Gregory Kloehn, two houses from the *Homeless Homes Project*, ongoing, Oakland, California, found materials (Azzarello 2014).

On the opposite end of the scale in terms of affordability and social restitution are mobile shelters for homeless people, built by Gregory Kloehn as part of the Homeless Homes Project (Figure 4). Based in Oakland California, Kloehn's project started after an extended period of observing the ways in which homeless people would rebuild their makeshift settlements after waves of municipal clean-up operations (Seligman 2015). Inspired by their ingenuity and tenacity, he set out to build small scale mobile homes making use of the materials commonly utilised by them: the flotsam of urban life thrown out by more permanently settled city inhabitants. Kloehn has lived in his own hand built homes to see whether they are suitable, as one of his main concerns is the restoration of dignity and a sense of heightened safety for the residents (Azzarello 2014). He visits the owners regularly and takes note of any suggested improvements: one such innovation is the installation of a system which funnels rain water into a small tank fitted with a hose (see Figure 5). By 2015, Kloehn had built and given away twenty-five homes (Hooton 2015). As with the *Robots* project discussed above, the disparity in agency and levels of social inclusion and mobility between Kloehn and the residents of the homes he builds, remain. While the shelters provide increased safety and privacy, they have an unfortunate resemblance to kennels – a shocking observation that indicts not so much Kloehn's intentions and actions, but the stark dehumanisation of sectors of modern society. And, again, the deep-structural sociopolitical dynamic through which such exclusion and dehumanisation are effected, prevail unscathed.



Figure 5: Gregory Kloehn, a home from the *Homeless Homes Project*, ongoing, Oakland, California (Alfaro 2015).

The last project mentioned here, facilitated by Ecoart Uganda, brings this brief appraisal of potentially socially relevant design praxis to a close. Ecoart Uganda was founded by artist Ruganzu Bruno Tusingwire in 2010 as an art collective that focuses on creating ecological awareness and community resilience (Gilmore 2015). The specific project highlighted here, namely the coordination of the building of a playground (or ‘amusement park’) from refuse by members of a shanty community in Kampala, was submitted as a curatorial project by Ugandan writer and curator Robinah Nansubuga to the Visible Projects Awards in 2015. She defines a socially engaged project in terms of its ability to impart skills and create “ownership for the community in which the project operates, whilst being able to survive without donor funding” (Nansubuga 2015, p. 198). The park was built in Kampala’s Kireka neighborhood from discarded plastic bottles, cans, tyres, obsolete technological artefacts and other structural materials, and it became the first of several examples of similar community-built parks across Uganda and elsewhere in Africa (see Figure 7).



Figure 6: Ecoart Uganda in collaboration with the Kampala community, *Ecoart Amusement Park*, 2013, found materials, Kampala, Uganda (Ruganzu Bruno Gallery, 2015).

Tusingwire's aim is to mitigate the gap between the rich and poor, evidenced by the juxtaposed cities and slums of Uganda and elsewhere, to humanise the urban landscape and to create a sense of social cohesion (Ruganzu Bruno Tusingwire Ecoart Project 2015). This communally built park combines elements of community architecture, socially engaged design, artistic social commentary, and activism. As such, it evades design as the creation of an increasing flood of semi-necessary products which function to oil the cogs of capitalism.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to grapple with the theory and praxis of decolonising higher education and the discipline of design by critically appraising firstly the institutional landscape itself, and secondly, a number of examples of design, broadly defined as such. The examples were chosen as potentially representative of praxis that evades current exclusionary and elitist frameworks, and that, as part of a decolonised curriculum, might be validated from an alternative perspective: that is, from a point of departure where human ways of being revolve around activities other than ownership and ease of consuming as a meta-good. An attempt has been made to directly confront the prevailing and lingering biases in higher education regarding blackness itself, and the forms of cultural expression suitable for critical discussion and emulation. The notion of conscientised, principled effort, which can also be described as woke work, has formed the basis of the current analysis of what might be required for the effective renewal of design education in the neo-colonised sphere.

The examples discussed here, however, neither evade nor change the over-arching system in which they were created, and all were initiated by individuals who had access to further training. This leads to the disturbing possibility that the university might never be able to

fulfil its envisaged role as a decolonised institution, as it merely serves to replicate existing social relations – us, and them. The design discipline, itself, would in all probability similarly cease to exist in its current form outside a capitalist system. The question arises: to what extent can the university, and the disciplines taught there, remain intact when, for instance, production and consumption are no longer needed to sustain capitalism, or when the elite no longer mobilises institutions of higher learning to replicate itself, or when woke work has succeeded in its conscientising and liberating task?

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Decolonising Fashion Education with Athol Fugard's

Boesman and Lena

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Abstract

At undergraduate level, research design and methodology was never a formalised part of the fashion education curriculum. Furthermore, fashion-related modules tend to comprise content predominantly of a Western nature: for example, the 'history of fashion' is often presented from a European perspective. In comparison to the vast, multi-disciplinary discourse relating to Western fashion, literature on African fashion is limited, which poses challenges for teaching, learning and curriculum transformation. The call for decolonisation has established a need to narrow this gap.

This paper responds to this call in a two-fold manner. Firstly, at third year level, research design and methodology was introduced as a formal semester module offering. Secondly, the authors integrated performance art into the first year theory of fashion and third year research methodology modules. The iconic South African play by Athol Fugard, Boesman and Lena (1969), was incorporated at first and third year undergraduate level because of its relevance to the South African political climate. This culminated in a collaborative fashion teaching and learning initiative with the institution's Arts & Culture Centre. Including performance art, in particular Boesman and Lena, within fashion education created an opportunity to contextualise fashion in a localised manner and align with the call to decolonise education.

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. Firstly, the authors explore students' views with respect to incorporating Boesman and Lena in first year fashion theory and third year research. Secondly, the authors explore how predominately 'born-free' students experienced the play from a personal perspective given its political underpinning. To achieve these aims, the authors deployed a qualitative research approach. Semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect data and explore the views and experiences of first and third year fashion students. A content analysis method was applied to analyse and categorise the raw data.

The paper is structured such that it begins by first narrating and contextualising Boesman and Lena against the backdrop of the South African social and political climate. The paper then shifts toward contextualising the scope of the teaching and learning initiative for both first year theory of fashion and third year research. Finally, the authors discuss students' views concerning the integration of Boesman and Lena within teaching and learning and their

experiences as predominately 'born-free' students. The authors conclude by offering their reflections from an educational perspective regarding the teaching and learning initiative.

By including performance art within fashion education an opportunity was created to contextualise fashion in a relevant, localised context thus aligning with the call to decolonise education. As such, this paper contributes to the larger discourse on fashion education which, at times, is considered superficial and frivolous. However, teaching and learning initiatives such as this demonstrate that fashion education could indeed address complex issues such as decolonisation.

Keywords:

Boesman and Lena, born-free student experience, decolonising education, fashion education

Introduction

In professional fashion design practice, research is seen as the application of tools such as literature reviews, market surveys, direct and indirect observation, visual images, and Likert scale questionnaires to collect information (Keiser & Garner 2012; Selvwright 2007; Tullio-Pow & Strickfaden 2015). In addition, Ezinma Mbonu (2014, p.9) argues that fabric experimentation, photographs, sketching and touring or travel are all forms of primary research, while secondary research is undertaken through consulting books or the internet. These research tools then inform the generation of design ideas.

Fashion education mirrors the aforementioned professional practices regarding the formation of design ideas. However, from a South African undergraduate perspective, research design and methodology has not been formally included in fashion education curricula, despite the fact that students are generally expected to engage in research. The result has been that students receive insufficient support to assist them to conduct research in a formal, academic and systematic manner, which poses challenges for their articulation into further studies. This is further compounded by the fact that there has generally been a 'colonial' approach, within South African institutions, to the theoretical underpinnings linked to fashion education, with theoretical module content mostly drawn from a Western context. For example, the 'Theory of Clothing' module presented at first year level, traditionally, and alarmingly, excluded any African fashion. From an international perspective, Ian Griffiths (2000, p. 69) indicates that fashion education underpins fashion theory in historical and linear chronologies or what he refers to as "hemline theories", but from the perspective of Western theorists. Mirroring these western counterparts, fashion education in South Africa traditionally underpinned fashion theory in the "chronology of dress based in a historical paradigm" (Smal & Lavelle 2013, p. 197).

One of the authors of this paper was assigned to teach the 'Theory of Clothing' module for the first time in 2016 and found the lack of theory relating to African fashion concerning. When attempting to address this problem, the large literature gap in respect of African fashion became evident. Moreover, existing literature seemingly focuses on well-known ethnic groups but discusses these in the context of cultural practices, rather than from a fashion perspective. This lack of literature has meant that African fashion is completely overlooked in terms of design and trends, and is treated as 'other' to the Eurocentric fashion world.

To overcome these challenges, the authors responded in a two-fold manner. Firstly, at third year level, research design and methodology was formally introduced in 2015 as a semester module offering within the curriculum. This research methodology offering included theoretical constructs regarding different research approaches, research designs, data collection and analysis methods, as well as the ethics associated with formal research. Data analysis methods included systematic visual and semiotic analysis given the nature of the discipline. Secondly, the authors integrated performance art into the first year theory of fashion module. This was addressed in the module 'Theory of Clothing' by including African fashion history (as well as Eastern and Oceania histories of fashion), and by introducing the iconic South African play by Athol Fugard, *Boesman and Lena* (1969) into the module content at both first and third year level. The inclusion of the play was based on its relevance to the current South African social and political climate. The result was a collaborative fashion teaching and learning initiative within the University of Johannesburg's (UJ) Arts & Culture Centre, who staged the production of the play. Including performance art created an opportunity to locate fashion education within a more relevant and localised context, thus aligning with the call to decolonising education.

In light of this, the purpose of this paper is two-fold. Firstly, the authors explore students' views with respect to incorporating *Boesman and Lena* within the first year fashion theory and third year research methodology modules. Secondly, the authors explore how predominately 'born-free' students experienced the production of *Boesman and Lena* from a personal perspective, given its political underpinning.

The paper is structured such that it begins by discussing *Boesman and Lena* against the backdrop of the South African social and political climate. The paper then contextualises the scope of the teaching and learning initiative for both first year 'Theory of Clothing' and third year 'Research Methodology'. The discussion then moves on to report on the research design and methodology deployed within this study. Finally, the students' views concerning the integration of *Boesman and Lena* within teaching and learning, and their experiences as predominately 'born-free' students is addressed. The authors conclude by offering their reflections from an educational perspective regarding this teaching and learning initiative.

Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena*

Boesman and Lena was written by Athol Fugard in 1969. It is set against the backdrop of turbulent apartheid South Africa. The play depicts a 'day-in-the-life' of a middle aged coloured couple, named Boesman and Lena, who take "to the road following the destruction of their shanty home through urban renewal" (Angotti 1971, p. 468). The couple carry all their belongings consisting mostly of discarded items and come to settle on a desolate plain for the night (Angotti 1971, p. 468). Boesman and Lena are plagued by a number of deeply concerning issues, such as racial oppression, substance abuse, gender violence and poverty. Additionally, they live in a permanent state of liminality due to their displacement. Outa, the third and final character, stumbles upon Boesman and Lena during the night. Outa is depicted as an unintelligible, old, ill and homeless African man, who passes away during the night.

An excerpt of one of Lena's dialogues below illustrates the mood evoked by the play:

Look back one day Boesman. It's me, that thing you drag along the roads. My life. It felt old today. Sitting there on the pavement when you went inside with the empties. Not just tired. It's been that for a long time. Something else. Something that's been used too long. The old pot that leaks, the blanket that can't even keep the fleas warm. Time to throw it away. How do you do that when it's yourself? I was still sore where you hit me. Two white children came and looked while I counted the bruises (Fugard 1969, p. 10).

The UJ Arts & Culture production of *Boesman and Lena* cast the characters as black African, rather than coloured. Alby Michaels, the UJ Arts & Culture production designer, explained that black African people were cast so as to highlight that the social and political issues of the storyline are not unique to only one South African racial category but are rather cross-racial and remain problematic in current South Africa.

Boesman and Lena wear second-hand, soiled and tacky garments that resonate with those typically worn by homeless people, even in the present day. UJ Arts & Culture play producer, Grace Meadows, explained that cast members bought new items of clothing which were then traded for clothing worn by homeless people in the Johannesburg area. In doing so, the 'costumes' worn by Boesman and Lena were authentic items obtained from desolate individuals. Lena also wears a baby's cloth diaper on her head to symbolize the baby she miscarried in her past, presumably due to her living conditions. Outa is in an even more dire situation than Boesman and Lena, and wears only black plastic bags and carries a stick to assist him in walking. Like the costumes, the set design includes minimal items, primarily Boesman and Lena's belongings such as an old blanket, a tarpaulin-type sheet, bottles of wine and an assortment of discarded items.

Teaching and learning initiative

With regard to the associated teaching strategies and learning tasks associated with this collaborative initiative, the first year students, as part of the 'Theory of Clothing' module, were briefed on Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena*. As a teaching strategy, first year students were introduced to basic semiotics and tools with which to carry out observations. For their learning tasks, each student was assigned one of the three characters and were then required to write a description of the complete 'look' of the character. The description of the character's look was guided by aspects, such as hair, top garments, bottom garments, accessories, shoes, headwear, as well as demeanour and stage setting. Meanwhile, the third year students, in the newly-introduced research methodology module which also included content relating to visual and semiotic analysis, were tasked with analysing and interpreting the costumes worn by the three characters, utilizing semiotic analysis. In line with the principles of semiotic analysis, the costumes required analysis, interpretation and justification by considering signs, symbols, their meanings and the literature. The third year students worked in groups of three and each group selected one character from the play.

The students were able to attend the production of *Boesman and Lena*. All of the third year students attended the performance, and 85% of the first years were able to do so. In addition, the stage director, set designers and coordinators from the UJ Arts & Culture Centre presented a seminar to the third year students with the purpose of contextualising the set design and the costumes worn by the characters against the backdrop of the storyline and its setting.

The viewing of the production itself, the seminar session, the descriptions of the complete 'look' written by first year students, visuals provided by the UJ Arts & Culture and literature surveys all served as collected data. The third year students then utilised this data to analyse the costumes worn by the characters by deploying a semiotic analysis methodology. For assessment, each group presented their findings to an assessment panel comprising of both authors and Alby Michaels, the UJ Arts & Culture production designer. The inclusion of Alby Michaels created opportunities for dialogue and understanding with respect to how viewers of this particular production interpreted the costumes and set design.

In the section that follows, the authors report on the research approach and methodology that they deployed to collect and analyse data for the purposes of the current paper.

Research approach and methodology

This research is guided by a qualitative research approach, which aims to explore, understand and interpret the experiences and meanings that people assign to social and cultural contexts (Creswell 2014; Merriam 2009). Qualitative research was selected given the focus on exploring and interpreting participants' views with respect to the incorporation of *Boesman and Lena* within fashion education. In addition, such an approach was deemed appropriate in order to understand the personal experiences of the predominately 'born-free' participants, particularly considering the social and political underpinnings of the play.

In line with a qualitative research approach, purposeful sampling was used because the participants had certain knowledge and because they fit specific criteria for participation in the research inquiry Babbie 2008; (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit 2004). As such, the participants comprised of first and third year fashion students who were engaged in the described teaching and learning initiative. These students are termed 'born-free' citizens of South Africa, since they were born after the advent of democracy in the country. To collect data, the authors administered 33 open ended questionnaires to first and third year fashion students in order to establish their views regarding inclusion of *Boesman and Lena* in fashion education, and how they personally experienced the production.

To ensure ethical research practice, the authors verbally and in written form invited first and third year students to partake in this research. All students were informed of the nature and scope of this inquiry and how the data would be collected and analysed. Additionally, all students were informed with respect to the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their identities. As such, all surveyed students granted the authors written consent to partake in this inquiry. In addition, the authors obtained written permission from Alby Michaels and Grace Meadows to use their names in this paper.

To analyse the collected data, a conventional content analysis method was employed. Such a method is used to describe a situation where “existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited” (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, p. 1279). With this method of analysis, raw data is coded with a systematic coding system and categorised into themes or categories (Babbie 2008; Saldaña 2016). From this coding system, the data was categorised into two main themes namely: 1) student’s perspectives on the teaching and learning initiative; and 2) the ‘born-free’ experience of attending *Boesman and Lena*.

Discussion of findings

In this section, the authors discuss the findings that emerged from the data analysis under the two main themes of 1) student’s perspectives on the teaching and learning initiative, and 2) the ‘born-free’ experience of attending *Boesman and Lena*. We discuss each of these two main themes in turn.

Student’s perspectives on the teaching and learning initiative

The students’ perspectives regarding the teaching and learning initiative fell under two sub-themes namely: a) the incorporation of performance art within fashion design curricula, and b) the incorporation of relevant South African history within fashion design curricula.

Incorporation of performance art within fashion design curricula

From a first year perspective, all students responded positively with regard to incorporating performance art within the ‘Theory of Clothing’ module. The comments made by the first year students demonstrate that they developed a greater understanding of the meanings that can be found in fashion and clothing alike. This may lend itself to a more in-depth understanding of semiotics within fashion. Similarly, all the third year students also viewed the incorporation of performance art within the research methodology module in a positive light. The third year students appeared to easily link fashion and performance art in order to gain a deeper understanding of research methodology. In Table 1 below, excerpts from the students’ raw data are included so as to support the findings within this sub-theme.

Table 1: Raw data supporting the incorporation of performance art within fashion design curricula

LEVEL OF STUDY	PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
First	Student 3	I thought it was an interesting was to get us thinking and taking note of the costumes worn and the significance they play
First	Student 4	I enjoyed having a different source to use in class
First	Student 5	I think it was a creative learning experience. It was an innovative teaching method which helped us to think out of the box.
First	Student 7	I think it was a good idea because for me it taught me how to analyse and understand one’s clothing and how the clothing is worn and the purpose for it.

First	Student 12	I was quite impressed that we were allowed to attend the play as it makes the subject very interesting and broadens the knowledge base.
Third	Student 19	Was interesting and made one understand the different ways of research and methods used to address a particular situation/play.
Third	Student 20	I found it interesting and refreshing to have a collaboration of the two departments and how they link to each other. I learned a lot about research and interpretation of symbols and signs.
Third	Student 31	It made methodology more easy to understand and we could incorporate what he have learned easily.

It is clear from the data obtained that the incorporation of performance art into the fashion design curriculum was viewed positively by students.

Incorporation of relevant South African history within fashion design curricula

Most first year students (85%) reported that the incorporation of relevant South African history benefited design insight. The first year students confirmed that this particular performance led to greater understanding of the role that socio-cultural issues play in fashion. The student responses indicate that they found the inclusion of local content enhanced their understanding of fashion theory. As such, first year students believed that this understanding will impact on and improve their role as designers. In the same light, all the third year students suggested that the production created greater awareness and heightened insight about design. These findings suggest that design can no longer be seen in terms of aesthetics only, but should rather be seen in terms of its emotional connection and evoked meanings. To support these interpretations, Table 2 presents extracts from the raw data produced by the students.

Table 2: Relevant South African history and the benefits for design insight

LEVEL OF STUDY	PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
First	Student 1	There is so much of history and depth in terms of apartheid that the effects of apartheid are still experienced by so many people. I have witnessed a lot of hardship and pain by people around me and I wonder what the outcome would be if there was no apartheid that took place in South Africa. This project allowed me to understand that clothing plays a far deeper role in society than what one would assume. Certain judgement about an individual's life can be shown through clothing. At times, clothing can hide what an individual is experiencing and all of these elements allows a designer to think and create and design effectively.
First	Student 2 (negative response)	Possibly in certain aspects, however, not greatly. The character's clothing was not very inspirational for me... Not everyone can afford designer clothes and this opened up my eyes to this, as it may trigger some ideas to make affordable and sustainable clothing.
First	Student 3	It has shown me the importance of the way clothes can carry a message about someone, not only from the play but in life as well. It has also made me take note of the

		small details of clothing which can also add to a bigger meaning.
First	Student 4	I think that linking a period of time... to fashion makes this experience more personal. As a human you are driven by emotions and to understand someone's suffering makes you not only understand their choice in fashion but also to empathise with them. So I think this project has made me understand theory of fashion clearer in a sense.
Third	Student 14	It made me understand the design process system better and made me realise the importance of the elements of design.
Third	Student 22	Before this project all I saw is what I wanted to see... but this has forced me to gain knowledge and look further and into a deeper meaning.
Third	Student 24	It did give me insight in design, because we analyse clothing in the context of the play and semiotics behind the whole meaning of the play.
Third	Student 29	I now try to design emotionally. Make clothing that I feel connected to because that way it will always mean something to me.
Third	Student 32	It has allowed me to understand that there is need for meaning behind specific designs, it is not just a matter of aesthetics but a matter of meaning.

Overall, it is evident that the first and third year students felt the teaching and learning initiative contributed positively towards their understanding of fashion theory and research methodology. The findings suggest that the inclusion of relatable content in fashion education can actually have a positive impact and change the way design manifests itself.

The 'born-free' experience of attending *Boesman and Lena*

As the play is set in 1969, the authors were interested in ascertaining the extent to which the content of the play remained relevant for so-called 'born-free' students, that is, those born after the first South African democratic elections in 1994. The first year responses were mixed, with a slight majority (54%) of students expressing a personal connection with the play, and 31% of students responding that they did not connect with the content. A small number (15%) of first year students felt that this did not apply to them because they were unable to attend the theatre production. From a third year perspective, the responses were balanced with 50% of students indicating that they did not necessarily experience a personal connection with the play even though they felt a sense of empathy towards the characters and, by extension, towards the struggles faced by people of colour in South Africa. On the other hand, 50% of students expressed a personal connection with this play, despite being of the younger, 'born-free' generation. Some responses were very personal, which demonstrates that a teaching and learning initiative of this nature is able to link students emotionally to the curriculum content which can arguably benefit their learning experience. Table 3 includes relevant excerpts from the student data in support of these findings.

Table 3: The 'born-free' experience of attending *Boesman and Lena*

LEVEL OF STUDY	PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
First	Student 5	The play shows the state some parts of South Africa is in. It shows that not much has changed... women a[re] still abused and you never hear about it.
First	Student 10	I have seen situations that is repeated like this due to skin colour and substance [abuse] of a friends' parents.
First	Student 8	The play supported the story that my mother and grandmother told me about apartheid. My elders told me how they were treated because of their race. The play showed that perfectly.
First	Student 12	Growing up I stayed in a community that was plagued with drugs and alcohol. I could identify with how people could use their last penny for alcohol.
Third	Student 25	Personally: didn't [personally experience a personal connection]. Emotionally yes. The play was very moving.
Third	Student 26	The characters related to people of our country, that's why it is more relatable.
Third	Student 27	This has never been my reality. But I do not dispute what the majority of South Africans faced during those tough oppressive times. These issues are still happening in South Africa... I can connect and empathise with the people in this situation.
Third	Student 29	It made me understand better how... apartheid affected...people we don't read about. My great grandparents found themselves homeless a number of times and ended up seeking refuge in Sophiatown.
Third	Student 31	Most of my great aunts worked for wine farms just outside Wellington and they were still being paid with alcohol.

Overall, it would appear that students felt that the content of the play was relevant to the current situation in South Africa. The notion of 'born-free' students identifying with an apartheid-era play could be viewed as concerning, because it would be hoped that South African youth would not have first-hand experience of issues that people of colour experienced in the height of apartheid.

Conclusion

The findings in this paper shed light on the benefits of incorporating South African literature, history and performance art into the fashion design curriculum. It emphasises the need to adjust the curriculum to include content that students can relate to, not only because the teaching and learning initiative enabled a more in-depth understanding of the curriculum content but also because it creates an opportunity for lecturers to positively engage with students.

Incorporating UJ Arts & Culture's *Boesman and Lena* into the fashion design curriculum is one way in which the authors began to address the gap regarding South African fashion design literature and apply understanding of research design and methodology in relevant and local contexts. Notably, this teaching and learning strategy allowed the authors to begin the process of decolonising the fashion design curriculum, predominately taken from a

Westernised slant, by including South African history and relevant content. The outcomes from this teaching and learning initiative as well as the student responses demonstrate that decolonising the fashion design curriculum allows students to deeply engage with their education with positive impact on how they approach their design tasks.

In addition to highlighting the constructive effects that decolonisation has on student learning, this teaching and learning initiative sheds light on current student issues, such as gender violence and substance abuse. These kinds of issues could also be considered as topics to restructure the fashion design curriculum for continuous meaningful and relevant engagement for students.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

History of African indigenous costumes and textiles: Towards decolonising a fashion design curriculum.

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Abstract

Worldwide, a close connection is demonstrated between the clothes worn by people and their cultural or political expression. The subject covering the history of costume taught in many fashion schools or institutions, focuses primarily on Western ideologies with little to no African concepts addressed. This paper explores the availability of a rich history of African costume and textiles that have remained indigenous to many people in most parts of Africa. Some of the examples include the dressing styles of the Maasai of East Africa, Adire textile influences of the Yoruba from West Africa and the Himba and Ndebele from Southern Africa. Many Africans while in diaspora, try to retain their heritage and African identities through traditional dressing styles. They use this to express freedom from colonialism and a way of articulating individualism in a market flooded with a variety of Western fashions. Some of these groups have chosen to integrate some Western styles or items as part of their own traditional heritage (often more for practical purposes), but continue their own customary dressing styles despite this. Very little literature has addressed African costume and textiles as important theoretical components that should form part of the history of costume taught in higher education institutions that ultimately influence and inspire design concepts. It is acknowledged that there are many distinctive dressing styles in the African and pan-African settings that can support the importance of its inclusion into any Fashion Design curriculum. Western designers have sought inspiration from various African cultures, costume and textiles for many years signifying its importance. However, this has not been recognised, acknowledged or documented as part of the teaching materials and the educational content within curricula focused on historical costume and textiles. Through decolonising fashion history curricula and incorporating more indigenous ways of creating contemporary African fashion, such content can be guided by but not dictated by Western norms. The aim is to build and enrich the African Fashion Design knowledge system with an indigenous-centred approach.

Keywords:

Curriculum decolonisation; Fashion curriculum; African indigenous costume; indigenous-centred curriculum

Introduction and problem statement

Several scholars express that South Africa is confronted with educational challenges due to its colonial history and apartheid that created the—blacks only—Bantu education system (Asmal & James 2001, p. 186; Donahue & Bornman 2014, p. 2; Lam, Ardington & Leibbrandt 2011, pp. 2-3). Although the apartheid regime ended, a lack of cultural inclusiveness in educational content still persists. Recent demonstrations by university students against colonial monuments (cenotaphs) around the country; the recent campaigns advocating for the decolonisation of education—ringing true where fashion curricula have not become inclusive—and the ‘fees must fall’ outcry all attest to the need to re-examine current curricula, which principally reflects Western ideologies. In responding to the student’s call, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has issued a directive for all universities to decolonise their curricula (Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) 2015).

The aim of this paper is to explore some of the rich history of African costume and textiles that have remained indigenous in most parts of Africa and provide a point of consideration for fashion educators. By including these examples, the transformative process can be initiated for fashion history curricula that have remained exclusively Western based in many institutions. This despite South Africa gaining its independence from the apartheid regime in 1994. This theme is inundated with glossy coffee table books, but the true impetus for new exploration of indigenous African costume and textiles should be the lack of sound academic information.

The fundamental content in most fashion history theory modules follows the European historical timeline and focuses on Europe as the originator of costume, fashion and textile development. From a western perspective this holds true, yet often development (even in Europe) outside of the triatic English, French and Italian areas is glanced over if considered at all. Fashionable costume originating within this triad is believed to have travelled, often via the sea-fearing vessels on trade routes to the colonies including Africa (Strutt, 1975). The ‘fashion capitals’ of the world today remain situated in London, Paris and Milan even though new locations have been added. Fashion history also provides fundamental understanding of the influence of historical costume and fashion, contemporary fashion and the fashion cycle and its influence on the core of any fashion design programme. This focus includes the concept and design, pattern and garment development processes. The daily authenticities exhibited in African costume and textiles by “the colonised people that have powerfully encoded and so profoundly influenced curriculum transformation” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin 2007, p. 48) should therefore be included.

Globalisation of markets has transformed the competitive forces, businesses and manufacturing sectors of many countries. This is realised through shifting forms of international trade where the Chinese now export Shwe-shwe garments, Xhosa-style dresses and African prints to South Africa and the African continent. The fabrics worn by African people are imported from other courtiers and the licenses of these fabrics are not necessarily owned by African companies.

Conducting a product search for ‘African print clothing’ on a marketplace website, in this case Alibaba.com (2017) <<https://www.alibaba.com/>> yields substantial hits (see Figure 1). Adding parameters that narrow the search to only mainland China, still resulted in over ten thousand hits. Within these, the manufactures could supply African print textiles and clothing at very reasonable price points, making one question how many of these products are already available and sold as authentically African in South African stores. In her newspaper article Okafor (2017, para. 9) alludes to a similar situation: the *shuka* worn by the

Maasai are now manufactured (not as per the usual) “in Dar es Salaam... [but] even in China, bearing the text ‘The Original Maasai Shuka’ on the plastic packaging”.

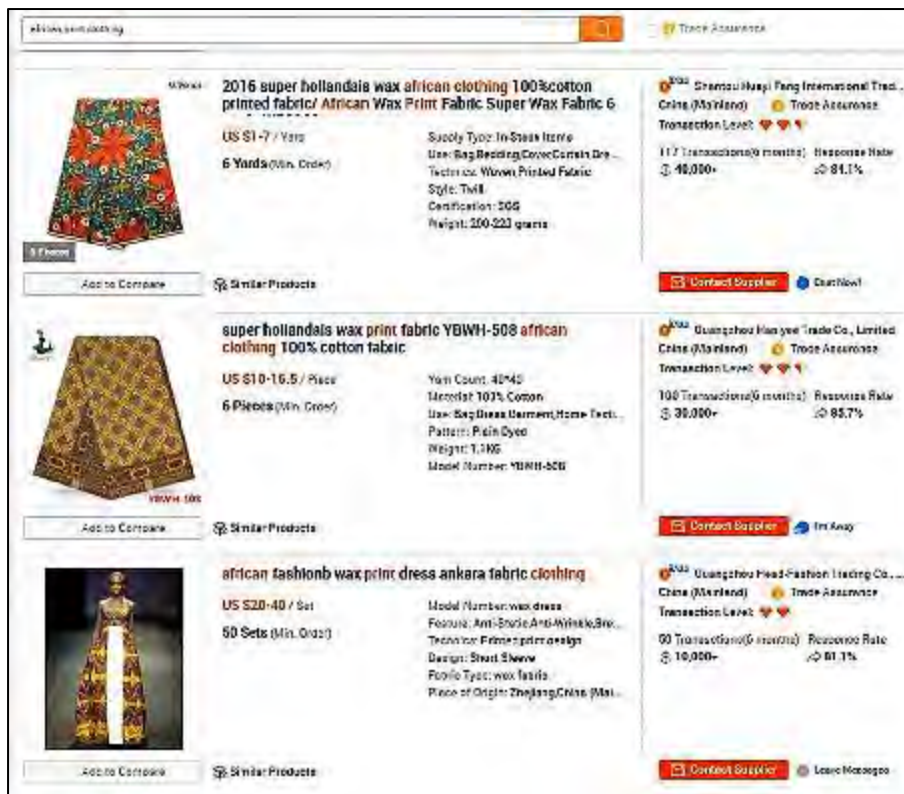


Figure 1: Alibaba.com screenshot of search result examples (Alibaba.com 2017)

The high levels of imported textile fabrics and garments into Africa, enforces the need to be globally present and relevant in our local design endeavours and Fashion Design programmes. It has been suggested that we could re-design or create new fabrics—close to our heritage—produce them locally and finally empower, improve and grow our own economy, instead of supporting these external sources. The same is true for South Africa as we could benefit from an inclusive national heritage ideology that can ultimately articulate to proudly South African dressing styles.

Decolonisation of curricula in perspective

Decolonisation as a term, is clearly defined by Cabral (1993, p. 62) where it:

...is important to be conscious of the value of African cultures in the framework of universal civilization, but to compare this value with other cultures, not with the view of deciding its superiority or inferiority, but in order to determine, in general a framework of struggle for progress, what contribution African culture has made and can or must receive from elsewhere.

African countries in particular, have embraced the concept of decolonisation with the aim of upholding an African agenda that dignifies the people of Africa as human beings and key role players in its socio-economic development (Arowolo 2010; Cruz 2012; Lotte 2006). Many ways of expressing the aspect of decolonisation include education, cultural preservations, festivals and ways of dressing (Arowolo 2010, pp. 1-2). Both Cabral (1993, p. 62) and Cruz (in Sium, Desai, & Ritskes 2012, p. XII) also alludes to the fact that there is value in moving towards this state of being ‘un’-colonised through the re-evaluation and attributing true value to the indigenous cultures and their contributions, but only if done equally with those

contributions from the West. In this regard traditional African dressing styles and textiles need to take centre stage in any Fashion Design curriculum as they inform indigenous knowledge, which is as dynamic as the fashion world, always creating and always moving forward as observed (Cornassel 2012, p. 89; Hendrickson 1996, p. 11). Resultantly, the interrogation of existing content in Fashion Design programmes at large becomes key towards the decolonisation of such programmes through exploring how the rich history of African costume and textiles can be factored into the educational content throughout.

Numerous countries, in time, have also seen some form of colonialism and many people's lives have been shaped to some extent by incidences of imperialism (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin 2007, p. 24). During colonial times, African tribes had to adopt elements of Western identities, ultimately modernising their dress (Nxumalo 2008, p. 46) and acknowledging that "European fashions were elements of a system designed to sweep away the culture and traditions of the colonized Africans" (Hendrickson 1996, p. 11). When Western clothing and fabrics were introduced to Africans, they quickly embraced these items because it was flexible and practical in terms of weight due to the nature of the textiles it was made from. Modern clothing and textiles were lighter than the animal skins and bark clothes—which were rigid and restricted flexibility—traditionally used by the African peoples (Hendrickson 1996, p. 11).

The newly introduced articles of clothing opened up new ways of imaginative possibilities for indigenous Africans and changed the way they dressed. These newly dressed up identities could be invented and became a way to communicate back to their colonial masters (Aris 2007, p. 17). They began changing their way of dress and their cultures transformed to those of the influencing Western cultures. Figure 2 shows the incorporation of hip and *derrier* enlargements worn (influences of the Victorian bustle) under the traditional garments as well as leg-of-mutton sleeves.



**Figure 2: Sketch of *Pedi* dress showing Victorian influence by B. Tyrrell
(in Nxumalo 2008, p. 46)**

Although many Africans gradually adapted to wearing Western clothes, there were those who chose tradition instead. Some traditional costume and textiles have inspired many Western clothing styles, designs and designers who have sought identity and inspiration from various African cultures, often with little or no acknowledgement, documentation or compensation. This paper will attempt to highlight the inclusion of such persistent traditional dressing styles into fashion and textile design curricula.

A snapshot of indigenous African dressing styles

No single definition exists for the act of or acts related to covering the body. This 'act' has been defined by various researchers, ultimately creating a broad umbrella of interrelated definitions. For the purpose of this document, Roach-Higgins and Eicher's (2010, p. 15) definition of *dress* as an assemblage of modifications of and supplements to the body is fitting. *Dressing* can be defined as wearing a piece of clothing together with adornments such as accessories, beading, tattooing and hairdressing to create a unique look (Rucker, Anderson, & Kangas 1999, pp. 59-77). Other than covering nakedness and providing warmth, clothes also communicate – the function of clothing in a social communication is emphasised by the viewpoints of both the wearer and perceiver (Kaiser 1988, pp. 10-16).

African peoples such as the *Maasai*, *Yoruba*, *Himba* and *Ndebele*, initially resisted (mostly as a political stance) but later assimilated the colonial and post-colonial influence on their own terms to suit their needs. They mostly continue their traditional way of dressing albeit with the incorporation of modern clothing or textile pieces. Furthermore, understanding the dressing styles of such distinctive cultures offers an opportunity to address design issues relevant to African markets.

The Maasai of East Africa – tradition as a political stance

During colonial times, for the *Maasai*, traditional dress remained a conflicting point as the country moved towards post-colonialism. According to Aris (2007, p. 2) “[d]espite the differing circumstances in each country (Kenya and Tanzania), dress consistently provided a battleground for Africans to assert their culture and build nationalism in the fight against external attacks on their way of life”.

Maasai dress was in direct opposition to a new policy from the post-colonial government. President Nyerere's government in Tanzania viewed the *Maasai* way of dressing as conflicting with the country wanting to be seen as contemporary and advanced and “[i]f this image was not created, Tanzania would likely be denigrated and shunned by international investors and businessmen” (Aris 2007, p. 14). Resultantly, no *Maasai* was allowed into the capital, while wearing their “limited skin clothing or a loose blanket” (Aris 2007, p. 14).

Dress in itself became a narrative for the discontent some African people felt. The tug of war between them, the colonisers or their post-colonial governments became a passive-aggressive method of war and expression against this loss of identity. Aris (2007, p. 18) supportively states the “struggle over the way African bodies were to be clothed and presented – a struggle simultaneously political, cultural, moral, and aesthetic – was a crucial element in the battle of wills”.

The *Maasai* people living in Kenya and Tanzania have retained their traditions and lifestyle despite pressure, especially in recent years from the East African government, to replace their traditional dress. The *Maasai* adapted *shuka* (sheets of fabric seen in Figure 3) of specific colour schemes and have not veered far off from their customary dress and ornamentation to date (Kennet 1995, p. 85).



Figure 3: Examples of *shuka* worn by the *Maasai* (Okafor, 2017).

This in turn is used as inspiration by Western designers as seen in the Thakoon, 2011 and Louis Vuitton, 2012 collections (Figure 4). The fact that indigenous African costume plays such a large role for international designers again highlights the lack of inclusion of African indigenous-centred content in existing historical fashion theory.



Figure 4: Thakoon Fall 2011 Ready-to-Wear (Condé Naste 2017a); Louis Vuitton Spring 2012 Menswear (Condé Naste 2017b).

The Adire fabrics of the Yoruba people of Nigeria

Adire fabrics (as worn in Figure 5), use resist-dye techniques and are produced by the *Yoruba* people of South-Western Nigeria. *Adire* is a *Yoruba* word translating as “tied and dyed” (Olugbemisola Areo, & Kalilu 2013, pp. 22-34) and cassava or resist paste is also used for block dye-penetration and to create colourful patterns. The skill of tie-dyeing has purportedly

been passed down from mother to daughter and immense *Adire* business networks stretch across West and other parts of Africa (Saheed 2013, pp. 1-8). The craft is mainly practised by the *Yoruba* women and they use indigenous plants, particularly the “Elu” (Olugbemisola-Areo, & Kalilu 2013, p. 6) or indigo dye plant.



Figure 5: “Adire – Indigo textiles amongst the Yoruba (Excerpt)” movie still (Lipp 1995).

Another nomadic African tribe from Northern Africa well known for their indigo dye usage, is the *Tuareg* (see Figure 6). Seligman (2006, p. 58) indicates that the *Tuareg* wear the:

...tagulmust, characteristic of male Tuareg, of white cotton cloth and a separate indigo dyed cloth known as aleshu....[and the] cloth is dyed with indigo several times and powdered indigo is beaten into the cloth, giving it luster. The indigo comes off easily on the skin and has resulted in the Tuareg being referred to as the ‘Blue People’.



Figure 6: “Tuareg man on camel, Talak, Niger” (Seligman in Seligman 2006, p. 73).

Notably, commercial dyes such as vat and Azoic dye among others, have been introduced. However, traditional indigo dyeing plays a significant environmental role as no chemicals are required – promoting sustainable practices. The trade of *Adire* fabrics have continued and has influenced many contemporary Western and African designs as seen in Figure 7.



Figure 7: Contemporary *Adire* designs and fabrics on the runway (The Guardian 2016).

This provides another example of the richness contained within the African continent – not only from the indigenous knowledge systems related to *Adire* production, but also the tradition that has been continued throughout generations of *Yoruba* women. Tie-dyeing and block dyeing is such an integral part of the fundamental course content covered in textile related subjects that the omission from this content of *Adire* and their use of the indigo plant for dyeing purposes is difficult to understand. Where a student’s first encounter with this concept could be localised through *Adire*, it is more likely to be through association to 60s hippie culture instead.

The Himba people of Southern Africa – tradition frozen in time

Semi-nomadic and known for their clothing made of leather and red ochre covered bodies, the *Himba* are often described as “a people caught in a time warp” and as “remnants of the past” (Jacobsohn 1990, p. 9). Jacobsohn (1990, pp. 11-12) also indicates that the *Himba* can be traced back to the origin of the *Herero* speaking people’s recorded history—roughly around 1550. Around two hundred years later they crossed the Kunene River to settle in the remote mountains of Kaokoland (the Kunene region) of North West Namibia. The tribe split however and those that remained became the *Himba* of today and the other part of the tribe moved to what is now central Namibia and remained the *Herero* (Jacobsohn 1990, pp. 11-12).

The *Himba* have clung to their traditions as is observable in Figure 8, but much like the *Maasai* they have also embraced more modern elements in their way of dressing such as contemporary textiles, plastic items and other materials. They still rub their skins with red ochre (Namibia Tourism Board n.d.a, para. 1) giving them a distinctive warm glow and the women in particular are known for their elaborate hairstyles, hair pieces and jewellery such as wrist and ankle bracelets and ornate necklaces.



Figure 8: Himba women (Namibia Tourism Board n.d.b).

The Mercedes-Benz Award for South African Art and Culture often engages different design or artistic disciplines every year. In 2009 the “Berlin exhibition... [was] the first institutional presentation in Europe of recent trends in South African Fashion, showing diverse aspects from Haute Couture based on indigenous traditions via minimal trends” (Daimler Contemporary Berlin 2009, para. 2).

Johannesburg label, Black Coffee (Daniça Lepen and Jacques van der Watt) won the award. Their collection (see Figure 9) clearly shows the strongly inspired garment pieces. The draped fabric, the hoods and neck ‘pearls’ create similar detailing to those found in the dressing style of the Himba women. The brick red colour scheme chosen was also clearly inspired by that of the red ochre covered skins of the Himba. Again, evidence of indigenous inspiration in a (local) contemporary fashion context is evident in the collection designed by Black Coffee. Further pieces submitted as part of their awards entry also included garments inspired by the Ndebele and made from Shwe-shwe fabrics.



Figure 9: Black Coffee collection exhibited as part of the Daimler Art Collection, Berlin (Daimler Contemporary Berlin 2009).

Considering that South Africa was settled by the Dutch in 1652, yet the recorded history of the *Herero* speaking peoples can be traced to circa 1550, then the *Himba* predates the colonisation of South Africa by around one hundred years. However, the irony of having such culturally rich indigenous people on the doorstep and within South Africa, begs the question as to why they (and others) do not feature more prominently as part of Fashion Design curricula.

In contrast, returning to the traditional, the *Herero* of central Namibia continue to wear their traditional costume. However, what has become their traditional costume (see Figure 10) do not originate from them but were imposed on them during German occupancy and colonisation.



Figure 10: Costume drama: Herero woman in blue dress in cow dance pose (Naughten in Watson, 2013).

