

Womxn as Agents of Change to Transform the Post-Apartheid City

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Abstract: The built form of South Africa's post-apartheid city perpetuates the perception that a heteronormative, protestant, white, masculine, binary norm is the societally preferred perspective. This perpetuation means that queerness, spirituality, womxnness – and all those included within this community, are pushed down by this perceived preferred type of person. This paper presents secondary data on the current social and cultural milieu that restricts womxn from being agents of change in transforming the post-apartheid city. Architecture is complicit in what drives the masculinity that manifests itself in built form. Consequently, existing and future architectural interventions within the post-apartheid city fall short in their attempts to transform the city. Anecdotally, this failure is due to the reluctance to include womxn in the architectural programme of these interventions. This lack of transformation results in the phenomenon that the subdued group at the bottom of the social hierarchy remains silent, as they are left without adequate room to act, be seen, or establish their voice. This paper theorises how this *zeitgeist*¹ perpetuates post-colonial capitalist industrial linear economy thinking or the masculine approach. The approach vested in profiteering from natural resources and an oppressed labour force. As a result, there may be a connection between the successful implementation of this masculine thinking approach and the global ecological breakdown, proven to be due to the human-caused climate emergency. Finally, this paper argues for a newly established agenda that will inform architectural interventions for programmes that encourage a balanced (feminine and masculine) approach as a contributing solution.

Keywords: heteronormative, post-apartheid city, queerness, transformation, womxn

1. Introduction

This paper presents an argument for womxn as agents of change in the post-apartheid city. A literature review is provided on heteronormative and queer, protestant and spiritual, white and Black, masculine and feminine, binary and nonconforming, colonial and indigenous, linear and indigenous, and African and Afrikaans. The literature review is followed by an intersectionality concept illustration based on the theory discussed in this paper. The concept is applied to four hypothetical participants, and the connection or exclusion of these participants to the post-apartheid city is discussed. The post-apartheid city of Tshwane is presented and some of the theories and an intervention concept are graphically illustrated in the urban context. This paper finally presents brief findings and a conclusion.

2. Preface

There is a heavy presence of autocratic leadership in masculinity. Autocratic leadership is a repeated motif in so many terrible ways, and it seeks to proselytise through religion, gender, education, and space. It is a play that coexists with delight and brutality throughout history. The history of colonisation in South Africa is heavy and violent, and the post-apartheid city is a legacy that prevails. Throughout history, missionaries were directly involved in acquiring land and establishing the rule of their monarch, resulting in the prevalence of western ideology and religion. Colonialism, and consequently apartheid, perpetuated the development of the post-apartheid city – a city in which indigenous and marginalised people relinquish their culture and identity to enter the city's fray for economic survival (among other reasons). The relinquishment renders these citizens complicit in the exploitation of natural resources through forming a part of the oppressed workforce (cheap labour). There is a tension between economic survival, history, and sense of self and culture. This paper argues that the key to transformation is vested in the inclusion of womxn and marginalised groups as agents of change.

3. A review of literature

The built form of South Africa's post-apartheid city perpetuates the perception that a heteronormative protestant white masculine binary perspective is the norm that is societally preferred. This perpetuation means queerness, spirituality, womxnness – and all those included within this community – are pushed down by this perceived preferred type of person. In addition, there is a heavy presence of autocratic leadership in masculinity that is proclaimed and performed in public through buildings and occupied space.

¹ *Zeitgeist*, or spirit of the time; the spirit characteristic of an age or generation.

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the connection between masculinity, public buildings and space, and the post-apartheid city. Figure 1 presents the personal level of people who dwell in the city and Figure 2 presents the urban level of the post-apartheid city. This paper introduces a necessary discourse when considering intersections such as gender. In addition, this paper proposes an intercepted form as a concept to catalyse transformation. Therefore, various terms and topics presented in this paper must be listed.