The *Herero* reportedly continues “to dress like their colonial masters” as this “[t]ribe clings to [their] 19th century dress ‘to protest against the Germans who butchered them’” (Watson, 2013). They believe that “wearing the enemy’s uniform will diminish their power and transfer some of the strength to the new wearer” (Marten in Watson, 2013). Again clothing is also used in a reverse conversation as a form of protest as indicated before, on the wearer’s own terms.

The Ndebele people of Southern Africa

The South African *Ndebele* people are another indigenous South African people with a richly colourful and artistic heritage. “The *Ndebele*, like other African people, combined functionality and artistic traditions that were carriers of their cognitive culture” (Siamonga 2014, pp. 5-6). Sadly, today it is a rarity to see *Ndebele* woman dressed in traditional clothing in the streets, whereas this was not an uncommon sight as little as twenty to thirty years ago. To see *Ndebele* prints or inspired accessories on a European high fashion runway is far more likely to happen nowadays.

Esther Mahlangu is a vibrant *Ndebele* artist of current times and she attests to the lively culture of the *Ndebele* people through various paintings (Van Vuuren 2012, p. 335).

Mahlangu was one of the only women, specifically from a black South African tribe, to establish herself as an artist in a very male dominated society. She is recognised as the face of *Ndebele* art – even where other *Ndebele* women were as capable as her of producing the same artistic works – yet Esther managed to find a marginal amount of recognition (Van Vuuren 2012). Despite this she is probably glanced over, if featured at all as a part of art history educational content. However, she is not only an icon for empowering women but also an artist in her own right who claimed her fame during a time when black women were not promoted in South Africa.

As with the previously included cultures, the use of patterns and colours by Western Fashion Designers is clearly influenced by traditional African art. The *Ndebele* people are known for their colourful details, architecture, art and their dress as a source of inspiration. The May 2012 issue of Vogue Magazine, featured an editorial fashion shoot by the photographer, Mario Testino. The shoot was very clearly African inspired, evident in the inclusion of elements one can consider to be ‘traditional’.

Furthermore, a very strong *Ndebele* print influence is noticeable as well (see Figure 11). The clothing



Figure 11: Photo shoot by Mario Testino for Vogue UK Magazine, May 2012 (Visual Optimism 2012).

items that were used as part of the styling for the photoshoot included designers such as Timothy James Andrews, Alberta Ferretti and Michael Kors. The styling of the shoot did however evoke further African themes through layered fabric prints such as leopard print, zebra print, snake skin prints and the use of big, bold bracelets as earrings and worn on the arms as well and chunky neckpieces. The very distinctive *Ndebele* prints did however take centre stage in many of the garments styled for the editorial piece.

As with Thakoon in 2011 and Louis Vuitton in 2012, ample examples exist (see Figures 12 and 13) the inspiration—and sometimes blatant copying of indigenous hair, make up, branding elements, costume and textiles—used by well-known Fashion Design houses bring to mind again the contradiction of this situation. Indigenous knowledge is sufficient to ‘borrow’ from as artistic inspiration but not to be included adequately as part of the educational basis for the same discipline that continuously ‘borrows’ from it. Western designers grow rich off

artistic output that is not their intellectual property and disregard the large influence that indigenous cultures play, especially in the fashion industry.



Figure 12: Jean Paul Gaultier Spring 2005 Couture Collection (Condé Naste, 2017c; Condé Naste, 2017d; Condé Naste, 2017e; Condé Naste, 2017f).



Figure 13: Junya Watanabe Spring 2016 Ready-to-Wear (Condé Naste, 2017g; Condé Naste, 2017h).

Quintessential French Fashion Designer, Paul Poiret (and early-twentieth-century taste maker) incorporated textiles, garment styles, images and ornaments from West Africa in his designs. In another reference to Africa, Poiret in 1924 created 'Nubian', a gown connected in name to the Nubian tribes of Southern Egypt and Northern Sudan. International designer labels inspired by Africa include *Tanger*, which has a link to the Tanger city of Morocco, among others.

An informed mind shift is needed in creative fields that inspiration from what is often seen as a 'lesser' culture does not constitute a 'lesser' offence when stealing from that culture. Earlier statements are quite fitting at this point where firstly, one way of expressing the

aspect of decolonisation can be done through education (Arowolo 2010, pp. 1-2); and secondly, where re-evaluation and attributing true value to the indigenous cultures and their contributions must be done, but only if done equally with those contributions from the West (Cabral 1993, p. 62; Cruz in Sium, Desai, & Ritskes 2012, p. XII).

Conclusion

Revision of history of fashion curricula must focus on the inclusion of Western, African and also other cultures such as those from Asia and the Americas. As previously indicated, including all African costume and textiles here is not possible, yet the few examples presented here emphasise the importance of its inclusion in the fashion curricula overall. The mere snapshot of some of the more familiar cultures in Africa, especially where the dress and textiles are still worn today, support the cultural richness that exists. Furthermore the use of these cultures as inspiration by Western designers show its importance as a source of said inspiration.

The selected African examples discussed in this paper forms just part of a starting point to critically analyse African costume and textiles and this is again supported by the need for research as seen in the lack of available academic materials dealing with this theme. This also creates ample opportunity for fashion academics to explore these cultures from a discipline specific perspective in order to generate suitable academic material and more importantly, a drive towards its inclusion in content.

It is essential for the development of an inclusive African and South African Fashion Identity and understanding that can be sustained through teaching and learning of indigenous knowledge systems.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Research Sleeping Dogs in Fashion Design Departments of South African Universities: A Decolonisation Obstacle?

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Abstract

South African universities are exploring strategies to decolonise higher education in response to student's calls. This manuscript investigates research sleeping dogs in fashion design departments of South African universities. Research sleeping dogs are defined as academic staff who do not have a doctorate qualification, resulting in their inability to fully perform research related activities. Through 2015 data sets sourced from CHET (2017) and Mbatha & Mastamet-Mason (n/d), a benchmark was done of the academic qualifications of staff in fashion design departments of South African universities against national academic qualifications of staff. Using the NDP Vision 2030's functions for universities, this study determines if research sleeping dogs found in the manuscript will be an obstacle in decolonising higher education.

The study found 54% of staff are research sleeping dogs at national level, while fashion design departments of South African universities have a 93% rate of staff who are considered research sleeping dogs. Using the above findings and NDP Vision 2030's functions for universities, this study argues that academic staff in fashion design departments of South African universities have inadequate manpower to: (i) produce new knowledge; (ii) identify existing knowledge and find new applications for it and; (iii) validate new knowledge through curricula.

The manuscript concludes that fashion design departments of South African universities have inadequate research skills and an under-qualified staff complement to decolonise the fashion design discipline. The manuscript makes a strategic and policy contribution by linking decolonisation and NDP Vision 2030, in an effort to awaken research sleeping dogs in fashion design departments of South African universities.

Keywords: *Fashion Design curricula, Decolonisation, NDP Vision 2030, Doctorate shortage, South African higher education.*

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Introduction

The South African higher education landscape has been characterised by protests covering a range of issues that are perceived to impact negatively on the country's skills development agenda. Anecdotal evidence suggests that while these protests have attracted interest from government, they have not managed to attract interest from the elite South African universities known not to engage in protests. However, protests held in 2015 and linked to decolonisation of higher education have attracted interest from even the elite universities, as well as society in general (Heleta 2016). Heleta (2016, p. 1) further explains why it is important to decolonise the South African higher education arena:

Since the end of the oppressive and racist apartheid system in 1994, epistemologies and knowledge systems at most South African universities have not considerably changed; they remain rooted in colonial, apartheid and Western worldviews and epistemological traditions. The curriculum remains largely Eurocentric and continues to reinforce white and Western dominance and privilege.

Evans (2016) explains that decolonisation of higher education means rethinking and reframing South African higher education curricula and “reconstructing the African continent from various perspectives”. Evans adds that the decolonisation of higher education has found interest in other African countries, including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ghana. The low throughput rate that is negatively impacting on the South African government's revenue indicates that the current state of South African higher education curricula demands immediate attention (Ramrathan 2016). As a leader in knowledge production on the African continent, the pursuit by South African universities to decolonise higher education carries potential new knowledge that other African countries could use to model their own decolonisation of higher education projects. This emphasises the importance of contributing to the literature on decolonisation.

Evans (2016) profiles a UCT student's view on what the call for the decolonisation of higher education entails. In his response, the student touched on the need to change curricula that focus on “advancing Eurocentric interest” to the detriment of the African interest. In support of the later, Mamdani (1998) argues that one of the UCT courses creates a view that “... this Africa has no intelligentsia with writings worth reading ...” The student further posited that “Eurocentrism does not serve our interests culturally, socially, economically. It does not resolve the issues of Africa”. Ramrathan (2016) argues that in order for curricula transformation to take place, South African higher education should move from number counting to a focus on curricula transformation. Due to the countrywide interest shown in the protests to promote decolonising South African higher education, one can conclude that students from other universities share the same views as the UCT student. I argue that while the students have brought the decolonisation of higher education to the forefront, as facilitators of curricula delivery, academic staff in South African higher education institutions are better positioned to decolonise South African higher education.

Sheppard (2015) defines academic staff as “employees who spend at least 50% of their office time on duty teaching and/ or on research activities”. Evans (2016) points out that some academics in South African higher education are of the view that decolonising higher education would mean a return to the Stone Age and the isolation of South African universities from the world. Blade Nzimande (2015), the South African Higher Education and Training Minister, dismissed the latter view in his speech at the Higher Education Summit 2015, by stating:

Building African universities does not mean creating universities that are globally disengaged. They should be globally engaged, but not only by being consumers of global knowledge. They should be producers of knowledge as well - knowledge that is of relevance locally, continentally, in the South and globally. We must reject the old idea that is still being recycled in some quarters that the African continent must exclusively focus on primary education to the exclusion of higher education. This means the North must continue to be the producer of knowledge and Africa and the South continue to be consumers of such knowledge. This would be a continuation of our colonization well into the 21st century.

It is the researcher's view that even though inconclusively stated, the call to decolonise the South African higher education system can be linked to the NDP Vision 2030's function of universities. As explained above, decolonisation of higher education means changing curricula to reflect the African content. On the other hand, the NDP Vision 2030 frames the main functions of a university as follows: (i) Produce new knowledge and find new application for existing knowledge; (ii) Validate new knowledge through curricula; (iii) Produce human capital for labour demand (Cloete & Bunting 2013; Cloete & Maassen 2013). The researcher argues that the human capital produced largely ends up adding to the unemployment statistics of South Africa, mainly due to the perceived Eurocentric outlook of South African higher education curricula. The new knowledge produced is perceived to be based on Eurocentric models designed while solving Eurocentric research problems, thus they are perceived to have a limited socio-economic impact in South Africa. The validation of this new knowledge through curricula is perceived to have resulted in the reinforcement of the Eurocentric outlook in South African curricula, due to its Eurocentric outlook of the new knowledge produced. This highlights a link between decolonisation of higher education curricula and the NDP Vision 2030. For decolonisation to be realised, I argue that it should be viewed through the lens of NDP Vision 2030's main functions for universities. This means that as academic staff pursue the NDP Vision 2030 functions of a university, the focus should not only be curriculum change but also on the knowledge produced, used to rearticulate and transferred to South Africans. For this to be possible, South African academia must also answer a question posed by Ngugi (1981): Are they ready to decolonise their minds?

South African Universities' content transformation

Heleta (2016) posits that South African universities have all adopted various policies linked to transformation. CHET (2012) provides a brief overview of South African higher education's curriculum transformation. These policies have resulted in the massification and diversification of South African universities. While the numbers of students of colour increased at all qualification levels, Heleta (2016) contends that the curriculum changes were also Eurocentric in nature and thus unable to largely decolonise the South African university curriculum. Chalmers (2017) asserts that universities produce knowledge based on their relationship with knowledge. This supports the view that due to South African universities' Eurocentric outlook, the knowledge produced also becomes Eurocentric (Daniel, 2011). This accounts for the decolonisation challenges characterizing South African universities.

Khupe and Keane (2017) highlight decolonisation strides made in the research methodology discipline. She states that, through research, South Africa has managed to produce new knowledge in the indigenous knowledge space, and that such knowledge has been validated through the production of new teaching material. Furthermore, her study proposes new research methods based on a South African context. Such decolonising approaches to research are encouraged by Chalmers (2017). While this exemplifies decolonisation of higher

education, it also exemplifies the interconnectedness of the decolonisation process and the NDP Vision 2030's view of how a university should function. Such pioneering studies are required in the fashion design departments of South African universities if we are to decolonise. Without academic staff with doctorate qualifications, decolonisation of the fashion design departments of South African universities will take place at a snail's pace. Below we briefly explore the importance of a doctorate qualification in decolonisation and achieving the NDP Vision 2030 objectives emphasized in this manuscript.

Importance of a Doctorate in Decolonising the South African Higher Education Arena

To produce new knowledge, academics should be in possession of a doctorate qualification, which is viewed as a requirement for university academic staff (Herman 2011). A doctorate qualification is defined as a degree in which a student has to produce new knowledge as a primary requirement (Sheppard 2015). While academic staff that have a masters' qualifications may engage in research, their degree places less emphasis on the production of new knowledge, according to Sheppard (2015). Louw and Muller (2014) acknowledge that the interest in a doctorate qualification is associated with the continuous supply of researchers and the employment of graduates. For the continuous supply of researchers (people with doctorates), departments must have academic staff with the ability to supervise doctorates, which Herman (2011) argues is an obstacle in South African higher education. This manuscript argues that the perceived lack of academics with doctorates in fashion design departments at South African universities may be an obstacle to the decolonisation of higher education.

The skills gained through the acquisition of a doctorate afford academics the ability to find new applications for existing knowledge. These skills also enable academic staff to transform the new knowledge produced into curricula, thus validating the new knowledge produced. Academic staff without a doctorate will thus fall into a category of academics called "research sleeping dogs". For the purpose of this manuscript, research sleeping dogs are defined as academic staff with untapped research potential, due to their lack of a doctorate qualification. Attainment of a doctorate qualification is critical for the potential of research sleeping dogs to be realised. Furthermore, the identification and reduction of research sleeping dogs is critical if the Department of Science and Technology is to achieve its aim of increasing doctorate graduation five-fold by 2018 (Herman 2012).

In light of the above, a doctorate qualification is viewed as a critical ingredient for the pursuit and achievement of decolonisation of higher education. Therefore, the researcher contends that departments with more academic staff with doctorate qualifications would be better positioned to decolonise their curriculum and universities at large. Furthermore, departments with less academic staff who have a doctorate qualification would face obstacles in decolonising the curriculum of their discipline and that of their university. In light of the above, the manuscript focuses on the qualifications of academic staff in fashion design departments of South African universities, as an indicator of the ability to decolonise the curriculum of the fashion design discipline. To do this, the manuscript uses data from the HEMIS database as a benchmark, which indicates the number of South African higher education qualifications held by academic staff (CHET 2017). The data is compared to Mbatha and Mastamet-Mason's (n/d) data on the qualifications of academic staff in fashion design departments of South African universities department to answer the research questions presented later in the manuscript. While Macfarlane (2011) highlights that the South African academic staff with Doctorate qualifications are low compared to one of its BRICKS partners, the researcher viewed this comparison as valid and credible enough to make the argument whether research sleeping dogs will be an obstacle in the decolonisation of the fashion design

departments of South African universities curriculum. This manuscript is important as it will determine if academic staff in the fashion design departments of South African universities department have the right qualification to pursue the decolonisation of the fashion design curriculum. This manuscript also present leaders of the decolonisation, fashion design departments of South African universities and their universities with an introspect feasibility of the decolonisation project and implement changes necessary to realise the decolonisation of the South African higher education.

The manuscript posed the following research questions: (i) What is the percentage of research sleeping dogs in the fashion design departments of South African universities compared to academic staff at national level?; (ii) Are research sleeping dogs an obstacle to decolonisation of fashion design departments of South African universities? In pursuit of its research questions, the study employed desktop research in an effort to present valid data to respond to the research questions in the manuscript. This process resulted in the use of 2015 secondary data from the CHET database being compared (CHET 2017) to the secondary data of Mbatha and Mastamet-Mason (2016), which they used in their study of fashion design departments of South African universities and this issue being one source of a lack of competitive advantage in the apparel manufacturing industry in South Africa (Mbatha & Mastamet-Mason 2016).

The data on fashion design departments of South African universities includes data from seven of the eight universities. Table 1 provides an analysis of the data gathered from both secondary sources. It indicates that South African universities have 8136 academic staff with doctorate qualifications, 6550 academic staff with masters' qualifications, and 3881 academic staff with qualifications below masters' level.

Table 1: Academic qualification data of national and fashion design departments (CHET 2017; Mbatha & Mastamet-Mason n/d)

Source of Data	Doctors	Masters	Other	Totals
Qualifications of South African academic staff	8136	6550	3881	18567
Qualifications of academic staff in fashion design departments of South African universities Departments	4	24	33	61

Table 1 shows that fashion design departments of South African universities have four academic staff with doctoral qualifications, 24 academic staff with masters' qualifications and 33 academic staff with qualifications below masters' level. While the data for the two variables may appear disparate, percentages should be used to interpret the data in Table 1.

Findings and Discussion

In an effort to respond to research question one (What is the percentage of research sleeping dogs in fashion design departments of South African universities compared to the national level?), the manuscript transformed the data in Table 1 into a graph to illustrate the comparison of doctoral qualifications of academic staff at national level and those in fashion design departments of South African universities, and the percentage of academic staff classified as research sleeping dogs. For this to be possible, data about master's qualifications (24) and other qualifications (33) were combined, as per the research sleeping dogs

definition given earlier. These findings pave the way for the manuscript to determine whether or not research sleeping dogs are an obstacle to decolonising higher education.

Research Sleeping Dogs in Fashion Design Departments of South African Universities

Figure 1 indicates that, at a national level, 46% of academic staff have doctorate qualifications; therefore, the percentage of research sleeping dogs at national level is 54%. Fashion design departments of South African universities have 7% of academic staff with doctorate qualifications; therefore, the percentage of research sleeping dogs in fashion design departments of South African universities is 93%.

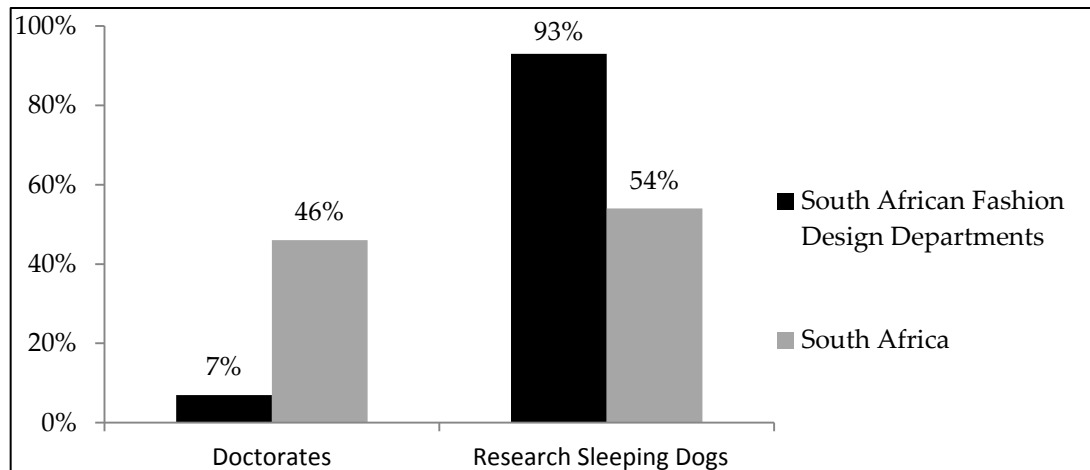


Figure 1: Research Sleeping Dogs

The findings show that the fashion design departments of South African universities have 39% more research sleeping dogs compared to academic staff qualification at national level, this presents the decolonisation of higher education with a number of obstacle discussed in the next section as the manuscript attempts to answer the second research question (are research sleeping dogs an obstacle to the decolonisation project?).

Research Sleeping Dogs in Fashion Design Departments of South African Universities: A Decolonisation Obstacle

In response to the second research question, the study used the above research findings to present an argument to show that research sleeping dogs in fashion design departments of South African universities are an obstacle to the decolonisation of these departments at South African universities. The argument is based on the main functions of universities indicated by the NDP vision 2030, as indicated earlier in this paper.

For fashion design departments of South African universities to decolonise their curricula, they have to find new applications for existing South African, African and South knowledge. With research sleeping dogs in fashion design departments of South African universities at 93%, their ability to find existing credible knowledge and find new application for it may be questionable, since they do not have doctorate qualifications - as argued by Sheppard (2015). This results in inadequate research skills as a decolonisation obstacle. Only the 7% of academic staff with a doctorate in fashion design departments of South African universities have the research skills that are critical to finding existing knowledge and developing new applications for it. The under skilled nature of the South African apparel manufacturing industry (Mbatha 2014) is also found in fashion design departments of South African

universities. Therefore, fashion design departments of South African universities that have more staff with a doctorate may find it easier to decolonise compared to those that have fewer academic staff with a doctoral qualification.

If existing knowledge is insufficient, the academic staff of fashion design departments of South African universities will have to produce the new knowledge required to decolonise the curricula of fashion design departments of South African universities, in line with the NDP Vision 2030's functions of universities, in order to reconstruct the African continent from various perspectives, as argued by Evans (2016). Sheppard (2015) advised that producing new knowledge is a competency gained from a doctorate qualification. This puts a heavier burden on the 7% who have this qualification to produce the new knowledge required to decolonise the curricula of fashion design departments of South African universities, given that 93% of the academic staff lack this competency. This indicates that the fashion design departments of South African universities lack the required manpower, which is an obstacle, since the new knowledge production capacity is marginal. As a result of the lack of manpower, fashion design departments of South African universities are unable to use their post-graduate students to accelerate the production of new knowledge, due to a lack of supervisors for doctoral programmes (Mbatha & Mastamet-Mason n/d).

I argue that the validation of new knowledge through curricula also requires research related activities as part of the validation process. Once a new curriculum is in place, further research will be required to understand the perception of students and employers about the new curriculum, in order to determine that the new curriculum does what it was designed it to do. Without adequate research skills and sufficient manpower to handle these research related activities, the decolonisation obstacles mentioned above will also negatively impact on the validity of the decolonised curriculum.

What presents the main decolonisation obstacle for academic staff in fashion design departments of South African universities is the answers they provide to Ngugi's (1981) question: Are they ready to decolonise their minds? Optimistically speaking, they should answer "yes", to guard against the continuation of our colonization well into the 21st century, as stated by minister Blade Nzimande (2015). For the 7% with doctoral qualifications, this will entail unlearning their Eurocentric theories and methodologies and learning, for example, the research methods advocated by Khupe (2017) and Chalmers (2017). The research skills gained through doing a doctorate may be critical in seeing them through the process of decolonising their minds. The 93% research sleeping dogs found in fashion design departments of South African universities are well positioned to acquire a doctorate through research that decolonises their minds, as well as the fashion design departments of South African universities. However, the yes answer given should also find expression in the policies and strategic documents of fashion design departments of South African universities.

Conclusions

The manuscript endeavored to answer two research questions: (i) What is the percentage of research sleeping dogs in the fashion design departments of South African universities compared to academic staff at national level?; (ii) Are research sleeping dogs an obstacle to decolonisation of fashion design departments of South African universities? Through benchmarking the national academic staff qualification level against that of academic staff in fashion design departments of South African universities, the study found that fashion design departments of South African universities have a higher percentage of research sleeping dogs (93%) than at the national level (54%). The manuscript concludes that this high

percentage of research sleeping dogs will prove an obstacle to decolonising fashion design departments of South African universities. The study concludes that decolonisation will only be achieved in pockets of South Africa fashion departments, where there is a lower percentage of research sleeping dogs.

This study faced the following limitations.

Firstly, the data used to arrive at the findings is based on 2015 data. While these are the latest data, anecdotal evidence indicates that there might have been slight changes to qualifications, both at national level and in fashion design departments of South African universities. Nevertheless, the study argues that the number of academic staff with a doctoral qualification in fashion design departments of South African universities is still too low, resulting in the above stated obstacle still being in effect.

Secondly, the manuscript acknowledges that universities have teaching and learning support departments that will be critical as decolonisation takes place. However, the discipline knowledge required to model the decolonised curricula will still require the expertise of academic staff in fashion design departments of South African universities. The high percentage of research sleeping dogs found in the study persuades one to believe that the existence of teaching and learning departments will not overturn the obstacles presented in this manuscript.

Thirdly, the study did not afford academic staff in fashion design departments of South African universities an opportunity to answer the question of whether they are ready to decolonise their minds or not. In light of the conference theme, the manuscript took an optimistic answer aiding the manuscript to provide possible strategies to aid the decolonisation project of Fashion design departments of South African universities departments.

The manuscript proposes that further studies should be done on the curriculum changes initiated and completed since 2015, in order to determine if fashion design departments of South African universities have been taking steps to achieve decolonisation in the fashion design discipline. Furthermore, a review of the strategic plans of fashion design departments of South African universities should be done to determine if decolonisation has been adopted as a strategy; evaluation of the actions plans should also be done. Lastly, the manuscript proposes that further studies should also look at the perception of decolonisation amongst fashion design departments of South African universities and the action academics take to achieve decolonisation in their discipline.

In conclusion, this study brings to the fore the importance of a doctoral qualification as a critical component for driving decolonisation of fashion design departments of South African universities. This studies determined a link between the aspirations of students (decolonisation) and the NDP Vision 2030 functions for universities and found the two to be inter-dependent. This study argues that the decolonisation activities by students should redirect academic staff to dedicate some of their research endeavours into curriculum transformation, which is critical for the South African, African and South knowledge to have a voice in the Western dominated knowledge world. Lastly, this manuscript contributes to the importance of policy alignment as we engage in decolonisation talks that may result in further policy development. Such policies should not be far from the NDP Vision 2030 goals, which put doctorate qualifications at the core of South Africa's development agenda.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Preparing Fashion Students for a Socially Engaged University Project through Zulu Proverbs

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Abstract

In this paper, I respond to the sub-question about the extent to which design educators can incorporate our context and knowledge of Africa into our design disciplines. I provide an example of a socially-engaged design project from a fashion department at a South African University of Technology (UoT) in which second-year fashion students participated. I argue that this project can be framed as an example of critical citizenship education as forwarded by Johnson and Morris (2010). I also grapple with how a diverse student body can be prepared for a design project that perceives the transformation of society as an end. In light of this, I propose Zulu proverbs as valuable resources that can be used to prepare students for such a project.

Adopting a qualitative approach, students' analyses and interpretations of selected Zulu proverbs drawn from Mayr (1912) and Nyembezi (1990) indicated that youth leadership, social responsibility and empathy may be the necessary themes for a socially-engaged fashion project of this type. While a small number of the students indicated that this approach was forgettable and unhelpful in preparing them, the majority of students perceived the use of Zulu proverbs as effective in preparing them to be agents of social good, while also offering a new framework and paradigmatic approach to socially-engaged design projects of this nature.

Keywords: *Critical citizenship education, Zulu proverbs, fashion design curricula, socially responsive design projects*

Introduction

The University of Technology (UoT), from which this case study was drawn, engaged in a curriculum renewal project as a result of the Vice-Chancellor at the time declaring the main goal of the institution:

To produce globally portable citizens, able to engage effectively with knowledge generation and management in increasingly diverse and globalised workplaces, then the UoT's curriculum and pedagogy must be intentionally designed to prepare our graduates for employment, while simultaneously preparing them for critical citizenship in an emergent and still fragile democracy. (General Education Guidelines of the institution)

In order to achieve this twofold goal, the institution conceptualises its own definition for graduate attributes as:

The qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students would desirably develop during their time at the institution and, consequently, shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and as a citizen. These attributes include but go beyond the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future. (Bowden et al. cited in McCabe 2010)

Keeping within the ambit of this operational definition, representatives from all faculties succinctly identified five graduate attributes encouraged to be included in curricula, which are: 1. critical and creative thinkers who work independently and collaboratively; 2. knowledgeable practitioners; 3. effective communicators; 4. culturally, environmentally and socially aware citizens within a local and global context; and 5. active and reflective learners.

Teaching practice in the fashion department of the UoT, where the project was conducted, predominantly involves pedagogy that nurtures students into technically knowledgeable practitioners and effective communicators who work independently. Before graduating at undergraduate level, students use skills learnt during the three-year course by developing an open range, which comprises a collection of garments showcased at an annual fashion show. This achieves mainly the first goal of preparing students for employment, and while this is an important aspect of the course, I argue that there is minimal focus on preparing our students as agents of social good. Critical citizenship education is propounded as an approach to achieving this goal (Berman 2013; Boyte & Scarnati 2014; Motala 2015). Locally, critical citizenship encompasses one of the focal points of the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education for South Africa which deals with 'redressing past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities' (White Paper on Higher Education 1997).

A departmental community-engaged project was implemented for the first semester of the 2017 academic year to prepare fashion students as agents of social good. In my capacity as facilitator of community engagement at second-year level, I paired students with members of an inner-city sewing circle for the design and development of fashion products, which were manufactured by the circle to generate income for their self-help social project. The focus on socially-engaged and socially-responsible design education enjoyed special attention during the 2015 DEFSA Conference (Bolton 2015; Enslin & Cronje 2015; Chmela-Jones 2015).

With this paper, I attempt to build on and extend this exploration by taking the stance that preparing students for socially-engaged design projects is an imperative, and, moreover, that certain Zulu proverbs might be valuable tools in achieving this. In this way, I respond to the

sub-question regarding the extent to which design educators can incorporate the context and knowledge of Southern Africa in socially-engaged design projects.

The structure of this paper is divided into three main sections. Firstly, I discuss what critical citizenship education might entail by using the framework conceptualised by Johnson and Morris (2010). Secondly, I consider the integration of African proverbs in teaching practice, with a particular focus on citizenship education. The teaching approaches of four authors – Akinsola (2011); Abubakar (2011) and Grant and Asimeng-Boahene (2006) – are considered for their focus on both the epistemological and practical implications of proverbs in this endeavour. Thirdly, I provide an overview and discuss the departmental socially-engaged design project, and how three Zulu proverbs were appropriated in preparing fashion students for the project.

A Framework for Critical Citizenship Education

In this paper, critical citizenship education implies an education which is 'expected to contribute to the promotion of social justice, social reconstruction and democracy' (Johnson & Morris 2010), this description parallels the vision of the White Paper already mentioned. Additionally, this education is 'based on the promotion of a common set of values, such as tolerance, diversity, human rights and democracy' (Constandius & Odiboh 2016, p. 2). This approach to education does not focus only on discipline-specific learning, but shifts focus across disciplines. Within critical citizenship education, the focus is on critical self-reflection, and the critical action which follows such reflection (Constandius & Odiboh 2016, p. 2).

Critical citizenship education should begin with consideration of the context in which this type of education takes place. In his insightful and philosophical article, *The coming of the ecological university*, Ronald Barnett (2011) discusses the university as constantly 'becoming' (2011, p. 446). This process of becoming has resulted in the twenty-first century ushering in the era of what he terms the 'ecological university' (2011, p. 451). This university he describes as 'an engaged university, a critical and an enquiring university and a university-for-development, acting to put its resources to good effect in promoting world well-being [which] will be active on the local and regional stages' (Barnett 2011, p. 453). Further, this university 'interpenetrates society, as society interpenetrates the university...It is aware of its interconnectedness with society and putting its resources towards the development of societal and personal well-being' (Barnett 2011, p. 453). This description is consistent with engagement, one of two threads developed as part of the strategic plan (2014-2018) of the UoT discussed in this paper. In the speech cited, the Vice Chancellor explained engagement as entailing a 'university embedded in its local context and engaging in that context'. Based on engagement being one of two strategic plans, and the need for students to become agents of social good as a graduate attribute, I make the assumption that the UoT in this study embodies elements of an ecological university which is challenged to incorporate critical citizenship in its curricula.

Johnson and Morris (2010) analyse and compare curricula which promote forms of critical citizenship. From this analysis they identify four horizontal categories of critical pedagogy: politics/ideology; social/collective; self/subjectivity; and praxis/engagement. These are coupled with four vertical categories which they assert a student develops by engaging in critical citizenship education: knowledge; skills; values; and dispositions as citizens.

These authors suggest that the framework provides a 'working, flexible model of critical citizenship, open to reinterpretation and adaptation' (Johnson & Morris 2010: 90), but that it is not mandatory to integrate all four tenets into critical citizenship curricula. This is especially recommended because critical citizenship does not have a 'clear-cut definition, as scholars perceive it differently' (Grant & Asimeng-Boahene 2006: 18). Since fashion students

from the UoT in this study used their sewing and design skills in conjunction with the skills of members from the inner-city sewing group, the two tenets, social/collective and praxis/engagement, are the most prominent for this socially-engaged design project (Table 1).

**Table 1: Two tenets of critical citizenship education by Johnson and Morris (2010).
Tabulated by the author.**

	Knowledge		Skills	Values	Dispositions
Social/collective	Knowledge of interconnections between culture, power and transformation; non-mainstream writings and ideas, in addition to dominant discourse.		Skills in dialogue, co-operation and interaction; skills in the critical interpretation of others' viewpoints; capacity to think holistically.	Inclusive dialogical relationship with others' identities and values.	Socially aware; co-operative; responsible towards self and others; willing to learn with others.
Praxis/engagement	Knowledge of how to effect systematic change collectively; how knowledge itself is power; how behaviour influences society and addresses injustice.		Skills of critical thinking and active participation; skills in acting collectively to challenge the status quo; ability to imagine a better world.	Informed, responsible and ethical action and reflection.	Commitment and motivation to change society; civic courage; responsibility for decisions and actions.

The learning outcomes for each tenet of critical citizenship education, as detailed in Table 1, reflect the themes expressed by certain Zulu proverbs. African proverbs have previously been promoted as effective tools in delivering citizenship education (Abubakar 2011; Akinsola 2011; Grant & Asimeng-Boahene 2006), although Grant & Asimeng-Boahene (2006, p. 19) problematise the idea that 'models for citizenship within Africa remain untapped. The irony is that Africa, long acknowledged as the cradle of civilization, has been such an underutilised resource for citizenship education.' These authors further promote African proverbs as frames of reference for teaching students to become engaged local and global citizens (Grant & Asimeng-Boahene 2006, p. 18).

This social engagement project is aligned with Giroux's (2012) definition of pedagogy as 'the space that provides a moral and political referent for understanding how what we do in the classroom links to wider social, political and economic forces.' Due to the fact that fashion students at the UoT under discussion are required to apply the skills learned in lecture rooms

at levels that effect positive societal changes, which I contend is an aim of active citizenship, then such a project may need to be made culturally-specific within its context.

African Proverbs in Contemporary Education

In this section, I present examples of how African proverbs might be adapted and applied in contemporary education. Although the use of African proverbs for educational purposes has been discussed by authors such as Owolabi (2001), Fashina (2008), and Dei and Simmons (2011), for the purposes of this paper I consider instead the views of Esther Akinsola (2011), Amina Abubakar (2011), and Rachel Grant and Lewis Asimeng-Boahene (2006), because they all provide practical ideas for teaching practice. These authors influence and inspire my own use of Zulu proverbs in preparing fashion students for their socially-engaged project by the Fashion Department.

Firstly, Akinsola's (2011) contribution to the *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices* is approached using the traditional Yoruba concept of *Omoluabi*, with the author drawing insight from this oral tradition to provide an African-based theory of knowledge and epistemology for education. In the chapter, Akinsola (2011, p. 228) discusses how different forms of *Omoluabi* oral literature like proverbs, wise sayings and folktales, are used for skills and knowledge acquisition in children; which then, according to the author, can also be applied to address the development of wide-ranging domains of learning, including those dealing with the physical, cognitive, social, emotional, psychological and moral development of individuals. In conclusion, Akinsola (2011, p. 231) provides a class exercise that may incorporate Yoruba, or other traditional African resources, in teaching, which includes:

1. Identifying between three and five indigenous learnings, and how they are transmitted in a learner's community;
2. Listing and describing an oral tradition from a learner's community;
3. Identifying practices and processes in a community that make African education comprehensive and holistic; and
4. Identifying possible ways that African education can be incorporated into curricula in the community and country (Akinsola 2011, p. 231).

Secondly, Abubakar (2011) uses Kenya's *methalis* proverbs to extract philosophical ideas on education. *Methalis* (sometimes written as *methali*), also known as *methali za Kiswahili* ('proverbs of Swahili'), are proverbs or sayings from the Swahilis living along Kenya's East Coast. Like all other oral traditions in Africa, *methalis* are widely disseminated by word of mouth (Abubakar 2011, p. 69), and like Zulu proverbs in particular are classified by category.

Abubakar's (2011, p. 70) contention is that 'in the African context, virtue training and character building are considered to be two of the most salient goals of education, where the educational process is aimed at producing an "ideal citizen".' An ideal citizen is described as an individual who values the cognitive process, in addition to social responsibility and communalism (Abubakar 2011, p. 72). This notion regarding education in the African context aligns with the ideas propounded by African communitarians, and has enjoyed discussion by such authors as Gbadegesin (1998), Gyekye (1998), and Castiano (2006).

Like Akinsola (2011), Abubakar (2011) concludes his contribution with the implications of *methalis* proverbs for contemporary education, and how they can be applied in a classroom exercise. While his approach resembles Akinsola's in many ways, Abubakar focuses only on proverbs, and the teaching ideas he proposes include:

1. Listing and describing at least two proverbs that have direct implications for classroom teaching and school learning;

2. Listing and describing proverbs that have direct implications for the conduct and behaviour of teachers;
3. Describing how proverbs could be incorporated into learning and socialisation processes to encourage specific educational outcomes (Abubakar 2011, p. 72); and
4. Conducting an exercise that begins with a statement which opens up class discussion, such as: 'The African school curriculum ought to promote social responsibility and communalism. Debate this assertion, illustrating how this applies or does not apply to students, teachers and the school community' (Abubakar 2011, p. 72).

Lastly, Grant and Asimeng-Boahene (2006), promote African proverbs as springboards for teaching citizenship education to students in urban classrooms. Their example aligns very closely with this paper, considering that this UoT is also based in an urban setting. The authors adopt the stance that when proverbs are viewed as theoretical frameworks for citizenship education, they offer culturally responsive pedagogy and critical literacy (2006, p. 17). Like Johnson and Morris (2010), Grant and Asimeng-Boahene (2006, p. 18) identify different categories for critical citizenship education, which are: virtue/morality; knowledge; responsibility; and humanity/community. Within each category, and where relationships are found, the authors place proverbs from various parts of the continent, including Botswana, South Africa and Ghana. The article closes with a catalogue of 20 teaching ideas that integrate proverbs, which, amongst others, include:

1. Arranging outside speakers to discuss proverbs that reflect the customs, religions, history or education system with the class;
2. Allowing students to discuss the local and global implications of the messages within proverbs; and
3. Searching for proverbs that relate to the essentials of citizenship education, interpreting each proverb to explain what it teaches about being a good citizen, and then identifying historical figures or community members who exemplify these proverbs (Grant & Asimeng-Boahene 2006, p. 21).

These three examples are not discipline-specific, which provides scope to integrate them creatively into any field of study, including fashion design and particularly if fashion education is used to contribute to positive social change. The incorporation of proverbs can be conceptually and practically complex in fashion design, however, and may require a design educator also willing to assume the role of a social educator whose endeavour is to incorporate knowledge from Southern Africa into their teaching. Such design/social educators would then be required to 'imagine new possibilities for knowledge production in contemporary education' (Dei & Simmons 2011, p. 97). I contend that in the case of this UoT this form of teaching and learning is just such an example of these new imaginings, and shows the potential of fashion education to contribute to society, whilst also integrating local knowledge both practically and philosophically.

Using Zulu Proverbs in the Fashion Department's Social Engagement Project: The Case

In this section, I discuss how three Zulu proverbs were analysed with the students as preparation for their community-engaged design project. The use of Zulu proverbs was introduced as a way of 'finding an appropriate means of extracting philosophical materials from the body of indigenous African culture and making them the foundation of contemporary effort' (Owolabi 2001, p. 148). The proverbs used included the more widely-known *izandla ziyagezana* ('hands wash each other'), and the less popular Zulu proverbs,

inkunzi isematholeni ('the bull is among the calves') and *ukupha ukuziphakela* ('giving is to dish out for oneself').

Ethical Considerations

While the project was timetabled as a weekly two-hour session in their curriculum, permission for the integration of a research component into this class project was sought from both the student participants and the community member participants. They were informed that it was also undertaken as research, and made aware that their interpretations of the proverbs would be recorded, and possibly used for public dissemination, such as at conferences, and publication in journals. However, this paper focuses on the student portion of the project rather than that of their sewing circle partners. During discussions concerning ethical considerations, I requested that all participating members take photographs during the learning process, and informed them that they would be requested to respond to questionnaires at the conclusion of the project. Once permission had been obtained regarding these ethical considerations, the project commenced.

Sample and Research Methods

Twenty-three second year fashion students participated in the project, and, as already indicated, the project formed part of their community engagement, which was structured into their weekly timetable. While community engagement currently carries no award of marks, students are required to participate. Each project lasts a term, and, as with modules that carry credits, is presented as a project brief moderated by the departmental head. The student body includes a diversity of races: Indians, Whites and Blacks, who made the largest number, and is of mixed gender, with a predominantly female representation.

Three of the 23 students were not required to participate in the project, due to having incomplete subjects, but chose to participate voluntarily. Students divided themselves into groups of three to four members, and each group was partnered with a seamstress from the inner-city sewing group. The group of seven seamstresses were all Black females ranging in age between their mid-20s and late 40s. Five of the seamstresses were originally from the KwaZulu-Natal province, while two were from Zimbabwe. Six of the seven were proficient in Zulu, including one of those from Zimbabwe, who had lived in Durban for many years, although the remaining Zimbabwean member understood very little Zulu. In a casual conversation, she indicated that she was not as proficient as her fellow Zimbabwean national because, while she had been in the province for many years, she was based in an area having very few Zulu speakers.

Learning from the previous year's project, where a large student group engaged with and overwhelmed a sewing circle partner, I encouraged the groups to develop a system of rotation where only one or two students were assigned to work with their partners each week. In this way, it was less probable that partners became overwhelmed, and all students could thereby contribute to the process equally. Each week, the absent students consulted with their groups and discussed tasks planned for the following week.

This paper focuses mainly on the workshop conducted to prepare students for their project engagement, which entailed analysing three proverbs using qualitative design in an interpretive approach. An interpretive approach allows students to empathise with their perceptions of the given proverbs, and explore topics by interpreting their understanding (Thanh & Thanh 2015, p. 25). Moreover, the process of interpreting the three proverbs into single themes was informed by notions forwarded by such African writers as Sophie Oluwole (1985) and Kwasi Wiredu (1980), who propose that the analysis of African languages and 'language of a people can be a splendid index to their philosophy' (Owolabi 2001, p. 150).

The author, who identifies as Zulu, and acting as both community engagement facilitator and planner of the project brief, introduced the three proverbs to the project groups. A 1990 reissue of Nyembezi's 1954 book, *Zulu Proverbs*, and an article by the Reverend Father Mayr (1912), were used as references because both works provide a catalogue of Zulu proverbs which detail their meanings.

In order to diversify the interpretation and analysis process, a seamstress partner proficient in Zulu was invited to join the workshop to assist as language interpreter. Only four students could not speak Zulu, of which three spoke English as a home language and the other Afrikaans, and while one student who identified as Tsonga was fluent in Zulu, the remainder of the student participants identified as Zulu. In the preparation workshop, each proverb was read and written out in the vernacular, followed by a direct translation in English. All interpretations were then transcribed to whiteboard, and analysed for distillation into single themes.

Analysing and Interpreting the Three Zulu Proverbs

Nyembezi (1990) classifies various Zulu proverbs into different categories. For example, *izandla ziyagezana* (also expressed as *isandla sigez' esinye* – 'one hand washes the other') and *ukupha ukuziphakela* ('giving is to dish out for oneself') are classified as proverbs related to Ubuntu (Nyembezi 1990, p. 50). *Inkunzi isematholeni* ('the bull is among the calves') is classified under the upbringing of children, and deals with preparing children to be future leaders (Nyembezi 1990, p. 162).

The reason for choosing these proverbs was, firstly, to introduce students through them to the concepts of remaining humble, and maintaining the spirit of Ubuntu as future leaders of the country. Secondly, the proverbs carry themes such as leadership, empathy and co-operation, which all embody aspects of the tenets of the critical citizenship framework proposed by Johnson and Morris (2010). Student interpretations closely resembled the meanings provided by Nyembezi (1990) and Mayr (1912), and in some instances extended the meanings of the proverbs to include interpretations drawn from spiritual principles. Some, who were encountering the proverbs for the first time, such as the Indian and White students, also participated enthusiastically in the analysis and interpretation process.

Proverb 1: Izandla ziyagezana ('one hand washes the other')

'Help and you will be helped'; 'no man for himself', and 'giving without expecting anything back' were amongst the phrases used to interpret this proverb. One student mentioned 'having one goal' as another possible meaning, and when asked to explain this, they stated that when washing hands the goal was to wash hands, and if the one hand is in disagreement with that goal, then the task would not be successfully fulfilled. Likewise, for the community project, the goal should be to work together with community partners towards a common goal, which in this case was to make and complete a garment. After deliberation and distillation, the theme chosen for this proverb was social responsibility.

Proverb 2: Inkunzi isematholeni ('the bull is among the calves')

This proverb attracted interpretations that alluded to leadership, with phrases such as 'a future leader is among the youth' and 'identify the leader in the crowd'. Reference was also made to strength, with phrases such as 'the strong is among the weak' and 'strength is in the young' emerging. Teaching as an act of giving back was also mentioned as another possible meaning, with 'teach others what you know'. Identifying the proverb's main theme as youth leadership required much consideration.

Proverb 3: Ukupha ukuziphakela ('giving is to dish out for oneself')

Analysis of this final proverb resulted in spiritual interpretations, with explanations drawn from the Christian *Holy Bible*, such as 'bless and be blessed', and 'blessed are those that give', which are associated with Proverbs 11: 25. Some students described the proverb in terms of *karma*, a spiritual principle associated with Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Taoism. All interpretations were considered, and empathy was chosen as the proverb's theme. Empathy currently enjoys discussion related to design under the sub-field Design Empathy (Kruger 2008), to which I argue this community engaged project contributes.

With the three themes – social responsibility, youth leadership and empathy – formulated by the workshop, the students partnered with their seamstresses to produce skirts and bodices over the course of two academic terms (February - March 2017, and April - June 2017).

Analysing the Viability of Zulu proverbs for Socially Engaged Fashion Projects

At the end of the engagement, I circulated questionnaires to determine student impressions of the use of Zulu proverbs to prepare them for their community engagement project. The analysis process included reading the questionnaire responses repeatedly, segmenting themes and interpreting the accounts of these themes.

Negative Responses towards Zulu Proverbs

Questioned on the effectiveness of the three proverbs in preparing them for the project, 33% of students responded negatively. Their reasons for this answer varied, with two students opining that the proverbs were removed from sewing, and that an introduction to basic words for various sewing techniques in Zulu would have enhanced their experience of working with a seamstress who understood very little English instead. These students were non-Zulu speakers, and it is possible that they suggested this in order to learn the related words for themselves. Their responses imply a preference for a more practical approach over the conceptual and philosophical learning provided, in particular, by the use of Zulu proverbs, as suggested by Hlongwa et al. (2014, p. 156).

Other responses indicated that the incorporation of these proverbs was a forgettable addition, and that the project could have proceeded without including them, such as the following response by one student who identified as Zulu-speaking: 'Because as a person you already know what you want to do and why you are helping [others]'. Two responses by non-Zulu speaking students alluded to a similar sentiment concerning the use of the proverbs, which were: 'The only reason I felt they did not help through the process was because I did not make a conscious effort to remind myself of it each week; it became something forgotten'; and 'I felt that we fulfilled and embodied those themes even without being consciously aware'.

Positive Responses towards Zulu Proverbs

Of the participating students, 67% who responded to the questionnaire reacted enthusiastically, however, and pointed out how noteworthy the use of the proverbs was. Some responses by Zulu-speaking students refer to the use of proverbs in this manner as being a new paradigmatic perspective on community engagement.

Positive comments received included: 'I think the proverbs were to give us the idea of the entire community engagement on a different angle...'; 'The different take helped to look at them with a different understanding'; 'It was helpful because we now understand what it means exactly'; and 'They taught me things about giving back that I did not know and wasn't aware of'.

Responses from some of these students, also all Zulu-speaking, indicated that the project was seen as a viable approach to students developing values as citizens, and becoming agents for social good, which is stipulated in the definition for graduate attributes at the UoT. These responses support Fashina's (2008, p. 314) assertion that 'proverbs are a condensed text which embed a whole gamut of historical, cultural and moral narrative with intent for didactic values as a school of philosophical thought'.

Responses that align with Fashina's assertion include: 'The proverbs are basically a way of life; we can grow the community by giving back'; 'By teaching or giving back I become a better person, I gain more knowledge; by working together so much can be achieved, *umuntu umuntu ngabantu...*'; 'We learned how you can act as a leader and how to lead with the community; helping one another is what we learned the most, because we had empathy for each other and act on it if someone needs help'; and 'Each of these proverbs gave meaning and drive to actually go about sharing our knowledge; assisting in what we could also gave new morals and values to instil in our daily lives and as young designers'. Such responses also included:

We were able to engage with our mummies through teaching and sharing our knowledge in a responsible manner. Secondly, we were divided into groups and each person in the group had an opportunity to assist mummies every week; in a way, we became more responsible and also gained leadership skills in the process.

Conclusion and Future Approaches

In this paper, I considered the UoT's goal of preparing students to be agents of social good. I made the claim that the UoT for which I work as a fashion lecturer can be defined as an ecological university (Barnett 2011), due to its aim of being responsive to the society in which it is based. Guided by this claim, and the graduate attributes of the UoT, I argued that there is a dearth of socially-engaged projects in the fashion department. I then continued the discussion by situating socially-engaged projects within the critical citizenship education framework conceptualised by Johnson and Morris (2010).

This discussion indicated a means for addressing the question of the extent to which design educators can incorporate the context and knowledge of Africa into the fashion design discipline. This question provided the impetus to make room for the use of African oral literature in my own teaching practices, using specifically Zulu proverbs to formulate a philosophical and conceptual framework for the socially-engaged project by second-year fashion students. While some students desired the use of Zulu words that were more practical, the majority accepted Zulu proverbs as a conduit to offering a new paradigmatic approach to community engagement that is both conceptually and practically rich. In conclusion, as a design educator, I was satisfied with the class exercise and the enthusiasm shown by the students in providing their understandings of Zulu proverbs used.

The learning approach adopted for the project was not a particularly simple one, because it required students to step away from the fashion design discipline as they might generally understand it and to engage in a discussion of African oral literature, within the environment of a multi-racial class. In this respect, a future consideration may be the incorporation of other oral resources, such as fables or riddles. Alternatively, the process can be made more student-centred, as per the institution's mandate, where themes could be identified and provided to students, who could be tasked with identifying proverbs, fables or other aphorisms from their own cultural backgrounds, and bring them to class for similar discussion. This could be done as an effective student-centred exercise in preparing students for future socially-engaged fashion projects.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Slow Design (Into Eyilwe Ngokwendeleyo): The Potential for a Decolonized Space Through Graphic Design

Margot Muir

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Abstract

In the context of contemporary, ephemeral, fast-paced and often disingenuous qualities of commercial graphic design in South Africa, Slow Design provides a moral antithesis. Slow Design focuses on a sense of place and culture, and is radical in its reassessment of human-centred values derived from the intimacy and integrity of local communities and resources (Clarke 2008, p. 427; Fuad-Luke 2005, para. 14). In its intention, it inevitably questions the abstracted, sometimes oblivious quality of graphic design that invites global consumerism unthinkingly. Designing is never innocent. Racialised stereotypes from the Global North have permeated design, marginalising the Global South and reflecting moral apathy — “the death of the heart” (Baldwin in Benjamin 2017, para. 3). Slow Design as a concept, in its alertness to local heritage, in its potentially authentic expression of varied African experiences, invites a more complex, less over-determined understanding of culture, particularly in the South African context.

As an emerging concept, much of the writing about the Slow Movement is politically neutral and simply encourages local sustainability while opposing design that is complicit in the production of desire and its consequences. This paper suggests that Slow Design utterly involves people, productive conflict and the complexity of local environments and thus has a socio-cultural and political context – which is not necessarily involving new ideas and which in some senses is a renewing of post-colonial thought – but which radically alters graphic design’s existing reach.

“Colonialism” is defined as “the control over one territory and its peoples by another, and the ideologies of superiority and racism often associated with such domination (Dictionary of Human Geography, 2009). Specifically, it involves “policies, problems, and legacies of European colonial rule in Africa”. Grosse-Hering (2014, p. 8) asserts that Slow Design is motivated by three intentions – social, cultural and environmental, sustainable design. It accentuates critical questioning and a conscious, productive “unknowing” when facing design challenges. Slow Design intersects time, it is aware of a past, present and future, that plunges contemporary designers not only into a quality aesthetic, but also into contemporary struggles and the historic, lingering, social injustices of colonisation that form part of South Africa’s sense of place. With a human-centred holistic approach, and a locally generated ethos, Slow Design naturally questions and disrupts existing conventions. The research methodology of this paper involves a literature review, integrating graphic design into the insights of post-colonial thought and the Slow Movement with the intention of encouraging education and agency. Slow Design is explored here as a potential influence in graphic design that is vital for the challenging, necessarily uncertain journey into a future decolonised space, in practice, in South Africa.

Keywords: *Slow design, South African design, Graphic design, Design culture, Decolonisation.*

“We should return to a belief in a radical spirit—the idea that design is something that can help improve society and people’s condition”. Dan Friedman, graphic designer. (Friedman in Heller 2017, para. 1).

“Africa doesn’t have to catch up. Africa can create its own.” Rendani Nemakhavhani, graphic designer (Nemakhavhani 2017, para. 3).

Graphic design and power relations

Graphic design, in its commercial endeavor, has an apparently bloodless relationship to politics. In reality, the graphic designer inevitably produces new knowledge through choices of research he/she undertakes that may either express or subvert the status quo. Knowledge, which has political nuances, is produced in the making process itself. And, each designer contributes to the field of knowledge within the discourse of design. Knowledge is always of and from, coerced, placated or disregarded by, the political expressions of power. As graphic design is “the art or profession of visual communication that combines images, words, and ideas”, the presence of images in design work may either articulate stereotypical power influences or disrupt them. South African graphic designers need to recognize how the creative and the political coalesce and how existing stereotypes of dominant Western ideas prejudice graphic design thinking about the African continent. As Ranciere (2011, p. 8) suggests “the existence of the political and the existence of the aesthetic are strongly connected”. The aesthetic is politics. The intention of decolonisation, the dislodging of dominant European colonial rule in Africa, is thus intimately involved with a progressive redefining, rethinking and relocating of graphic design and the persuasive power of images and text.

Slow Design as a local African concept

A definition of Slow Design involves a conscious focus on ‘local’ design (expressing African values and African strengths rather than a mimicry of the West), integrating local communities in a ‘sustainable’ use of resources, striving towards ‘fair’ labour relations and approaching design with a ‘human-centred’ integrity (Clark 2008, p. 427; Fuad-Luke 2005, para. 14). Slow design is part of the Slow Movement. Designers consider the well-being of workers, communities and the environment, in their design challenges. Slow design involves a “securing of local specialness”, in particular “drawing together the ‘natural’, cultural and social resources already existing in communities and towns” (Pink & Lewis 2014, p. 704).

Slow Design does not necessarily reflect a literal design time period, rather it encourages design which is self-reflective and problem-seeking. It involves a “circumspect approaching”, a heedful discovering attitude to design and being-in-the-world which is not fully described by a “stretch of time” (Heidegger 1996, p. 98). Slow Design gives designers an opportunity to understand and reflect about their actions. As Heidegger (1938, p. 57) suggests “reflection is the courage to make the truth of our own presuppositions and the realm of our own goals into the things that most deserve to be called in question”. As we question, Oxman (2017, 15:09) asserts that “problem-seeking is far more generative than problem-solving”, and leads to an engagement with design as a continuous system rather than an object, involving a more saturated and complex design process.

Slow Design and a deeper look at sustainability

Grosse-Hering (2014, p. 8) asserts that Slow Design is motivated by three intentions – social, cultural and environmental, sustainable design. Firstly, in the South African context, *social* sustainability implies a commitment towards social equality and social justice that is at the heart of the decolonizing project. The South African experience and economy involves vast

inequalities. The country confronts a history of racism that is “not merely cultural prejudice, but a structural subjection”(Joja 2015, para. 7). Design expresses its human environment, even as commercial practice seeks to deflect it. It is obvious to state that the majority of South African education systems emerging from privileged white Eurocentric backgrounds, has meant the kinds of knowledge systems, frameworks and methodologies graphic designers have inherited, have mostly come from the global North. Inexorably, these perspectives subconsciously draw on, or resist, colonial and Apartheid practices of social control and stereotype.

Secondly, if design is “transformative” as Glaser (2016, 2:32) suggests, *cultural* sustainability potentially disrupts Western hegemony and modernity, accenting transformative African design scholarship and local design diversity. The cultural idea of what it is to be African is capable of being both reproduced and changed through design (Evans & Thornton 1991, p. 49). What constitutes “Africa” is a fluid concept. “African culture is not a museum specimen. It is a dynamic feature of our lives. It has motive force, being active, potent, energetic, having influence. Because it is active, it assimilates - i.e. it adopts - while it can also resist.” (Mphahlele 2002, p. 91). Matthews (2015, p. 112) comments, however, that before asserting an African identity to actively develop a racially just South Africa, a transformative shift needs to take place in the dominant privilege of white identity that, as Macmullan (2009, p. 54) suggests, was “slowly created through violence, legislation, and other practices of exclusion and privilege”. As Baldwin (1998, p. 178) notes, forms of racism do not have a biological essence but “arise in a particular historical context in order to justify a specific set of political relations” and confirms Olson’s (2004, p. 113) assertion that: “it is more useful to understand whiteness as a form of power rather than as a culture”. Slow Design implies that, in a local context, who the designer is and what is designed is a shifting, negotiated space. The developing thrust of an African voice, and other marginalised perspectives, potentially integrates the deep and complex knowledge of people who express their own issues. It is not inevitable, but a crucial imperative, that South African design work should begin to reflect not only a sense of culture and place but to understand, resist and transform the colonial impressions that characterise it.

Thirdly, *environmental* sustainability is influenced, irritated and accompanied by human preferences. The reality of people in a country of deep inequalities, living in degraded urban environments or in the excesses of social privilege, suggests that an ecological balance is not possible without sensitive, integrated design thinking. Particularly, design thinking that contributes not only to the unfolding of sustainable environmental ideas, but also that stimulates the kindred need for social upliftment.

Also, while it is necessarily still engaged with commercial demands, Slow Design requires a drift of meaning from consumer pleasures and desires to the realities of production and waste, a shift from the naivety of consumer privilege to sometimes discomfiting knowledge. It seeks “to trace the histories of everyday products, ... to comprehensively expose the life of the products, from where materials are sourced to the labour conditions of those who manufacture them” (Grosse-Hering 2014, p. 12). In South Africa, Slow Design is an opportunity to interrogate production lines that are predominantly populated by a black working class, often bounded by a crippling minimum wage and production choices that involve a deluge of waste and environmental pollution. Slow Design’s interest in the intimate history of a product, does not simply introduce human experience, it deepens and amplifies design representation.

Commercial graphic design fabricates commodities that are entirely detached from the complexities of their production, so that “all the messy truths of the commodity are neatly sealed away” (Purcell 2005, para. 1). Environmental sustainability necessarily challenges the idea of the commodity as alluring, romanticised and entirely sanitised from the realities of life. In contemporary society, resource-intensive modes of production are often moved away

from the point of consumption and the nexus of design. In this way, consumption is severed from the human and environmental impact. As Slow Design discloses the history and relationship of artefacts to everyday human experience, it potentially interrupts the blind surrender to aspirational but unsustainable lifestyles in consumer imaginations.

How Slow Design can support decolonisation

Slow design can support decolonisation in a number of practical ways:

Slow Design invites a sustainable approach to relational networks. It conceives of design and its content as an integrated, relevant *system*, rather than an abstract artefact. “Slow Design recognizes that richer experiences can emerge from the dynamic maturation of artefacts, environments and systems over time. Looking beyond the needs and circumstances of the present day, slow designs are (behavioral) change agents” (Alessina 2013, p. 3). Slow Design effectively makes visible something unseen. With process and education, it has the potential to expose how colonialism is a designed system that is constantly in play, involving “the politics of distraction” with very consciously designed outcomes (Nwanosike & Onyije 2011, p. 625; Smith 2003, para. 2).

Slow Design reflects a cultural revolution, a conscious objection to a global “loss of nearness” (Heidegger in Frampton 1983, p. 29). As Seepe (2014, para. 12) asserts that, in education, which applies equally to design, international recognition starts with the local, where designers “use their pressing and persisting problems as a source of intellectual critique and investigation”. Slow Design is informed by *local* narrative, by social as well as commercial needs, designing *with* a community rather than *for* a community. As design shifts from designing purely for idealised communities, Slow Design implies a deep and sustainable attachment, dialogue and exchange where the complexity of real community needs is gratifying.

Implicit in the characteristic intimacy of Slow Design is the demand for a balance of narratives. As graphic designers are challenged to respond to cultural identities that have a complex local substance, they face “usually politically inflected differentiations of gender, sexuality, class, religion, race, ethnicity and nationality” (Tomlinson 1999, p. 272). Local communities have different knowledges, they involve multiple stories that express negotiated meanings. Graphic designers drawn from and focused on local Slow Design have motive to be more attentive to multiple local community perspectives. The dominant literature in South Africa has historically expressed influences that “flatten the experience” of a marginalized black South African majority (Dei 2012, 2:32). This flattening is a product of knowledge production that is dismissive of local, afro-centric experience. “Western civilisation habitually identifies itself with civilisation as such that what is not like it is a deviation, less advanced, primitive, or, at best, exotically interesting at a safe distance” (Van Eyck in Frampton 1983, p. 22). The West typically interprets African design as an ethnic curiosity instead of its rightful place as an aesthetic expression (Diagne 2017, para. 7).

As Nkopa (2016, para. 4) suggests “when we talk about decolonisation it’s absolutely about addressing the order that is at play when you produce knowledge”. He refers to the need in South Africa to disrupt the intention of the colonial project. Adichie (2009, 12:56) asserts “it is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power”. In the polarity of South Africa’s social landscape, post-colonial narratives increasingly contradict, reveal and question the existing system.

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity (Adichie 2009, 17:35).

Design is suffused with narratives because it is always constructed by and embedded in discourse, both ideological and theoretical (Porter & Sotelo 2009, p. 19). “Every design is defined by and gives definition to social narratives that influence the behaviour associated with design spaces or objects” (Porter & Sotelo 2009, p. 19). The narrative expression of design always involves rhetoric and a persuasive intention, that shapes attitudes and influences actions (Bonsiepe 1965, p. 23; Foss 2005, p. 141). In this way, through including some perspectives and ignoring others, design narratives reinforce a particular pool of knowledge and shape history (Ouyang 2012, p. 5). Design forms an expression of culture that may either entail a confined identity, “identity as bounded, primordial and ready to advance ethnic chauvinism” or a liberating project, a “regularly contested and re-grounded” postcolonial discourse in Africa (Boswell & O’Kane 2011, p. 361).

Decolonisation must necessarily shatter convention, creating a space for questioning, for critique, and for the experience of not-knowing. It stimulates “the ability to tolerate, and even enjoy, the experience of confusion or doubt” (Keats in Huberman 2009, p. 32). The experience of not-knowing is always a part of how knowledge works. Design thinking needs to be pragmatic: “the ongoing process of *attempting to understand* – though never really understanding completely – is *absolutely productive*. The relentless attempt to understand is what keeps any practice moving forward”. The intention is “*only an attitude of orientation*, of looking away from first things (preconceptions, principles, categories and supposed necessities) and towards last things (results, fruits, and consequences)” (Bailey 2009, p. 1). Decolonization is an open-ended purpose not a conclusion. It is an “open-ended beginning because it speaks to two things: that the struggle for decolonization is a journey that is never finished and that, on this journey, uncertainty is not to be feared” (Ritskes 2012, para. 1).

Slow Design is not reclusive. The expression of graphic design is germane particularly at a local level, but is simultaneously pressured to reflect global relevance. South Africans have, however, confused this global reach with the need for global affirmation. “This whole notion when we talk about internationalisation, it is almost like a subtle way of saying you have to be impacted by the outside, that you cannot be a source of your own intellectual inspiration” (Seepe 2014, para. 9). Decolonisation diffuses this external pressure and presupposes that African designers need to find their own voice.

The mimicry of Euro-American culture dominates almost everything graphic design produces. Designers are susceptible to existing stereotypes that “help perpetuate fundamental ignorance that feeds a certain Western agenda” (Wan 2015, para. 1). An unconscious, mediated and colonized response is to produce ideas and imagery that imitate tourism stereotypes of Africa or the “politics of pity” for Africa (Wan 2015, para. 1). In reality, these adventitious forms are unequivocally not a coherent expression of the gestures of African being, the intriguing and complex fusion of African life.

What are the ways South African graphic designers can dissipate colonial influences and celebrate a sense of the original?

Firstly, Slow Design is driven by the emergence of the concept of the (local) designer as author. Authorship reflects the shift from the graphic designer as “unseen messenger” of the marketplace (Finn 2009, para. 20) to the graphic designer as an assertive critical voice in the world. Equally, design authorship has a certain inventive freedom, integrating the personal and social into a commercial space. Poyner (1995, p. 37) introduces authorship as an intervention beyond simply the mechanical creative persona of the graphic designer; he suggests the critical and theoretical climate is germane for designers to articulate “something of their own through the material”. The interests of individual South African designers, including those from communities that have historically gone unnoticed or ignored, are wonderfully multiple and varied. As essentially the creator of meaning rather than the translator, the graphic designer is challenged to bring a strong point of view and sentient lived experience more deeply into the discourse of graphic design.

Secondly, black scholarship, black designers and black design culture are a vital part of dislodging unyielding colonial preferences and expanding into a twentieth century humanism. As the value of black culture has long been withheld (and essentially invaded), there is a resultant tension and protection of black heritage that is particularly animated. There is thus the existing necessity of a self-asserted black identity, in effect the erasure of difference among black South Africans, as a strategy to unite those who have been historically oppressed so that they can be the subject of their own liberation in the face of colonialism. As Lewis (2013, p. 54) asserts “Black culture is not simply a concept of black particularity (blacks are different from whites) or of the universalism of black identity (all blacks are the same) but of black particularity as a constitutive part of a universal identity”. It is a necessary undertaking, including a focus on the *contribution* black identity makes to the design field. The maturing process of this stratified identity is empowerment and the inevitable simultaneous or subsequent divergence into a sprawl of identities; a process that is ongoing, open-ended and subject to cultural shifts, gender issues, ambivalence and contradiction (Yon 2000, p. 136).

In reality, our identities are multiple, subtle and constantly changing. As Simmons (2010, p. 96) asserts, the issue of decolonisation is a complex one as human narratives may express oppression in one instance of social identity (race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, religion) and the inadvertent role of an oppressor in another. South Africans, as in any country with a history of oppression, are not “frozen in attitudes of perpetual difference and hostility to each other”, but lived experience is essentially fluid and hybrid (Said 1986, 48:14). Ultimately, a more equal future in South Africa, and a more diverse graphic design workforce, is an ongoing, complex process towards a more deeply embedded celebration of multicultural diversity and non-racist coherence.

Questions of social justice are best articulated by the question “Would you like it done to you?” and the assertion, alongside social change, of an apology (Said 1986, 1:05:30). Said (1986, 1:16:00) comments that a defining strand of colonial power is not only the denial of oppressive practice, but a refusal of the right of the oppressed to represent themselves. To radically change colonialist practices, White privilege has to review its assumed authority and begin the complex task of acknowledging and supporting black self-determination towards a more socially just South Africa.

Thirdly, emotion is welcomed and celebrated in the forms and impressions of black African culture. The celebration of immediacy, sensual rhythm, sentient emotion and humanism make a radical design contribution to the world, as an equivalent knowledge to reason and conceptual abstraction (Senghor in Lewis 2013, p. 52). African design resonates at an emancipatory emotional level that remarkably, but not exclusively, conveys its originality. “What constitutes originality is not a specific feature that would belong solely and exclusively to one race but, rather, a certain ‘equilibrium’, let us say a certain ratio, between various features that can be found everywhere because together they make up the human condition” (Senghor in Diagne 2017, para. 41). Emotional resonance does not exist at the expense of intellectual truth (Helfand 2001, p. 33), rather it has indelible, lasting power that declares lived experience. Design education has been characterised by the thrust of the rational, the neutral, the pure form so celebrated in modernist thinking. However, as Helfand (2009, para. 12) asserts “Design that strives for neutrality, that seeks to extinguish its relationship to the human condition, risks removing itself from the very nucleus of its purpose, which is, yes, to inform and educate — but also, to enchant”. And alongside enchantment is the call for social relevance. Graphic design is an opportunity to inject sustainable, meaningful, socially relevant ideas in the world, where the realities and chaos of vibrant culture, memory and feeling are as valued as form and execution.

And finally, graphic design can function (practically) to create and transform systems of meaning.

Wilk's (2004, p. 113) contestation of meaning in consumption may be constructively applied to how graphic designers can redefine meaning to resist colonialism. Wilk suggests five strategies for reimagining existing systems of meaning – displacement, identification, promotion, appropriation and escalation:

Displacement disqualifies a set of images and replaces them with new ones that have the same meaning. The graphic designer has the choice to reinvent, to consciously replace unthinking preconceptions about black Africanness with *self-determined* images, “an old category being transformed into a new one through substitution” (Wilk 2004, p. 113). South African designers have an evolving range of distinctive images and invented forms that can replace the false authority of colonialism.

Identification fuses together categories of meaning, so that a new image joins the same category as an old one. The cultural idea of Africa is capable of being both reproduced and *changed* through design. Through repeating *transformative* images and behavior linked to consumer concepts, a new form of identity has the potential to emerge. The idea of *repetition* of newly-recognised codes (of what constitutes “being a self-determined African”) begins to describe identity, as the activity of repetition prevents images and behaviours from being overlooked (Said 1986, 10:41). In other words, when positive, contemporary images are repeated they begin to describe identity, they begin to exist through that repetition and become ascribed to an African sense of being. As Said (1986, 27:10) asserts, traditions can be insistently invented.

Promotion “is the lifting of an item by a series of steps in a graded hierarchy of meanings within a larger category” (Wilk 2004, p. 113). Thus the interstices of rural, suburban and township life may be lifted from the disavowing colonial gaze to contribute meaningfully to the contemporary milieu.

Appropriation involves redefining stigmatized images by aligning them to a particular situation or new social group. “A poetics of knowledge can be viewed as a kind of ‘deconstructive practice’, to the extent that it tries to trace back an established knowledge – history, political science, sociology, and so on – to the poetic operations – description, narration, metaphorization, symbolization, and so on – that make its objects appear and give sense and relevance to its propositions” (Ranciere 2011, p. 14). Conceptual design “differs from earlier forms of [design] in the sense that it does not interpret, nor change, nor add a new object to the environment, but only isolates and draws attention to existing phenomena” (Claura & Sigelaub 1999, p. 286). Existing images and concepts may be given new propositions in a decolonized space and associated with a fresh or ironic African-centred design aesthetic.

Escalation involves the widening of meaning of a particular image or design idea to include other issues. With a human-centred approach, and a locally generated ethos, Slow Design naturally questions and disrupts existing conventions. The meaning of commercial graphic design may be escalated, however complex the task, to begin to include changes in cultural understanding, to focus on the ethics of human-centred, sustainable design, of critical rather than neutral intention and of locally-generated design saturation that redefines the invisibility of affirming African design.

In conclusion

Slow Design is still an emerging concept, a radical shift in design thinking in the contemporary world. It has not been in existence long enough to reflect colonial baggage, rather it has the potential to become rooted in Africa. By sheer force of imagination, by contesting meaning and by exerting political will, South African graphic designers can see that power, access, and agency is in their hands. As aesthetic expression is integral to political expression, “the

framing of a future happens in the wake of political invention rather than being its condition of possibility” (Ranciere 2011, p. 13). Design has the potential to be transformative, functioning as it does in the persuasive use of image and text, that influences and is influenced by cultural and political imagination. In every way, with a commitment to decolonisation at an aesthetic, educational, social and systemic level, the cultural and complex conception of a socially just South Africa is capable of being both envisioned, reproduced and activated through design.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Doing Research to Decolonise Research: to Start at the very Beginning.

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Abstract

The paper proceeds from the perspective that to decolonise education one needs to start from the position of decolonising research as practice. It proceeds to argue that to attempt to enter the halls of research to decolonise it, one needs, indeed, to decolonise the pursuits of research which are the pursuits of knowledge. A central domain of this pursuit lies in the notion of Africa-centred knowledges. The paper concludes by arguing that designers sit in the cusp or at the forefront of decolonised research endeavours, as they pursue human flourishing (instead of 'research') and the search for practical wisdom (or phronesis) instead of knowledge.

To make this argument the paper follows this pathway: it sets out to note that the current research state of affairs has come about by universities attempting to make research legible (following Scott's definition and tracing his arguments around "seeing like a state" – the title of his book) and therefore measurable. This is compounded by the necessity (it seems) to make the very practice of "doing research" legible, measurable, quantifiable and 'generalisable'. To open up potential alternatives, the paper then moves to an understanding of Africa-centred knowledges (Cooper & Morrell, 2014) in the pursuit not of what the world is but what the world needs. Having established this, the paper then suggests that research assumed the role primarily of problem definition (a pursuit of accurately describing and explaining the "isness" of the world), leaving solving of the problem to so-called lesser domains of the "applied sciences." Yet, the paper argues, the point of research should perhaps be, as it originally was, to solve practical problems to the advancement of community (and not the advancement of knowledge, directly). To do this it posits the notion of collaborations and strategic alliances. This is connected to abductive reasoning, which leads, the paper argues, to practical wisdom, and through this, to the pursuit of human flourishing.

Having made this argument, the paper considers avenues that such a conclusion might take, and engages in 'designed' speculations that move beyond description and explanation, to product, process, making and, therefore, potentially flourishing. It draws on Kasulis (Integrity and Intimacy) and then on Gardner's notion of Multiple Intelligences and Herrmann's Whole-brain learning. In short, the design disciplines gear their research around producing that which can solve problems. This comes about through exploring the territory, and not fixating on the map.

Keywords: *decolonisation; legibility, measurability; Africa-centred knowledges; strategic alliances; problem-solving.*

Doing research to decolonise research: to start at the very beginning

“Who knows the river better ... the hydrologist or the swimmer? Put that way, it clearly depends on what you mean by ‘knows’, and ... what it is you wish to accomplish.” (Clifford Geertz).

“AR vs ARVs (African Renaissance vs Anti-retrovirals)” (Green 2014, p. 45)

“If you ask a mathematician what is two plus two they will say ‘four.’ If you ask an engineer what is two plus two, they will say: ‘it depends on how accurately you measured the first two and how accurately you measured the second two and the answer would be somewhere between 3.83 and 4.18.’” (Fred Munro, Engineer, personal correspondence)

The colonising agenda: legibility and measurability

The colonisation agenda was driven by a supreme faith (indeed, a belief in the truth of the matter) in a modernist or high modernist agenda. James C Scott, in his provocative book *Seeing like a State* (1998) connects (and therefore critiques) such an agenda to a “muscle-bound version of the self-confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature (including human nature) and, above all, the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural laws” (1998, p. 4). I return to its application shortly, but a number of these concepts resonate in the education system in South Africa. There is an assumption that scientific progress (whatever that is) will be the panacea for all ills, and that technical and technology progress ‘carries’ such a panacea. Furthermore, progress and development is determined by the “expansion of production” and will lead, inevitably, to the satisfaction of needs, and finally, that the task is to master nature and human nature and then all will follow. Scott emphasises that social order can therefore be rationally designed (and thereby controlled), and that such rationalisation is, of course, the same as science. The implication is that all educational endeavours need to be geared towards achieving such rational mastery.

Given this, it is difficult not to determine that such education is part of a colonisation process, embedded in rationality, cognitive engagement, manipulation and control. Indeed, following this argument it would appear that the purpose of education is to tame the wild (we know how to do this because we have mastered the natural laws), focus on development (meaning production and productive development) and increase satisfaction (which means ‘personal satisfaction’). To do this, and to know we have succeeded, we need (following Scott) to determine two major concerns. Firstly, we need to be able to make whatever it is we wish to determine *legible*. By this he means that we need to be able to convert whatever it is we are wanting to control into some form of readability – a map, a definition, a diagram – so that what we observe here can be seen to be the same as what we see over there. We set up a classification system (Cooper, 2014), a series of check lists, a memorandum or two. If the matter cannot be made legible it cannot be controlled and therefore cannot contribute – indeed, it may be considered ‘aberrant.’ Once it is *legible*, matter will then be able to fulfil the second concern, namely its *measurability* (and with this, quantification).

Scott speaks here of social engineering (and we might parallel this with ‘research engineering’). Four dynamics are at play for problematic social engineering.

The social/research engineering dynamics

“The first element is the administrative ordering of nature and society” (Scott, 1998 p. 4). The need for bureaucracy is to make things “legible”, measurable, conveniently formatted and thus controllable. In short, research is replete once the ideal map is delivered, the article

is published, that which is at play in the world is reduced to words that can be defined by a dictionary or by scientific jargon. But, as Scott points out, this ignores the territory or, as I shall argue below, the notion of embodied knowledge. In short, the “knowledge economy” has the potential to reduce the world to words, maps and money.

Scott’s second element refers to a “high modernist ideology” (1998, p. 4). Modernism reflects the notion of control over the world, natural or otherwise, placing humanity as masters of all that they survey. Modernism cements the belief in objectivity, the rational, and the exploitation of the natural world for the benefit of humanity. It is perhaps best illustrated in Descartes’ maxim “*Cogito; ergo sum*” – “I think; therefore, I am” – separating out the rational from the embodied, and presenting them as a hierarchy, with the rational in control. This clinging to the rational and to the hierarchy has led, amongst other things, to a justification of colonialism as a rational engagement with development. To decolonise, therefore, will mean to challenge the rational in the form that it is currently at play. Critically, from the point of view of the argument that I wish to make, this will also need to challenge the knowledge economy, as well as the imperative to make things legible and measurable.

“The third element is an authoritarian state that is willing and able to use the full weight of its coercive power to bring those high-modernist designs into being” (1998, p. 5). From a research point of view there are abundant examples of this at play, ranging from the insistence on publishing in accredited (‘high impact’) journals, to foregrounding research practices as the ultimate aim of a university. Within the educational environment the pursuit of pass-rates, FTEs, memoranda to emphasise information-memory equivalencies, even the underpinning of Outcomes Based Education is premised on “designing learning.”¹ Within this domain one might also address the plethora of concepts around KPA’s, PMS’s and the like. (One wonders what Plato, Mudimbe, Newton or even Bach would have thought of these high modernist tools of measuring productivity).

The fourth element is, controversially for now, “a prostrate civil service that lacks the capacity to resist plans” (1998, p. 5). I shall return to this concern as a central matter, below, but it is worth considering that attempting to change the educational landscape in South Africa has been a long and arduous process. Perhaps this is because the modernist ideology throughout the world is so deeply engrained that, to dismantle such an ideology is difficult, but perhaps even more difficult is *conceptualising what will or could take its place*. Here we discover one of the primary tensions in the decolonisation agenda. It is perhaps not enough to claim ‘freedom,’ when what is actually meant is ‘freedom from the colonial, oppression and discrimination’ – one should also pose the concern of ‘freedom to . . .’ Freedom to do what, one might ask? What replaces the colonised educational state?

Scott concludes: “In sum, the legibility of a society provides the capacity for large-scale social engineering, high-modernist ideology provides the desire, the authoritarian state provides the determination to act on the desire, and an incapacitated civil society provides the levelled social terrain on which to build” (1998, p. 5). Scott proceeds in his book to document and analyse a number of situations throughout the world that have engineered this position, and points to the catastrophic consequences in each. For my argument I do not wish to engage with catastrophe, but to suggest ways to escape this seemingly iron grip in the pursuit of decolonisation.

If one attempts to undo the impact of colonialism in the South African context one is inevitably plunged into the socio-economic domain. Colonialism has led to vast levels of inequality and discrimination, resulting in poverty and, inevitably and correctly, rebellion.

¹ The potential to remove the embodied from education by emphasising ‘blended’ learning, and the use of so-called ‘technology’ is particularly problematic as a hallmark of modernism. Within the South African context, for example, one wonders how *Sangomas* might be trained through the internet.

The causes of this need to be identified, described, understood and addressed. The processes of decolonisation, therefore, need to start with such an agenda. However, my concern is with what will be put in place in the new, decolonised, dispensation? Within the South African context it would make sense to move away from the western, globalised, metropole as the seat of the original colonial endeavour, and turn to what is African. However, this leads one to the tensions between modernity and indigeneity and along this binary path lies danger, one could argue. In simplistic terms, decolonising by removing modernity and replacing it, uncritically, with indigeneity is to pose the question: 'If one is freed from the colonial, freed from modernity's vice, and one turns to indigeneity, what is one free to do?' Can one conceptualise this 'freedom to do' around actions, events, conclusions, goals and the future? Put another way, and following Cooper and Morrell, and others in their edited book (2014) setting up modernity and indigeneity as a binary leads to debates "between a bad place and an immovable rock" (2014, p. 2).

Introducing Africa-centred knowledge

I offer, drawing from two major sources, potential ways out of this conundrum. Firstly, I turn to the debates offered in various forms and engagements in the Cooper and Morrell book entitled *Africa-centred knowledges: crossing fields and worlds* (2014). Here I argue not for an African (decolonised) approach to education and knowledge, but for an *Africa-centred* approach, which focuses less on what Africa *is* and more on what Africa *knows and needs*. In this I follow the argument against 'cultural identity' as a retro-concept, and replace it with 'subject formation' as posited by Kaiser (2012). Subject formation allows one to posit a pragmatic, in-the-moment engagement with the situations, drawing on the past where necessary, but acknowledging that culture is emergent, generative, relational, temporal and creative (Hallam & Ingold 2007, pp. 1-24). I then proceed to Kasulis' (2002) work on *Integrity* as a modernist, westernised concept in understanding (with its emphasis on objective, dispassionate knowledges) (I acknowledge that I have extrapolated his views), and *Intimacy* as a non-western approach to human understanding, relationships and being in the world. I conclude by pointing to some educational models that might assist in the process of decolonising education, and therefore, research.

Cooper and Morrel argue cogently, that "Africa-centred knowledges are entangled, contextual and contingent" (2014, p. 3). Historically, for example, it is a seemingly impossible task to untangle the influences, sources, needs and dreams of the African continent from the past. Indeed, working through all of the current media practices in South Africa, for example, content and form of presentation shape-shift continuously, resonating with the past, the perceived future (the millennial or conceptualised Utopia) and the influences from Africa and beyond. To attempt, therefore, to untangle these, and place each strand into one or other 'box of influences', and then to determine what is 'colonised' and what has been 'decolonised' raises massive problems. The reasons for this, as Cooper and Morrel point out, is that all stimuli are by their very nature contingent upon what has gone before, and therefore the responses to such stimuli are inevitably dependent upon such triggers or stimuli. Furthermore, the shaping of such responses (and, dare one say, the expectations of such shaping) are embedded in the context of the moment of shaping. To draw, thus, on Hallam and Ingold (2007), responses arise out of the relationships with context, in the moment of shaping, emerging, thus, as a network of creative endeavours, entangled in webs of contextual stimuli. This is what the response *is*. Perhaps, therefore, it is more useful to ask what the response *does*, thus acknowledging the epistemological entanglement but moving toward a teleological engagement.

Inevitably, therefore, I would argue, following Cooper and Morrell (2014, p. 15) "Africa-centre knowledges are made and situated in the creative space ... and are open to *collaborations* and strategic alliances across the divide." The word 'collaboration' is,

etymologically, potentially the key, for two reasons. Firstly, the Latin words *'cum labora'* that form the basis of the word imply 'working together' or 'to work together'. Secondly, a collaboration is a state of existence that is constructed deliberately to do something that has not yet been done. Cooper and Morrell, however, stipulate that such collaboration should not fall into the domain of giving in to the power position (collaborating with the enemy, or the boss, for example) but should form "strategic alliances". Again, the notion of forming an alliance implies both enhancing the strength of the position, but also suggests that the alliance is set up to do something. Being established "strategically" poses the potential aim of the alliance – to achieve something². Here, when Cooper and Morrell speak of "the great divide" they are referring to the "the bad place and the immovable rock" – the modernist and the indigenous. Inferentially they are suggesting that the strategic alliance between the two will develop an Africa-centred knowledge.

What might this Africa-centred knowledge draw on? Cooper and Morrell offer five areas of engagement, and all seem valid in the pursuit of a decolonised education. The first one I have dealt with, above, in the form of collaborations. Secondly, they suggest that such knowledge will arise from current embodied knowledges. Such embodied knowledges are embedded in context and in exigencies, suggesting that the knowledge has arisen from 'problem-solving'. Thus an education and a research culture that foregrounds problem-solving, as opposed to problem finding will move Africa-centred knowledge forward. Yet it is inevitable that such solutions need to be interrogated by the third area of engagement namely gatekeeping mechanisms of some sort. However, such gatekeeping needs in and of itself to interrogate "the great divide" and not cling to either the rock or the hard place. Indeed, as Cooper (2014, pp. 78-92) argues, one of the critical domains of gatekeeping will be the pursuit of the classification of an Africa-centred knowledge, and, by extension, all aspects of such decolonised knowledge domains. It is here that the fourth area is conceptualised, namely that the very language of negotiation (and classification) needs to be placed under the spotlight, for it is through language that Africa-centred gatekeeping/classification needs to arise. Languages, are, inevitably, bound to local knowledges (a fifth area of engagement) for context, connotation, implication and meaning. Language cannot be objective (language is a map to meaning and not the territory of meaning, where such a territory is experienced or embodied) and therefore it becomes by its very nature a site of strategic alliance building.