It is essential to know the definitions of the terms to which this paper refers. In South Africa, apartheid was a system under which people were separated by law based on their race. White people were given more political rights, education, and other privileges (Cambridge, 2021). Apartheid cities originated from legislation phases, such as the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, often viewed as the foundation stone of urban apartheid (Parnell, 1991). This Act divided colonial cities into high-standard spaces that were intensely regulated for the colonial population, and low-quality poorly regulated spaces for the indigenous population (Simon, 1989). Another noteworthy phase of legislation was the Group Areas Act of 1950, which authorised the forced removal of people to separate race groups (Freund, 2010; Smith, 2003) and pronounced white people as established legitimate urban citizens (Maylam, 1995). One of the objectives of apartheid was to maximise the exploitation of cheap Black urban labour while minimising the presence of the Black labourers in white urban areas (Pirie, 1987). The apartheid-legislated racial separation lasted from the National Party's assumption of power in 1948 (Smith, 2003) until 1994. White supremacist rule (Jackson, 1998) formally ended on 27 April 1994, which was the day of the first democratic election in South Africa. On that day, apartheid cities became post-apartheid cities, but the legacy lives on. For this paper, post-apartheid cities are the built-form legacy of a divided past.

When it comes to conversations about the concept of apartheid and its effects across time and ideological lines, we seem to be more divided and separated than ever— perhaps more divided due to these ideological barriers – some of which are inherited similarly to how the democratic government inherited governing systems and protocols from the apartheid government. The post-apartheid city presented in this paper, Tshwane, represents a particularly vivid case of these separate lives. When looking at buildings in the city, like the hierarchy of the ABSA building that previously was the Volkskas building (Verhoef, 2009), and the neoclassical colonial architecture of the buildings surrounding Church Square, you will recognise how history manifests itself in complex ways through everyday routines and the mundane. The buildings speak of a type of language, a particular culture, ideology, and way of living that reflects the binaries and heteronormative ideology.

Heteronormative ideology refers to the pervasive and persistent belief that there are only two opposing genders (Van der Toorn, 2020). This belief carries negative consequences that enforce the belief that assigned sex results in matching associated 'natural' roles of masculine and feminine. This belief holds that heterosexuality is a given, as opposed to one of many sexualities (Warner, 1991). Heteronormative ideology supports an environment for compulsory heterosexuality with gender roles developed to uphold a patriarchal system, where the purpose of women is diminished to the service of men, to reproduce offspring, to play the role of mothers, and to be wives (Butler, 2003).

A protestant is a member of any of the Western Christian churches that are known as protestant churches. These churches are separate from the Roman Catholic Church (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). Many of the Dutch East India Company employees who formed part of the white settlement in South Africa from 1652 onward were French Calvinist protestants, Lutheran Germans, and Scandinavians (Dehmoune, 2016). Afrikaner nationalism, and consequently apartheid, was steeped in a religious bias that the Afrikaner is superior to other South African ethnic groups (Bosch, 1986; McNeil, 1967), and arguably, other African ethnic groups. Furthermore, the protestant religion places the man as head of the home and he is assigned the role to protect and provide for the family (Van Staden, 2014). This paper argues that a disproportionate protestant-built representation exists in the post-apartheid city, deterring diversity and inclusion. This argument is based on the findings that the protestant church represents heteronormative ideology, plays a prominent part in the justification for apartheid, and also plays a part in the justification for the built environment the apartheid regime constructed that reaffirmed the white characteristics of the legitimate citizen.

White is one of the four groups recognised in terms of the Population Registration Act of 1950. The groups are white, coloured, Asian, and Black (Smith 2003). White was defined as what was perceived by the ruling whites as pure of blood, of European descent, and with a light skin complexion (Posel, 2001). Non-white South Africans were denied rights such as property rights and access to adequate education (Smith 2003). With further gender-based restrictions to rights and access when considering that women, of whatever race, were always seen as

less or below men of the same race. Gender has traditionally been viewed as binary, directly following either male or female biological sex (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Challenges to this binary, such as gender-inclusive language with gender-neutral pronouns, have been met with strong opposition from groups such as religious groups (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Darwin, 2020) and legislation that we still carry as a legacy today such as the Immorality Act of 1957 (Cock, 2003).