Sites/themes of/for collaboration/strategic alliances

Lesley Green (2014, pp. 43-48) posits three sites where such collaboration/strategic alliances might arise. She posits these as "non-canonical ways of knowing" (and she acknowledges that the canon, in this case, can refer to that which arises from either the rock or the hard place), and she clusters them in themes. Her argument is not based on the binaries suggested by the dyad, but by suggesting a continuum between the two terms, and also by acknowledging the tensions between the understanding of the dyad as seen through the eyes of modernity and indigeneity.

The first theme that she suggests draws on the tensions in the Nature/Culture dyad, specifically engaging with the seeming hierarchical, placing nature 'beneath' culture (by some). Simplistically argued, a culture can be seen as a community that is bounded by its members practising life in the same ways, by understanding life in the same ways, and by sharing value systems. Yet it can be argued that such doing, understanding and valuing arises from and engages with that which is deemed 'natural' or 'from nature'. Culture presupposes a particular 'web of control' over nature, but is, in itself, determined by the 'nature of that

² Tellingly, perhaps, the difference may lie between the role of 'stakeholders' as opposed to 'role-players.' As I shall argue, below, it can be suggested that a stakeholder enters the fray to take something out of it, whereas the role-player has a vested interest and therefore is critically engaged in making the strategic alliance a success. As I shall show, this resonates with Kasuli's tension between the Integrity model and the Intimacy model.

nature.’ When two (different) cultures have two different ‘webs of control’ over the same matter, a site for negotiation is opened up, and strategic alliances between such differing cultures present themselves. (This potential decolonised dynamics of such strategic alliances will be attended to in the section on Kasulis’ notion of integrity and intimacy, below). It is conceivable, given this set of definitions that one can draw on a culture of science as opposed to a culture of experience. This would open out the tensions, offered in the third of the quotes at the top of the article, between the mathematician who has a culture of exactness, and the engineer who has to deal with the exigencies of measurement ‘in nature’.

The second theme Green raises speaks to the Mind/Body dyad (or bodymind whole, which in turn resonates with the embodied knowledge). Current understanding in education is that the mind is divorced from the body and education engages the mind. This is the duality captured in Descartes notion of “I think; therefore I am.” However, it is also caught up in the tensions where the map is not the territory. The map is a cognitive product of reduction, whereas the territory is embedded in the lived experience. It can be argued that the article, or the dissertation is a cognitive reduction (or distillation if one must) of the being in the world. But furthermore, it can be suggested that, in terms of Africa-centred knowledges, the knowledges are lived and not written. Geertz’s quotation at the start of this article also speaks to this – the hydrologist ‘can write about’ the river; the swimmer ‘lives it.’

The tension (perceived or otherwise) between the Traditional and the Modernist is her third theme. She opens this up with two telling examples, the one quoted in the beginning of the article where the modernist approach to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (the use of ARVs, or Anti-Retrovirals) was placed in tension (at the time) with the notion of the African Renaissance. The second example is the way in which Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) may be seen to potentially become commodified by a modernist approach (IKS becomes trademarked as IKS™). Her argument is that neither approach is particularly productive. Yet the fisherman knows the river, and the marketer knows the market and it would make sense that local, indigenous knowledge and modernist knowledge seek “strategic alliances.”

I would argue that all three themes highlight the potential dangers of clinging to a monolithic (and, perhaps, hegemonic) perception of identity. At this juncture of the argument I would suggest that the decolonisation endeavour cannot be hardened around already existing identity formations, where such identity formations might be seen to be embedded in the coloniser/colonised dyad. Kaiser’s (2012) notion of subject formation allows for the exigencies of the moment, the memories of the past, and the search for the future to coalesce around ‘strategic alliances’ between mind and body, between nature and culture, and between the traditional and the modern. Is there a way that this might come about?

Kasulis on Integrity and Intimacy

I turn now to Kasulis’ notion of Integrity and Intimacy in attempting to provide a strategy. His project is to attempt to suggest a model to explain the differences between a Western ontological approach to the world and an Eastern one. I have appropriated his argument to speak of a modernist approach and then to intimate an alternative. Kasulis argues that the west understands the world in compartments, in integers, in discrete elements. Thus, in a process of negotiation, for example, each side would be seen to enter the negotiation with a clear understanding of the integrity of their positions, and an accepted understanding that the field or domain about which the negotiation is being undertaken can be demarcated and has an integrity of its own. Once the negotiations are completed, the parties withdraw, and return to their own integrity position, and the demarcated field is left as it was, its integrity intact. Units are discrete, have boundaries, can be defined and analysed, using discrete models that have their own integrity. Taken to its logical conclusion, such fields and models, because they are discrete, named, bounded, made legible (I return to Scott here) and

therefore measurable, they can seem to become agents on their own (I have extrapolated Kasulis somewhat here, to make my argument). This is the domain of the stakeholder. Thus one argues that “the economy” is in decline, the university is flourishing, research needs support and so on. In actual fact, it is not “the economy” that is in decline, it is a case of less people are spending less money (another discrete unit) where money is seen as a reward for working hard at making things, and so more people are making less money. It is not the “university” that is flourishing, but the people in the university who are working harder and smarter and are contributing to make a name for themselves, and it is not research that needs support, it is the researchers who are attempting to solve problems that need financial, emotional, and psychological, and so on, support.³

Given this, rather simplistic, presentation of one side of Kasulis’ argument one can see how the integrity model plays out in Green’s themes: the body is a discrete unit, as is the mind; the modernist approach is discrete, as is the traditional and so on. The development of “strategic alliances” seems a somewhat forlorn hope, given this Integrity state of affairs.

As opposed to this Kasulis notes the Intimacy paradigm, where engagement⁴ with the ‘other’ (in the dyads, for example) inevitably influences both sides of the dyad. Thus, as the mind engages with the body, for example, so the mind changes, as does the body, given the engagement. The relationship is an intimate one, in that withdrawal from the engagement means that a part of each is presented to or left with the other, and withdrawal suggests loss. Furthermore, the relationship in the context of problem-solving is an empathic one. What is traditional can only be defined as being traditional if it is placed in empathic relationship to the modernist. And the modernist can only be seen as being modernist because the traditional is ever (empathically) present. Perhaps the most intimate moment is the moment of collaboration, and thus the collaborative interweave (or entanglement) of tradition and modernity in Africa produces, potentially, Africa-centred knowledge, solutions, insights and wisdom. Tentatively I propose, then, that this approach brings one closer to *Ubuntu*, and when *Ubuntu* is in the service of education and research one encounters Africa-centredness.

Collaboration and strategic alliances reveal human endeavour but are only constructed in the pursuit of something. If “colonised” research has pursued making things legible, measurable and predictable (or problem finding), what might “decolonised” research pursue? Given my argument to this point I would suggest a utilitarian pursuit – collaboratively using legibility, measurability and predictability in pursuit of problem-solving, practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and empathic development. As such, decolonised research (and education) is not about legibility, measurability and predictability, but lies in the empathic and intimate engagement through collaboration and strategic alliances with the future – in the pursuit of making a better life, for example. It is a field for role-players, and not for stakeholders.

The field of design is ideally placed to foster this decolonised approach. Whereas Human Centred Design or HCD has attempted to formalise this (and is not without its difficulties) it has provided a parallel framework, as it were, to *Ubuntu*.⁵ I offer here an extended quote from a paper I presented at the University of Johannesburg’s FADA campus in April, 2016.

³ A classic example of this at work is in the use in academic language of the passive voice where the agent of the action seems to disappear. For example “research was undertaken” actually should read “a bunch of people got together to attempt to solve problems,” and “state-capture was punished” where the people doing the punishing have not been named (by the language), nor have the people who are involved in state capture been revealed (by whom?)

⁴ It is perhaps useful to interrogate the concept of an engagement here. In the marriage sense, an engagement is where two disparate people commit to a relationship that will lead to something productive. The breaking of an engagement leads to loss.

⁵ I am indebted to my colleague, Kate Chmela-Jones, for this insight, and await the completion of her study with keen interest.

Consider an artist working at a painting. In the integrity model, one has the artist, with her paints, easel, even idea. Then there is the canvas, ready to receive, as it were, the paint. And then there is the notion of making a painting. In the integrity model, the one applies her tools to the other. And in the end, the painter stands back and returns to her reality, and the painting is complete, or now has its own integrity. In the intimacy model (and now I have to appear to wax lyrical, but if you are a painter you will know what I am talking about) the painter and the canvas stand ready to be changed, to engage, to be in an intimate relation to each other, to be open to what the canvas can give and receive and what the painter can give and receive. In the act of painting, the painter is often not cognitively (dare one say 'rationally') deliberate, but in communion with the canvas, her and its reality, the world. The reaction to each other is one of frustration, so to speak, if matters are not 'working' (whatever that 'not working' might be). At the end of the process it appears as if both artist and canvas 'step back from' the relationship moment, in many ways fulfilled, and definitely changed. Critically, there has not been an exchange (that would be an explanation from the integrity model) but a mutually creative act. The canvas and the artist will never be the same again.

The argument thus far suggests that to move into a decolonised education approach one needs to counter the modernist necessity to make new knowledge measurable and legible, and that such an approach needs to pursue not 'new knowledge' that takes these forms, but to pursue an Africa-centred knowledge, which pursues not what is, but what could be or could become. Constraints include multilingualism, competing world views, a potential clinging to a hegemonic view of identity, and the like. Are there models that might address these issues? I am fully aware that what follows is conceptualised from research that has taken place potentially from the modernist view of matters, but offer them for consideration/engagement and trust that they may form new collaborations and strategic alliances on various levels.

Gardner and Herrmann

Thus I close this paper with some speculations on how one could overcome these barriers and to do so I draw on Gardner's model of multiple intelligences (1983) and on Hermann's view of whole-brain learning (1988/1995). I engage with Gardner in so far as I adopt the notion of "intelligences" to mean 'abilities to cope with, operate in and develop the world' and I do not consider the innateness of such intelligences, but posit them as 'domains of engagement.' Gardner's original model contains seven intelligences/domains of engagement, namely the verbal-linguistic, the logical-mathematical, the visual-spatial, the bodily-kinesthetic, the musical-rhythmic and harmonic, the interpersonal, and the intrapersonal⁶. It is common cause that most universities almost exclusively embed their understanding and pursuit of new knowledge through the domains of the logical-mathematical and the verbal-linguistic⁷.

This resonates with Scott's concern around the pursuit of the measurable and the legible. It can be argued that the *Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations Produced by South African Public Higher Education Institutions* (2017) goes some way towards opening up the potential for developments around the other five intelligences and fosters the notion that development and new knowledges can arise from activities in these domains, opening

⁶ It can be argued that the domains of the interpersonal and the intrapersonal resonate with the field of Emotional Intelligence/Competence as well.

⁷ Indeed, most current debates around the seeming problems in pre-tertiary education in democratic South Africa circulate around the mathematical and the multilingual concerns/shortfalls for the generation of new insight and knowledge.

up the presentation of such new knowledges in other, non-mathematical and linguistic ways. This is a development to be applauded in the decolonisation domain, I would argue. I do not advocate for the discontinuing of the mathematical and linguistic, but advocate for the rightful place of the other domains of enquiry and sharing in tertiary education, and, by extension, tertiary research. (I am also fully aware that, if tertiary education pursues the notion of making such research outputs legible and measurable, an immediate potential stumbling block will occur. How does one make legible and measurable the seeming ephemeral that benefits community and society at least on a local level? Could it be that impact factors for journal articles are replaced by the impact on local communities in the pursuit of development and 'a better life?' Is impact to be 'measured' by 'human flourishing' and not 'citation numbers'?)

The second approach (running somewhat parallel to Gardner) is the notion of Whole-brain learning developed by Ned Herrmann (1988/1995; see also especially Ann-Louise De Boer, Pieter du Toit, Detken Scheepers & Theo J D Bothma, 2013). In simplistic terms brain preferences occur for learning purposes and can be clustered around the notion of learning through employing Form, Fact, Feeling or Fantasy (or combinations thereof). Traditional research work has dominated expectations through Form and Fact applications (which resonate with the logical-mathematical, and the linguistic when coupled with the logical). Nevertheless creative work often materialises through Feeling and Fantasy (although it can manifest in other domain combinations). Current pedagogy requires application (seemingly) of all four metaphorical quadrants yet measurability and legibility are only 'allowed' to manifest drawing on the Form and Fact Quadrants. I argue that this approach needs a form of decolonisation, as it will thus foreground doing and making, local knowledge and practical wisdom. In short, new insights from the swimmer and the engineer are as valuable and contributory as the hydrologist and the use of ARVs in the pursuit of human flourishing.

Conclusion

I have argued that to decolonise education and research one needs to understand that 'the map is not the territory.' To move forward one needs to navigate the territory. Having a map is a huge advantage, but without the Africa-centred knowledges of the territory, and the necessity to traverse the territory that is embedded in the needs of Africa, the map is rather pointless.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

A Humanistic Approach to Designing and Assessing Interactive-narrative Based Social Interventions.

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Abstract

Decolonising digital media design education requires an investigation of possible techniques that can be taught to designers as a way of approaching interactive design with an emancipatory agenda. Traditionally, interactive-media studies have been taught from a positivist or psychological stance focusing predominantly on theories of human activity and cognition. In this paper I argue that the humanities offer an additional social and ethnographic lens with which to focus on the socio-historic, political and economic context of interactive media artefacts. At a fundamental level, interactive media offers a specific type of engagement, one that combines many effective aspects of communication such as computational technology, storytelling and theatre, with the mundane world of people's everyday lived experience, and therefore demands a unique method of interrogation.

Broadly this paper merges the fields of psychology and social theory to build a robust scaffolding upon which interactive-narrative based interventions can be built upon. Interactive-narrative is a useful medium for addressing a more humanistic account of digital technology as it allows the audience an engagement with in ways that offer a high level of agency and activity. Critically, though designing interactive-narrative requires considerations that extend beyond 'usability' and 'utility' and seek to account for a more rounded interpretation of human experience. To this concern, this paper firstly presents two case studies of existing interactive-narratives that promote social change. Next a range of theories and practices from psychology and sociology related to human activity, embodied cognition and media studies are described and key concerns originating in the theory are articulated resulting in a creation of a set of conceptual tools that embody these concerns. These tools formulate a unique rubric of navigability, identification, co-creation, immersion and transformation, which are then used to reflect upon the case studies.

Keywords:

Interactive-narrative, Humanistic HCI, Audience Reception Theory, Agency, Emancipatory Design, Postcolonialism

Introduction

Calls by South African students for decolonised higher education demands an interrogation of our role as design educators in decolonising design education. This is not a simple task and cannot be achieved overnight. This paper does not necessarily answer all the complex issues expressed by student protests, however this critical investigation is an important step in the right direction.

Postcolonialism invokes ideas of social justice, emancipation and democracy in order to oppose oppressive structures of racism, discrimination and exploitation. But it also emphasizes the formerly colonized subject's 'agency' – defined as the ability to affect her/his present conditions and future prospects (Nayar 2010, p. 4).

Decolonising design education requires a critical exploration of conceptual approaches built upon a postcolonial schema. The idea of agency is critical to an emancipatory agenda, although 'agency' is an ambiguous word, I attempt to unpack the term in this paper, using the medium of interactive-narrative to address a more humanistic account of digital technology as it allows the audience an engagement with in ways that offer a higher level of agency and activity.

I suggest my own five-layered rubric with which to evaluate agency, and perform a comparison of two case studies using my suggested methodology derived from my Masters research. The complexities of narrative based interactive-design applications with a humanistic or emancipatory agenda drive the construction of this five-layered rubric, fusing the core concepts of Human Computer Interaction and Media Studies to critically account for a more rounded interpretation of human experience extending beyond pure 'usability' and 'utility'.

Description of Case studies

Both these case studies are instances of interactive-narrative based social interventions, aimed at educating young people about HIV. These studies are USA based, and the reason I have used them is because the newness of the medium limits the instances available, and for purposes of this study I need to compare like with like. This methodology may be easily translated to any geographical or cultural audience because of its humanistic agenda.

CASE STUDY 1: WSTDtv: "You wanna do what?"

This case study is part of an HIV/STD awareness and prevention curriculum for middle and early high school learners. This takes place through an interactive platform called WSTDtv, comprising of interactive studio activities that are for classroom use. I will be looking at the module "You wanna do what?" which can be found at <http://wstdtv.org/>.

An animated character takes the stage, she is a woman standing in what looks like a TV studio. The placement in this environment makes sense, as it could be an exciting context for teenagers to explore the ideas and information presented. The animated woman calls herself "Geraldine O'Riley" or "Dr O" and explains the show, placing the user as a new intern in her TV studio. She explains the particular program that the intern will be working on and gives some information relating to the show's purpose, stressing the focus on communication regarding sexual health. She explains that people send in videos about friends, family or themselves engaged in communication about relationships and sex. She goes on to say that the studio's job is to broadcast and rate the videos and then get feedback from the viewers. The intern is told to watch and rate the video submissions against seven criteria:

4. Risk reduced
5. Relationship maintained
6. Participant's assertiveness
7. Negotiated well
8. Persuasive
9. Verbal communication
10. Non-verbal communication

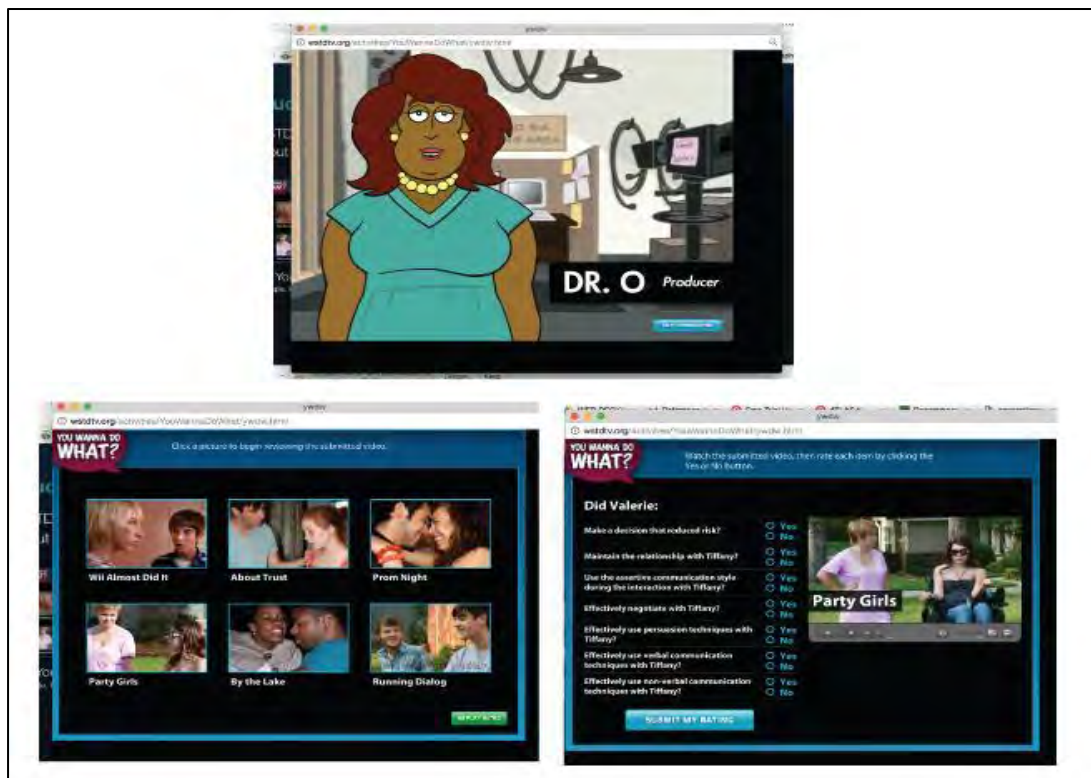


Figure 3: Screenshots from the interactive- based HIV intervention “You wanna do what?”

She explains that she has assigned some more experienced staff members to review the intern’s comments, and that the videos are cued up on the work station for the intern to review. When the user starts their task, six videos appear on the screen: “wii almost did it”, “about trust”, “prom night”, “party girls”, “by the lake” and “running dialog”. The first video “wii almost did it” features the couple Ian and Carly, engaged in a two-player game on the Wii, after which Ian broaches the subject of condoms and STDs. Carly seems reluctant to discuss the topic, but eventually agrees to talk about it. As the conversation progresses Carly gets noticeably upset, she seems to be feeling guilty about not using protection with her last boyfriend, however Ian persuades her to listen to his concerns about safe sex. The scene continues with Carly agreeing to practice safe sex, and ends with them deciding to go to purchase the condoms together. While there is a discussion and conversation that takes place, the user is not part of it. The user cannot affect the outcome of the story, and is purely an outside viewer to the narrative unfolding, with no control over the outcome. Seven questions are posed about Ian’s use of communication. The user has to rate it, after which it is compared to the “expert’s” rating. If there is something different in the rating, the user may click on it to find out why the expert disagreed.

The second video “*about trust*” follows the same pattern as the first video – also featuring a teenage couple talking about sex. Here the boyfriend tries to convince his girlfriend that they need to use a condom when having sex. She is not convinced, and feels like such a demand is a breach of trust. The boyfriend eventually finds a way to explain it, comparing it to wearing a seatbelt in a car, even if you trust the driver. The conversation ends with her understanding and agreement. The third video, “*prom night*”, features a teenage couple during prom making out in a private room. They seem all geared up for sex, but the girl has left her bag in a friend’s car – her condoms are in the bag and she insists they stop. This begins a fight about using protection, the boyfriend insists she bend her rules once, as it is a special night, however she is adamant that she will not. He then tries to pressure her by suggesting they might not be good together, which unfortunately is a very plausible scenario. The girlfriend holds her ground and is not negotiable on this issue, she eventually walks out on him. Video four, five and six follow the same pattern: the user is introduced to a scene featuring a teenage couple in a situation where sexual health needs to be discussed. The scene unfolds, after which the user/intern is asked to rate it against the same seven criteria.

CASE STUDY 2: “*I’m Positive*”

The second case study is a game called “*I’m Positive*” and can be found at <http://www.impositivegame.com/play>

“*I’m Positive*” is an educational interactive-narrative, interspersed with quirky mini-games. The user plays as a young man, who finds out from a former partner that he may be HIV positive. The player is then presented with a series of choices to make – he can either get tested and seek treatment, or ignore the circumstances. Throughout the game, the player learns pertinent information regarding HIV: the misconceptions around it, testing, treatment, disclosure, and the consequences of not getting treatment. The game needs to be downloaded, and is available for Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems.

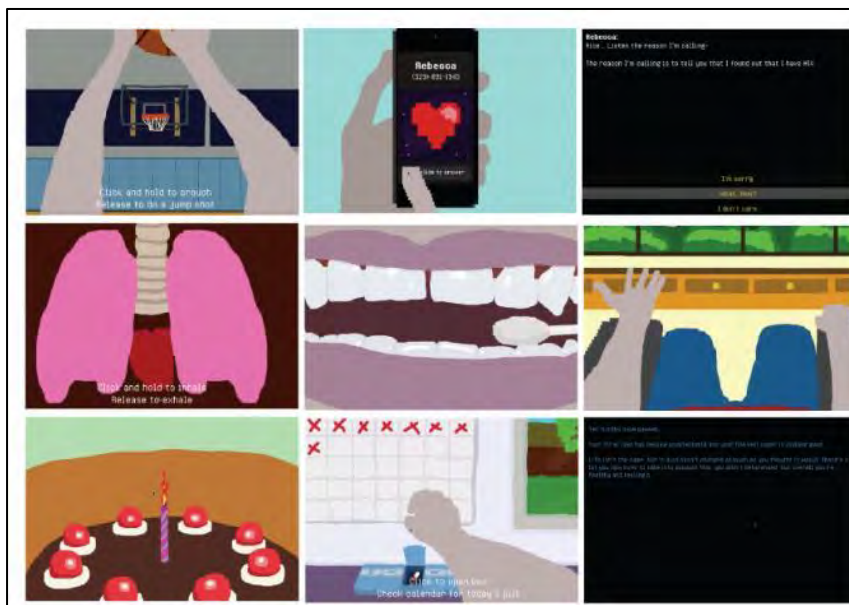


Figure 4: Storyboard of the game “*I’m Positive*”

Throughout the narrative, the gameplays follow this structure: the player is presented with a game requiring varying levels of skill, and after successful completion of each game, the user is presented with options which drive the story forward. The game starts with a pair of hands holding a basketball, representing a first-person point of view, the game is set in a basketball court, and from the visuals and textual prompts it is clear how the game works. After successfully completing the game, a phone starts ringing and the player, represented

as a white male character, may answer it by swiping right, text on the screen describes what is transpiring: Rebecca is calling, she is an ex-girlfriend, she calls to inform the player she is HIV positive and suggests he gets tested, after the phone call, the player is offered options for how he wants to respond. From here the interactivity opens up – there are different paths that can be chosen by the player which directly affect the way the story unfolds. Each selection causes different outcomes in the flow and direction of the narrative. Each step of the way allows options. Clearly there are branching plots that will unravel according to how the user chooses to travel. The main narrative storyline is set, and accessed via different choices. There are various gameplays scattered through the story, after the character gets the phone call from his ex girlfriend, text on the screen informs him about how anxious he is- followed by a game to calm down his breathing, there is another gameplay later on in the narrative involving an oral swab test and a blood test, these do not require particular skill, but do lighten the mood of the narrative, and remind the player that it is only a game. There is also a play involving the character’s birthday celebration where he must blow out candles, and further on a more complex gameplay- where the player must select and take the correct pills for the corresponding day, this gameplay requires some skill, and has the same ludic elements present in the basketball game. The story ends in the basketball court, with the player being informed that life continues as before, or with him falling down on the court and eventually dying because he refused to seek help. The choices in the game are obviously constrained to a certain extent, as there are set choices to make, however the game endeavours to ensure the player never feels stuck or controlled. All choices are valid, and although the choice’s outcome might not be desired, it is still the player’s choice to make. The game lends itself to being played more than once, with different pathways. The game allows the player to go all the way down the path of not seeking help. This path ends with a screen that says: “*You die!*”- which brings in humour and the juxtaposition of reality and play in an interesting manner.

If we compare these two case studies, on a surface level “You wanna do what?” might seem to be more representative of a decolonized agenda, we are presented with an array of multi-cultural interactions- white, black, male, female and homosexual couples having conversations about sex, while the second study “I’m positive” provides only a white male avatar prompting immediate questions around representation, but if we are to break these case studies down against my rubric, the layers unravel and a more complex matrix is revealed. My rubric has evolved out of a study of the theories of humanistic human computer interaction and audience reception theory.

Humanistic HCI

Human Computer Interaction (HCI) has been described as having three waves (Bardzell & Bardzell 2015, p. 18), in its early stages, the computer was seen as a tool to accomplish specific tasks and the user simply as the operator of the computer. By the 1990’s the disciplines of sociology and anthropology became an important lens in the discourse of HCI, highlighting the social context of activity in the interaction between people and technology and allowing for an appreciation of the user. Humanistic HCI started to come to the fore in 2004, foregrounding the role of interpretation in user experience (Hook 2004; Sengers et al. 2004). Humanistic questions started to feature in HCI research, interrogating experience from different perspectives, to form a more layered understanding of the facets contributing to the human experience. The user’s role as active participants in interactive systems became recognised as significant. Humanistic HCI does not negate ideas presented in the earlier paradigms, rather it draws on activity theory, distributed cognition and ethnomethodology and also brings in emancipatory social science, philosophy and cultural studies to emphasise the importance of self-determination, which is an imperative factor in postcolonial thought. McCarthy addresses the interpretive nature of experience, which stretches the notion of

media simply being decoded by users. (McCarthy & Wright 2004) Humanistic HCI deploys humanistic epistemologies to critically formulate processes, theories, methods, agenda setting and practices. Emancipatory HCI is part and parcel of this methodology and demands both research and practice in addressing oppression, racism, poverty, sexism and colonialism. The present direction of emancipatory studies are “guided by a reflexive interest [in enabling] human beings to have greater autonomy and self-determination” (How 2003, p. 117).

Active Engagement

Interactive-narrative benefits dramatically by being placed within the discourse of media studies, which has also gone through an evolution of ideas, from its dark origins of naming the audience as a faceless mass, that passively receives media content- known as the Magic Bullet Theory (Lowery & De Fleur 1983, p. 97), to a more complex understanding of the active audience. The various methods in which the “active audience” respond to and engage with media, is known as Audience Reception Theory and is based on Stuart Hall’s model of communication, which explains that meaning is not intrinsic in the content, but rather is constructed by the individual’s engagement with the content (Hall 1980). Interactive-narrative allows the audience an engagement in ways that offer a high level of agency and activity. Influenced by the work of media scholar John Fiske, Jenkins describes an “*active audience*”. In his book *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, Jenkins addresses fan culture and how audiences become “active participants” in the construction and circulation of textual meanings (1993, p. 24) . The audience- no longer seen just as a passive recipient of content enjoys taking content, mixing it up, playing with it and adapting it for their purposes so it makes sense in their worldview. In this understanding, there is not a distinction between “user” and “content” or “author” and “reader” rather media participation is a conversation between the user and the content. These theories are important as they acknowledge the power dynamics present between the “author” and “reader”, from a postcolonial perspective these are important factors to consider in the design of interactive media products, as agency becomes key in creating engagements that wish to remain true to an emancipatory agenda.

Humanistic HCI and Audience Reception Theory highlight that Agency is at the core of an emancipatory agenda, and as such my methodology interrogates Agency in interactive-narrative interventions based on five specific criteria namely:

11. Navigability
12. Identification
13. Co-creation
14. Immersion
15. Transformation

This approach uses these five threads of interactivity, as the hinge between active engagement and quality of the experience. These five threads are at heart interwoven. It would be artificial to argue that one takes precedence over the other, or that they can be exclusionary or absolute, however they are useful ways of evaluating how content and platform articulate with elements of agency.

Navigability

Murray’s definition of spatial navigation relates to the pleasure of exploring and discovering in an interactive environment (1997, p. 130). David Benyon highlights the element of exploration in navigation systems, and explains: “exploration is concerned with finding out about a local environment and how that environment relates to other environments” (2014,

p. 70). Principles for good navigation, set out by Shneiderman & Plaisant add a quantifying variable in my assessment of the navigability of the case studies. When a user is exploring an interface, they seek clues for the discovery of pathway possibilities. Clear high-quality links, which are relative to the specific task, will give the user a good indication of the systems pathways (2010, p. 84). He also emphasises the need for using orderly, structured patterns of HCI such as "multiple ways to navigate", "process funnel" and "internationalized and localized content" as identified by Van Duyne, Landay & Hong (2003, p. 93).

Identification

For a user to have interest in an interactive-narrative experience, they must first identify with it. Identification is a psychological process whereby a person identifies with another person to different degrees. This can be a primal identification, where the person involuntarily has an emotional attachment to another, or it can be a partial identification, where a person shares something in common with another, and therefore has an emotional attachment on that level (Freud & Strachey 1989). Jonathan Cohen looks at facets of identification and its important role in media effects. Identification is based upon the audience member's worldview, and extends to the way he or she might relate to the character in terms of attitudes and emotions. When there is a strong identification with a character, recognition allows for association that makes for easier adoption of prescribed roles and information processing. Identification causes the user/player to process information, with empathic emotions, marked by internalising the character's point of view (Cohen 2001, p. 252). In his article *Representation, Enaction, and the Ethics of Simulation*, Simon Penny notes that the embodied aspects of simulation feed back onto representation and thereby make representation not inert but interactive (Penny 2004). The nature of the characters and the interactive environments that drive the narratives in these case studies indicates the levels of identification that will occur.

Co-creation

Co-creation can mean many things, in this context it is a system allowing a user control over the arrangement and placement of the individual pieces that build an interactive-narrative. The creator leaves room for others to create their own narrative. The agency in co-creation would depend on how much control is given to the user in the creation and placement of the narrative parts. This will always need to be constrained somewhat to keep the narrative from losing meaning. Agency is strong when a user feels they can control the outcome of a story and there is intrinsic pleasure in being able to create. Caracciolo remarks on the tension between narrative progression and ludic interests (2015, p. 246). His suggestion is that the avatar/protagonist serves as the hinge between the real world in which the game play exists and the fictional world where the story exists. In this way, the avatar participates in the ludic play as an instrument of players' agency, enabling players to accomplish their competitive goals through strategic planning. The point at which the user identifies with the character and feels empowered to make decisions affecting the unravelling of the narrative needs to be central in the constructed experience.

Immersion

Immersion is linked to active engagement and the quality of the experience. When a user is actively engaged in the interaction, they feel a sense of agency. Benyon defines immersion as "the feeling of being wholly involved within something, with being taken over and transported somewhere else... immersion is not about the medium; it is a quality of the design" (2014, p. 10). In his chapter *New Directions in Intelligent Interactive Multimedia*, J. Gutiérrez-Maldonado describes the term immersion as relating to the stimulation of the different sensorial channels of the user (Lampropoulou, Lampropoulos & Tsihrintzis 2008, p.498). Similarly Alexander describes immersion, specifically in a narrative game

environment, as the feeling achieved by a reactive environment – where the environment acts as a feedback loop. He also explains immersion as being “sensual and multimedia in nature” and that a successful immersion should progress over time and not be static (2011, p. 94). Immersion is closely interwoven with active engagement. Glassner notes that active engagement requires exertion on the part of the user/player. In order to draw the user into an activity that requires work, they must be receiving something that makes it worth their while – there must be some fun and pleasure derived from the interaction (2004, p. 293). Ryan looks at the importance of active engagement in interactive-narrative instances, for both ludic and narrative based games (2009, p. 54). She suggests that immersion may take on various forms including spatial, epistemic and temporal immersion (Ryan 2009, p. 56).

Transformation

Transformation in digital media is the ability for the user to change, shift and morph throughout the journey. It is the pleasure of not being stuck in a particular role, of being able to explore a story from multiple points of view, to retrace one’s steps, and re-enact the journey. One of the strategies suggested by Ferrara for using games to support learning is necessitating transformation, which means forcing the players to adopt a new way of thinking in order to succeed in the game. This can be achieved by allowing for an examination of the problem so that the player can solve puzzles and progress the story. The puzzles should be designed to have many possible combinations so that players cannot practically solve them by any other means (2012, p. 188). A transformative interactive experience will leave the user with a better-defined understanding of another perspective that leads to a new way of thinking. Once again this element is strongly linked to some of the other elements of agency. Identification and transformation will be a strong indication of the transformative experience. A user must first identify with a character before he or she can get into the role. Once the user is in the role, they might have a change of perspective. This is because they are in the head of another character, which forms another perspective, leading to a different mode of thinking. The level of immersion the user feels will also be highly influential in the transformation that occurs, because without immersion, the user cannot fully identify with the characters and stories, which will inhibit the change of perspective.

Comparative analysis

Comparing and analysing the two case studies using my rubric of navigability, identification, co-creation, immersion and transformation to extract levels and nuances of agency in these interventions, produced some interesting findings. When addressing navigability, it is clear that both these case studies have high levels of navigability based on the above-defined criteria. “You wanna do what?” is designed with sound information architecture, containing a well-defined hierarchical structure, which clearly marks the steps the user must follow. The game environment of “I’m Positive” has clearly demarcated areas for specific tasks, gameplays and choices, giving the user a good indication of the systems pathways. Both case studies have clear links describing the possible pathways of exploration. “You wanna do what?” has multiple ways to navigate, but is superficial as the navigation system allows the user to navigate easily, but only in the guided direction. “I’m Positive” has a robust process funnel whereby the player is directed through the game process with a series of mini-games and tasks with specific choices that produce the sequence of the narrative. Navigation is well considered for both case studies, with these nuances influencing the level of navigability experienced.

We saw that it is the nature of the characters and interactive environments driving the narratives, which will indicate the levels of identification that will occur. The case study “You wanna do what?” presents various characters. The target audience is middle school children, who are supposed to experience this interaction from the point of view of an intern at a

television studio. This target audience is likely to identify with that role, as it is an exciting role to play. The audience will probably also identify with the characters in the videos to various degrees, and therefore identification is reasonably high. Built into the gameplay of “I’m Positive” is the possibility for a player to explore scenarios and outcomes of someone else’s story in a palpable way. The active engagement demanded by first-person play naturally cues the player to identify and therefore empathise with the character they are playing. Allowing one avatar character – a white, male young adult, does detract from the identification to a certain extent, but the mechanisms of first-person gaming counterbalance those discrepancies. The player feels like they are going through the process themselves, and the realistic choices presented do make the game more meaningful. These elements of identification shift the experience in a more accessible and relatable way.

These case studies differ in levels of co-creation, with “You wanna do what?” falling short in this area. There is no point in this particular interaction at which the user is afforded the pleasure of creation in the narrative outcome, although the user may identify strongly with the character they are playing (an intern working in a TV Studio) they are afforded little power in the unravelling, and outcome of the stories. This lack of flexibility severely compromises agency. Identification influences agency when the protagonist serves as the hinge between the game play and narrative, here the user has little effect on the narrative outcome, so while the identification is high, co-creation is low, and this it is detrimental to the agency felt. The videos feature teenage couples in relatable scenarios having feasible discussions around safe sex, giving the user many opportunities to identify with the characters and situations presented. As the point of entry into the interaction, high levels of agency are present at the outset. There are six videos to choose from, and each video is different- however, as the narrative unravels, the user is pushed into a bystander role and not offered an opportunity to affect the stories or decisions made by the characters. The user may only watch the scenarios play out by virtue of the fact that at the end of the video they are presented only with a set list of criteria to evaluate, as opposed to more open questions or alternative paths to explore. “I’m Positive” is a game and therefore the tension between narrative progression and ludic interests may agitate agency in co-creation if the elements that drive the outcome are not strong. Here the avatar participates in the play as an instrument of player’s agency, which provides for a sense of agency in co-creation as the player is allowed to make choices and plan the next step in the play.

Although the case studies are constructed on different platforms and platform can have an impact on immersion, it is not the only element that will define the levels of immersion. “You wanna do what?” is a classroom intervention, and “I’m Positive” is a game, one of the problems with “You wanna do what?” is that it requires a lot of work with little payback. The user watches their chosen video, for instance “*wii almost did it*”, in which the couple are engaged in a discussion about condoms. Tasking the user with the job of evaluating and rating the scenario and characters’ choices, with the knowledge that their rating has no influence and will be further audited by a superior, does not induce pleasure and is not fun. It is more like a test with very little reward for doing well. This impinges on the immersion the user will feel when interacting with the interface. Immersion in this case study is very low. “I’m Positive” has balanced the elements of ludic play with the narrative well. The playful elements of the game invite the player to engage despite the heavy nature of the content. The structure of the gameplay pulls the player back into fun mode as soon as the narrative gets serious, and this decreases the resistance the player might start to feel without playful elements. Immersion is intense because of this thoughtful juggle. The somatic cues employed in the game – such as forcing the player to shoot the ball or breathe slowly when feeling stressed – produce embodied physical immersive moments quite different to the intellectual approach of “You Wanna Do What?” Instinctive process is prioritised over

abstract cognisance in “I’m Positive”, resulting in a stronger stimulation of the different sensorial channels.

The level of immersion the user feels directly influences the transformation that occurs, without immersion, the user cannot fully identify with the characters and stories, inhibiting any change of worldview. Transformation must be evaluated within the context of immersion. “You wanna do what?” will not necessarily draw the user into another way of thinking, but the videos themselves have the potential to create transformation. There are characters and scenarios that users might identify with, and watching the characters deal with these situations may lend an alternative perspective, depending on the level of identification that transpires. Transformation is compromised in this instance because, although identification may occur, the user is placed as the intern, making a decision clouded by thoughts of what will impress “Dr O”. There is no room to try on different perspectives or different outcomes this leads to a somewhat less transformative experience. By contrast, “I’m Positive” is transformative, and has the advantage of a gaming platform. The strong elements of story and play which are present provide the right ingredients for transformation, and the elements of choice – joined with the allowance for exploring the story, and then re-exploring it – amount to high levels of transformation.

Conclusion

Interactive-narrative based design can benefit from being constructed and analysed using multiple techniques rooted in a humanistic approach. While the medium itself affords an engagement that offers a high level of agency and activity, there are many facets of agency. The proposed rubric of navigability, identification, co-creation, immersion and transformation are useful ways of evaluating how content and platform articulate with elements of agency. Unravelling the case studies with this rubric has brought to light the weak and strong areas of these interventions. This in-depth, humanistic practice of enquiry is valuable, as it aids the endeavour of decolonising design education by illuminating the many facets of agency that designers must probe when designing interactive-narrative social interventions.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Decolonizing Thought Practices with Discussion Approaches for Built Environment Educators

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Abstract

Decolonization is a globally relevant redress of local customs and practices that have remained altered since the times of historic colonial expansion. In South Africa, education forms one such set of customs and practices and the built environment another. Educators in the field of built environments share a responsibility to challenge the accepted norms under colonial systems and find ways in which to facilitate the creation of built environments that reflect the needs and aspirations of their society. Seepe (2004, pp. 160-174) urges us to rethink curriculum functioning, and attitude in the context of African traditions, conscientiously instilling relevance in both the system and the resulting products of that system. 'In our curricula lies the very identity of our society. If we therefore want to change our society, address inequalities and develop ourselves into a just and healthy society, we need to change the very content of the vehicle through which we teach and develop our young people' (Nzimande 2011).

Matos (2000, p. 18) explains the need for an African identity in higher education that contains not only African examples but an understanding of the basis on which they are created, emphasizing the need to 'acknowledge African traditions and practices, and work towards eliciting and understanding their fundamentals'. Makgoba (1997, p. 181) reiterates this, stating that the way in which the curriculum informs students through its methodology is a crucial point, as African content alone, presented with the best intention, will not equate to decolonization of the system as a whole. The idea supported by Matos is of students aspiring to design in a local context, using local principles and practices creating meaningful design, not disconnected concepts and misinterpreted '*vernacularisations*' (Steyn 2014, p. 50).

This article begins by contextualizing a '*colonization of the mind*' through an introduction to ontology, the history of history and colonial education reforms, establishing a domain in need of redress. The discussion then asks the reader to reformulate their thoughts and self-reflect, aided by six approaches to facilitate discussion around decolonization. Conclusions are not given, instead the reader is urged to embark on their own *decolonization of the mind* and engage in discussion around curriculum development. The article speaks to educators as a whole, but reflects on key aspects relevant to the built environment sector including interior design, public landscape and architecture.

Keywords: *Curriculum Transformation, Decolonization, Africanization, Built Environment*

Onto-logic behind decolonization

Onto means 'variant form of' –*logic*. Ontology encompasses the metaphysical dynamics of a culture's beliefs and explains foundational concepts for a way of being. As Jimoh and Thomas (2015, p. 54) explain, ontology is the *reality* through which a culture has evolved with a uniquely interpreted understanding of existence and approach to knowledge.

Ontology in a broader sense focuses on an individual's *becoming*, it can be thought of as a set of applications in becoming an individual or member of a culture or group without the 'restriction *pure logic* places on what can be' (Sanders 1996, p. 413).

Dall'Alba and Barnacle (2007, p. 7) challenge the notion of higher education curriculum design that does not first consider ontology, favoring pedagogy that establishes a sense of being or becoming for a student. They state that knowledge 'can change who we are' and warn that 'knowing is inhabited' by what they identify as an, '*always already*' manner of practicing what we historically know or the way *we know* it to be.

Oke (2005, p. 33) cautions us to engage ontological discussions using critical thinking and contemporary relevance, cautioning us to not only think of African ontology as "spiritual", 'ancient'... 'mystical', but as also evolving through scientific discovery and forethought.