Masculine refers to people who have qualities or an appearance traditionally associated with men and denotes a gender of nouns and adjectives conventionally regarded as male (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). For this paper, it is argued that heteronormative ideology dictates that those assigned as male at birth are men and expected to be masculine. Whereas queer ideology is argued to be nonconforming and thereby states that those who say they are male are men and that male, female, and non-binary people can be masculine, feminine, or neither in varying degrees. Furthermore, this paper notes the connection between apartheid, heteronormality, protestant, white, and male.

Feminine refers to people who have qualities or an appearance traditionally associated with women and denotes a gender of nouns and adjectives that are conventionally regarded as female (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). For this paper, womxn is the term associated with the queer community. In the past, queer was a term describing homosexuality and used as homophobic abuse, with the aim to shame, insult, and accuse those to whom it was directed (Butler, 1993). Today the term queer has been reclaimed as an umbrella term for all those culturally marginal sexual and gender self-identifications (Jagose & Genschel, 1996). For this paper, to live as queer and/or to be, present oneself as, and/or provide for queerness is being an agent of inclusion and diversity. Womxnness is an alternative to womanness that refers to a fact or quality of being a woman. The alternative spelling of womxn is used as an intersectional concept that seeks to include every person who identifies as a womxn, such as transgender womxn, womxn of colour, and womxn of the developing countries (Kunz, 2019).

In academia, the term womxn is used to acknowledge the prejudices, discriminations, and institutional barriers faced by those who are not men (Kaufman, 2018). For this paper, the word woman is amended due to its root in patriarchal power structures that still systematically exclude, devalue, and oppress womxn. In the same way, for comparisons in this paper, protestant is associated with the masculine and men, so the feminine or womxn is associated with spirituality. Spirituality is the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul, as opposed to the material or physical things (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). Spiritualities have transformative possibilities (Lafrance, 2005; Foley, 2000). When considering these transformative aspects, spirituality can be a space of possibility or recovery for various marginalised communities towards alternative spaces of spirituality that seek social change and transformative politics (Rhee, 2014). Furthermore, spirituality is argued to be a source of sustainable energy for decolonising, anti-oppressive endeavours, and anti-oppressive commitments (Dillard, 2006; Hooks, 1994; Kumashiro, 2009). Spirituality is connected to nature (Heintzman, 2009; Kamitsis & Francis, 2013). For this paper, to be spiritual is to be anti-oppressive and reject the promotion of apartheid or separateness. This paper furthermore notes the connection between the feminine, queerness, and being spiritual. These qualities form a multi-layered intersectionality that becomes stronger or weaker between individuals when interacting with the post-apartheid city.

Intersectionality is a term that Kimberly Crenshaw (1989) coined for the interconnected nature of social categorisations, such as gender, race, and class (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). However, the concept may be attributed to activities before 1989 when considering movements such as the Orange Free State Native and Coloured Women's Association in South Africa. In 1913, the association protested against laws for passes instituted for African women, thereby showing race and class solidarity (Lewis & Baderoon, 2021). A person or group has their own unique experience of intersectionality as overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. For this paper, intersectionality is used to identify where a person or group is marginalised based on religion, race, gender traits, gender conformity, colonialism, cultural groups, and/or heteronormative conformity. The charts illustrated in Figure 1 may expose oppressive power by identifying the degree of intersectionality a person holds and if their intersectionality allows for greater connection and/or exclusion within the post-apartheid city.