The history of history: Colonial and African history are separate

The idea held by many, of recorded history as purely factual is only partially true, as Munslow (2012, pp. 16-22) explains; while empirical evidence of an event may be accurate the explanation of the event may be in the motive of the time. Tosh (2015, p. 2-10) defines recorded history by foreigners as more often a *social history* relevant to the foreign group, lacking the insight of context to form a true understanding of what is being documented. –

As evidenced in the UNESCO, *Library of Congress*, artistic and written depictions of Africa offer a catalogue of colonial observations limited to *their* specific encounters. This documentation of history is not a historic context and timeline of Africans, it is a selective record of the colonizer in a foreign land. Spillman (2012, p. 123-124) identifies that visiting colonial authors would capture an exotic collection of images of Africa to take back to a curious homeland public, while local integrated colonists depicted *their* versions of *true* Africa; both colonist representations, both in opposition to each other, but neither written by indigenous Africans.

Much of this narrative of Africa persists through *tourist art* 'as a process of communication involving image creators who attempt to represent aspects of their cultures to meet the expectations of image consumers who treat art as an example of the exotic' (Jules-Rosette 1984, p. 1). The semiotics of African art thus change from their original symbolism and meaning to a generalized symbol of exoticism.

According to Twells (2009, p. 10-11) Christian mission work, prevalent at the time of colonization, formed a narrative, broadly termed the '*civilizing mission*', '*enterprises that aimed to dignify and liberate their subjects*', with colonial narrative prejudicing indigenous culture, while validating the actions of the colonizer.

Shillington (2012, p. 1-2) further explains that European colonists from the 18th century on only deemed written history to be existing history, so when they encountered African forms of knowledge including pictorial, oral, enacted and made or built forms, they simply concluded that many African regions had no history. However, he does identify the existence of written history in the North, through ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, 5th century Ethiopian religious texts and 9th to 16th century Arab texts of North and East Africans.

In terms of built environments, Viney (1987, p. 14-19) discusses that colonization brought with it the vernacular styles of the colonies. The colonists adapted to local conditions and geography, but remained within a colonial aesthetic character that later included the technological advancements of industrial imports.

Furthermore, Hess and Oliver (2013) identify that the religious influence of Islam and Christianity on Africa and the built environment included the addition of Mosques and Churches to the architectural landscape and town plan, and with that the introduction of more rectilinear forms and arrangements.

Despite all this, ancient African sites still evidence the diverse and interactive nature of the continents societies, including many examples of pre-colonial trade, culture, philosophy, art, scholarship, metallurgy, monumental building, and mathematical, astronomical, medicinal and scientific discovery, as verified by Njoh (2006, p. 19-29).

Ancient Egypt and Nubia are well known examples of African building prowess, but many other examples exist predating colonial intervention. One such given by Tiley (2004, p. 16) is the Southern Bantu, 10th – 13th century civilization of Mapungubwe, which according to Hall and Steffoff (2006, p. 35) later repositioned further North, establishing the 14th century stone complex of Great Zimbabwe and Thulamela. These sites combine to exhibit adaptability, complex organizational structures, stone building and metallurgy skills and mutual trade relations with Arab regions along the African East coast, North to Persia and further East to India and China, which took place during a shift in economy from farming to trade.

More current, Modern and Contemporary African designers such as Hassan Fathy (1986) and Diébédo Francis Kéré (2012) have veered away from the congested mainstream architectural styles and foreign introduced materials prevalent in many cities, opting rather to engage indigenous African techniques for building that reintroduce meaningful design, functionality, and locally sourced materials and building methodologies. Hassan Fathy's design for *New Baris Village* in Egypt and Diébédo Francis Kéré's design work for *Gando Village* use passive design principles to create a climatically considerate interior that is comfortable and cost effective. The resulting designs not only focus more closely on community needs and fostering a sense of community through the built environment but also result in a rooted African aesthetic.

Colonization of the education system and a colonization of the mind

Dascal (2009) defines a 'colonizer' in the case of a '*colonization of the mind*' as not only being restricted to the guise of foreign colonist, but as any individual or institution wishing to enforce their ideals or instill a favored doctrine, identifying that the colonizer may not only be doing so from an enforcer stand point, but could also be doing so believing that they are helping the colonized. Examples include: family tradition, religion, schooling, politics, global media and fashion. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, for good or bad intention, *colonization of the mind* is a product of encounter and as considered by Biko (1978): 'the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed'.

Morreira (2015, p. 292) refers to colonialism as '*a system of management*' replacing indigenous systems of education with Western paradigms inhibiting validation and thus the perception of validity of indigenous knowledge. Ndlovu (2015, p. 10) continues that the African paradigm at the point of colonization and from there on is '*subalternized and inferiorized*' in favor of the Eurocentric latter. It is Ndlovu (2014, p. 136) who identifies the way in which Western knowledge systems speak in a centralized, non-geographical way, using '*We / The / Our*', projecting inclusivity while actually remaining exclusive. By impressing western knowledge as *the*, and *our* knowledge, individualism and context are removed and all exists within a Western '*owned*' world. By assimilating local populations under Western

rule into a Western *language of knowledge* there is an assumed conformity, a disguise of inclusivity.

In South Africa the Apartheid systems of education, Christian Calvinist and Bantu Education, are acknowledged by Msila (2009, pp. 310-311) as an attempt to assimilate Africans to colonialist ideals. – Mamdani's (1994, p. 248) description of children as 'potted plants' nurtured in a Eurocentric 'green-house', as opposed to being rooted in their communities remains a vivid description to this day.

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, pp. 3-4) the tendency to select European over Indigenous persists still in what he explains to be a '*postcolonial neocolonial world*', with all partaking in the fruits and burdens of globalization.

Connell (2016, p. 1) further identifies the nature of current global systems of knowledge or *knowledge keepers* as belonging to a greater, global economic system of publishers and funding agencies, by and large subsidized by Europe and North America. This sheer volume of publications, databases and research agencies existing out of these foreign regions, makes it easy to understand how the colonial style of research and institution has persisted.

In an extension to a *colonization of the mind* it is possible to consider such manifestations in built environments; Calburn (2009) for instance identifies a failure to *reframe* post-1994 South African society. She explains that Tuscan villa developments, RDP housing and gated communities subject their dwellers to separatist judgments of class through location and style. When these residential forms are joined by public city landscapes based on foreign benchmarks, a faulty or corrupted image results of what 'local' is, 'so intrinsically dangerous to any real imagination of a new South African society'.

Continuing this point, Sojkowski (2015) has concluded that 'western material and construction techniques are seen as correct, modern, permanent, and for the affluent, the vernacular is viewed as substandard, outdated, temporary, or for the poor'. An African man interviewed by Sojkowski, choosing to build his roof using sheet metal as opposed to vernacular alternatives, states that he did so because then '*he would be somebody*'.

'Decolonization, if it is to be successful as a reaction against such a deep, powerful, and long lasting colonization of the mind, cannot but be itself as radical as its opponent' (Dascal 2009, p. 9).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2013, p. 7) proposition for a *decolonization of the mind* is to break down thoughts and their linkages and to rethink content freely, with an awareness of the origins of those thoughts and on what they are based. Continued discussion on decolonization, is considered relevant by Muchie, Lukele-Olorunju and Demissie (2014, p. v) in facilitating the process of 'unlearning' and 'unthinking'. Importantly, they further state that discussion is shifting from the negative effects of the colonist to a deliberate focus on the positive contribution of Africans.

Six approaches to facilitate discussion around decolonization

With a broad overview of the need to decolonize in place, the following six headings offer an opportunity to focus thoughts and discussions through different approaches to decolonization. The approaches are highly summarized and where an approach is deemed to be of particular interest, further reading is advised. The reader is urged to self-ideate reforms in curriculum, pedagogy, and the built environments they foster. The discussion points are meant to encourage collective ideation as opposed to an individual ideology, and may take time to probe and process.

Discussion approach 1: *Fundi wa Afrika*

According to Machakanja (2015, p. 204) the concept of *Fundi 'the builder or tailor' wa Afrika*, introduced by Mueni wa Muiu and formalized together with Guy Martin, undertakes to provide a new paradigm for the African state that focuses on mutual benefit and self sustainability, based on indigenous institutions, and underpinned by the ideology of African thinkers such as 'Claude Ake, Steve Biko, Amilcar Cabral, Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah and Thomas Sankara' (Muiu 2005, p. 2).

Muiu (2005, p. 1) asserts that an understanding of pre-colonial, colonial and paradoxical neo-colonial states is necessary to grasp the role that each play in the making of a minority elite, over-riding the remaining majority, marginalized population. Understanding *Fundi wa Afrika*, means recognizing that Africa is in a predicament that 'reflects neither the Western state, nor African values', and that while this predicament is rooted in historic colonial practices, it continues under a corrupt neo-colonialist systems.

Muiu and Martin (2009, pp. 195-205) state that 'Africans must transform their education systems'. The primary concerns they highlight is the irrelevant, displaced and misinformed nature of content and values in the education system, and teaching methodologies and classroom practices that alienate and subordinate learners. Knowledge, content and methods should instead reflect African indigenous practices with content that is relevant and true, based on African history and methodologies.

Whether considering the greater African context, governance or institutional practices, several points are raised as part of the greater *Fundi* vision, which must elicit non-capitalist, non-corrupt systems that are accessible, shared, self-sustaining, integrated and transparent.

On reflection, if higher education should lead to self-empowerment through a self-sustaining system, invested in local growth, public good and equality; then in what ways can the curriculum and classroom experience encourage that?

Discussion approach 2: A phenomenological and ontological approach to thinking of University and design education

A phenomenological approach to thinking of the University is the University in *response* to Africa and the people, or the *response* of Africa and the people to the University.

An ontological approach to thinking of the University is the University as part of the *becoming* of Africa and the people, and Africa and the people as part of the *becoming* of the University.

So if we consider the University as part of Africa and the people, in the way that the people are part of the land, and the land carries ancestry as do the people, then the University... well, herein lies the problem, the University has a disconnect... its ancestors are found on other continents, and the phenomenological response of the people to the University reflects that.

Selvi (2008, p. 39) states that 'formal' learning systems homogenously group learners under a guise of singularity. However, 'Phenomenology focuses on an individual's first hand experiences rather than the abstract experiences of others'. Through Selvi (2009, p. 51) it can be understood that the University experience is a section of the learner's lifelong learning journey, and it has a responsibility to be a supportive structure in self-actualization, *a knowing of self*.

As explained by Dawes, Henderson, Nair and Petersen (2012, p. 139) the education system should be a safe space in which learners can engage with different cultures and beliefs through their interactions with fellow learners and the projects that they take on. Practicing tolerance and encouraging a positive response when encountering difference is a valuable tool in the formation of self and of solutions that foster positive responsiveness.

In thinking of built environments as part of the land and people and as a phenomenological response of the land and people, in what ways can the curriculum foster built environments that engage South African society's functional needs and support the formation of a regional aesthetic?

Discussion approach 3: Social justice, South African values and education that promotes public good

Reading from Asmal (2001, pp. 3-5), the education system has a role to play in developing students through a socially just system that instills values and that promotes public good, establishing criteria that include: Equity, Tolerance, Multilingualism, Openness, Accountability and Social Honor, Democracy, Social Justice, Equity, Equality, Non-racism, non-sexism, Ubuntu, Open society, Accountability, Law, Respect and Reconciliation. This sentiment is backed by Daviet (2016, p. 2) who further specifies the increasing role of government to provide education as a service of public good to society under a growing state of economic and social welfare.

Ndebele (2016) highlights though that recent student protests have shown-up the rift between African society, *the role Africans must all play in taking national pride and partaking in nation building*, and the lack of accessibility to the institutions that promote these ideas, bringing in to question their approach to social justice.

Adding to this is the question of how the built environment curriculum exhibits public good through the projects they envisage. For instance, including the Department of Human Settlements' (DHS) National Development Plan 2030 vision of transforming human settlements and the spatial economy to create more functionally integrated, balanced and vibrant settlements. This concept filtered into the curriculum is a way of forging productive links between government and educational institutions and introducing public good to learners of the built environment so that they may take those ideas forward with them as part of their problem solving mentality.

On reflection, how can social justice and public good be demonstrated to students, and in what ways can public good be embedded in the curriculum and collective efforts of the student's campus work and the work they continue when they leave the institution?

Discussion approach 4: Implementing the IKS and African methodologies in design education

Africa is a large continent with a diverse system of Indigenous Knowledge, spanning back millennia.

Referring back to Makgoba (1997, p. 181), African methodologies need to form the basis on which the African University is built, supporting learning and knowledge generation in an *African way*. When the curriculum supports a decolonized, African-centered epistemology, then it in turn induces the use of African knowledge, publications, materials, suppliers and contributors in all their forms. – The system becomes self-supporting, in benefit of Africa.

The *Indigenous Research Paradigm* by Chilisa (2012, pp. 40-41) establishes a system of enquiry that aims to procure knowledge through sources native to the topic in an ethical manner. The paradigm's guidelines promote transformation through decolonization, critical thinking and upholding of ethical behavior, instilling local values that focus on Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Emphasis is placed on acknowledging ontological, socially constructed, multiple-realities shaped by the connections of human beings to their environment and cosmology. The paradigm uses research and data collection methodologies that are participatory, liberatory, and transformative, drawing from indigenous knowledge systems and their language frameworks.

Generally viewed as a threat to indigenous knowledge, homogenization of cultural groups and cultural information, norms, identity and style through globalization is viewed negatively. But Embong (2011, p. 15) rationalizes that many contemporary Africans straddle the divide between traditional and global culture successfully, as 'conscious agents who may contest and resist global domination, or who may decide to negotiate, accommodate, adapt and appropriate aspects of the global, resulting in some kind of cultural hybridization as its means of engaging or negotiating with globalization'.

Consider then, what the possibilities are to support both traditional and global culture in defining what 'African' is in a contemporary context and in what ways can these modalities be incorporated in to the curriculum? Consider your own indigenous knowledge base; to what degree must you still learn about indigenous knowledge and the student's position in order to resolve the prior question?

Discussion approach 5: Innovation as a means of development, independence and relevance

Innovation in education can relate to progressive pedagogy, such as blended learning, new research concepts, and staying abreast of industry adaptations and technology.

Innovation in terms of the built environment encompasses a wide range of ideas, from finding solutions to complex problems such as sustainability and community development to new developments in building materials and smart technologies.

As Muchie (2015) establishes, innovation is nothing new to Africa, with many examples from ancient African history. He adds that the integration of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) as a trans-disciplinary field in education 'can be enriching for learners to make deeper sense of the world rather than observing through a narrow disciplinary lens bits and pieces of phenomena'.

Ogude, Nel and Oosthuizen (2005, p. 1-5) identify curriculum relevance as being rooted in innovation, through the technologies employed to capacitate developmental goals. They explain that while contradictions may occur between South Africa's *social redress* of education and the drive for *market-orientated* relevance, it is important to instill a critical and innovative approach to the curriculum to develop learners who can think in a flexible and independent manner. 'Higher education is expected to increase its responsiveness to social interests and needs. It must therefore be reconstructed to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically orientated economy'.

On thinking of technology and developing innovative minds, in what ways can the curriculum and pedagogy engage on a global technological level and, in what ways do we avail innovative approaches in solving problems of the local built environment by scientifically applying indigenous knowledge?

Discussion approach 6: Activity theory as a methodology for developing educational practices

According to Kaptelinin (2013) Activity Theory relates an individuals actions and reactions to their personal experiences.

Activity Theory is presented as a triangulation model that places a *Subject* (student), *Community* (institution) and *Object* (curriculum), against a set of *Tools* (teaching mediums), *Rules* (government) and *Division of Labor* (staff). The experience of each group in the system is relative to all other inputs in that system, perpetuating whatever condition is endemic. For example: a *Student* as consumer vs. *Student* as role player, working with *Tools* that teach

status quo vs. Tools that facilitate self-discovery. All inputs can be adapted to elicit different interactions and responses.

Winberg and Garraway (2016) place Activity Theory into an African context through the proverb '*it takes a village*', with responsibility spread across all parts of the system to create a functional whole. They suggest using Activity Theory as a theoretic tool to identify what contradictions may exist in a system, stifling its function, then, making changes to various inputs until a combination is found that produces a good product.

So, if the student and the work they produce through the education system is viewed as the product of that system, then what style of institution, curriculum and pedagogy yield an optimum product. Likewise: What is the expectation of the product on leaving the system and in what ways does the system support the meeting of that expectation?

Conclusion: Reaching a thought evolution

The undertone of decolonization discourse is achieving common goals by promoting the collective thought of many as opposed to a singular idea of one. Through freethinking, knowledge and perspective can surpass expectations of *normal* and *accepted* and innovation can take place. By actively engaging in decolonized thought practices and discussion, and taking these ideas forward, tangible change can move through class lessons, into the built environments of our shared society in a way that adds meaning and benefit in a sustainable way. 'Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world' (Mandela 2013).

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

“Community” as the basic architectural unit: rethinking research and practice towards a decolonised education

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Abstract

As a contribution to the decolonisation debate, we need to develop theoretical frameworks that are better suited to diverse contexts, specifically Africa, and we need to elevate local knowledge systems, thinking that originates from the African continent and architectural theory from African scholars. It also demands a shift from documentation (which we tend to do when studying Africa) to interpretation and the development of new theories and new methodologies of research and practice.

This paper therefore explores why societies build and what governs the building processes, acknowledging that societies build for reasons, including and, beyond the need for shelter. The layers of meaning that make up the building process include status, power, social convention, values and ideas on aesthetics. This inherent layering of meaning through building ensures that every built work is a deliberate act – consciously or unconsciously – which communicates meaning and gives shape and identity to those that build.

Architectural history traditionally deals with individual buildings, yet historically building and spatial expressions are almost always collective forms of expression. Architectural history tends to focus on the ‘monumental’ rather than the architecture of the ‘everyday’. It is therefore expected that to develop this alternative theory which sheds light on the ‘collective’ or ‘community’, would rely heavily on texts on residential architecture, the domestic scale and residential neighbourhoods. These are explored and interpretative models developed through analysis and adaption of various theories and texts.

It is proposed that the ‘community’ or the ‘collective’ should be considered as the basic architectural unit of design, embracing complexity, uncertainty and allowing for multiple voices to emerge and multiple actors to intervene in the built environment while ensuring minimal conflict. This approach is at odds with current practice and education which favour the individual over the collective.

Keywords: *community, architecture, decolonisation, education, practice*

Decolonising architectural theory

Decolonisation means the consideration of other contexts, other voices and other experiences – that is exploring beyond what has been presented to us as valid, academic and professional; it is seeing and acknowledging the value of other knowledge systems previously excluded from academic debates. How we approach this task is being interrogated and differences are rife. We have a dilemma in terms of what to use and what to discard from Western theory. However, it is important to note that this exploration presents us with a great opportunity. This paper makes a contribution towards the development of a theoretical framework for interpreting space and built form that is better suited to African contexts. It is based on various schools of thought and authors and aims mostly to shift the focus from the ‘individual’ to the ‘collective’.

The daily face-to-face interactions of dynamic social networks and patterns of interaction in collective spaces ultimately define what we recognise as ‘settlement’. The values that underpin ‘settlement’, as an expression of ‘collective’ aspirations rather than ‘individual’ aspirations, are at the heart of vernacular settings. The focus on the ‘individual’ has dominated practice in the profession, which is at odds with how vernacular settlements were built and developed in much of Africa. Indeed, it has been said that vernacular architecture is town planning or it is nothing (Turan 1990).

Another aspect to consider is that some practices are based on the occupation of open space as opposed to the construction of buildings. This is not something that would be highly valued in conventional practice which celebrates the bold, dominant, permanent and visible, rather than some understated spatial expressions which are more temporal in nature. The decision **not to build** can still be considered an architectural decision. This simple acknowledgement makes a massive difference! It allows us to elevate many African rituals and study them as spatial and architectural forms of expression. The *‘halaqat al zikr’* is one such example. This is an Arabic phrase: *‘halaqa’* translates into ‘circle’ (of people or worshippers) and *‘zikr’* into ‘remembrance’ (of Allah or the prophet).

Whether people build massive monuments or building simply is linked to resources, but it is also linked to belief systems and cultural norms. Building dominant structures or understated structures also relates to forms of social understanding. Buildings that stand out as isolated objects are a different form of expression from buildings that merge with the surroundings and are not easily identifiable. All of these are not neutral configurations. These contain meaning and convey socially understood messages.

‘Meaning’ in the built environment comprises two facets. Firstly, it implies the shared repertoire of significance, importance or quality attributed to an artefact. The common understanding of the symbolism of artifacts creates the cultural identity of a community. In semiotic terms, this is an interpretative community, sharing the same codes. Secondly, it is important to acknowledge the meanings read by the interpreter or researcher, as these may not necessarily coincide with those of the community under study. Meanings read by the authors no doubt reflect the authors’ cultural frameworks and experience. Meaning is a matter of social definition. Interpretation or ‘meaning-making’ includes subjective processes as a part of the academic enquiry (Osman, 2004: 3).

Architecture and the concept of community

The notion of community is considered by the authors as a key element in architectural configurations, in vernacular and informal settings, and architecture, in these contexts is considered as being indistinguishable from urban design. Thus the ‘architectural scale’ and

the 'settlement/urban scale' are one and the same in the sense that vernacular settings and informal settings are almost always about the 'collective' and rarely about the 'individual' – be that in terms of formal expression or in terms of decision making structures. In other words, the individual building cannot exist or be understood outside of its urban and neighbourhood context. Sometimes the community connections are not so evident visually or spatially. In vernacular settings, the morphology of villages/towns sometimes dissolves the distinction between one family home and the other. This is very evident in “medina” settings. (See Figure 1).

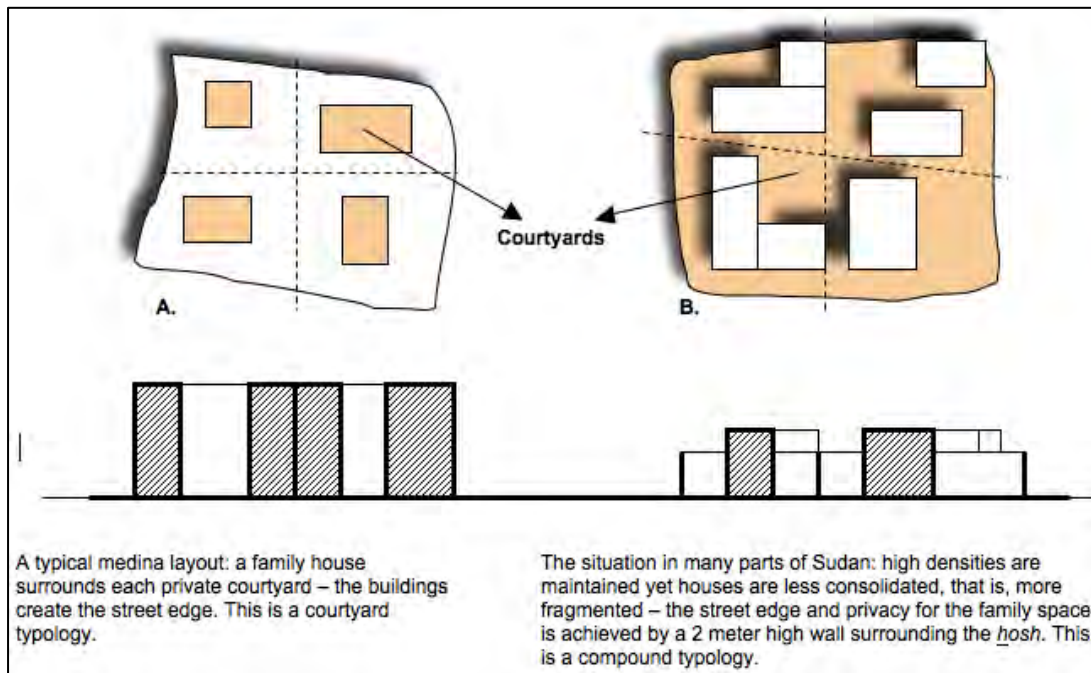


Figure 1: Comparison between the morphology of Sudanese towns and villages and that of other Muslim cities. (Osman 2004)

A community is defined as the daily network of face-to-face interaction in a settlement setting. These social networks constitute a spatial and built context of a neighbourhood. A community could be described as a form of 'corporate unit' (Kenyon 1991, p. 21). In some parts of northern Sudan, networks of interaction between people are based on their *fareeq*. This concept is not easy to translate spatially as members of a *fareeq* do not necessarily live directly next to each other. The demarcation of the *fareeq* is strong in peoples' consciousness and is reflected in their patterns of interaction, but it is not necessarily apparent in the settlement layout. People from different *fareeqs* may be immediate neighbours. A *fareeq* will also have ties with other *fareeqs*. This interaction implies frequent visits and assistance in the form of finances, food and lending a helping hand in ceremonial occasions. *Fareeq* is an Arabic term describing a corporate unit of nomadic groups, two to four settlements headed by a *shaykh* (Kenyon 1991, p. 21). The term *shaykh* is also used to denote a leader and not necessarily a religious man. *Fareeq* people derive their identity from the group corporate identity "a powerful impact on the everyday lives of its members and can exert considerable pressure on people to conform to social norms." (Ferraro 1998, p. 249 and Osman 2004, p. 136) (See Figure 2).

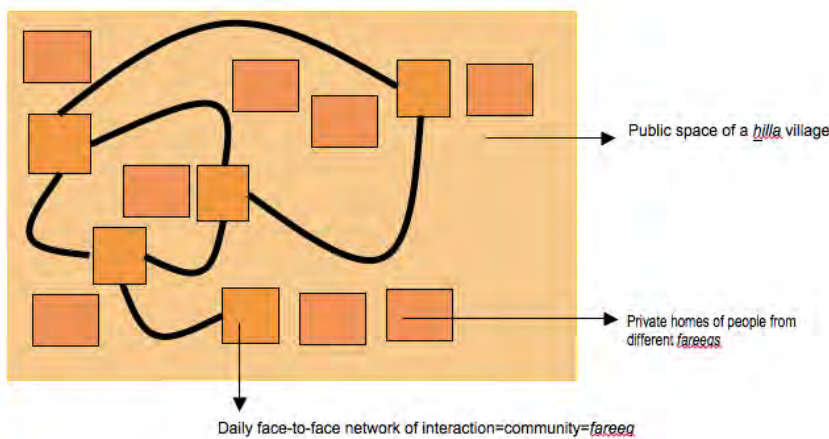


Figure 2: The *fareeg* in northern Sudan. (Osman 2004)

To better understand the role of the built environment professional in dealing with such complexity, some of the concepts related to community and multiple voices and decision makers, agents of control, and the cultural languages in the built environment are further unpacked in the following sections.

Levels and agents of control and the collective ‘language’ of the built environment

Control is exercised by groups or individuals in any cultural setting – across a range of levels from the very personal level (clothes, garment can be extended to include body, utensil and includes food systems) to the more communal levels (house, family accommodation and furniture – which can also extend to partitioning systems – indicating a small collective form of decision-making in the built environment. The highest levels of decision making in the built environment are therefore those of the settlement or neighbourhood in a rural or urban context and in the city. Figure 3 attempts to group these concepts together to showcase how this higher level, meaning the collective and communal decision-making that contributes to a shared language and understanding that allows people to collectively inhabit the same spaces. In other words, space and built artifacts act as mediators between individuals and their needs/aspirations in relation to the needs/aspirations of the collective, group or community.

Language/Code	System Parts of speech nouns, verbs	Syntagm Sentence
Clothes/Garment System	Set of pieces that cannot be worn together, variation corresponds to a change in meaning	Juxtaposition in the same type of dress of different elements
Food System	Set of foodstuffs	Sequence of dishes chosen
House/Family Accommodation System	Set of stylistic variations of the same layout/form/materials – selection is based on meaning	Juxtaposition of different layouts/form/materials in the same contexts
Furniture System	Stylistic varieties of a single piece	Juxtaposition of different pieces in the same place
Architecture System	Variations in style of a single element of a building	Sequence of the details at the level of the whole building
Settlement Village/Town Rural/Urban System	Variations in settlement layout and relation of buildings to each other and to streets and open spaces	Sequence of the buildings at the level of the whole settlement

Figure 3: The built environment based on the elements of semiology, developed by Roland Barthes (1915-1980), portrayed by Hale (2000, p. 140) and Leach (1974, p. 49) and adapted by Osman (2004).

Habraken explains that certain environments are sustained through the order achieved by various actors (Habraken, 2000: 29). He elaborates that a:

...built environment may be described solely in terms of live configurations operating on different levels. In doing so, we describe it as dynamic form controlled by people; fully taking into account that built environment is the product of people acting (Habraken 1998, p. 28).

These actors:

...communicate, negotiate, bargain and cooperate. Such direct interactions are necessary for the built environment to remain in stasis, and they have their own conventions. Although agents may contest portions of a built environment, it exists to be shared as a whole. Hence, reaching formal consensus is an important aspect of the environmental game (Habraken 1998, p. 29).

Habraken refers to configurations under the unified control of a single agent as 'live configurations'. "Thus defined, a live configuration 'behaves' like a single self-organizing entity" (Habraken 1998, p. 18). The single agent is the community as an entity. Both the 'body/garment/utensil' and 'partitioning' are indicated as 'live configurations': they are under the control of a single agent, in this case the community. 'Utensil' is included as being that which is moveable; 'food' and 'furniture' are seen to be more under the control of a single agent rather than the community, even though social norms may place pressure to conform to some food types related to certain occasions. Kent explains the issue of control as follows:

...low social complexity is a situation usually regarded in anthropological terms as synonymous with organisation based on principles of kin-relationship, genealogy, and shared [beliefs in] supernatural force rather than hierarchical stratification and separated central power. Individual members of such societies adhere to conceptual realities that emanate from implicit acceptance of group-exclusive supernatural and relationship unity, a relatively holistic world view that stresses communal rather than individual identity. On the domestic level this conceptual structure applies to the basic communal group and its living space, tending to downplay architectural segmentation of each domestic activity or activity sets (Kent 1990, p. 167).

In many cases, individual houses within a neighbourhood form a continuum and speak a similar visual language (subtle variations on typology), yet they are under the control of separate agents. This configuration cannot be seen as 'live'. Yet, the internal layout of the houses can be considered a live configuration: it is individual agencies as an expression of principles that are governed by the social norms of the community as a whole. Control does not always imply ownership. The house belongs to one owner, but there are two live configurations at work in determining the characteristics of this house: the one exercised by the owner and the other exercised by the community in the form of social norms.

These levels of control can be learnt through observation, but the underlying forces are not always evident. A cluster of houses may be wrongly seen as a unit. In reality, it is the whole neighbourhood that is the lowest denominator. Yet, these forces are invisible and can only be detected through understanding the socio-economic patterns, religious and social ritual and peoples' cultural attitudes.

“...Uniformity results from removing personal initiative from the creation of the artifact.” (Habraken 1998, p. 272). There is a limited variety within a given typology. While the individual house is not easily identified in a vernacular setting, levels of control do remain distinct. To remain stable, an environment avoids horizontal relationships between live configurations (Habraken 1998, p. 34). Within a single neighbourhood, individual houses are under the control of different agents: “Territory and its markers subdivide space, allowing similar configurations to coexist on the same level” (Habraken 1998, p. 34). Homogeneity could lead one to believe that the ‘higher level configurations’ at work, dominate ‘lower level configurations’, as intangible and unseen forces.

The meaning of artifacts in the built environment and the interconnectedness of things – an eco-systemic analytical approach to the concept of ‘community’

In this type of analysis, artifacts are approached in the sense that no ‘thing’ stands alone, but rather pertains to a whole setting of importance in its interpretation. The world is a collection of inter-dependent entities. Things are what they are by virtue of their relationship to each other. After all, Heidegger does equate ‘thinking’ with ‘dwelling’ (Cooper 1996, p. 92). Heidegger wrote: we build because we are dwellers (Krell 1977, p. 326). Therefore, artifacts/things, including buildings, making our existence/thinking evident.

The isolation and study of artifacts allows the researcher to borrow from a wide variety of sources and different schools of thought. This is an attempt to: “...reconcile the subjective self with an objective world” (Krell 1977, p. 259). Both Husserl and Descartes would examine an object by detaching it from its context and examining its essence. An object’s essential attributes are thus identified through ‘phenomenological reduction’ (Hale 2000, p. 96 and Urmson 1960, p. 217) bearing in mind that “...the organisation of the environment is a mental fact before it is a physical one...” (Rapoport 1977, p. 15).

Heidegger’s environmental phenomenology introduces natural elements and philosophy to describe places, an approach that was elaborated and applied by Norberg-Schulz (1980). Attention to the character of dwellings and how they are made is important in achieving a phenomenology of place. Phenomenological approaches bring the idea of existence, the notion of doubt/uncertainty, as well as faith in the correctness of choice and individual experience, to architecture. This approach is employed in this study by relating visible aspects of built culture to the particular location and people’s understanding of place: “The ‘whatness’ of an object can be learned through the ‘whyness’ of it... knowledge about an object is based on understanding or recognising the causes of that object” (Turan 1990, p. 9). Turan also explains how understanding the artifact through material, the form into which material enters and its use as insufficient because it only applies to the appearance of an object. However, there are many codes that make up a cultural context, as is demonstrated by Figure 4 below:

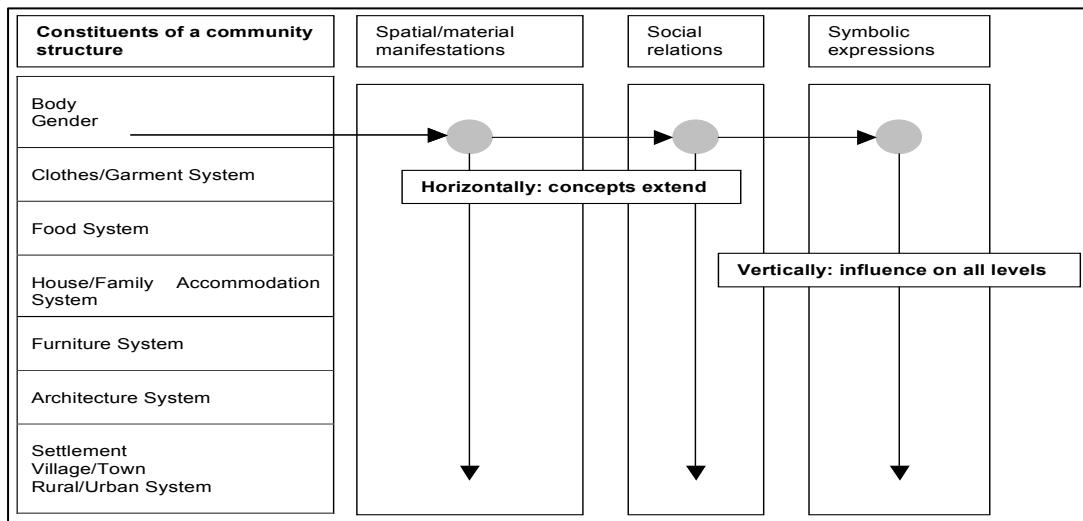


Figure 4: Codes that make up a cultural context, a framework based on Vagenes (1998, p. 124) and developed by Osman (2004)

According to Kent (1990, pp. 44-45), form, organisation and use of space are determined by naturally fixed, flexible and culturally fixed factors. This might be a limiting construct if one considers that climate and topography are considered naturally fixed elements. It is acknowledged by Kent that each factor modifies the effects of the others. In this case it is seen that none of the factors are really fixed. The differences between them would then be the rate at which they change (see Figure 5).

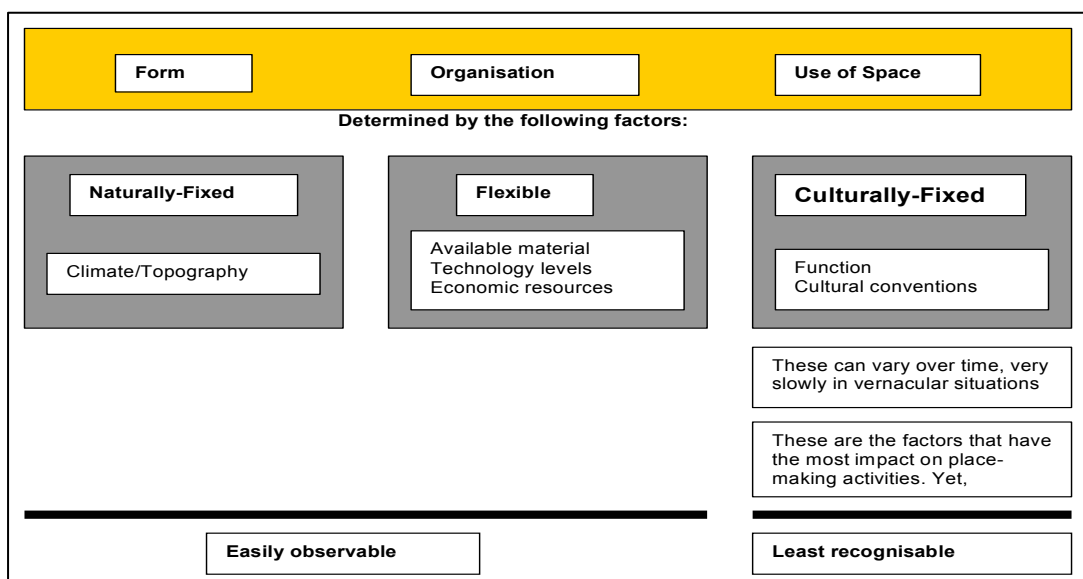


Figure 3: Determinants of form, organisation and use of space (adapted by Amira Osman, 2004, from Kent (1990))
Figure 5: Determinants of form, organisation and use of space – adapted by Osman (2004) from Kent (1990)

The above text and diagrams aim to contribute towards the development of a framework to understand the built environment with a unique and particular focus. It is aimed towards developing a deeper appreciation for the role of collective decision-making in the built environment. It is important to remember that text and diagrams cannot replace the complexity of reality. It rather allows for a window onto reality by deconstruction and then synthesis into useable theoretical models. This framework can be used to better articulate a relationship between the traditional and the informal, previously excluded from institutional

architecture, and it therefore offers great opportunities for understanding and writing about complexity in the built environment.

The traditional and the informal

Many parallels can be drawn between the traditional and informal. In Rapoport's writings on vernacular architecture, he points out that "...evidence comes from many disciplines... it also makes available new approaches and new methods that "come with" these disciplines" (1990, p. 43). In earlier writings he also explains how the study of vernacular architecture may generate new fields of study "...at the intersection of two or more previously unrelated disciplines" (Rapoport 1982, p. 10). He believes that the boundaries defining disciplines are sometimes arbitrary (Rapoport 1977, p. 4).

Rapoport's main premise is that it is not possible to use a single characteristic to distinguish among entities as complex as built environments and that "...multiple characteristics become more useful the less clear-cut the case" (Rapoport 1990, p. 71, 1999, p. 60). As in traditional contexts, people today continue to act on, and influence their immediate environment, this being especially evident in situations where people have difficulty to access formal city structures and markets. These initiatives are perceived negatively and labeled as illegal and informal. However, they create an energy that should be celebrated and managed in efficient ways through innovative delivery, finance and technical systems – rather than being dismissed, eradicated or 'formalised'.

The traditional and the informal force us to ask questions previously excluded from institutional architectural debates. Learning from these contexts is more than imitating forms or spatial layouts; it is learning the process of negotiation and complex decision making as well as the mechanisms employed in the management of diverse and, sometimes, conflicting needs. This process implies the necessity to efficiently address issues of the delivery of professional service as well as managing the social systems that impact on these – this approach calls for a slower process that incorporates time as a crucial aspect to the development process. Indeed these processes may be described as Open Building, as 4-dimensional design or as time-based design – this is to mention a few theoretical schools that could greatly assist in the further development of this way of thought and its relevant applications in education and practice.

Rethinking practice...

Architecture oscillates between being defined as a science, as art production, as technology, as a professional service, as a community service. It is a profession that is constantly re-discovering itself, re-defining itself and re-establishing new roles for itself. As our ideas on architecture change, so do our expectations with regards to whom the profession engages with and how it provides a service to its clients – embracing sectors of society who have traditionally been excluded. Heightened social responsibility, environmental awareness and debates around ethical practice are the prerogatives that are leading the profession in directions relatively unexplored, as is the need to discover new markets and a renewed sense of relevance.

As we re-think practice, we are also considering the knowledge, previously unrecognised and untapped, to which we now have access. This is a challenge and an opportunity. We are in need of tools with which to gather information, represent it, interpret it and use it to develop frameworks of practice.

In this investigation, the boundaries between the disciplines tend to dissolve as it is discovered that to understand the built environment, one needs to build up an understanding of the culture, religion and social set up of a community as well as the geography and history of the region in question. In traditional contexts the separation of art from daily life, or a building from social interaction patterns is not possible. An interdisciplinary interpretation allows for deeper understanding of how people interact with the environment and how they shape their spaces at the micro and macro levels (Osman 2004, p. 6).

As an example, psychological comfort relates strongly to values and beliefs of a community. These concepts are transposed onto any physical context to make it more suited to the cultural identity of a people. This does not always have to be in the form of space-manipulation, but can be achieved by dress form, positioning of the body within the space and the movement of the body in space. Through observation, it becomes apparent that people from different cultures use the same space in different ways and that the movement patterns are varied (Osman 2004, p. 89).

How can these aspects be brought to the fore in architectural education?

...towards a decolonised education

This paper has investigated the idea of community, multiple voices and multiple decision makers in the practice of architecture. This is suggested as one way with which to decolonise architectural education. It is explained that this is at odds with institutional architecture, assuming that institutional architecture, and the institutes that deliver it (those that teach future architects) and the institutes that regulate its practice and regulate educational institutes, remain colonised.

Some individual explorations are already underway with regards to the creation of alternative methods of research and teaching in classrooms and studios. The nature of our profession means that some of these approaches are met with great skepticism and resistance. This discourages many in continuing with these explorations.

Architecture is not an easy field to study, teach or practice. There are many forms of exclusion that we have to contend with in a highly elitist profession. The exclusion is evident in attempts to silence difference; dismiss as nonprofessional alternative forms of design, thinking or practice and declaring other voices and forms of expression as invalid. This happens in both overt and subtle ways. Sometimes we carry out that censorship ourselves through self-doubt, lack of confidence and years of systematic conditioning.

The decolonisation debate has brought legitimacy to these explorations. This is cause for celebration. We now need to do the work that this process demands.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Object Biographies as a method for Communication Design students to construct knowledge in the Design Studies classroom

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Abstract

This paper reports on the use of object biography writing as a method for Communication Design students to construct knowledge in the Design Studies classroom. Students used a guideline constructed around the stages of the birth, life and death of an object to write an object biography on a mass-manufactured object of their own choice with a focus on how the object is used by individuals to construct and express gender identity. The method, process and outcome of the project is discussed and an evaluation offered on whether object biography writing can be considered as a form of decolonised design education. It is argued that while the writing of object biographies is relevant to the objective of decolonising design education, the project as reported here can also be criticized on a number of fronts. This includes the requirements that the research be presented in the form of a research paper, that students select a mass-manufactured object and work from a real object, the origins of object biography as a methodology in social anthropology, and the selection of prescribed readings. To align the project closer to decolonising imperatives it is recommended that improvements and adjustments are made with regard to the presentation format, the requirements for the selection of the object and the list of prescribed readings.