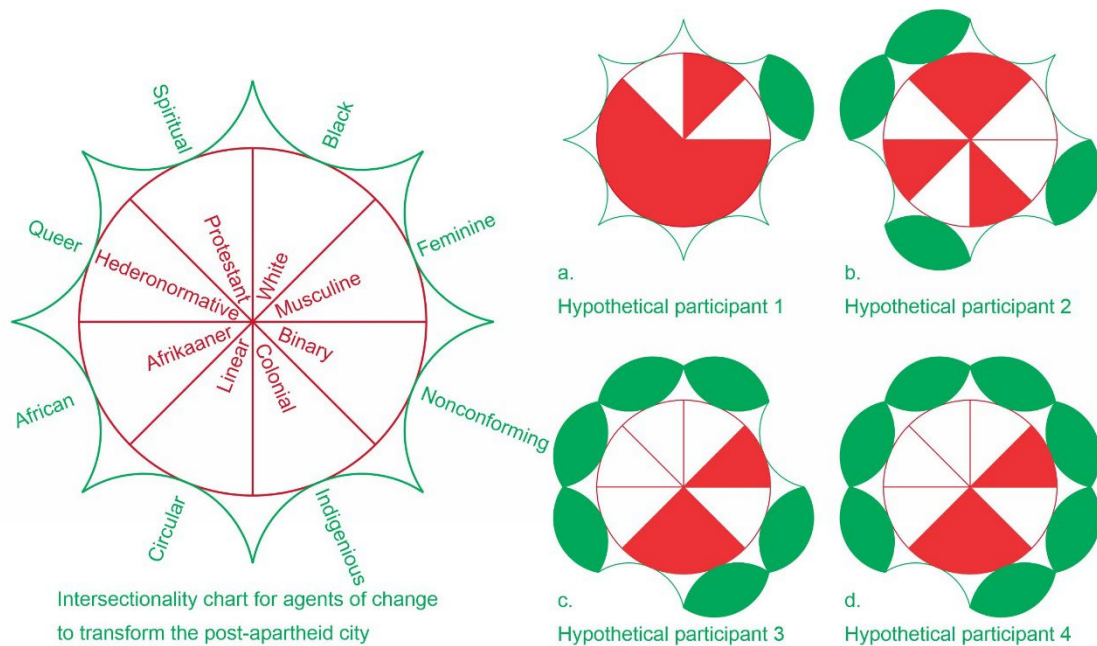


Figure 1: Intersectionality presented graphically: The heteronormative protestant white masculine binary perspective is illustrated as the norm, in red is societally preferred groups, and in green is queerness, spirituality, womxnness – and all those included within the community who are pushed down and orbit the perceived preferred type of person

Related to Figure 1, the following inferences may be made through the theoretical lens of this paper.

- Hypothetical participant 1 (Figure 1a) is a white person, assigned female at birth, a woman adhering to a binary. She is colonial and lives in a way that strengthens a linear economy. She is Afrikaans, heteronormative, and atheist. Her intersectional connection to the post-apartheid city is 75% (6/8 red segments) with only a 12,5% (1/8 green leaves) exclusion from the post-apartheid city, and 12,5% of her intersectionality not applicable due to being neither protestant nor spiritual.
- Hypothetical participant 2 (Figure 1b) is a white person, assigned female at birth, who is neither masculine nor feminine and nonconforming to a binary. They are colonial and live in a way that strengthens a circular economy. They are Afrikaans, queer, and protestant, as well as spiritual. Their intersectional connection to the post-apartheid city is 50% (4/8 red segments) with a 50% (4/8 green leaves) exclusion from the post-apartheid city.
- Hypothetical participant 3 (Figure 1c) is a Black person, assigned male at birth, who is masculine and nonconforming to a binary. They are colonial and indigenous and live in a way that strengthens a linear economy. They are African, queer, and spiritual. Their intersectional connection to the post-apartheid city is 37,5% (3/8 red segments) with a 75% (6/8 green leaves) exclusion from the post-apartheid city.
- Hypothetical participant 4 (Figure 1d) is a Black person, assigned female at birth, who is feminine and masculine and nonconforming to a binary. They are colonial and indigenous and live in a way that strengthens a linear economy. They are African, queer, and spiritual. Their intersectional connection to the post-apartheid city is 37,5% (3/8 red segments) with 87,5% (7/8 green leaves) exclusion from the post-apartheid city.

The intersectionality concept illustration in Figure 1 is based on the theory discussed in this paper, and is limited in that the inferences made are also limited. However, some rudimentary parallels may be drawn:

- Firstly, parallels between the intersectional factors that contribute to excluding a person from the post-apartheid city are also factors that may contribute towards a person's participation in a circular economy, feminine approach, or feminine economy that contributes to addressing the climate emergency.
- Secondly, parallels between the urban form of the post-apartheid city and the intersectionality toward connection or exclusion of the people who live in it.

It is necessary to discuss the post-apartheid city in greater detail to explain further the diversity of concepts of this paper.

4. Tshwane as a model post-apartheid city

This paper presents secondary data on the current social and cultural milieu that restricts womxn from being agents of change in transforming the post-apartheid city. Tshwane previously known as Pretoria, was founded in 1855 by Dutch settlers (Howe, 2021) and is one of the three capital cities of South Africa. The city of Tshwane is used as a case study. The central business district of Tshwane is chosen as the area of study. Figure 2 depicts the landscape, settlement, and formation of Tshwane (adapted from Jordaan, 1989:27).

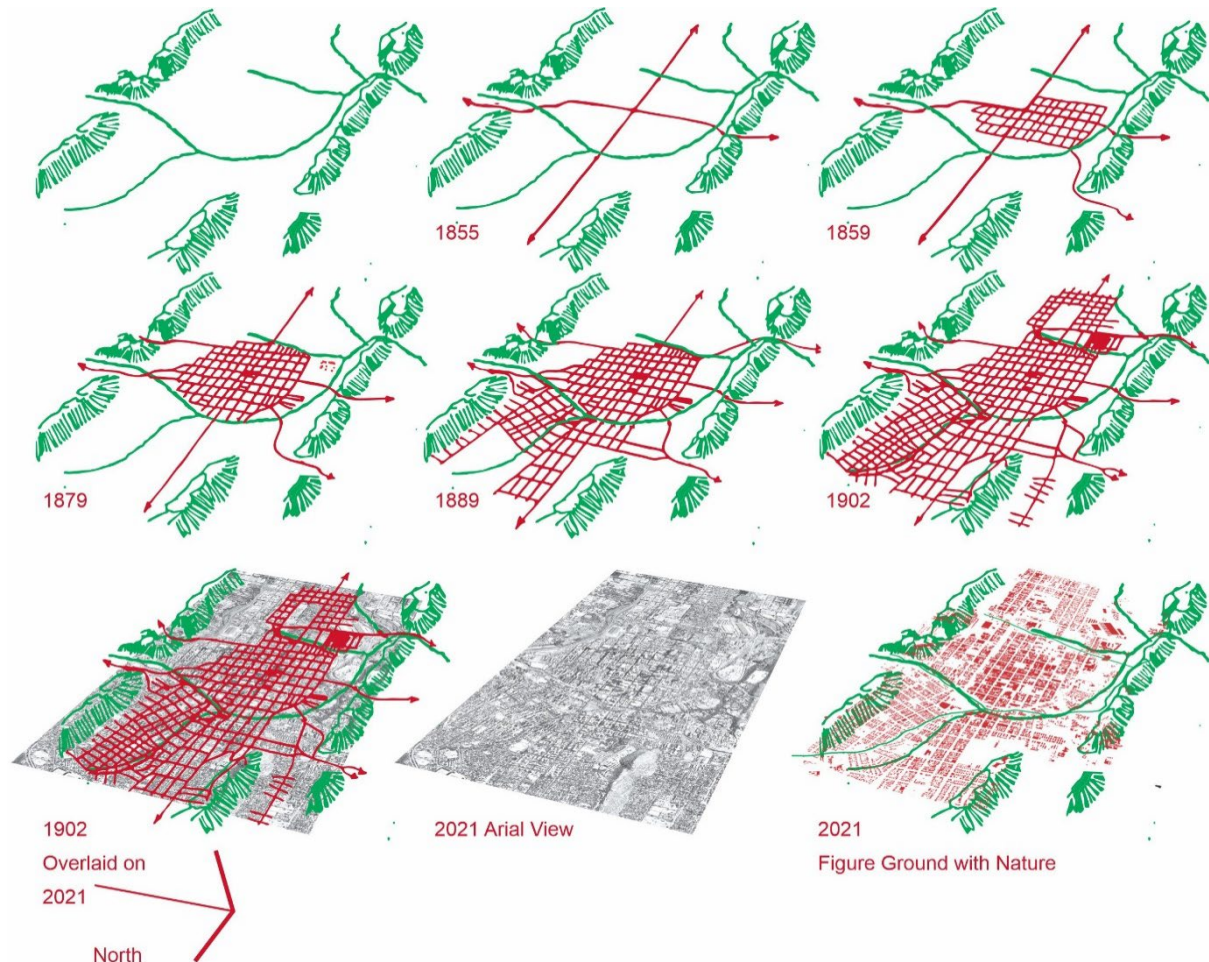


Figure 2: Top six images depict the landscape, settlement, and formation of Tshwane (adapted from Jordaan 1989:27). Bottom three images depict the 2021 Tshwane aerial view of the study area with 1902 overlaid, 2021 Tshwane aerial view, and 2021 figure-ground with natural topography added. The feminine natural topography is illustrated in green, and the masculine manufactured urban and topography structure is in red