Keywords:

Object Biography, Communication Design, epistemology, Design Studies, decolonising design education

Introduction

The University at which I lecture formed an Ad Hoc Senate Task Team on Decolonisation of Knowledge in 2015 in response to the countrywide student protests (Hendricks 2016). The task team did not undertake to develop “toolkits” or “handbooks,” instead departments, units, research centres and faculties were tasked with debating decolonisation and determining what it meant in their contexts (Hendricks 2016). It was left to academics to “do the hard work of revisiting what you teach and how students learn in our current context” with the task team noting that they were “not experts on decolonisation – we are all finding our way through practice” (Hendricks 2016).

The management of the Faculty – in which the Department in which I am appointed resides – responded in 2016 by scheduling a number of “Decolonisation conversations.” In my Department, decolonisation was placed as a permanent item on the agenda of the weekly Departmental meetings, formed part of the Department’s strategic objectives for the year and was written into performance contracts of staff members.

From the outset, it was clear that there was no consensus among colleagues in the Faculty on how decolonisation should be defined or viewed in the curriculum. This state of affairs was not unique to our Faculty. In 2016, Professor Emmanuel Mgwashu (2016) from Rhodes University reported that the definition of “decolonising the curriculum” remains a grey area. However, he emphasised that Universities had to “keep encouraging critique and problematisation of what is considered to be knowledge and the processes involved in generating it.” Similarly, Cheryl Hendricks, the head of the Ad Hoc Senate Task Team on Decolonisation called for a multiplicity of “epistemologies/plureversality.”

Brenner, Vorster and Wintjes (2016, pp. 11-12) affirm the value of other kinds of knowledge making beyond the conventional or the linear, or what Ingold (2007, p. 153) calls “thinking straight” (cited in Brenner et al 2016, p. 12). They claim that the “entangled”, “rhizomatic” nature of researching and writing object biographies differs from the manner in which knowledge is constructed by “thinking straight” and hence is relevant to the “current climate of decolonising thought and attitude.” “Thinking straight” is connected to a “western sensibility” a position that “distinguishes a distanced and rational approach to knowledge-making from one that is immersed, physical and emotional” (Brenner et al 2016, p. 12). Brenner et al (2016, p. 12) argue – in their accompanying book to the exhibition “Lifescapes; Six Object Biographies” which ran in the first quarter of 2017 at the Wits Art Museum (WAM) – that it is possible to place the object biographies in the book into a “different political paradigm of knowledge-making altogether.”

Object biographies trace the life of an object, as do biographies of people, through the stages of birth, life and death (Kopytoff 1986 in Joy 2009, p. 540). An object is produced, or “born”; it is involved in a particular set of relationships during its lifetime; it also “dies” when it is no longer involved in these relationships (Holtorf 1998). Because objects accumulate histories, over time it should be possible to reveal relationships between people and objects by unravelling object histories (Gosden and Marshall 1999, p. 169). Just as there is no single way to write a biography of a person, there are multiple approaches to writing the biography of an object.

Drawing on Kopytoff (1986, p. 67), Gosden and Marshall (1999, pp. 170-172) and Brenner et al (2016) I constructed a guideline around the stages of the birth, life and death of an object to enable third year Communication Design students to write an object biography on a mass-manufactured object of their own choice. This paper reports on the method, process and outcome of this project, which formed part of the Design Studies 3 module, and evaluates whether it can be considered as a form of decolonised design education.

Design Studies 3

The Design Studies 3 module forms part of the curriculum for the BA Design (Communication Design) qualification. This qualification was first offered in 2011 and replaced the National Diploma Graphic Design. With the introduction of the degree programme came the opportunity to rethink the curriculum; and one of these changes was the transformation of the subject History of Art and Design into Design Studies. The approach to teaching History of Art and Design was embedded in western scholarship that focused on presenting a canon of mostly western artists and designers in chronological order and focused on the development of style and aesthetics. This approach was modified, but not entirely overhauled, with a thematic approach, which now included design's relation to colonialism, imperialism, sustainability, class, race and gender. The name change to Design Studies heralded a broader, more inclusive view of design as the "conception and planning of the artificial world" (Margolin 2002, p. 227) and can in retrospect be characterised as contributing to the project of decolonising the curriculum.

Design Studies 1 and 2 was conceived as a shared module between the new BA qualifications and over time three other design specialisations joined the module. However, on third year level, Design Studies is only presented to Communication Design students. The purpose of the subject on the different year levels was conceived broadly so that it would be flexible and responsive to the needs of the students, the South African context and the research interests of the lecturers. The module was also designed to prepare students for postgraduate study as the BA articulates into an Honours degree in Design.

On third year, the purpose of the module is to enable students to demonstrate detailed knowledge of design and communication design history and theory. Design Studies 3 consists of an a and b module, each of which in turn consists of two seven-week units. I teach unit 1 Gender and Design the purpose of which is to enable students to demonstrate knowledge of and conduct independent research on design and gender. The assessment criteria require that by the end of the unit students must be able to explain how gender identities are constructed, how the unequal roles and position of women and men are reflected in language and how objects of everyday life are gendered through design. In addition, students must be able to explain the influence of Feminism on design and the role of the media in constructing gender identities. The unit was assessed by way of three tasks; a written assignment, group class presentation and a research paper. The research paper contributed three fifths to the final mark, and the assignment and presentation, which were constructed to support the writing of the research paper, contributed one fifth each. Following is a discussion on the method and process involved to enable students to complete the research paper in the form of an object biography followed by a presentation and discussion of the results achieved by students.

Object biographies as a form of knowledge-making

Students were required to write a research paper of 2000-2200 words on one historical or contemporary mass-manufactured object of their own choice by writing the biography of this object with a focus on how the object is used by individuals to construct and express gender identity. It was important that the real object, not a photograph of the object, was used to work from and that reference was made to at least three of the prescribed readings. Working with tangible objects allows an interactive experience involving all the senses, the ability to scrutinize the object from all angles and very close up, to interact with the object and to understand the scale and ergonomics of the object, all of which are crucial for an in depth-analysis. As Brenner et al (2016, p. 7) argue so eloquently: "[c]lose looking means that

in the process, one enters the life, or the lives, of the many people and thoughts that are locked into any object.”

Students were provided with the following guideline to writing an object biography that was based on the writing of Kopytoff (1986, p. 67), Gosden and Marshall (1999, p. 170-172) and Brenner et al (2016):

- Birth: Provide a photograph of the object from a variety of angles and close-ups. Provide its date and dimensions and describe the object fully. Explain where, how and by who the object was produced.
- Life: explain where the object was initially most likely sold, whom it belonged to in the past and who it belongs to now. Explain what it was used for and how, in the past and present, and explain how the object reinforces beliefs about the role, position and character of men and or women. Are there any signs of wear and tear, which provides information on its life?
- Death: explain what will happen when it reaches the end of its usefulness, for example if it breaks

The first two weeks of the unit was spent on lectures and readings around gender in relation to identity, design, language and mass media and was assessed by way of four questions based on the prescribed readings (Brouwer 1995; Kirkham 1996; Meyers 1999; Woodward 2004). In the third week students were introduced to the process of writing object biographies and provided with the opportunity to try out the guideline around the birth, life and death of an object by completing a class exercise. Students divided into groups and selected an object by drawing one from a box filled with objects that I provided. The objects included a ceramic cup and saucer, lighter, beaded necklace, multi-purpose tool, commemorative tin cup, plastic bracelet and spring clip hair curlers and were purposefully selected to represent a range of cultures and historical periods. Using their handheld devices and laptops students collected information on their object from the internet and by the end of the class all of the groups were able to give feedback on aspects of the birth, life and death of their object.

A particularly challenging part of the assignment was the requirement that the student explain how individuals use the particular object to construct and express gender identity. This required of the student to use theory from the prescribed readings to construct arguments. A session dedicated to Toulmin’s model of Argumentation (Toulmin 2003) was scheduled to enable students to complete this requirement.

The programme was then interrupted for a week as all third year students were required to participate in a Faculty-wide collaborative project. The following week students visited the “Lifescapes; Six Object Biographies” exhibition at WAM and participated in an hour and a half walkabout offered by the museum’s educational team (since 2015 WAM has been a key resource in the teaching of the Gender and Design unit). This provided students with the opportunity to engage with the exhibition and come to an understanding of the method involved in writing object biographies. Following the visit, students had to start writing up their research paper, a draft of which had to be presented the following week to class. The purpose of the class presentations was for students to test their ideas and to evaluate whether they selected an appropriate object. Some students elected to select objects that were not strictly speaking mass manufactured, but as long as objects were produced in multiples, according to an established pattern, such objects were permissible. During this week a South African Feminist artist also visited the class to show and discuss her work in an hour-long presentation.

In the meantime, students also had to work in groups on the Feminism and design class presentations that were to be presented in the final week of the term to the class in a 20-

minute digital presentation. The class was divided into eight groups each of which was assigned a topic related to feminism and design. The assessment of this presentation consisted of a peer assessment of the groups and the contribution of their team members. The peer assessments contributed 60% and my assessment 40% to the final mark for the class presentation. Students had two weeks following the last week of term to complete their object biographies.

Table 1 shows the results of the three assessments. The pass rate achieved is high for all the assessments and the class averages and amount of distinctions achieved for the group presentations and research papers show very high, and good levels of competence respectively.

Table 1 Results of the assessment

Results N=33	Research paper: Object Biography	Written assignment	Group class presentation
Pass	91%	94%	100%
Fail	9%	6%	0%
Did not complete the assessment	3%	6%	0%
Distinctions 75%>	36%	27%	70%
Average	68%	55%	76%

Most students selected appropriate objects for their research project that allowed for detailed analysis and the construction of convincing arguments regarding the biography of the object. Students were generally able to contextualise their research well and many essays made good links to gender theory and provided interesting analyses. Several papers offered an excellent description and in-depth analysis and made insightful use of gender theory to construct arguments. The majority of students demonstrated their ability to critique design products from a gender perspective. Some students experienced problems with writing clearly in academic register and referencing sources. A few essays contained irrelevant information and contradictions and did not support claims with relevant or sufficient evidence.

Table 2 shows that the objects selected by students came from a range of categories from books to sporting equipment. Nearly a third of the students selected objects that can be classified as “decorative household objects” because, although most could serve a function, they were mostly used for display purposes.

Table 2 Objects selected

Category	Description
Books	Amandla novel Collins English Dictionary
Clothing and shoes	Legit denim jeans Nike Air force 1 Sneakers Soviet M-Viper Pu Hi 1 black Sneakers

Decorative household objects	Geisha lithophane tea set German beer stein with lid German beer stein with lid Lego Star Wars Boba Fett torch and nightlight Preciosa crystal ballerina Royal Albert Old Country Rose sugar pot Saturn sewing machine Scottish thistle mould Waldershop Bavaria Germany tea set Apostle spoons
Grooming/beauty products	Combina 100 shaving tool Eight piece Ferule make-up brush set Perfume "Fantasy" Britney Spears Perfume "Catsuit for Women" by Creation Lamis
Jewelry and accessories	Busby wallet Citizen Eco Drive watch Irish Claddagh ring Jacques Lemans men's classic watch Multi-layered gold choker necklace Omega Seamaster watch Oval frame glasses Rolex Oyster wristwatch
Musical Instrument	Hawkes and Son Concert violin Mridanagam (South Indian classical instrument)
Phones and cameras	Nokia 6101 Zenit E SLR camera
Sporting equipment	Mizuno Shadow series golf club

The majority of students could date their objects to a specific year, six students could situate it within a decade and only six objects could not be dated. The oldest dated object was a violin from 1889, with the remaining objects being nearly equally spread throughout the current and previous century.

Students chose to select objects mostly produced in Euro-America. Objects originating from other countries, including China, Russia and the Czech Republic, were in the minority. The only other countries that featured to some extent was South Africa with four and Japan with three objects. In some cases, the designer could be identified by name, such as Bruce Kilgore who designed the Nike Air force 1 Sneakers, but in most instances, it was the company, such

as Lego, Elizabeth Arden and the lesser-known KMZ (Krasnogorsky Zavod), which were identified. Only a few objects were not assigned to an individual designer or company.

Students largely selected objects presently belonging to themselves or to family members. A few students elected to discuss objects they themselves had purchased; for example a pair of sneakers or jeans, but most chose an object which they received as a gift, such as perfume by a godmother or which they had inherited, for example spoons inherited from a grandmother. The case was similar when discussing objects belonging to others. The objects were either purchased, inherited or received as gifts.

With the help of online shopping and auction sites students were able to place a monetary value on their objects. However, many commented that the objects carried value beyond the fiscal. In writing about her brother's watch received as a birthday gift from a relative a student notes that he considers it as "priceless." Another quotes her father when asked what the beer stein which belongs to him is worth as stating: "it has no real monetary value but for me it represents, a romanticized view of an archetypical German outdoorsman in lederhosen living in perfect harmony with nature"

The majority of the students' decision to select objects belonging to themselves or family members meant that the research papers took on an autobiographical character. This brought aspects of the student's lived experience and family history into their research paper. A student commented of his much-adored Nike Air force 1 sneakers, which he has worn "constantly over a period of over three years", that it has "had alcoholic and carbonated drinks, as well as food among many other things spilt on them." Another student notes the signs of wear on her mother's inherited porcelain sugar pot, which was initially given to her great grandmother as a wedding gift.

The students' preference for choosing gifts are interesting when considering Gosden and Marshall's (1999, p. 173) observation that: "commodities are supposed to be alienable, so that they can be transacted without leaving any lasting relationship between giver and receiver ... gifts always maintain some link to the person or people who first made them and the people who subsequently transacted them." In choosing Christmas presents, birthday and wedding gifts and inherited objects, instead of "commodities", the students' object biographies were enriched as it enabled them to trace "the social links and obligations that such gifts map out and maintain" (Gosden & Marshall 1999, p. 173). A student writing on a watch belonging to a family member observes that:

"the object is not only interesting, due to the story it has, but because the bond between a grandfather and his grandson was so strong, that the grandson has never thought about selling the watch or giving it away for the reason that it reminds him of his grandfather and it is the only keepsake he has of his late role model."

Students became aware of the movement of objects through time and space and their crossing over national and international borders. For example, a student explains that a camera manufactured in Soviet Russia came into his father's possession when he bought it from a German teacher in Zimbabwe in 1984. Another student traces the journey of a sewing machine that belonged to her great-grandmother over 97 years from Switzerland to Australia and finally to South Africa.

In writing the object biographies some students appeared to move from an objective, rational description of the object to a more immersed and emotional position, which for Brenner et al (2016, p. 12) indicates a move away from a "western sensibility." A student notes her father's emotive response to the idea that his beer stein breaks: "it will mean the shattering of a dream, it will bring into sharp focus the unstoppable march-of-time." Nyamnjoh (2012, pp. 131-2) observes that "the real is not only what is observable or what makes cognitive sense; it is also the invisible, the emotional, the sentimental, the intuitive

and the inexplicable.” Through the writing of object biographies students demonstrated an understanding that the symbolic meaning of things is often far more important to people than its use function (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1981). Commenting on the use of a beer stein belonging to her father a student does not mention its use as a beer mug at all, instead stating “[b]oth its past and present use is identical a representation of a bygone era.”

The majority of the students were able to argue how the object reinforces beliefs about the role, position and character of men and or women and how it contributes to the construction of gender identity. In an analysis of a dictionary from 1984 a student points out the male bias and inequality in the ownership, staffing and division of labour of the publisher, as well as the inherent sexism contained in the definitions of “men” and “women” contained in the dictionary. A student notes how beauty ideals are conveyed through a crystal ballerina figurine which “is thin and has a small waist” and “elongated” legs. It was interesting to note that very few students felt that once the object breaks that it should be thrown away. Many students felt that objects should be repaired, restored or repurposed or be kept to be passed on to another family member or one day to their own children.

Conclusion

This paper reported on the use of object biography writing as a method for Communication Design students to construct knowledge in the Design Studies classroom. In conclusion, I reflect on whether object biography writing, as reported here, can be considered as a form of decolonised design education.

Depending on your view of what decolonisation means, the object biography research project may, or may not be criticised on a number of fronts: in its requirement for writing a research paper, selecting a mass-manufactured object, writing an object biography, working from a real object and in the selection of prescribed readings.

A research paper is a very traditional form of assessment and it could be argued that instead of presenting the object biographies in an academic written form other forms of presenting findings could have been explored; such as a poster, illustrated story or in spoken form, as was the case with the group presentations. Some may find the use of Toulmin’s model of argument inappropriate seeing in it links to the logic and rhetoric of Aristotle. In this regard, I would direct critics to “Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization” in which Bernal (1987) argues for the recovery of the African and Phoenician influence on ancient Greek philosophy. It should also be noted that Toulmin (2003, p. viii) himself argues that his “concern was with 20th century epistemologies, not informal logic.”

Others may argue that requiring students to select a mass-manufactured object contains a western bias. Such a criticism seems to play out in the selection of objects, which shows that students chose to mostly select objects from Euro-America. Such a bias can be avoided in the future by specifying that an object produced in Africa must be selected and opening the production methods from the outset to include mass-produced, but also one-offs, batch production or unique objects. In this way the potential for “a devaluation of African creativity, agency and value systems, and an internalized sense of inadequacy” can be avoided (Nyamnjoh 2012, p. 129). It is notable that the objects selected for analysis in “Lifescapes” were confined to objects from the WAM collection of African Art (Brenner et al. 2016). In 2016 students were in fact tasked with selecting objects from WAM’s collection for their research project in the Gender and Design unit. Although the object biography format was not followed, the results for the research projects in 2016 were virtually identical to 2017, with the exception of the amount of distinctions: 24% in 2016 as opposed to 36% in 2017.

Criticism can be levelled at object biography as a method “derived from social anthropology and adopted largely by European post-processual archaeologists” (Joy 2009, p. 542). The continued dominance of western epistemologies and eurocentrism at most South African universities are some of the aspects most frequently criticized by the decolonise movement (Heleta 2016; Hendricks 2016; Kessi 2016; Nyamnjoh 2012; Pillay 2013). The use of anthropology by the West to serve the colonial and imperial project has been justifiably severely criticized. Tuhiwai Smith (2008, pp. 66-67) states that anthropology is the discipline “most closely associated with the study of the Other and with the defining of primitivism” and that “anthropologists are often the academics popularly perceived by the indigenous world as the epitome of all that it is bad with academics”. However, Tuhiwai Smith (2008, p.14) notes that the “selected ideas, scholarship and literature” which she draws on “may or may not be attributed to either Western or indigenous traditions”.

It is possible to criticise the requirement that students access, document and scrutinize a physical object as reinforcing a “colonial epistemological order” in which the “sense of sight and physical evidence” assumes “centrality, dominance and dictatorship” (Nyamnjoh 2012, p. 131). It was noted that although students started with an objective, rational description of a physical object, in some cases this precipitated a move to more immersed, emphatic and emotional engagement. In selecting objects belonging to themselves or family members students’ work became autobiographical and offered some insight into their lived experience and personal histories. The result was that the project was imbued with affect and empathy. The development of such an empathic engagement can be encouraged by requiring students to select an object belonging to a close family member or friend and requiring an interview as part of the research process.

Lastly, the selection of prescribed readings on gender (Barnard 2001; Brouwer 1995; Kirkham 1996; Koplewicz 2011; McQuiston 1997, Meyers 1999, Woodward 2004) does not draw on authors from or situated in Africa. Although Mqgwashu (2016) warns that decolonising the curriculum “is far more nuanced than replacing theorists and authors” on reflection, I would criticize my choice of readings harshly and argue that the reading list must be relooked as there is much excellent writing on gender from an African context (see for example Behr & McKaiser 2013; Judge 2014; Lewis & Hames 2011; Ratele 2014; Van der Westhuizen 2005).

Despite such possible criticism, the writing of object biographies proved to be a useful, engaging and interesting method to enable students to demonstrate knowledge of and conduct independent research into gender and design and students achieved good results. The students’ object biographies demonstrated their ability to explain how objects contribute to the construction of gender identities and how objects of everyday life are gendered through design. The students’ class presentations and exercises, visit to WAM and presentation by a Feminist artist created an immersive learning experience.

The provided structure for writing an object biography meant that the focus moved from the traditional design historical preoccupation with the object, to a wider understanding of the moments of production, distribution, consumption and disposal of objects and their entanglement in the lives of people. By allowing students to self-select their objects of study a shift was made from prescribing what is considered “good design” and an emphasis on “genius” individual designers, to a focus on the meaning that objects and people acquire in their interaction with each other. The object biographies written by the students problematized what is considered appropriate knowledge and ways of generating knowledge for design education. Students were empowered with a method that they could use to approach the understanding of any designed object from any place and period.

As Brenner et al. (2016, p. 4) experienced, I also found that the boundaries between the role of lecturer and student started blurring as students followed a “self-directed path of interested action.” Brenner et al (2016, p. 4) argue that because students and lecturers

generate new knowledge together, object biographies can contribute to “the pursuit of transformative pedagogy.” Instead of knowledge transfer from a prescribed text or myself to students, the students “become active researchers and swiftly begin to make a tangible contribution to what is known about their object” (Brenner et al 2016, p. 4).

Brenner et al (2016, p.7) observe that “the value of research that develops out of ‘interested action’, based in developing agency and empathy, is arguably, perhaps obviously, productive and meaningful both inside and beyond the lecture hall.” I would therefore argue that the writing of object biographies is relevant to the “current climate of decolonising thought and attitude” as Brenner et al (2016, p. 12) claim. However, improvements and adjustments can be made to the project to align it closer to decolonising imperatives with regard to the presentation format, the requirements for the selection of the object and the list of prescribed readings.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Reinventing design teaching in an era of exponential growth

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Abstract

Students across the globe are demanding a change in education. In South Africa, the call is for 'decolonisation' of higher education. Initially, the call was for free higher education, but students then demanded a significant overhaul of higher education; from the removal of symbols celebrating white supremacy, to a change in the selection criteria and policies to promote applicants on more indicators than academic aptitude alone.

Student protests against the governance and structure of higher education have been familiar occurrences in other parts of the world as well. In 2015, students in the Netherlands protested for a "new university", that include democratisation of governance, financial transparency and better conditions for temporary staff. In Brazil, student protests against neoliberal educational reforms, lead to the occupation of more than 1000 schools and universities in 2016. In the past five years, similar protests resonated from Chile (2010-13) and Canada (2010-13).

Given that education hasn't changed much in decades, we should not be surprised by the reaction from students. We live in an era where people are surrounded by millions of everything, where anything and everything is available, anywhere, all the time, with all possibilities and combinations and at affordable prices. Technology is a reality in everyday life. Yet, we educate our youth for jobs that do not yet exist, where they will have to face challenges that we are not even aware of yet. We are trying to solve 21st-century challenges with a 20th-century education model. As educators, we should consider how we want to reinvent higher education during a time when billions of people have access to universal knowledge - more than ever before in the history of humankind.

At a glance, the demands made by students across the globe are similar in that they are concerned about the governance of higher education, access to higher education, including the cost thereof, and the cultural relevance of education at their institutions. By means of comparative research methodology, this paper will establish common themes in the demands relating to education that were made during student protests that took place over the period of five years, across the globe. Reflecting on these themes, the paper will propose an approach to design education that promote cultural values that motivate our discipline to be optimistic and to persevere in this era of exponential technological growth.

Keywords:

Decolonisation, design education, academic literacies, education in exponential era

Introduction

Knowledge creation is not a western concept that developed with the university model of the 19th century (Connell 2014, p.1). To gather information, study it and make sense of it, is a way we solve daily challenges. Producing creative knowledge, therefore, is a natural response to the immediate environment that we encounter. Yet, universities developed models that guided studies and established research methods that were required for the needs of the time; and embedded in it, the culture derived from the 19th century. Then again, other methods to study material and formulate abstract theories already existed. History confirms that knowledge such as the numbering system, algebra and trigonometry existing long before universities were established (Connell 2016, p.2).

Student protests globally

Africa prides itself with one of the first universities in the world. For most of its 1,000-year history, Egypt's al-Azhar University has acted independently and is still organised in its original Islamic model. It is the only university in the world of its kind to survive as a modern university. The rest of the academic traditions in Africa have vanished. Academic institutions that remain in Africa are all organised to the European models, like in the rest of the world (Altbach 2001; Lulat 2003). However, being the oldest African University hasn't exempted al-Azhar University from student protests. Despite all its efforts to maintain the original academic structure, all while keeping up with the changes in the modern society they serve, the university has had to deal with countless protests over the years. According to Osama al-Hatimi, a specialist in student movements, student groups have been opposing the administration's wishes ever since the 1930's and student movements "were the thermometer used to measure Egyptian society and its ambitions" (al-Hatimi in Suleiman 2014, n.p.).

Student protests against the governance and structure of higher education have been familiar occurrences worldwide. Media reports confirm a significant increase in the number of student protests across the globe since the turn of the 21st century. These include protests in Chile (2010-13), Canada (2010-13), the Netherlands (2015), Brazil and South Africa (2016), to name the publicised protests that took place in the past five years. Table 1 shows the comparison in the demands from students across the globe, who protested against the state of affairs in higher education over a period 2013 to 2017. Upon reflection, when the demands of protesting students are analysed, some common themes come to light. Although students globally protest for, or against many different causes that include environmental and political causes, this paper will reflect on the protests in respect of higher education only.

The results of the comparative study correspond with Sociology Professor, Rachel Brooks, who states that "...student protests of the 21st century have much in common" (Brooks 2016, n.p.). She maintains that many of the protests concerning higher education are opposing the introduction, or increase, of tuition fees, as well as concerns about the change in the position of higher education for private gain, rather than a public benefit. When comparing the demands from the students' protests over the past five years, across both first world and developing economies, it appears that there is a common themes that emerge. Table 1 indicates the themes that develop, namely accessibility to higher education and the governance of higher educational institutions.

Brooks (2016) furthermore highlights how technology, especially with regard to social media, expanded and diversified how news is spread and how protests gain momentum. Technology changed how protests are executed and since technology has no geographical boundaries, it facilitates communication between student activists across national borders. For instance, South African students using Twitter hashtags #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall managed

to stir up protests across the African continent (Brooks 2016). In addition, software, like Sukey and FireChat, were developed with the aim of improving communications between participating students during protests.

Table 1 Comparison of demands from student protests relating to education 2013 - 2017

Country	Slogan/Emblem	Theme: Accessibility	Theme: Governance
Canada (2010 – 2013) (2016)	Red Square <i>Symbol for Collective for Quebec without poverty</i> The protests in 2012 are referred to as Maple Spring	Oppose government cuts in public spending, like education Oppose the increase of fees Demand free tuition (2016)	Demand right to education for everyone (2016) Oppose government's budget cuts on education
Chile (2010 – 2013) (2017)	Advancing towards free public education without debt	Oppose students portion of 75% of costs of education Oppose escalation of cost of education that is 87% from 2005 to 2012 Oppose a system that favours those who can pay	Oppose a system that favours those who can pay
Netherlands (2015)	New University	Oppose the cancellation of courses without consultation with students	Demand the democratisation of governance of universities Demand better condition of employment for temporary staff Demand transparency in finances of universities Oppose risky property speculation by universities Demand restructuring of departments must be done in consultation with students

<p>Brazil (2013) (2016)</p>	<p>The FIFA Standard</p>	<p>Oppose cut back on government spending on education</p> <p>Demand a 10% of GDP for education</p>	<p>Oppose neo-liberal educational reforms</p> <p>Demand the denouncement of ideological harassment by professors</p>
<p>South Africa (2016)</p>	<p>Decolonisation</p>	<p>Demand a moratorium on fee increases while testing the possibility of free education</p> <p>Demand the cancellation of existing student debt</p> <p>Demand an increase government funding to 50%</p>	<p>Demand the implementation of an institutional transformation charter</p> <p>Oppose the Eurocentric education system</p> <p>Demand review of institutional autonomy</p>

Decolonisation

South African students compiled lists of demands during the #FeesMustFall campaign of 2016 that resulted in protests across South Africa. Student leaders from 10 higher education institutions, namely the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), University of Johannesburg (UJ), University of Pretoria (UP), University of Cape Town (UCT), Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), University of the Western Cape (UWC), Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), Rhodes University (Rhodes), Durban University of Technology (DUT) and University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) presented the demands to their respective universities. The South African Students Congress (SASCO) also presented a list of 10 demands to the South African government's task team. Only UWC and NMMU did not demand the decolonisation of higher education, although UWC did demand the Africanisation of the curriculum to meet industry standards (What Are Students... 2017).

When Jenni Evans, a News24 correspondent, asked the UCT student, Athabile Nonxuba, to explain what students meant by decolonised education, he told her that the current curriculum dehumanises black students. "We study all these dead white men who presided over our oppression, and we are made to use their thinking as a standard and as a point of departure" (Nonxuba in Evans 2016, n.p.). He further stated that African thinking has been undermined and that students must have access to their "own education from our own continent" (Nonxuba in Evans 2016, n.p.). He used the example that students are exposed to Eurocentric philosophers' opinions as a standard, instead of introducing concepts by Africans.

During this interview, Nonxuba said that decolonisation of education will develop African interests and resolve African economies, cultural and social issues. He also pointed out that education can't be decolonised by the white people who colonised Africa and that decolonised education has to be defined by the people it serves. "We want to review that system and that curriculum, and that can't happen without a decolonised institution" (Nonxuba in Evans 2016).

When reflecting on the statements of Brooks (2016) on the similarities in the student protests in higher education, it is evident that the fundamental demands to decolonise higher education echoes global concerns. When the explanation of decolonisation is read by removing racist (political) comments, then the demands seem very similar to other students across the globe. South African students oppose the existence of, and the increase of tuition fees, because it excludes members of the public from higher education. They also believe that higher education is meant to benefit the public, rather than be used for private gain, and as such want to be part of the governance of higher education that is meant to serve the public (Here are 10 demands... 2016; What Are Students... 2017).

Disillusioned youth globally

The demand for 'decolonisation' of higher education in South Africa is a symptom of disillusioned youth in South Africa, just as the protests are in other parts of the world. Researchers are seeing patterns of student detachment and new forms of engagement to which institutions have not adapted (McInnes 2001). The student protests at various universities show that there is a new generation of young people who no longer feel that current leadership represents their aspirations. In South Africa, students are demonstrating signs of detachment by extremist groups that have no interest in preserving the current political and economic order (Pitso 2016). Conversely, there are also groups of students aspiring to contribute to South Africa's "new economic and political dispensation" (Pitso 2016, n.p.), but who feel ignored and will remain excluded. They are conflicted by a sense of loyalty to the government that freed the country from Apartheid, while at the same time being angry with the same government who has not delivered on promises, policies and services they made (Pitso 2016).

The ideology of a collective freedom seems to have shifted to individuality and material wealth. Media shows politicians and their families being enriched through government tenders, state-owned corporations or the government's interactions with the private sector (Pitso 2016). They report on corruption within the government and the case of state capture by wealthy families and corporations has only exacerbated the feelings of disappointment and hopelessness, resulting in disillusionment.

An era of exponential technological growth

Exponential technological advancements have dominated the 21st century. We are part of a generation that has witnessed outstanding innovations in information technology. As such, we have a digitally native generation of students that is constructing their online digital life (Prensky 2007). Advancements have been made in all spheres of life. We are surrounded by millions of everything, where anything and everything is available, anywhere, all the time, with all possibilities and combinations and at affordable prices. Technology is a reality in everyday life. Yet, we educate our youth for jobs that do not yet exist, where they will have to face challenges that we are not even aware of yet.

Where the 20th century's industrial model used machines to create increasing returns to technological advancements, the current digital model uses a system of effects that create an accelerating scale of development (Kurzweil 2013). The vital dissimilarity is that industrial models are linear while digital models are exponential. That means that in contrast to a linear model where the same increases are made at regular intervals by adding a value to the previous value, exponential models multiply the values at regular intervals (Figure 1). The result is that the growth patterns, as shown in the graph in figure 1 below, is very different. Linear growth is incremental, that is 10% better, but exponential growth expects 10X better results. Smart phones and social media, artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous cars, three-

dimensional printing, health and longevity, and education have all undergone developments the era of exponential growth.

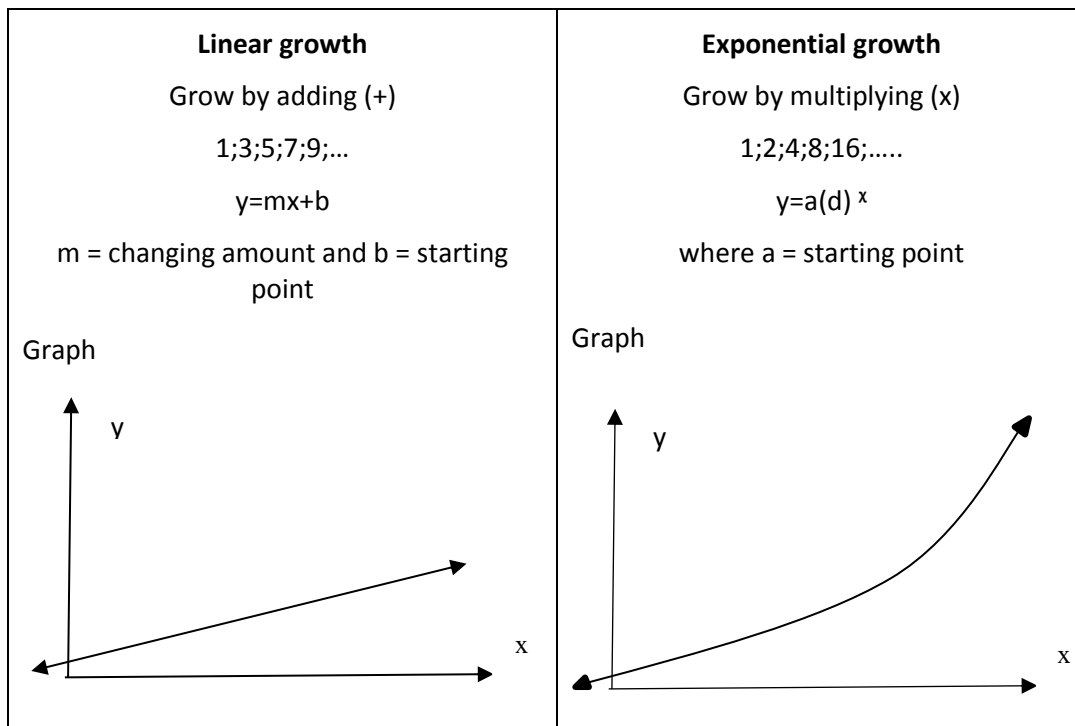


Figure 1 Difference between linear and exponential growth

The development of technology has had significant consequences on education. With smart phones becoming easier to own, access to world class education is in the owner’s hands. Overall, students are adapting to the use of technology at a much faster rate than their teachers. Moreover, when students observe a lack of digital proficiency of teachers, they regard them as ‘illiterate’ in the one area that students regard as essential for their future, namely technology (Prensky 2007). As a result, the notion of what education should be, is changing. When students have access to self-directed learning on digital platforms on topics that fascinate and interest them, they see how it is different to the current learning models where they have no choice in what they learn and where they are subjected to “test you to death” (Prensky 2007, p. 40) methods of learning.

Literacies in an exponential era

Literacies and discourses are always positioned in social contexts. Academic literacies are no different. Design students, for instance, are required to develop academic literacies that are entrenched in the culture and social context of universities. So when Gee (2012, p. 3) describes ‘Discourses’ as more than language, and as “... ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking and often reading and writing...”, then the values that students bring to their studies are integral to the propositions that they make. This is especially true for students of design.

The autonomous model of literacy, as it was termed by Street (1984), doesn’t acknowledge students’ contextual positions and the literacies that their cultures and histories can add to discourses (Boughey & McKenna 2016). Instead, the autonomous model considers literacy as “independent of and impartial towards trends and struggles in everyday life” (Street, 1984, p.28). And while the ideological model regards literacy as “an active relationship or a

way of orienting to the social and cultural world” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008, n.p.), the culturally responsive model promotes multiple literacies that are “specifically designed to perpetuate and enrich the culture of a people and equip them with the tools to become functional participants in society” (Gay, 2010, p.35).

In this era of exponential growth, with the many cultures and social contexts that communicate globally with the use of technology, it will be reasonable to agree that students will benefit most from a culturally responsive model. For instance, students that don't have English as a first language can then bring additional perspectives to a discourse when they engage with existing academic literacies. Bringing student readers' social contexts to the discourse can add another view on topics and current views. Canagarajah (1999) expresses it as “... non-native students can go beyond the reproductive and deterministic influences of the English language and its discourses to display a measure of agency as they critically negotiate discourses in the light of their preferred ideologies and rhetorical traditions” (Canagarajah 1999, p. 170).

In our South African context, especially, with the disparity that exists in basic education and the diversity of cultures and social contexts, design students should be encouraged to approach resources with their own personal experiences as the starting point before they attempt to make meaning or participate in the discourses. Only once they understand their own perspective, can students be persuaded to interpret the contextual background and values that inform the social practices and related texts that they found in their selected resources. With further encouragement, students will then succeed to construct their own practices, based on new knowledge that is positioned in the same or new contexts.

In addition, multimodal literacy, as described by Jewitt and Kress (2003) as the design of a discourse through the use of semiotics, can, by integration with other modes of expression, create a comprehensible ‘language’ that assists in expressing meanings. A typical example will be a web page that has sound effects, oral language, written language, music, images and video combined to bring across a message. The combinations in multimodal literacies instil analysis skills on a student through repetition of knowledge and also have the feature of making students sensitive to recognising multimodal discourse in written works. Thus, multimodal literacy utilises semiotic resources and modalities in making meaning of knowledge (Lim 2011).

In a generation where young people are connected globally through multiple forms of media, the value of multimodal literacies has to be addressed as an access point to understanding the literacies and discourses positioned in the social contexts of our students. Students often use multimodal literacy to communicate meaning. As we are “... moving away from the word-centered era of print literacy, we are now entering a new era of multimodality in which written text is increasingly interconnected with visual, audio and other modes of meaning” (Cope & Kalantzis 2006, p. 42).

Technology that uses the combination of communication techniques such as text, sound, language, spatial and visual compositions is the way people, especially students, communicate today. Multimodal tools are often tied to social networks, and people are subjected to these on a daily basis. Multimodality can, therefore, trigger a sense of personal authority by making knowledge more accessible to anyone who is willing to look for it. As academics in the design disciplines, the value of multimodal literacies will continually be a method of communication across social contexts and certainly a sure way to start discourses on any available platform.

As students, globally, communicate and engage in dialogue through multiple forms of ‘language’, the gap between lecturers and students can become bigger. However, through greater understanding of a student's personal experiences as the starting point of the

learning process, lecturers can encourage students to construct new practices based on new knowledge that is positioned new contexts.

This paper, therefore, proposes that design educators look to the future, rather than the past, to address the challenges that higher education currently faces. The next generation of designers will have to skillfully drive innovation and adapt to change in a quicker and more effective manner than ever before. Future jobs will expect creative thinking in order to set us apart from the fast-developing artificial intelligence. As design educators, we have influence in the way we prepare design students for the future. Addressing challenges through literacy models that embrace cultural values and social contexts, can develop young adults to innovatively meet the needs of the 21st century.

Conclusion

Student protests against the governance and structure of higher education have been familiar occurrences worldwide. A comparison of the demands that were made by student protests from five countries over the past five years indicates that similarities exist in the concerns over the state of higher education globally. The fundamental demands to decolonise higher education in South Africa echoes concerns of students globally. Students demand access to higher education institutions, regardless of their financial position, and feel that governance of those same institutions must promote education for the public, rather than function for individuality and material wealth. These student protests are symptoms of a renewed youth who feel that current leadership doesn't represent their ambitions and desires. The South African youth, in making their demand for a decolonised education, is no different.

The 21st century has witnessed exponential advancement in technology resulting in a digitally native generation of students that put together their online digital life. The value of these literacies, that connect young people across the globe, has to be addressed as an access point to understanding the discourses that are situated in the social contexts of our students. As students communicate their personal experiences of the learning process, lecturers should encourage them to construct new practices based on knowledge that is positioned new contexts.

The future of humankind seems to follow a predictable trajectory that is determined by structural drivers that include educational development. As design educators, we are tasked to continually develop the what, when and how of design education in the 21st century by reinventing design teaching in an era of exponential growth. By engaging in this restructure, we can contribute to young adults in forming mental 'operating systems' that will determine their effectiveness in everything that they do in our fast-changing future.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Contesting the Decolonisation Narrative: Towards an Entrepreneurship Based Graphic Design Curricula

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Abstract

The waves of decolonisation rhetoric flooding across South Africa's postsecondary education landscape are undeniable. Whilst acknowledging the historical precedents and present day anomalies that fuel these calls, the authors are sceptical of the relevance of decolonisation as an epistemological and philosophical catalyst for reforming and rethinking higher education curricula and practice. Decolonisation, as a term apropos to and derived from the moment of political decolonisation in many African countries during the mid-twentieth century, is both problematic and polarising. Thus, in this paper we contest the decolonisation narrative, especially within the framework of design curricula, instead arguing for the detraditionalisation, recontextualisation and ultimately 21st-centurisation of an African based graphic design university curriculum by, inter alia, enhancing it with appropriate entrepreneurship theories. The need for entrepreneurship infused graphic design education is necessitated by an increasingly challenging and complex contemporary climate where graphic design practitioners are expected to possess skills that extend beyond the realms of design. The paper posits that augmenting entrepreneurship principles to those that presently persist in graphic design education, as opposed to decolonising it, will result in "developing and designing locally and regionally relevant curricula" (Le Grange 2016, p.8) which will equip graduates to respond to and successfully navigate the ever changing demands of contemporary graphic design practice. Some recommendations on how contextually appropriate entrepreneurship theories can be effectively infused into university level graphic design curricula are provided.

Keywords:

Detraditionalisation, graphic design, entrepreneurship, decoloniasation

Introduction

In an illuminating article examining the decolonisation of the South African academy, Achille Mbembe (2016, p.32) ponders on the expediency of the notion of decolonisation for the reformation of higher education:

The harder I tried to make sense of the idea of ‘decolonisation’ that has become the rallying cry for those trying to undo the racist legacies of the past, the more I kept asking myself to what extent we might be fighting a complexly mutating entity with concepts inherited from an entirely different age and epoch. Is today’s Beast the same as yesterday’s or are we confronting an entirely different apparatus, an entirely different rationality – both of which require us to produce radically new concepts?

The authors of this paper also foster parallel concerns in our exposition of the graphic design curriculum at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and how it can be strengthened through the inclusion of appropriate entrepreneurship precepts. Like Mbembe, we are incredulous towards the hyper-usage of the decolonisation term for the transformation of modern day university curriculum. The first part of this paper problematises this historically laden term with the aim of shifting the epistemic and philosophical conversation on curriculum reform beyond decolonisation towards a detraditionalisation and recontextualisation of design education in Africa.