Tshwane is landlocked and is located in the northeast of South Africa in the Gauteng Province. Tshwane is described as a valley surrounded by the hills of the Magaliesberg range (Figure 2 indicates the feminine natural topography in green and the masculine manufactured urban and topography structure in red). The natural topography of Tshwane is argued to be feminine with characteristics such as rivers providing emotional support that nurtures and cares (Jordaan, 1989). The manufactured urban and topography structure are thought to protect the city (Jordaan, 1989). This paper argues the structure is masculine, for example the edges, grid, and cross with Church Square at the centre and forts on the periphery. It must be noted that the argument of this paper is not to declare that all manufactured forms are masculine, but rather that the built form (space and form languages) of the post-apartheid city was and is designed with masculine heteronormative and even protestant ideology at the foundation of its many forms.

The city's manufactured urban and topography structure is not characteristic of Tshwane in the same way as natural topography. This city structure dates back at least 8000 years (Figure 3) (Jordaan, 1989). The layout of

the city of Tshwane is therefore not indigenous and originated at a time when humans transformed from hunter-gathers to farmers (Betti & Beyer, 2020) and started to exploit nature and natural resources for surplus or profit.



Figure 3: The city structure, based on the cross, diamond, and mandala

Church Square is Tshwane's symbolic centre and originally hosted a protestant church (Van der Vyver, 2018). The square currently houses a statue of Dutch and Afrikaner Past President Paul Kruger (Figure 4) (Van der Vyver, 2018). The culture of white protestant masculinity is interestingly placed dead centre inside the feminine natural topography of mountains and rivers. Church Square's context is created by nature and culture (Jordaan, 1989). However, as argued by this paper, in Tshwane, only one culture (the white protestant) and one gender (the heteronormative masculine) are prevalent and dominant.