At this point we must highlight that the meaning and resulting implications of decolonisation in South African higher education is highly contested (Jansen 2017; Mgqwashu 2016, Wingfield 2017,). One of the seminal voices on decolonising learning, George Sefa Dei (2010, p.11) posits that decolonised education must be “truly transformative”, an ethos echoed by Patty Bode (2014, p. 52) who adds that “to become a decoloniser of curriculum, teachers first need to see the world through a different lens”. This transformative agenda is absolutely necessary and this paper affirms this view by arguing for the inclusion of entrepreneurship into design education. However, the enigma of marrying the decolonisation narrative with this ongoing education reform is baffling. This paradox is magnified by Dei (2012, p. 13) who asserts that “in decolonising schooling and education, we may want to look at the question of examinations and insist that assessments have to be age, grade, and subject-specific”. Once again, the authors are sympathetic to Dei’s sentiment, but does questioning the efficacy of rigid assessment practices need to be hijacked by decolonisation? The reevaluation of mono-modal paper based assessment is a universal educational imperative, but the almost clichéd deployment of decolonisation to describe the realignment of postsecondary pedagogy reduces the concept to a sort of academic fad. Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes (2015, p. 157) are critical of this fetishisation of the term and argue that it devalues and often ignores “the immediate context of settler colonialism on the lands where these conversations take place”. Put differently, decolonisation should not be abstracted from its original and essential aim of liberating native societies from the clutches of imperial domination.

In thinking about infusing the Graphic Design curriculum at TUT with appropriate entrepreneurship principles, we propose detraditionalisation theory, as opposed to decolonisation, as an alternative conceptual pathway. At the heart of detraditionalisation is the questioning and re-evaluation of established truths and to “critically reflect upon, and lose faith in what the traditional has to offer” (Heelas 1996, p. 4). When appropriated to the educational domain, detraditionalisation induces us to reconsider the normative practices of teaching and learning, towards more agile, responsive and relevant systems of knowledge sharing and production. Later in the paper, we flag the ‘traditional’ educational imperative of preparing students for design vocations, in favour of contaminating the design curriculum

with the entrepreneurial impulse. The primary thesis of this paper is that we ought to detraditionalise our educational practices and not necessarily decolonise them.

Reframing the decolonisation narrative

Decolonisation was formally institutionalised by the United Nations (UN) with the establishment of the 'UN Special Committee on Decolonisation' in 1961 to acknowledge and support the formally colonised newly independent nation-states in Asia, the Americas and Africa. This political dimension of decolonisation was later thrust into the philosophic and aesthetic domain by the Fanon inspired *Decolonising the mind: the politics of language in African literature* (1981) by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. A radicalised version of the concept has recently resurfaced in South Africa, exemplified by the *#RhodesMustFall* and *#FeesMustFall* campaigns which invoked decolonisation as the intellectual and moral compass for their praiseworthy causes. Unfortunately, Mary Carmen (2016, p. 235) warns that this revolutionary construct of decolonisation points to "a complete subversion, destruction or deconstruction of colonial attitudes, processes and concepts" and in a country like South Africa, this leads to an erroneous perception that, as revealed by Emmanuel Mqgqwashu (2016), "decolonisation equals an attack on white academics by black academics". Although Mqgqwashu calls for the "unsettling" of this acrimonious interpretation, decolonisation in a South African context is inherently divisive and polarising, as it operates contra to the Africa-Europe, black-white binaries (Jansen 2017, p. 167). Jonathan Jansen (2017, p. 159) is wary of the risks and unsuspecting snares of this extremist 'hard version' of decolonisation.

In a rare and enlightening assessment of how the concept of decolonisation has been abused by the postcolonial principals in Zimbabwe, Munyaradzi Hwami (2016, p. 27) exposes how this ideal, and its attendant objectives of nationalism, pan-Africanism, Africanisation and indigenisation – political and theoretical movements founded on the premise of decentring colonial supremacy – have themselves become hegemonising forces: "Besides neoliberal globalisation, other dominating discourses such as nationalism, indigenisation, and pan-Africanism have been unmasked as hegemonising practices utilised by elite groups to dominate the majority and in the process appropriating economic and political influence". Although Hwami professes faith in the unpolluted version of Fanonian decolonisation, he bemoans how what is now known as Mugabeism, has perverted the term. Amongst other totalitarian traits, Hwami (2016, pp. 26, 29) notes how Mugabeism decolonisation is "intolerant of criticism" and conveniently dismisses any form of opposition or "democratic and human rights claims as Western machinations to derail the decolonisation process". In Hwami's (2016, p. 34) final analysis "decolonisation is supposed to result in development" but in most African countries, as in Zimbabwe, "the fruits of this progress have been accruing to the rich elite nationalists while the rest of the population swim in unprecedented poverty levels. The indigenous bourgeoisie, as was foreseen by Fanon, demand people to remain patriotic".

This emphasis on Hwami (2016, p. 34) is meant to, in his own words, spotlight the "complexity of any decolonisation agenda in modern times". Drawing on these insights, our concern lies in how decolonisation has become the *de facto* theoretical instrument for revising higher education, and as such could become a kind of hegemonic scholarly force which will be entrenched as the new tradition in education reform. In a pre-emptive caution against this, Mqgqwashu (2016) recognises that decolonised learning should have its roots in "African identities and world views", but goes on to highlight that "this doesn't exempt it from critique". We too acknowledge the priority of detraditionalising higher education curricula from its Western heritage, by recontextualising it with the current and future needs of Africa. One of the hallmarks of the decolonial attitude is the motivation to rediscover an intrinsic Africanness by "...resisting colonial education and knowledges" (Dei 2012, p. 105). Dei (2012, p. 103) expresses this mood by emphatically proclaiming that "we must be true

to our *authentic* selves as African subjects of knowing". This call is reinforced by others such as Bagele Chilisa (2012, p. 14) who stresses that a decolonised education requires the "restoration" of African systems that were marginalised by colonisation. Once more, the authors completely abhor the devastation created by the racist and systemic suppression of African societies during colonisation, but wonder if the instinct to rediscover and restore an authentic "nativist" African experience is synchronous with the need to provide our diverse students with locally entrenched, but globally competitive, training (Jansen 2017, p. 167). There is a growing pool of opposition against this decolonial Afrocentric logic such as Post-Africanism which sees Afrocentricism as "an unofficial policy of cultural protectionism" (Ekpo 2005, p. 112). At the core of Post-Africanism is the question: does classical Africa possess the right ideological and practical apparatus to help us navigate Africa's contemporary challenges? The answer remains unknown, but what is certain is that over half a century of decolonisation policies in many African countries has had unsatisfactory and often disappointing outcomes.

Lamenting the poor performance of African countries that appropriated, experimented, and enacted the idyllic notion of decolonisation as captioned by Frantz Fanon, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Cheik Anta Diop, the renowned American economist Thomas Sowell (1998, p. 120) eloquently and quite correctly diagnosed:

After the soaring rhetoric and optimistic expectations at the beginning of independence were followed by bitter disappointments and painful retrogressions that reached into virtually every aspect of African life, the immediate political response was not so much a re-evaluation of the *assumptions and policies* which lead to such disastrous results, but instead a widespread blaming of the departed imperialists, or racial minorities such as the Indians, or even the United States, which has had relatively little role in African history, for good or ill.

It should be noted that the authors do not champion the neoliberal stance Sowell is writing from, however like Hwami (2016, p. 19) we are sceptical whether it is possible to realise "genuine development outside the dominant neoliberal paradigm".

In the wake of the #RhodesMustFall episode, some have proposed that South African higher education institutions should adopt a 'soft' decolonisation wherein "what changes is the relational position of an African-centred curriculum to the rest of the world" (Jansen 2017, p. 159). This 'soft' decolonisation is echoed by Mary Carmen (2016, p. 236) in her synthesis of Kwasi Wiredu's idea of 'conceptual decolonisation', which "is not aimed at liberating African philosophical thought from *all* influences from the colonial past, only those that are undue". Lesley Le Grande (2016, p. 6) speaks in a similar tone by arguing that the decolonisation of education should be "a process of change that does not necessarily (sic) involve destroying Western knowledge but in decentring it or perhaps deterritorialising it (making it something other than what it is)". This redemptive and conciliatory synthesis is regrettably overlooked in populist decolonisation rhetoric and whilst the authors also subscribe to this 'soft' variant of 'conceptual decolonisation', we remain wary of the delimitations of the term in its entirety, as concluded by Jansen (2017, p. 171):

While the call for the decolonisation of the curriculum on the part of protesting students might be viewed as a useful wake-up call to accelerate the transformation of universities, *it is fundamentally misguided*. Moreover, when wielded as a crude instrument of black nationalism, the call to decolonise curriculum and society is not only offensive; *it is dangerous* in a country still struggling with racial, gender, and class inequalities of a very present past.

Entrepreneurship infused graphic design curriculum

Having problematised the notion of decolonisation as a conduit for curriculum transformation, we will now focus on the actual mechanics of revising and detraditionalising graphic design curricula¹ towards an entrepreneurship based model. At its most schematised form, entrepreneurship is defined as a process by which individuals pursue opportunities by putting novel ideas into practice which result in economic activity and job creation (Barringer & Ireland 2006). One of the intangibles of entrepreneurship is that it often transcends mere money-making (Rwigema & Venter 2004), as confirmed by Fayolle (2007) who indicates that businesses are not only constrained to monetary advancement, but are also actively engaged in disturbing or detraditionalising conventional social interactions and production strategies. A 2011 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report revealed that South African youth, as compared to their counterparts from other emerging economies such as Brazil, had the lowest Total Entrepreneurship Activity (TEA) (Kelley, Singer & Herrington 2011). Analysts observe that, amongst other impediments, Apartheid policies which deliberately excluded large sections of the population from formal economic activity can be imputed for this low level of entrepreneurial activity (Phaho 2008). However, according to another GEM report, the main factor that influences entrepreneurial performance and sustainability is entrepreneurship education; the better the education, the higher the entrepreneur's chances of sustained success (Singer, Amorós & Moska 2015).

But firstly, it is worth citing the significance of global best practice when rethinking curriculum design. Mbembe (2016, p. 41) counsels that South African universities "cannot afford to think exclusively in a South-African-centric way". Brenda Wingfield (2017) echoes this advice by stating that "South African teachers, lecturers and professors must develop curricula that build on the best knowledge skills, values, beliefs and habits from around the world". This move towards internationalising our offerings should not be done at the expense of local wisdom, however Wingfield (2017) qualifies her views by mentioning how the world has benefited from local knowledge and developments, and contends that "we should continue to benefit from their discoveries, too". Sowell (1999, p. 61) reminds us that "much of the story of the human race has been a story of the massive cultural borrowings which have created a modern world technology" and the most important form of this borrowing is the exchange of intellectual resources. In support of this 'cultural borrowing' Mbembe (2016, p.41) proposes a more fluid "globalised talent mobility" amongst African academies in order to "build new diasporic intellectual networks".

In order to detraditionalise graphic design curricula, we espouse that this talent mobility² should happen in concert with a 'curriculum mobility'. Curriculum development is largely dependent on the existing body of knowledge within a field and Deirdre Pretorius (2016, p. 47) surmises South African graphic design research as encompassing the following interests: "South African graphics for social justice and human rights, protest and resistance, design language, advertising, comics and cartoons, print media, illustration and murals". It is clear that traditional graphic design academic research does not engage with graphic design entrepreneurship, which inevitably results in a shortage of reliable data and literature to draw from.³ 'Curriculum mobility' or drawing on appropriate case studies and research from

¹ Since its inception in 1991 DEFSA has been the premier platform for reimagining South African design education. Pretorius (2016, p.48) confirms that since 2000 the forum "has tended to focus on teaching, learning and programme development issues" where graphic design curriculum reform has been debated at some depth.

² Within the context of this paper, talent mobility means inviting successful graphic design entrepreneurs and various experts in business practice to present lectures and block courses to students, which will require open-ended administrative and teaching strategies from the university.

³ Southoff (2004), Sutherland (2004), Carey (2010), and Giloi and Du Toit (2013) have published articles dealing with design education, assessment and professional practice in South African universities. In their papers, very little is mentioned about entrepreneurship education within graphic design education, particularly in a South African context.

around the world can ameliorate this deficit, but there is a concurrent need to increase local scholarship on graphic design entrepreneurship.

Of interest to us is how this deficiency of graphic design entrepreneurship scholarship can be seen in graphic design curriculum at the Tshwane University of Technology. Below, we present a very brief examination of the existing levels of entrepreneurship training within the Graphic Design Diploma at TUT to highlight this scarcity.

Table 1: List of modules for TUT’s Graphic Design Diploma (TUT 2017, p.75)

First year	Credits
Communication Design I	36
Design Techniques I	36
Graphic Design Drawing I	24
History of Art and Design I	12
Professional Graphic Design Practice I	12
Second year	
Communication Design II	48
Design Techniques II	30
Graphic Design Drawing II	18
History and Theory of Graphic Design II	12
Professional Graphic Design Practice II	12
Third year	
Communication Design III	60
Design Techniques III	24
Graphic Design Drawing III	12
History and Theory of Graphic Design III	12
Professional Graphic Design Practice III	12

Table 1 showcases the various modules within the current Graphic Design Diploma at TUT, which, like other programmes both nationally and internationally, mostly focuses on the technical aspects of the discipline where students are equipped, quite effectively, with the necessary skills and tools to be proficient in web design, print design, advertising design, and typography (Hannam 2012). Of significance is that students are only really exposed to entrepreneurship within the Professional Practice (I, II & III) modules, which make up a measly 10% of the overall credit allocation within the diploma. Although some of the content within the Professional Practice module is suited to entrepreneurial activity, in actuality the module schools students with professional behaviour and conduct related to the workplace environment. It does not necessarily offer entrepreneurship training. Writing about the Australian situation, Ruth Bridgstock (2011) confirms that creative courses usually focus on the employability of the graduate, thereby inadvertently relegating the focus on entrepreneurship and business skills. This emphasis on employability is also seen in the

nature of the feedback received from the industry linked advisory board, which provides curriculum related input on an annual basis to the Department of Visual Communication at TUT. Although the comments from the industry insiders are wide ranging, they inevitably gravitate towards ensuring that the curriculum is abreast with the latest industry developments and that the students are adequately prepared for the world of work.

An argument could be made that design is an innately entrepreneurial activity due to its creative and problem-solving attributes. These attributes can be found in all the other practical modules (i.e. Communication Design, Design Techniques, and Graphic Design Drawing) where students are exposed to simulated projects that require them to utilise various entrepreneurial strategies. However, the limitation is that the entrepreneurial dimension is not overtly emphasised, which is problematic since overall success as a design entrepreneur is not solely dependent on the design and creative skills which these practical modules teach. Design entrepreneurs also require other competencies which are not properly covered in the present course. We acknowledge that the current curriculum and its predecessors have kick-started the careers of many graduates who have become successful design entrepreneurs, but posit that, whilst training students to be proficient designers, the programme must also equip them, both psychologically and technically, to be entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurship should not be a welcome by-product as is presently the case.

In a treatise aptly titled *The rise of the design entrepreneur* Anderson (2014, p. 3) argues that to be successful entrepreneurs “graphic designers need to think and act more like traditional entrepreneurs”. Anderson (Ibid) further adds that “they need a supplemental business education that is tailored to understanding the full life cycle of how to take a product or service from idea to market”. Anderson's statement highlights the necessity for graphic designers to be exposed to entrepreneurial skills and principles, which warrants the reevaluation of graphic design education at local tertiary institutions. The ongoing realignment of university curricula with the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) is a timely blank canvas upon which the nature of graphic design training can be radically reimagined. To this end, the new Integrated Communication Design Diploma⁴, which will replace the current National Diploma in Graphic Design at TUT will make significant strides with regards to introducing entrepreneurship training within the curriculum⁵.

Some recommendations

Since the Graphic Design curriculum is undergoing an overhaul, most of the recommendations presented here have been considered within the coming Integrated Communication Design programme. One of the major reformations which is due to take place is related to Work Integrated Learning (WIL). At the moment, graphic design students at TUT are required to complete a six week WIL placement at a design or related work environment⁶, however, within the new diploma WIL is due to have a credit weighting of 60, split between second and third year. Although this is a welcome improvement, we caution against using this module as a platform for the sole purpose of preparing students to be employable in the industry. Although this remains an essential and important outcome, the WIL module should also introduce students to entrepreneurship by allowing them, amongst other activities, to freelance. Acknowledging the value of internship/WIL programmes as a filler between tertiary education and the industry, Hannam (2012, p. 4) strongly advocates for freelancing, stating that through freelancing “you get to test the waters for a career in

⁴ The Integrated Communication Design diploma will be introduced in 2019.

⁵ Although the approval and accreditation processes of the programme and its subject content is ongoing, the authors can confirm that the new Diploma will have a dedicated module on entrepreneurship.

⁶ This WIL placement is not formally integrated into the current graphic design curriculum, but the Department of Visual Communication assists all the design students to obtain credible placements.

graphic design, to make a little money, and to fill in the gaps in your education". Put differently, besides exposing them to workplace learning, students must also be prompted to seek out their own income generating opportunities as part of the WIL outcomes.

Hannam (2012) advocates for the introduction of freelancing into university design curriculum as early as the first year because it induces self-directed and self-reflexive learning. The first part of this process would entail workshops or talks from successful design entrepreneurs on themes like professionalism and customer relations. This preparatory phase equips students with the relevant content related to freelancing such as, but not limited to, client engagement, project management, and pricing. The assessment of the projects should also tap into non-traditional modes of evaluating the students' competencies. For example, students can produce a portfolio of evidence of their project which will be demonstrated through oral PowerPoint presentations. The presentation should report on the interactions the student had with their client and must contain a self-assessment of the competencies they gained or missed in the process. An important dimension of the portfolio of evidence is the feedback from the client, which can be validated in the form of voice or video recordings, or the traditional written report.

The freelancing strategy will also expose students to the wealth of opportunities hidden within the country's informal economy. Graphic designers are central to the overall health of the Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMME) sector in South Africa⁷ due to the fact that design is a "key strategic activity" that can contribute to a business' value through, amongst other things, corporate identities, branding, and packaging (Gunes 2012, p. 65). Due to these specialised services, graphic designers can sometimes mean the difference between success and failure for SMMEs in the country's highly competitive and globalised business landscape. Amongst other benefits, the advantage of this freelancing approach is that it will ease students into entrepreneurship without the pressure and risks of handling 'big' contracts.

Another spinoff of freelancing will be improved networking. Networking is a necessity when running a business, however, very few design programmes have networking as part of their curriculums (Bridgstock 2011, p. 14). Bridgstock motivates that "creatives should start to practice networking as early in their careers as they can, and to treat networking as an important skill set which can be learned". Thus, besides integrating it into the curriculum, students should be encouraged to network within the campus environment as well. Through networking, students can vastly increase their confidence, communication skills and, mostly importantly, industry contacts.

Lastly, in a seminal article entrepreneurship training in South Africa Amadi-Echendu et al. (2016, p. 31) provide a list of recommendations related to the transformation of higher education towards an entrepreneurial framework. Amongst other suggestions⁸, the most critical intervention they advocate for is the introduction of entrepreneurship related block courses in aspects such as financial accounting, developing contracts, human resource management etc. Of importance is that these courses must be contextually relevant to students in the creative industries. Ultimately, all these aforementioned points will foster that intangible "entrepreneurial spirit"⁹ within the students (Amadi-Echendu et al. Ibid). Our conviction is that this reformation needs to be precipitated by 'curriculum and talent

⁷ We propose that TUT and other universities with design departments initiate links with the Department of Small Business Development and the National Youth Development Agency in order to access reliable databases of economically active emerging businesses that need the intervention of graphic designers.

⁸ Amadi-Echendu et al. (2016, p.31) also suggest the setting up of incubation centres to assist students with the commercialisation of their business ideas.

⁹ This entrepreneurial spirit or behaviour can be cultivated through extracurricular activities and teaching methods using both formal and informal learning (Salem, 2014).

mobility' in order to supplement the current lack of entrepreneurship tuition in graphic design programmes.

Conclusion

In a constantly evolving society and economic landscape, graphic design curriculum needs to respond to this context by providing students with responsive content that will skill them to be self-sustainable and engaged citizens. Furthermore, in the present climate of rife unemployment, graphic designers are a key competent and interface that can assist many small businesses to become competitive and viable. Based on the abridged investigation of TUT's graphic design programme, it is apparent that the curriculum is mostly geared towards preparing graduates for employment and does not acutely emphasise entrepreneurship. Therefore, we encourage the consolidation of entrepreneurship theories within local graphic design curricula, but question the elicitation of decolonisation as the driver of this amendment. The authors are wary of the almost hegemonic grip which decolonisation has assumed in university transformation discourse. Although we are sympathetic to the 'soft', 'conceptual decolonisation' which induces "all individuals to explore their own assumptions and beliefs so that they can be open to other ways of knowing, being, and doing" (Sherwood & Edwards 2006, p.188), this important exercise is clouded by the very heritage and DNA of the decolonisation term. Hence, the authors propose that we contemplate going beyond the decolonisation narrative towards a detraditionalisation and recontextualisation of design training, especially during this open window of the HEQSF realignment process. Decolonisation discourse has left a positive mark on humanity and we do not seek to downgrade this contribution, however, perhaps it is time to reconsider its viability for design education reform.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Using Digital Imaging Technology to Decolonize Education in a Museum Context

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Abstract

Museum information and knowledge is persistently understood and communicated according to Eurocentric concepts and provides only a limited account of the experience of the museum environment as place. In this paper we develop a conceptual framework to guide how Digital Imaging Technology (DIT) can change the situation to an inclusive, less hegemonic approach. The purpose of this paper is to explore in theory the potential use of DIT to enhance and facilitate experience and the educational function of the Port Natal Maritime Museum (PNMM). Two relevant tasks of decolonization are discussed which includes to develop access and to develop a non-dualist knowledge system to achieve a more engaged museum experience and to enhance education and learning. The paper describes a potential dynamic from environment through space, to place as activated by human involvement for utilization and experience. The role of technology in this dynamic is one of mediating the potential of experiencing a place on both the microperception level, where individual needs and wants regulate the unlocking of the potential for utilization and experience, and on the macroperception level for contextual dimension of experience.

Keywords:

museums, digital imaging technology, education, technology mediation, experience.

Introduction and background

In this paper we present the a conceptual framework developed in order to guide the installation of digital imaging displays in the Port Natal Maritime Museum (PNMM) with cognizance of the need to decolonise education in South Africa (Mbembe 2016). Towards this end we draw on theories on Experience of place, in relation to a postphenomenological understanding of how technology mediates such experience within the specific case of the PNMM.

The PNMM opened in 1988 in the Durban Harbour on the then Aliwal Street, now Samora Machel Street. The museum's attractions, as shown in Figure 1, consist of floating vessels that museum visitors can board to explore their interiors and engine rooms together with number of small ships and boats with various functions that were in use between 1957 and 1984 and other displays that mainly relate to historical maritime practices. Drawings and historical photographs take the visitors through the history of the development of the Port of Durban over 170 years from Bay to Port. A large number of artefacts are found in the Britannia Room which is the only exhibition hall in which diverse exhibits are displayed that aim to provide the visitors with information on the original context of use of displayed artefacts.

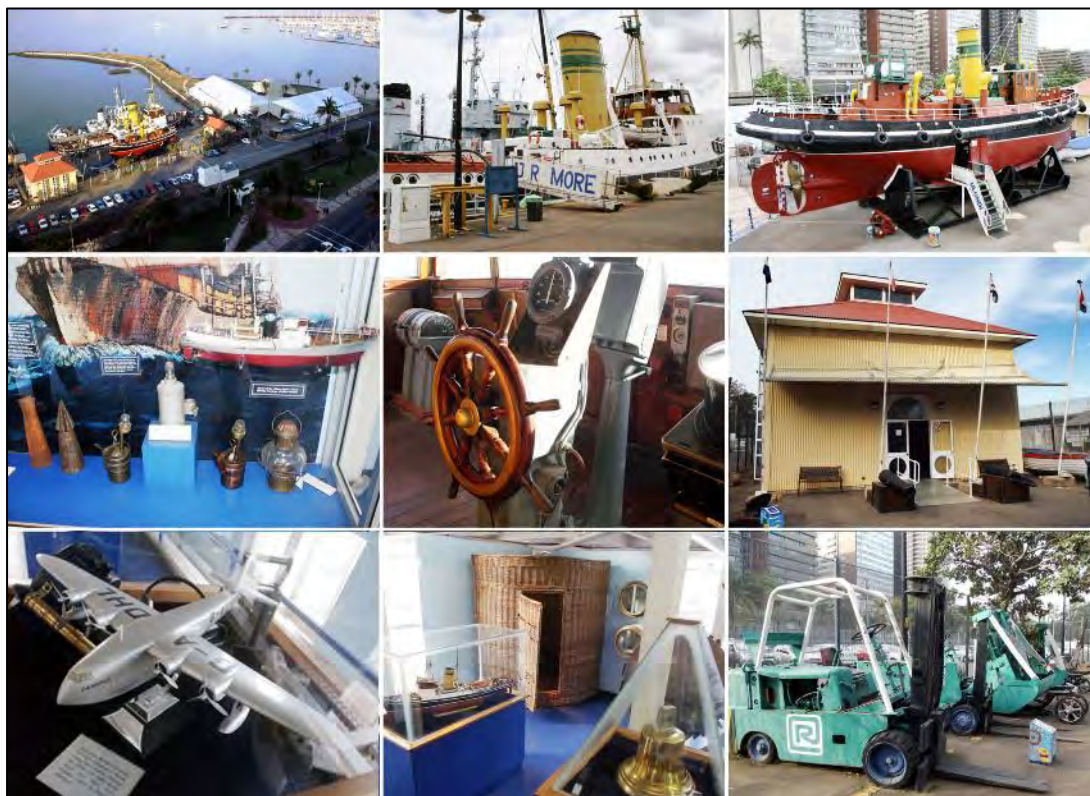


Figure 1. The Port Natal Maritime museum and selected displays.

At the time of writing this paper, visitors to the PNMM are able to board vessels and interact with the displays in a playful manner. Because two of the vessels are floating on the water visitors can therefore feel the movement of the water while exploring cabins and engine rooms. Visitors can also ring bells, fiddle with non-functioning compasses and pretend to 'steer' the ships by turning the wheels, et cetera. In a sense visitors enact a 'sailor' or perhaps a 'captain', or a 'cook'. This interactive experience is supported with written (and in some cases visual) information displayed on tags and boards intended to augment such playful engagement with information that would facilitate learning. For the outside displays of, for

example rope-making machines and smaller boats, there is an audio guide system that can be accessed through a hand-held device. The audio guide is, however, seldom used according to the general assistant at the PNNM and the supporting texts (audio, visual and written) that provide contextual information regarding the artefacts and their original uses (see Figure 2) are seldom engaged with by visitors (Makhanya 2017, personal communication, 7 August). For the purposes of this article, we refer to the original context; in which the various objects and vessels were used, 'place 1'. The current context of the museum in which the vessels, small ships, boats and various displays are experienced, is termed 'place 2'.



Figure 2. Detail of The History of Whaling display with contextual information displayed on a tag.

According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM) (2014), education and recreation are two of the core functions of a museum. In accordance with the ICOM, the mission statement of Durban Local History Museums, which the PNNM falls under, is given by the museum manual as:

To provide an effective educational and recreational service in the Durban Metropolitan region, through selective collection, documentation, research, interpretation, conservation and display of materials both past and present; and to promote their use for the benefit of all. (Oberholzer 1996, pp. 12–13)

The manual further proclaims an “urgent” need to keep abreast new technological development in audio-visual media in order to access a wider audience (Oberholzer 1996, pp.12–13). From the description of the museum in relation to core purposes of a museum as outlined by the ICOM, the PNNM falls short on two fronts. Firstly, the displays do not make use of contemporary audio-visual technologies, or digital imaging technologies (DIT), as we will refer to in this paper. Secondly, while providing entertaining interactive experiences, the displays do not succeed in facilitating an engagement with the original context of use of the various artefacts and vessels on display. The reasons for this failure

could be found in an assessment of the way the supporting educational information is displayed as well as the nature of this information.

Two decolonisation tasks

The way in which the above-mentioned supporting texts present information conforms to Eurocentric norms of knowledge in that it is mostly linear, it presents fixed viewpoints, and separates the knowledge from the embodied subjectivities of knowing subjects. As Lander maintains, Eurocentric knowledge “is based on the construction of multiple and repeated divisions or oppositions. The most characteristic and significant of these—but not the only ones, to be sure—include the basic, hierarchical dualisms of reason and body, subject and object, culture and nature, masculine and feminine” (Lander 2009, pp. 40).

The scenario described above therefore results in inadequate learning and limited visitor experience. The displays therefore fail to facilitate engagement with ‘place1’. Dibley (2005) states that the persistence of Eurocentric knowledge structures within museum institutions is part of what motivates the frequent calls for museums to be ‘redeemed’ from their colonial legacy. For the purposes of this paper we work with a broad definition of decolonization which pronounces the decolonisation project as an effort to expose and redress in public, the “ontological violence authorized by Eurocentric epistemology both in scholarship and everyday life” (Sundberg 2014, p. 34). With this paper we focus on “everyday life” rather than on scholarship. Dibley (2005) is, however, sceptical about such redemption narratives because, he argues, the colonial legacy runs much deeper than racism, classicism, and sexism because it relates to “the violence of the Eurocentric epistemologies” that have subverted other ways of thinking and other ways of doing.

From a recent paper by Mbembe (2016) on decolonization we lift out certain points that relate to museum education and experience. In this paper we engage with only two of the many issues Mbembe mentions in relation to the decolonisation of the university. These issues are equally relevant to the museum as an institution, especially in light of the current mandate of museums to develop their education role (Kotze 2017). Firstly, Mbembe raises the issue of opening up access to various institutions as an essential project of decolonisation. Mbembe maintains that access is more than just being allowed in, it is also about a possibility to inhabit a space to the extent that one could say “this is my home, I am not a foreigner, I belong here, this not hospitality, it’s not charity” (2016, p. 30). This first task of decolonization points towards the question of how a museum can become such a place that draws visitors into such a sense of belonging.

The second task, highlighted by Mbembe, that we identify as relating to the museum experience, is to develop a non-dualist knowledge system where the “knowing subject is not enclosed in itself and picks out at a world of objects and produces supposedly objective knowledge of those objects” (Mbembe 2016, p. 32). A non-dualist knowledge system where the knowledge is not independent of knowing subject, implies that knowledge (which includes science and technology) is socially constructed. Ihde maintains that by the end of the 20th century, the general consensus amongst philosophers of science was that science was now seen as “fully acculturated, historical, contingent, fallible, and social, and whatever its results, its knowledge is produced out of practices” (Ihde, 2009, p. 8). Knowledge is not only inseparable from the knowing subject, but also intimately tied to historical and even physical contexts of use and of production (Ihde, 2009, p. 8). The way that knowledge is transferred in educational contexts such as museums, however, does not necessarily acknowledge this.

In a Eurocentric knowledge system, even if the socially constructed and contextually produced nature of knowledge is acknowledged, hegemonic structures would regard knowledge produced in Western societies and through Western practices as superior to

other contexts. In a museum context, a non-dualist, decolonised understanding of knowledge would therefore imply that no two visitors would gain precisely the same knowledge and understanding from a museum visit, but also that one kind of knowledge would not be regarded as superior to another. Now that we have explained the mandate of museums to develop education through the implementation of DIT, within the contemporary need to decolonize educational structures, as argued by Mbembe, we are faced with potentially conflicting aims as DIT could be seen to be colonial technology. In the following section we discuss the nature of DIT and the role it can play in a museum context.

The role of digital imaging technologies

Digital Imaging Technology presents photography and audio-visual media in a digital technology environment. Althaus (2000) clarifies that DIT refers to the ability to digitally capture or scan an image; image processing and editing; computer image display; and sharing images almost instantaneously, thus making digital images a common component of hi-tech communications. In short DIT addresses (a) digital image creation and (b) management, yet considering how the digital image will be (c) accessed and (d) used. These four dynamics are critical in the use of DIT.

Given the above description of DIT, can digital imaging technologies participate in addressing the above-mentioned tasks of the decolonisation project? Schiwy (2003, p. 3) writes that a certain school of thought holds that

[T]echnology is not neutral [...] it produces involuntary effects [...] video inscribes a particular logic of production. Having emerged in capitalist, colonial and patriarchal contexts, audiovisual media carry the burden of a colonial geopolitics of knowledge.

In light of such critical perspectives, it would seem as if DIT cannot legitimately participate in the decolonising project. A brief survey of scholarship, however, shows that many researchers and individuals are in fact doing just that (see Stam and Shohat 2014; Souza et al. 2016; Winter 2013).

To treat a technology in a way that it remains forever embedded within the ideology that was responsible for its development is an essentialist universalising approach that denies contexts of use and bodily praxes. According to Don Ihde's (2009) philosophy of technology one should rather ask who is using the technologies, in what way and for what purpose. Instead of formulating universal theories of technology, Ihde holds that technology is constituted through relations that shape by virtue of and around it. Although technological artefacts are seldom neutral, the bodily praxis and context of use shape into a variety of possible relations between human, technology and the world. Peter Paul Verbeek (2005; 2010; Verbeek & Rosenberger 2015), building on Ihde's work, explains that humans, technologies and worlds are simultaneously co-shaped in relation to each other (without being reduced to immaterial relations) and thereby presenting an integrated, non-dualist understanding of subject and object. Various kinds of relations therefore bring about different ways of knowing, experiencing, existing and making meaning.

According to Verbeek (2005, pp.122-123) such ways of knowing occur on two intertwined spheres, the microperceptive and the macroperceptive where microperceptual experience considers the bodily dimension of sensory perception, macroperceptual experience which refers to cultural or hermeneutic perception that he describes as the contextual dimension of experience. The former usually is taken as immediate and bodily focused as in an actual seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting. The latter is a framework through which sensory perceptions become meaningful. While human experience considers interpreted perceptions the interpretations are informed by cultural context and places of occurrences. Verbeek (2005, pp. 122-123) maintains that microperceptual and macroperceptual

experience cannot be separated from each other as they are closely linked and they are intertwined. In other words, bodily perception cannot exist without being interpreted and the interpretation cannot exist without something to interpret (*Ibid*).

Both of these dimensions of experience belong equally to human life and the world and draw from the three basic kinds of relations between humans, technologies and worlds, which Ihde termed embodiment, hermeneutic, alterity, and background relations, all of which transform human experience and the world in some way or another. Van den Eede (2015, p. 146) emphasises that these various relations often overlap, and one often finds more than one kind of relation formed in the use certain artefacts, in different contexts. Rosenberg and Verbeek (2015, p. 14) explain that, 'when a technology is "embodied," a user's experience is reshaped through the device, with the device itself in some ways taken into the user's bodily awareness'. With hermeneutic relations, aspects of the world are interpreted through the artefact by 'reading' instruments. This therefore involves a "direct experience and interpretation of the technology itself" (Verbeek & Rosenberger 2015, p. 17). With alterity relations, the technological device is fitted with some form of interface that allows it to "mimic the shape of person-to-person interaction" (*Ibid.*, p. 18). The result is that the device becomes a quasi-other with which we must interrelate.

These various relations results in microperceptual experience due to bodily dimension of sensory perception and contextual dimension emerge through macroperceptual experience. Inside the J.R. More vessel, for instance, visitor experiences are mediated by technologies through various kinds of relations. The ship itself extends human physical capabilities by allowing visitors to move around on water. This function, however, becomes transparent and is not part of visitors' conscious actions (embodied relation). The air ventilation system which has been recently restored, functions equally in the background, providing a constant droning, interspersed with sounds emanating from the harbour. For current visitors the sound of the ventilation is just that, a droning. Macroperceptual experience is, however, necessary for visitors to understand that for sailors that manned the ship while it was still in use, the air-conditioning system was their oxygen supply without which they could not function inside the ship.

When the vessel was still in use, sailors would navigate by reading data off various instruments, including a nautical compass (hermeneutic relation). At the moment, however, the nautical compass displayed in the museum is not functional, and is displayed in the Britannia Room as a mere curiosity, with no contextual information. In this view how can DIT be implemented to allow visitors to also learn about the past (place1), in such a way that they are not required to take an uninvolved step back to access knowledge. How can visitors be drawn in to experience a sense of belonging in place 2, and thereby access an aspect of place 1?

Phenomenology of Place

In order to answer these questions, we turn to a phenomenological understanding of place, based on concepts initially developed by Edward Relph (1976) and later adapted by Tim Ingold (2000) David Seamon (2015) and Jeff Malpas (1999) among many others. A phenomenological approach to place emphasises embodied experience, that takes the bodily, emotional and physical aspects of human interaction with their world into account (Casey 2001, p. 417). Even though the distinction between the terms space, place and environment are not always clear and have been interpreted in different ways , for the purposes of this paper, we work with place as differentiated from space and environment in the following way: *Environment* refers to a set of physical constraints, prior to inscription for use (Ingold 2000, p. 19), where *space* refers to human involvement with the environment for utilization. With *place*, an additional layer of human involvement results in a concept that

combines location, locale, and sense of a place. The concept of place allows for meanings and attachments to be forged in relation to individual, socio-economic, political and environmental factors (Seamon & Sowers 2008, p. 49).

The three terms are intimately interrelated and do not represent a linear progression. As Seamon mentions, “for Relph, the unique quality of place is its power to order and to focus human intentions, experiences, and actions spatially [...] our understanding of space is related to the places we inhabit, which in turn derive meaning from their spatial context (Seamon & Sowers, 2008: 44)”. What we want to emphasise here is the increasing level of human experiential involvement that results in particular meaning-making as opposed to generalised utilisation purposes characterised by the term ‘space’. Place therefore offers an opportunity for interactive meaning making.

The meanings forged could, however, result in either a sense of deep belonging, inclusion and attachment or of alienation and separateness, or anything in-between, depending on the way in which a visitor (in the present case) is involved, and the kind of utilisation the visitor engages in. Seamon and Sowers (2008, p. 46) claim that the crucial phenomenological point that Relph makes is that

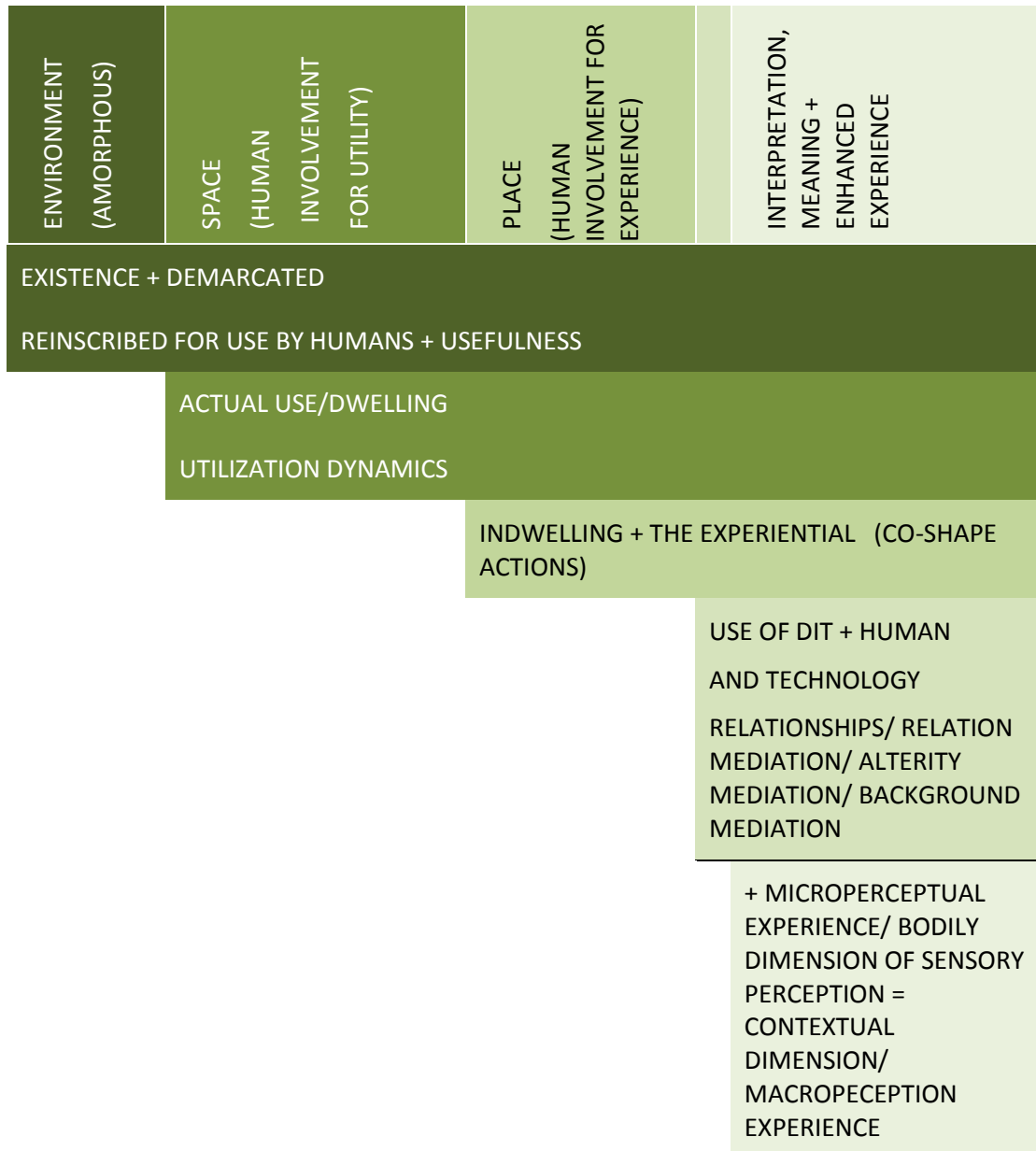
[O]utsideness and insideness constitute a fundamental dialectic in human life and that, through varying combinations and intensities of outsideness and insideness, different places take on different identities for different individuals and groups, and human experience takes on different qualities of feeling, meaning, ambience, and action.

Relph’s concepts of ‘insideness’ and ‘outsideness’ relates to Mbembe’s (2016, p. 30) understanding of access as an important part of the decolonisation project. Access by virtue of charity, does not grant ‘insideness’,

In the current situation we could argue that visitors to the PNNM encounter the original context of use as space, rather than the desired ‘place1’ due to a lack of utilisation, experiential involvement and macroperceptual experience. If we are to achieve the decolonial tasks of facilitating meaning making as education, we therefore need to ensure that the introduction of DIT provides ways to mediate visitors’ experiences of both place1 and place2 as insiders, not separate either from the place or from the meaning created and understandings developed.

From the phenomenology of place and postphenomenology of technology briefly outlined above, the following framework was developed in order to guide the eventual development of DIT installations (see Table 1).

Table 1. Conceptual framework for DIT installations at PNNM



This framework illustrates increasing human involvement that form layers of human experience that deepen from the experience of environment to that of involvement and interaction and the forging of meaning and a sense of place. The framework illustrates that with any environment it comes to existence due to human intervention and would be demarcated for a particular use. Just as is the case with the PNNM it is in the harbour environment. However, the environment can be re-inscribed for any other use by humans, meaning it has a potential to offer humans usefulness to their desire and it becomes useful because of human endeavour.

A second layer is added where human involvement for utility turns the environment to a space. The PNNM is also considered a space because there is utility that humans find with it, the space is utilized as a museum. A third layer turns space into a place due to human involvement for experience which is what museums aim for because visitors through dwelling they find actual use and experience of a place.

To achieve interpretation and meaning of the displays and for enhanced experience, the third layer suggest for technologically mediated experience and use of DIT and current

technology. To this is added further 'steps' in the form of mediating technologies that co-shape mediatory relations between human, technology and world. An understanding of how these relations are shaped will guide the development of DIT installations that would shape relations of 'insideness' in terms of relations to the places as well as to the technologies encountered and the learning, or development of understanding, that takes place on both micro- and macroperceptual levels.