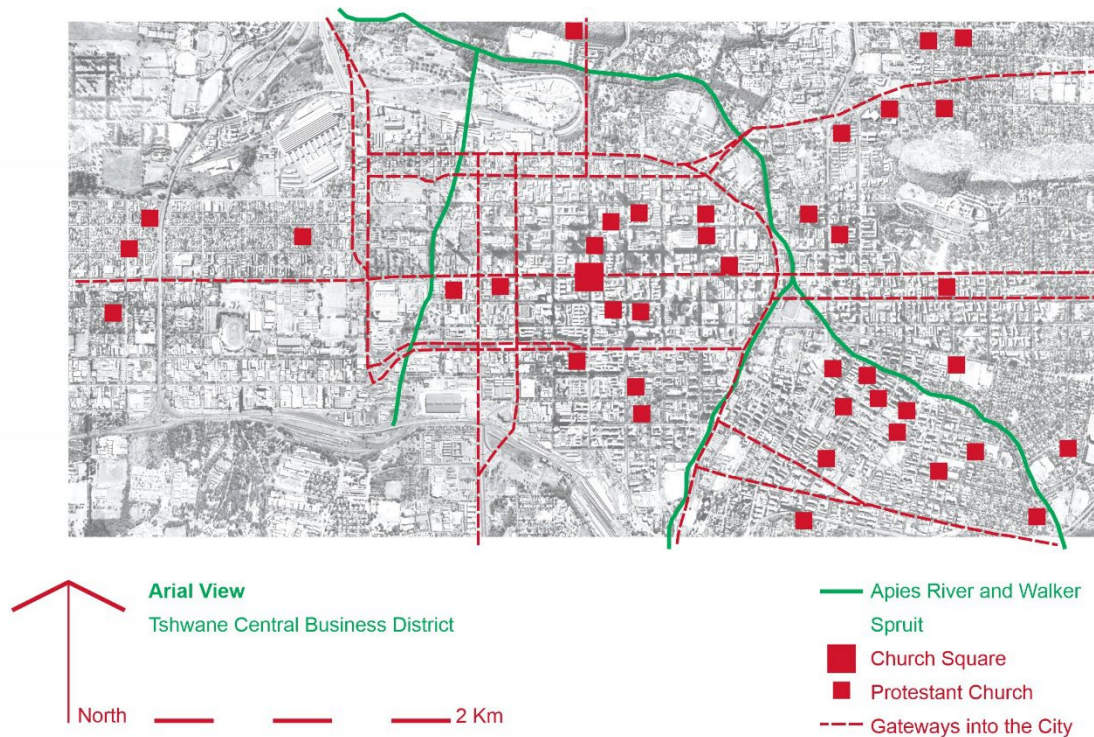


Figure 4: Tshwane aerial view of the study area with Apies River and Walker Spruit, Church Square, protestant churches, and the road gateways into the city

The way that nature, as related to femininity and spirituality, is restricted, not integrated, and therefore is underutilised as a force of transformation and replenishment that catalyses a circular economy, may be seen as a metaphor for how the city restricts womxn from being agents of change in transforming the post-apartheid city. Architecture is complicit in what drives masculinity and how masculinity manifests itself in the built form. This paper argues that the masculine structure of Tshwane restricts post-apartheid attempts to transform the city with architectural interventions. Anecdotally, this restriction may be due to the reluctance to include a representation by womxn of the feminine in the architectural programme of these interventions.

Therefore, this paper argues that the built form of Tshwane must be intercepted by the very nature that nestles and holds it. Among the many interventions possible within the post-apartheid city, nature as the spiritual feminine that represents womxn may be the most significant catalyst currently underutilised towards the transformation of the post-apartheid city. Restrictions of the womxn and the feminine nature on an urban scale and social level are observable in the study area map found in Figure 4.

5. Womxn as agents of change

There is a lack of transformation in post-apartheid cities, among them Tshwane. This paper argues that the lack of transformation is because womxn in varying levels of intersectionality are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. There womxn are subdued into remaining largely silent, as they are left without adequate room to act, be seen, or establish their voices. Social variables such as gender, restriction, or aid, the right to the city, and a sustainable city are unattainable unless a city is free of fear of violence against womxn (Datta, 2021). The post-apartheid city must be a safe and welcoming place for womxn if transformation is to occur.