Conclusions and way forward

Given the arguments that a place should have human involvement for utility and for experience, the framework seeks to demonstrate how to achieve deeper engagement with displays; how to activate enhanced interaction, and how to engage visitors to interpret the displays and to make meaning. The framework suggests that use of human technology mediation and the experience via a technological artefact that visitors bring into experiencing supposedly broaden and extend bodily sensory perception; thereby microperception and macroperception occur, thus facilitating understanding of the historical context as in where the artefacts on display were used, how they were used, and for which purposes, and is the kind of perception that we aim for and that we want to facilitate due to interpretation and meaning making of displays.

Through the combination of a phenomenology of place and postphenomenological perspectives on technology, we have developed a conceptual framework which can guide the implementation of DIT in such a way that it can potentially aid the decolonization project. A greater understanding of how technologies mediate human relations with their environments, and the museum space in particular, in turn informs on how visitor experiences can, through increasing and deepening levels of involvement and utilisation, be guided towards experience of place. The resultant framework potentially provides a way to guide the implementation of DIT in this project by mediating visitors' experiences of the spaces that make up the museum, thereby creating meanings and forming attachments and 'insideness'. Where visitors can inhabit and feel they belong and through involvement for experience they can say this is my home I am not an outsider or a foreigner.

Further refinement of the preliminary framework offers interesting opportunities for local museum environments and spaces to find ways to increase visitor involvement for utility and for experience. And to deepen the experience to that of engagement, interpretation and interaction due to various relations of technology, that can create different ways of interpretation to create meaning, thereby forming attachments for enhanced experience. The next phase of this research is to design and install DIT interventions in the PNMM spaces to demonstrate mediatory relations between human and technology and to create microperceptual experience due to bodily dimension of sensory perception, and to promote macroperceptual experience or contextual dimension. The aim is to broaden access to museum content and to promote enhanced education. We fully acknowledge that these proposed interventions are but a small contribution to the decolonialisation project and that many other issues, such as the neglected representation of the labour that enabled the harbour economy and navy activities, remain to be addressed.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Transforming Fashion Education to Design with Intent

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Abstract

Two fundamental shifts are currently evident in design. Firstly, a growing call to integrate research and praxis is evident. Secondly, a call to move fashion design praxis to more relevant and value-adding environmental sustainable and user-centred design approaches is emerging. As such, fashion education should align itself to such shifts.

Conventionally, fashion education at fourth year placed greater emphasis on design and the making of products to culminate in a collection. This teaching and learning approach presented challenges. Firstly, the design of such collections predominately grounded itself in areas such as celebrity culture and fashion trends but with no value to fashion design praxis. Secondly, a disjuncture between research and praxis was evident even though they both focussed on a common theme. This presented a gap for the authors to decolonise fashion education by transforming teaching and learning approaches at fourth year to ensure that students are educated in a manner that contribute to more meaningful and value-adding fashion design praxis.

In this paper, the authors reflectively report in a three-fold manner. Firstly, a report on the rationale for decolonising and transforming fashion education at a fourth year. Secondly, a discussion on a research focus aligning to the notion of design with intent. Thirdly, a reflective discussion on how such a research focus informs and is applied to student praxis in the educational context.

The paper begins with arguments extracted from literature to support the two fundamental calls evident in design and fashion design discourse. The paper then shifts to contextualise the conventional scope of fashion education at fourth year and justify the reasons for transformation. The authors then move to contextualise the research foci, grounded in design with intent, and how research informs student praxis by drawing on student cases. The paper concludes with some delimitations and challenges of such a teaching and learning approach.

In transforming fourth year fashion education, design with intent underpinned research, which in turn informed student praxis opposes the conventional teaching and learning strategy. As such, this paper contributes to the larger discourse to ensure fashion design praxis and education is more relevant and value adding to current situations.

Keywords:

Design with intent, Fashion design education, Fashion design praxis, Transformation

Introduction

Higher Education institutions adopted Westernised colonial Eurocentric epistemological academic models (Heleta, 2016; Le Grange, 2016; Mbembe, 2016) but the 2015 student protests challenged the western doctrine. As a result, South African Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande, called for the Africanisation of universities and the decolonisation of curriculum (Le Grange 2016:2). But what does this mean as these are multi-modal complex phenomena with no clear meaning. Mbembe (2016, p. 36) argues for Africanisation and decolonisation from a number of perspectives such as, access to higher learning, decolonisation of buildings and learning spaces, authoritative bureaucratic control by universities and the inclusion of “African languages at the center of its teaching and learning”. Le Grange (2016, p. 9) recommends, amongst other things, the rethinking of Western disciplines, the inclusion of transdisciplinary indigenous knowledge production and the redesign of curricular for local relevance as ways to decolonise curriculum. It is evident from these arguments that Africanisation and decolonising curriculum may take different forms but for this paper, the authors follow Garuba’s (2015) approach of rethinking theories and methods that underline the framing and transformation of curriculum. By following this approach, the authors attempt to address the call for decolonisation by transforming curriculum from conventional models through rethinking theories and teaching and learning methods, and grounding design in an African, as opposed to western contexts to align with fundamental shifts occurring in design landscapes.

Both authors acknowledge the approach to fashion design education presented here is an attempt to start thinking differently about what and how we do things. Transformation in this regard is an aspect of the broader debate on decolonisation. This paper therefore starts by presenting a shift in design praxis and education and moves on to present the application thereof through two student projects. The paper then concludes with reflections, delimitations and challenges of the projects and the new teaching and learning approach which commenced in 2016.

Shifts in fashion design praxis and education

Two fundamental shifts are currently evident in design. Firstly, a growing call to integrate research and design praxis, in general, is apparent. Secondly, a call to move fashion design, in particular, to more relevant praxis that should add value to environmental sustainable and user-centred design (UCD) approaches. To underpin our thinking, we draw on arguments extracted from literature to support these two fundamental calls.

Giacomin (2014, p. 607-608) reasons that design today is characterised and practiced under three distinct paradigms and values, namely that of technology driven design (TDD), human centred design (HCD), also known as known as UCD, and environmentally sustainable design.

Historically, resulting from the industrial revolution, design practiced under the TDD paradigm focussed on the designer and their expert knowledge in shaping material products (Krippendorff 2006; Sanders & Stappers 2012). As such, this paradigm saw designers practicing as the expert, guru and lone-genius (Krippendorff 2006; Sanders & Stappers 2012). The TDD movement, commonly known as the market driven paradigm, dominated the 1980s during which time autonomous designers were primarily responsible for the design of material products from their expert lens. Thus, designers did not “explore what to design” but rather concentrated on “how to design what the client asked for” (Sanders & Stappers 2014, p. 27). For this reason, in the 1980s, the TDD movement was rife with market research, design was practiced as ‘for people’ and the marketplace acted as the context of use (Sanders & Stappers, 2014 pp. 26-27). As a result, the TDD paradigm witnessed trained market researchers studying people as subjects by observing and surveying them (Sanders & Stappers 2008; Stappers & Visser 2007) but researchers and designers assumed two different

roles (Sanders & Stappers 2012, p. 23). Hence, a TDD praxis saw research and design as two separate entities because trained researchers gathered information about people and transferred this to expert designers who then designed for people (Stappers & Visser 2007, p. 1). In other words, designers in a TDD paradigm practiced design with secondary market research and through their expert designer lens or what Muratovski (2016, p. xxx) refers to as an “inward-looking practice” where style, designer intuition, artistic practice is core but ultimately manifests in a “form of personal self-expression”. Although the TDD movement may have dominated design, two fundamental shifts are evident in general design praxis.

The first is the call to integrate research and design to inform praxis (Crouch & Pearce 2014; Muratovski, 2016; Sanders & Stappers 2014). When design is driven by research, Muratovski (2016, p. xxx) calls this an “externally-driven process” because the designer first identifies and defines a problem which in turn informs the design of creative solutions and because external aspects such as people and planet are at core. In this situation, design is driven by systematic and scientific primary research and not by an inward looking practice (Muratovski 2016, pp.xxx, 10).

The second shift is that design landscapes are changing with a growing call to move design practice away from TDD to HCD and sustainable design paradigms (Fry 2009; Krippendorff 2006; Sanders & Stappers 2012,2014). Despite this, several scholars such as Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wang and Chan (2012), Welters (2015) and Fletcher, (2015) confirm the fashion design praxis remains grounded in a TDD paradigm and supports the culture of overabundance, conspicuous consumption, fast fashion and unsustainable environmental practices. As a counter argument, several scholars are rejecting fast fashion and TDD practice by arguing for change and a move towards UCD, such as co-design and environment sustainable approaches in fashion design praxis (Clark 2008; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Fletcher & Tham 2015; Hethorn 2015). Environment sustainable approaches can be viewed from different angles, for example: the move from fast to slow fashion, the use of organic materials, zero waste and re-use to redesign. Co-design, also known as participatory design, is an approach to HCD (Sanders & Stappers 2008; Steen 2011).

Sanders and Stappers (2012, p. 30-31) argue that co-design is a mind-set or a worldview that changes the way that design, and development processes, are seen and approached. To implement co-design, designers will have to place people (users) and their needs, desires, experiences, capabilities and behaviours as the nucleus for design (Giacomin 2014; Keinonen 2010; Marti & Bannon 2009; Norman 2013;). The result is that people and their voices are the sources of inspiration (Sanders & Stappers 2014, p. 29) as opposed to, for example: secondary visual images, muses and travel experiences. In co-design, users, as non-designers, are joint, co-operative and active partners to provide expertise and participate early in the design process, as opposed to them being merely passive subjects to be studied (Sanders & Stappers, 2008, 2012). HCD proponents Sanders, Brandt & Binder (2010), Steen (2011), and Wilkinson and De Angeli (2014) claim that real users of products are the experts of tacit knowledge as opposed to the expert designer. Participation of users early in the design process eradicates the need for designers to draw on their personal knowledge, skills and attitudes as drivers in the design outcome (Wilkinson & De Angeli 2014, p. 615). Therefore, designers should not adopt an inward looking approach to praxis.

It is evident from the discussion that a growing call to integrate primary research and design in order to inform praxis is evident. Beyond that, the design landscape in general, including fashion design, is shifting with many voices beckoning a move away from the traditional TDD paradigm to alternative thinking and approaches to praxis that adds value to social and environmental needs. If this is the situation, then surely fashion design education should align itself to such shifts. The problem is that by enlarge fashion education, follows a model of design education where students are encouraged to self-express, develop personal style, rely on intuition and are taught to apply design elements and principles such as line, texture, proportions and harmony with aesthetics and taste (Muratovski 2016, pp. xxix-xxx), hence,

an inward-looking practice to education. If fashion education has to align itself with the two fundamental shifts occurring in design landscapes, then educational design philosophies and teaching and learning strategies should change. As such, the authors aimed to transform the design philosophy and teaching and learning strategies from a conventional fashion educational model that fosters a culture of Western dominated fashion trends, secondary research and an inward-looking practice to one that is externally-driven where primary research informs praxis.

A change in thinking about application to fashion education

Conventionally, fashion education at fourth year (in particular the BTech Fashion programme), placed greater emphasis on design and the making of products to culminate in a collection. This teaching and learning approach presented a number of challenges. Firstly, the design of such collections predominately grounded itself in areas such as celebrity culture and western fashion trends but with no value to the broader discourse on fashion design praxis. Secondly, a disjuncture between research and praxis was evident even though they both focussed on a common theme. In other words, fashion students traditionally relied on secondary visual research as stimuli to design another aesthetically pleasing collection based on western ideologies. It is in this gap that we started to consider an alternative approach in fashion education at fourth year level, by transforming teaching and learning to ensure that students are educated in a manner that contribute to more meaningful and value-adding fashion design praxis that is founded in primary research and within aspects of sustainability.

The BTech Fashion programme consists of three interrelated modules. The investigation in the Theory of Clothing module (the research aspect) in particular, has to inform the design praxis in the Specialized Clothing Technology module. In the past, students were encouraged to select their own topic of enquiry, but this resulted in students occasionally selecting topics that seemed to be meaningless and not really adding value to current and relevant the discourse of the discipline. A change of approach and research foci aligning to the notion of design with intent was suggested for the 2016 cohort based on two doctoral studies in the Department, one of which focussed on environmental sustainability in the South African fashion industry and one study, in progress, where HCD is considered as an approach to fashion design education.

The projects were to focus on either a human-centred design approach or environmental sustainability in the industry, as entities in their own right, or they could merge both aspects. A framework, as presented in Figure 1, was created to assist students with developing a research focus for their BTech project. Acknowledging that this model is founded in western ideology but by applying this framework, primary research is conducted in an African context, with local participants hence is directed towards local needs.

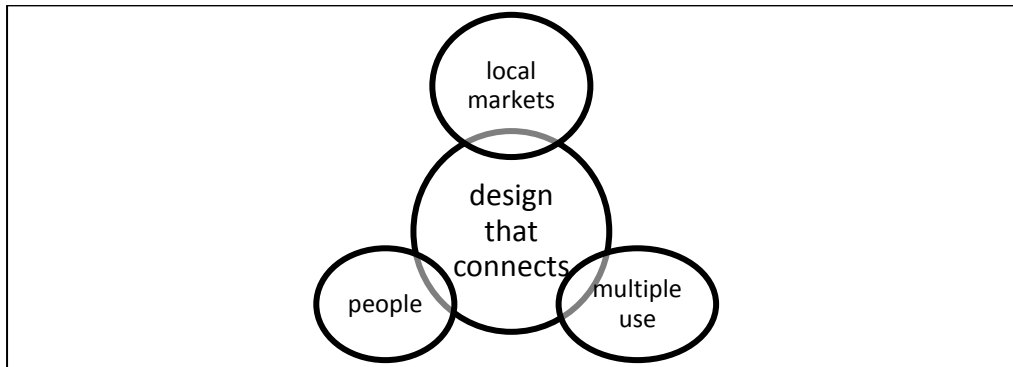


Figure 1: Project focus framework for 2016

In addition to the above framework, students were urged to look deeper into issues that concerned the above. In the people category aspects such as *doing things differently, lifestyle, human needs and social needs* were suggested. Aspects that informed the multiple-use category included *Cradle-to-cradle-apparel-design (C2CAD), continuous loop and lifecycles*. For the category local markets, aspects suggested were *by, for or with* local markets. Within this framework, students were able to craft their own projects by focussing on one of these aspects or combining them. The 2016 cohort consisted of five candidates who developed the projects presented in Table 1.

Table 1: 2016 BTech Fashion cohort

STUDENT	CATEGORY SELECTED	FOCUS OF PROJECT
A	People and multiple use	Trans-seasonal collection Functionality
B	People and multiple use	Multi-functional modular collection, predominantly made from organic fabrics
C	Local markets	Organic fabrics and using local crafters
D	Local markets and multiple use	Collecting waste fabric from various regional manufacturers for her collection. The fabric cost of this collection amounted to R500.
E	Local markets	Using a local crafter to inform product development

From the above, the cases selected for this paper are based on the work of student A and student B because these two projects specifically focussed on including users in the design development process. The two projects will be discussed in relation to the approach taken in the project, the research design for the project, and significant findings from the data collected.

#1: Under Construction by student A

Student A selected to combine the people and multiple use categories from Figure 1. The aim of demonstrating that through applying HCD principles, a functional multi-purpose garment collection could be developed. Due to her former architectural background, Student A opted to focus on architects, who need to work both in office and on site, as the context in which the collection was to function. Literature on, HCD and aspects of functional clothing as suggested by Gupta (2011, pp. 231-327), informed the research. These comprised of a consideration of psychological, physiological, biomechanical and ergonomic aspects, and how it could best be applied in multi-functional and trans-seasonal clothing. Fletcher and

Grose (2012, p. 78) suggest that multi-functionality in clothing provide, in a positive way, a strong relationship between wearer and product and, in a negative way, a misunderstanding of the use of the product and could thus not be a sustainable solution due to over-consumption. Multi-functionality does provide a change in mind-set to the wearer (Fletcher & Grose 2012, p. 79). However, trans-seasonal, as argued by Fletcher and Grose (2012, pp. 79-80) as a strategy for environmental sustainability, provides clothing that can be worn through various seasons, can reduce clothing consumption and, by implication, be considered a sustainable solution (Moshoeshoe 2016, p. 7).

A's project followed a case study research design and a co-design approach. The participants of the project were three final year architecture students from a higher education institution in Gauteng who had both studio time and compulsory site visits, thus mimicking the actual architectural work environment. The research design consisted of three phases. In phase one, initial semi-structured interviews were held with the group to determine users' needs concerning multi-purpose clothing. As a former architectural student, Student A began phase one with a lone-genius mind-set assuming that the participants required multi-purpose clothing to carry their equipment to site visits, but the analysis of findings showed that this was not the case. This informed phase two where participants were re-interviewed in order to establish their general needs and provide solutions to current clothing concerns. The data reflected three areas that were of concern by the participants. The first was safety at site visits and thus participants preferred garments or colours that would necessarily attract attention. The second was that garments should preferably have hidden pockets to store valuable items, and thirdly, garments should have components that could be detachable. Findings of phase two also indicated that there was a need to adjust current styles to accommodate protection from heat, rain and cold (Moshoeshoe 2016, p. 14).

These research findings informed phase three (integration of praxis and research) with Student A designing a collection of products that could be, in her interpretation, trans-seasonal. The design collection included the following (Moshoeshoe 2016, p. 15):

- Comfort: specifically considering the type of fabric to be used
- Colours: Use of predominantly neutral colours
- Textures: Versatility of fabric textures
- Fabric choice: Should have protective characteristics with regard to weather
- Functionality: Clothing needed to be functional
- Practicality: Clothing needed to be practical
- Specific design features: Clothing needed pockets, hoods and zips



Figure 2: Work of Student A (designer), E Hön (photographer), FADA Facebook page, 2017.

To integrate research and design, in phase three prototypes were evaluated by participants, in terms of protection against the elements, multi-functionality in terms of clothing reversibility, selected design features, and colour and fabric choices made by the designer (Moshoeshoe 2012, p. 11, 15). In general, the participants were happy with the design decisions Student A had made. This integration of primary research to inform design and users involvement shows that a co-design approach was applied in the early and latter stages of the design process.

However, upon reflection, Student A felt that she should have evaluated prototypes in the field in order to establish if the clothing was appropriate for the context of use, but due to time constraints this was not possible. She also considered not having included the participants throughout all stages of the design process a negative to her study and mentions, “in that way both parties learn from each other and exchange design processes from their respective academic fields of study” (Moshoeshoe 2016, p. 22). She mentions that the BTech experience and approach was enriching to design for a need and mentions how “rewarding it is to design with a purpose” (Moshoeshoe 2016, p. 22).

#2: Morphosis by student B

Student B selected to work with the multiple use category with the aim investigating whether there is interest in a modular perspective of multi-functional garments. Due to proximity of participants, she opted to collect data from students at a higher education institution in Gauteng. The objective of her project was to consider students’ suggestions in order to inform the design of products (McAlpine 2016, p. 3). As with Student A, she largely focussed on the writings of Fletcher and Grose (2012) concerning multi-functionality in garments and whether this approach could be considered sustainable or not.

Fletcher and Grose (2012, p. 79) specifically refer to the rigours of restraint as a strategy to reduce environmental impact which requires a different approach to design and garment use (McAlpine 2016, pp. 11-12). Student B argued that a modular approach in design provides the wearer with opportunity to change and adapt for different occasions and provides a possible new strategy to consume products. Modularity also provides an opportunity to change garments for different seasons, thus being trans-seasonal (McAlpine 2016, p. 13). Modular clothing allows the wearer to change and interchange the different styles in their wardrobe and, by doing so transform themselves (Fletcher & Grose 2012, p. 82; McAlpine, 2016, pp. 12-13). As suggested by Fletcher and Grose (2012, p. 82), Student B reasoned that the most challenging of such an approach is to change the shapes and silhouette of a garment (McAlpine 2016, p. 14-15).

Student B’s research design also followed a case study approach with snowball sampling comprising of three participants who were interested in sustainability. This study took a two-phase approach, where the first phase consisted of gathering data through semi-structured interviews with the participants. Through a method of colour coding five themes were identified, namely, sustainable lifestyles, challenges of sustainable lifestyles, dressing time constraints, preferred sustainable fashion stores, and multifunctional garments (McAlpine 2016, p. 25). The findings informed the design and development of prototypes that specifically focussed on changing shapes and silhouettes through careful consideration and usage of zip details (McAlpine 2016, p. 36-43).

Phase two set out to evaluate whether or not the prototypes addressed the participants needs and suggestions regarding multi-functional modular clothing. The zip detail in particular was highlighted as a successful strategy to achieve multiple silhouettes and shapes.



Figure 3: Work of Student B (designer, photographer) 2016

On reflection, although having developed a very successful collection, McAlpine (2016, p. 49) mentions that while multi-functional modular garments could be an approach to address environmental unsustainability, the cost thereof was above that of participants' and therefore provided a somewhat disjuncture between the objectives and the results of the study. She also re-iterates that environmental sustainability provides an intensely multi-faceted design challenge (McAlpine 2016 pp. 49-51).

From conventional to alternative

We conclude with some delimitations and challenges of such a teaching and learning approach through a reflection on the design framework (Figure 1) provided to students and by reflection on how research is starting to inform and enrich the design process. The decision to (almost) force the students to consider current issues in design instead of allowing only a creative approach has actually enhanced creative ability of the 2016 BTech Fashion cohort. Not only did the projects reflect serious engagement with current challenges regarding environmental sustainability and shifting design praxis, it also delivered highly creative projects that showed a deeper level of thinking and reasoning about fashion design. This aligns to one of the focus areas of the BA Fashion Design programme that started in 2017, namely – design with intent.

In a market saturated with mass produced clothing, it has become necessary for fashion designers to be able to contribute innovative design to society that hold the possibility of social, socio-economic and environmental development. Design with intent in this context therefore relates to socio, economic, environmental development and change. This is possible only if fashion designers can identify and understand end-users needs of products, services or systems, and are then able to put into context the required research. Included in design with intent are the design and technological practice required to be able to transform a concept into a workable (functional and desirable) design solution. As Fletcher and Grose (2012, p. 156) suggest:

As more designers begin to populate other sectors of the economy, totally new patterns of designing, of consumption and of behaviour are likely to evolve, for the range of issues and information that designers become exposed to is much broader than can be afforded through the simple lens of business and the market, and this inevitably informs practice.

The framework presented in Figure 4 was adapted for the 2017 cohort, to assist students to focus a lot faster.

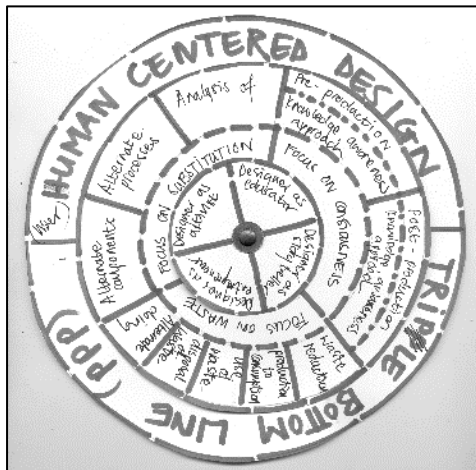


Figure 4: Project focus framework for 2017 – work in progress (developed by authors)

The above figure is a ‘play’ wheel that consists of three movable layers. Layer one is the mind-set of the study/student which requires that the project is approached from a selected point of view, either as entrepreneur, as story tell, as activist or as educator. Two examples are provided for clarification on the use of the tool. Students then need to consider a particular focus and develop a research topic within the two suggested frameworks.

Table 2: Suggested projects that align to the new framework

	Approach	Focus	Framework
Example 1 MULTI-FUNCTIONAL MODULAR LOW-COST WARDROBE.	Designer as entrepreneur	Focus of the project is on substitution and alternate processes	Tripple Bottom Line
Example 2 WHAT DO I DESIGN FOR DISABLED PEOPLE	Designer as activist	Focus of the project is design with disabled users	HCD

In example 1, a student could take an entrepreneurial approach to the project aiming to focus on environmental consciousness and a transformative approach as a result of a multi-functionality modular wardrobe within a specific cost framework. In the case of example two, the student could take on a designer as activist approach with a project that aims to focus on designing with disabled people as per their clothing needs, goals and preferences. In this project, the student will follow a HCD approach.

Reflecting on the 2016 BTech cohort, changing student mind-sets to systematic and empirical research that informs praxis was a challenge of such a teaching and learning approach. Traditionally, for students, research was about literature surveys and the collection of secondary visual images. It was difficult to move students away from what they perceived as research to a point where research was systematic, scientific and empirical. Students were also inclined to follow an inward looking approach where the designer as lone-genius, was the core driver for fashion design praxis. As such, the challenge was in changing student mind-set from an inward looking approach to an externally-driven approach, where research informed praxis to add value to more people-centred and environmental sustainable design contexts. Nevertheless, discussions presented in this paper, show that it is possible to address such an approach through transformation by rethinking underpinning theories about fashion design, alternative approaches to praxis and teaching and learning methods as way to decolonise the approach to fashion design education.

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#Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

Reimagining Design Education Through Empathy

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Abstract

This paper will explore my intervention into decolonising design education as a response to bell hooks' call for a teaching philosophy that recognises empathy and respect as devices for freedom and sustainable world making. By reflecting on my experience as a recent Masters degree graduate, a newly appointed first-year design lecturer and as a design mentor on a youth training programme I will provide evidence that, in the right learning environment, such a pedagogical approach is possible.

My Masters thesis asserted that Design for Sustainability (DfS) was a critical input for preparing students for more ethical practice once they graduate, as well as to inspire and empower them to lead the way as change agents in industry. While the onus was placed on design educators to prepare the next generation of design leaders with the requisite knowledge, skills and tools to make a meaningful impact not only on their profession, but also on the world at large, the findings highlighted the critical need for students to be able to confidently define their role as designers in the world. Students come from diverse backgrounds having experienced varying levels of exposure to, and awareness of the design world. Some students face socio-economic challenges that impact on their ability to meet the basic requirements of the course – attending lectures and submitting work. For these reasons, I have come to realise that students first need to be primed to engage with design as a problem-solving tool, on a personal level, before they will recognise their potential role as change agents and appreciate the necessity of practicing DfS. In this paper I will discuss the importance of creating awareness among students about how their principles, opinions and desires can affect their design decisions and therefore influence what impact they make on the world around them. Possible ways of achieving this include: tapping into and respecting the students' situated knowledge; connecting with the students' personal values; encouraging empathy; and shifting the relationship between lecturer and student to be one based more on mentorship. Moreover, these approaches are seen as hopeful and possible attempts to overcome some of the inherited inequalities and disadvantages of design education in South Africa by foregrounding students' personal experiences.

Keywords:

bell hooks; Design for Sustainability; empathy; personal values; situated knowledge

Introduction

To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (hooks 1994, p. 13).

As an educator-practitioner who has lectured, mentored and worked alongside young designers over the last decade I have first-hand experience of how different pedagogical methods can either nurture, or hinder, a student's personal growth, therefore directly impacting their approach and ability as designers. Driven by the realisation that a new breed of conscious designers was urgently needed to advance my industry – the communication design industry – towards a more sustainable path, I enrolled in a Masters degree programme that allowed me to investigate how this could be achieved. My research, completed last year, focused on the importance of integrating *Design for Sustainability* (DfS) into communication design curricula as a means to inspire and empower students to lead the way as change agents in industry. Rather than unpacking the outcome of my thesis – a set of adaptable guidelines proffered as a way of making DfS more accessible to students – this paper will discuss the findings that are considered most relevant to the theme of this conference, *Decolonising Design Education*, and doing so in the light and spirit of bell hooks' statement cited above. The findings I discuss include: tapping into and respecting the students' situated knowledge; connecting with the students' personal values; and encouraging empathy. These approaches are seen as hopeful and possible attempts to overcome some of the inherited inequalities and disadvantages of design education in South Africa by foregrounding students' personal experiences. This paper will explore my intervention into decolonising design education as a response to hooks' call for a teaching philosophy that recognises empathy and respect as devices for freedom and sustainable world making. By reflecting on my experience as a design mentor on a youth training programme I will provide evidence that, in the right learning environment, such an approach is possible.

DfS in communication design education

DfS is described by Thorpe (2007, p. 13) as the theories and practices for design that cultivate conditions that will support human well-being indefinitely. Put differently, DfS is a response to the momentous challenge faced by society to contribute positively towards environmental stewardship, social responsibility, cultural preservation, and economic viability (Spangenberg, Fuad-Luke & Blincoe 2010; Perullos 2013; Robertson 2014). Communication designers have a critical role to play in the drive towards sustainability by adapting to the needs and daunting challenges of a rapidly changing world. Through advertising, marketing, packaging and websites, the communication design industry, one way or the other, influences people's daily lives (Price & Yates 2015). Designers can have a positive impact through the materials and production processes they choose, and more significantly, through the persuasive messages they communicate designers have the power to inform public thoughts, opinions and views, and can therefore influence change in attitudes and behaviours (Dougherty 2008; Sherin 2008; Shea 2012). With this power comes responsibility – designers must become accountable for the impact of their design decisions – and my thesis asserted that DfS is a critical input for preparing students for more ethical practice once they graduate.

While the onus was placed on design educators to prepare the next generation of design leaders with the requisite knowledge, skills and tools to make a meaningful impact not only on their profession, but also on the world at large, the findings also highlighted the need for students to be able to confidently define their role as designers in the world. Moreover, in order for students to personally take on the required responsibility of their profession, they first need to understand the positive role design can play in their own surroundings.

Linking sustainability to students' situated knowledge: context, culture and values

As was discovered in my research findings, and more recently in my engagement with first year design students, the students' backgrounds and schooling influence how they connect with concepts such as DfS. As stated by one of the design lecturers interviewed in my thesis: "If students cannot personally connect with what sustainability means and why it is important, it will be meaningless to them" (Lecturer 1, 2013). Because students come from diverse backgrounds, with some students facing socio-economic challenges that impact on their ability to meet the basic requirements of the course – attending lectures and submitting work – I realised that students first need to be primed to engage with design as a problem solving tool, on a personal level, before they will recognise their potential role as change agents and appreciate the necessity of practicing DfS. How can this be done? By tapping into the students' situated knowledge of how design is relevant to their own lives.

Haraway (1988, p. 590) proposes that knowledge is situated in time and place, thus providing context for peoples view points. What my experience within academia has uncovered however is that due to certain barriers – large class sizes, varying literacy levels, limited one-on-one contact with students and limited time for dialogue – educators are not afforded the opportunity to better understand and promote students' lived experiences as a source of valuable knowledge and inspiration. Rather most students' regulate their design decisions based on predetermined expectations of what is good design and often this is defined by First World design traditions and aesthetics. As observed by Lecturer 1 (2013), students approach problems "in a Western way that is disconnected to their daily lives and does not consider their reality". In terms of DfS education this is perpetuated as the majority of available resources and examples of DfS originate from a western point of view. These are mostly generic and are not particularly relevant to the South African design context. While many authors have motivated for "global best practices" to facilitate the advancement of sustainable communication design, Giard and Walker (2013, p. 1) have an opposing view of such a homogenous approach; they suggest: "proposing universally applicable solutions is antithetical to a comprehensive understanding of design for sustainability". They believe that in order to be meaningful and effective, DfS has to be "attuned to place and context" (Giard & Walker 2013, p. 1). In order to really engage with DfS and recognise its importance, students need to develop a personal connection with the concept. Thus, extending Giard and Walker's (2013) concept, for design education to be accessible to students not only must curricula be attuned to the local context in which it is taught, but it should also be framed within the context of the challenges faced by the students and their communities.

As Haraway's (1998) concept of "situated" suggests, knowledge is not context-free, and neither is it value-free – knowledge is situated in or informed and shaped by historical and socio-political values, belief systems and cultural differences. Contrary to what hooks spoke of in the opening quote of this paper – education as a practice of freedom – from my experience of working with students right at the start of their tertiary academic careers, I have come to realise that for the majority of students their secondary education has not primed them to appreciate their lived experience, and tap into their culture and values as

guiding inspiration for their design decisions. The *Collins Dictionary* (2004, p. 934) defines values as “a person's principles or standards of behavior” [sic], and according to Sherin (2013, p. 6) communication designers who choose to practice sustainably are “driven by values-based decision making”. This idea is supported by Benson and Napier (2012, p. 213) who believe that the best solution to promote the uptake of DfS in communication design education is in “connecting issues of sustainability to the values of design students”. While sustainability itself can be understood as a value system that guides people towards more conscious behaviour within society, we cannot assume that all students will have a similar set of values, or that their values are necessarily aligned with sustainability principles. Students do not have to ascribe to the same values as the educators; they must however be able to articulate what it is they believe in, and what they want to work towards as designers. Through educational experiments, Benson and Napier (2012) realised that most students are in fact unaware of how their personal values, opinions and goals impact their design decisions. As expressed by Sachs (1988, p. 189), a stalwart supporter of South Africa's democratic constitution: “[c]ulture is us, it is who we are, how we see ourselves and the vision we have of the world”. It is therefore important for educators to encourage students to determine their personal values, with respect to their diverse cultural backgrounds, and then to interrogate how these values connect to the larger environmental, social, cultural and economic context in which their design decisions are made (Fleming, 2013; Wals, 2014). According to hooks (1998, p. 40): “[w]hen we, as educators, allow our pedagogy to be radically changed by our recognition of a multicultural world, we can give students the education they desire and deserve”. Furthermore, if it is considered that a teacher's personal values and views about sustainability can influence the way in which the subject is taught, it becomes even more important for students to be able to critically evaluate information and engage with it on a personal level (Cotton & Djordjevic 2011; Jones, Selby & Sterling 2010). This also highlights the need for students to learn that while they do not have to agree with what other people say, they have to respect their right to say it, which in actual fact is what constitutes freedom of expression¹ as one of the cornerstones of South African democracy. Educators therefore need to guide this process by engaging the students in “reflective discussions” about their understanding and interpretation of what they have been taught and its relevance to their own lives and design practice (Cadle 2011, p. 8; Benson & Napier 2012, p. 200). This speaks to design pedagogy needing to be student-orientated and human-centered, and the key to this is empathy in hooks' (1994) sense.

While in my thesis I viewed *Design Thinking* as a strategic tool for tackling the complexities of designing sustainably, and therefore suggested that it should be taught in design curricula, central to my approach to empathy as a pedagogic principle is the idea that not only is Design Thinking valuable for students to consider, it is also an important tool for educators who are wanting to drive action-for-change in the learning environment. Of particular relevance to this paper is the view that Design Thinking is a collaborative, human-centered approach to problem solving that is premised on empathy, where empathy “is the capacity to step into other people's shoes, to understand their lives, and start to solve problems from their perspectives” (IDEO.ORG 2016, p. 7). Practicing empathy ensures that solutions do not only consider the end users' practical needs, but also their cultural and emotional needs (Pourdehnad, Wexler & Wilson 2011; IDEO 2015). According to the *Design Thinking for Educators Toolkit*, educators should use Design Thinking's empathetic approach to reimagine the learning experience through the lens of the students' needs and desires (IDEO 2012, p.

¹ Though, obviously, this concept of respect for the freedom of expression as a creative pedagogical principle excludes, like the South African Constitution itself, hate speech.

2). This links back to the value of integrating DfS into curricula, because what is DfS if it is not about reimagining what is possible.

While educators should aspire to educate as a means to empower students and to promote freedom, the realities of the limitations under which they work may obstruct this ideal, as was my experience when working with first year design students, which is described below.

Turning vision into reality

My thesis argued for a proactive approach to preparing communication design students to become agents of change by incorporating DfS as early as possible within curricula, so when at the beginning of the 2017 academic year I was tasked with developing and implementing a first year module on the fundamental elements and principles of design I saw it as the perfect opportunity to practically apply my research findings. I believed that my role as an educator was to stimulate the students to design for sustainability, to design with empathy and respect for the relational implications of their design choices. However, over the course of the first semester I realised that due to many complex issues, including those previously mentioned – differing secondary education experiences and standards; varying levels of exposure to and awareness of the design world; lack of confidence; language barriers; poor time-management skills; economic challenges; and crowded classrooms – the vast majority of students were not ready or able to engage in topics relevant to DfS. Rather than being motivated to shape their situated knowledge, the students took on the role of passive receivers of information. This meant that instead of being active participants in the learning space they were consumers and I experienced this as an impediment to the freedom of education. The structural limitations of the institution meant that I could not easily put into practice the concept of empathy within education. Moreover, this exposed the tensions that exist between the ideal of teaching to promote freedom and the urgent realities of the legacy of an unequal education system that educators and students have inherited.

Next, I will discuss a possible way to overcome this by sharing my experience of a learning space where young people were guided along a journey of defining their role in the world while being exposed to the relationship between values and actions.

Offsetting existing pedagogical limitations: learning's from a youth training programme

In my professional capacity I worked as a design mentor at Livity Africa, a non-profit youth development organisation. The purpose of the organisation was described as follows:

We exist to work with young people and for young people; to harness and accelerate their ability to create their own sustainable livelihoods (Livity Africa, sa).

An example of how this was achieved was through *Live SA*, a nationwide youth-run media channel. *Live SA* provided a platform for eighteen to twenty-five year olds – predominantly black South Africans – to receive on-the-job training from professional mentors representing various disciplines including design, photography, videography, digital marketing and journalism. Every three months there was an intake of up to twenty-five young people who would be responsible for generating relevant content in an authentic and creative way so as to inspire and engage the youth. While to some extent I collaborated with all of the trainees, my focus was on the design and photography trainees of which there was an average of six per intake. My role as design mentor was not only to up-skill the trainees, but to better equip them for the changing working world by guiding them on a journey of self-discovery and self-actualization. Rather than dictating what content they created, or how it should be visually communicated, my responsibility was to assist them in finding their own voice and personal means of expression. The key to achieving this was by encouraging the trainees to

foreground their lived experiences, as well as challenging them to question how they – the South Africa youth – could live better lives.

Right from the start, the trainees' learning experience was shaped by a sense of equality that was realised through active participation and co-creation. This required that everyone who participated in the training programme needed to be empathetic towards one another's lived experience. As mentors we made the time to accommodate the trainees' situated knowledge into our knowledge and perceptions, allowing us to reflect on the context of where they were coming from, where they wanted to go and what was important for them to be able to succeed in life. We were inspired by each person's individual story and tried to tap into their passions as much as possible, in that way making them feel valued and respected. Through this empathetic engagement with the trainees we were embracing their otherness. The following quote by Léopold Senghor captures this experience of mutuality succinctly:

I feel the other, I dance the other, Therefore I am (Senghor in Fourie sa, 2007, p. 210).

Because the trainees were defining all of the content themselves, they were not only enacting their creativity, they were identifying with their own value system. Moreover, this was happening in a shared space, making possible the discovery of shared values. The content created for *Live SA* covered a range of topics from music, art, fashion, relationships, career advice, events, politics, and news – including on the ground reporting of the *Fees Must Fall* uprising. In varying degrees, the content addressed issues that were connected to the four pillars of sustainability: environmental, social, cultural and economic (Werbach 2009, pp. 9-10). Adding to this, the trainees' involvement in producing content for a community that they empathised with allowed them to better understand what role they could play in society, and what impact they could make on the world around them. A good example of this was the content and collateral created for the *Voting Is Power* (VIP) campaign. The aim of the VIP campaign was to “encourage young people to vote and become active agents in their democracy” (Live Mag sa, sp). By motivating the youth to amplify their voices around political issues and to take to the polls, the trainees – in a very pragmatic way – were co-creators of their own path to freedom.

With each cohort, we witnessed the trainees' personal growth. As attested by Breytenbach (2017), *Livity Africa's Head of Impact and Training*, “[t]he young peoples' confidence levels increased greatly, which enabled them to confidently contribute to conversations and openly share their opinions. Also, their hard and soft skills improved which helped in preparing them for a constantly changing world of work”. By the end of the programme the trainees were better prepared to deal with the demands of the working world and better equipped to succeed in whatever path they chose. In terms of the design trainees, not only did their conceptual and technical skills improve, but their approach to design also shifted from being mostly about aesthetics to a powerful communication tool for raising awareness of the youth agenda.

Live SA epitomised the learning environment that hooks (2003, p. xv) envisaged the classroom to be: “A place that is life-sustaining and mind-expanding, a place of liberating mutuality where teacher and student together work in partnership.” There was a marked difference between the connection I developed with the young design trainees and the first year university students. My experience indicates that, while there will always be room for the expert's voice, the foundational relationship between lecturer and student needs to shift to one more of mentorship and guidance. At *Live SA* any potential barriers to the practice of freedom were broken down through a degree of mutuality in the formation of empathy and respect – the same needs to happen in education.

As Wingfield (2017) suggests, the imperative to decolonise education cannot simply be a political obligation to make curriculum content more Afrocentric. Rather it must be driven by ethical necessity. The empathetic approaches to teaching discussed throughout this paper – tapping into and respecting the students’ situated knowledge, connecting with the students’ personal values, and redefining the lecturers role to one more of mentorship – relate to decolonising design education in that they play a key role in breaking down barriers and building meaningful relationships between educators and students. Establishing deeper connections between educators and students will allow them to work together to tap into and celebrate the students’ own culture, traditions and knowledge, rather than imposing someone else’s rules.

Through her writing hooks (2003) gives voice to these practices; and she advocates for a foundational and ethical restructuring of the way in which students are taught. A decolonised teaching philosophy should be about facilitating and validating the voices and situated experiences of others. This is especially relevant when considering a human-centered approach because it is reliant on the identifiable needs of others.

Darder (2015) highlights, in her reflective book *Freire and Education*, that a decolonised education is about empowerment. If educators have a better understanding of their students’ realities they can adapt how they teach so that design education becomes a more accessible and democratic learning experience.

Conclusion

While certain structural limitations exist within the education system, and often educators are not able to contribute towards the decision-making within that system – such as the number of students enrolled in a course, or the core structure of curricula – they do have the capability to reimagine the system. Following the human-centered approach of Design Thinking, educators can contribute towards the redesign of the education system by adapting the form and delivery of the course content in such a way that it becomes a more nurturing learning experience that is accessible and inspirational to the students whilst respecting their inherent diversity. The first step to achieving this would be to create a learning environment that students recognise as being an equal and safe space. Based on my experience, there are several empathetic approaches that educators can implement, these include:

- Learning students’ names, and referring to them by name, right from the start of the academic year;
- understanding and acknowledging the students’ cultural and academic backgrounds;
- being increasingly mindful of the various barriers that students face;
- promoting access, in a positive light, to institutional support structures such as financial aid, food aid and health care;
- enabling students to discover their voices and personal means of expression;
- encouraging open and respectful dialogue between students so that they become aware of each others realities;
- introducing design concepts in such a way that they are contextually relevant to the students’ own lives;
- setting design briefs that provide the opportunity for students to explore how design can positively impact their communities;
- eliminating the need for expensive materials to execute a practical brief;

- being lenient with deadlines, specifically for students who face socio-economic and/or psychological challenges; and
- building confidence amongst students by identifying and promoting their interests and skills.

This paper therefore argues that in order to implement a sustainable, inclusive, democratic and decolonised approach to education – as a practice of freedom – it becomes about a philosophy of teaching that is founded on deep empathy and respect for students’ needs, aspirations and motivations.

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