Social constructs that conform to normative gender roles, such as the division of labour, are found to reinforce heteronormative ideology (Sumontha, Farr & Patterson, 2017). Parents with traditional gender role attitudes are more likely to discourage and change the gender-nonconforming behaviours of their children to fit in with societal expectations (Spivey, Huebner & Diamond, 2018), even though such parenting causes harm. For example, in Tshwane, based on the cross, diamond, and mandala, the city structure results in a masculine grid with predominantly square block buildings. This paper argues that this artificial urban and topography structure discourages the very nature in which it is nestled. In the same way, parents of queer children discourage the children's queerness.

The post-apartheid city must call out and condemn any discouraging of womxn if transformation is to occur. In addition, this paper proposes that the natural (as relating to feminine and spiritual, and representative of womxn) must intercept the city and propose an intercepted form toward transformation and a circular economy that replenishes rather than exploits.

6. Intercepted form

Intercepted form is described as an intervention towards reconstruction. Interception is the first stage of subsequent events and reconstruction, an interpretation formed by piecing together bits of evidence. This paper argues that the post-apartheid city needs an intercepted form towards an alternative typology (Van Tonder, 2010) for transformation, among other things. This interception is illustrated in Figure 5 as a graphical exploration.

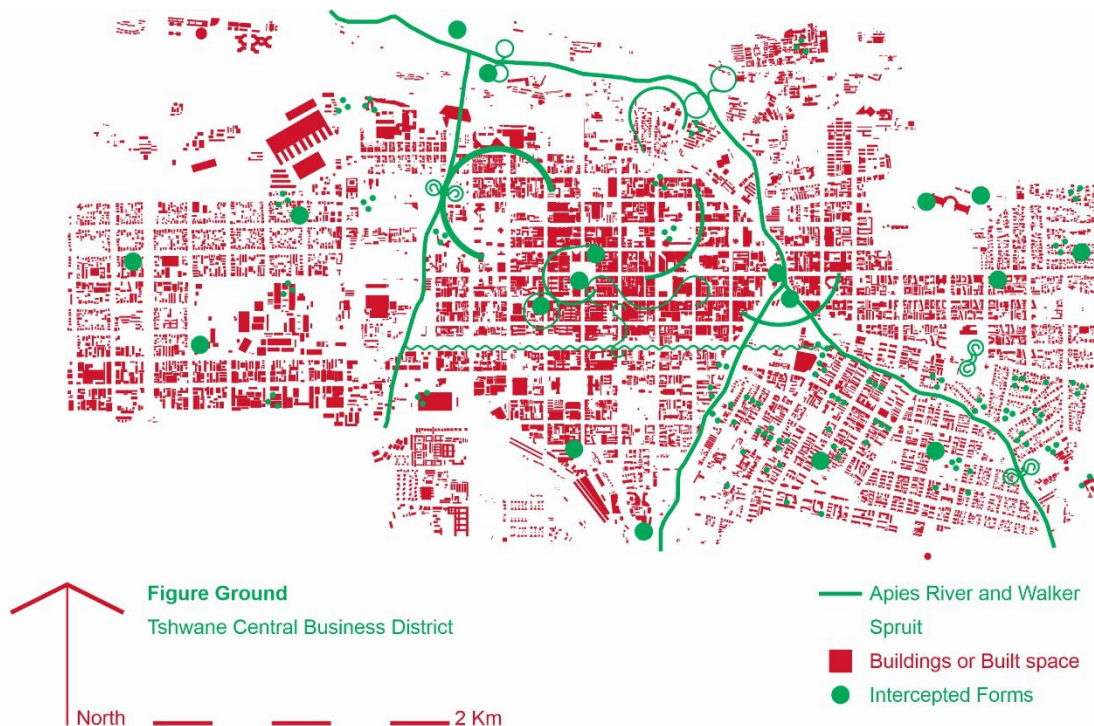


Figure 5: Tshwane figure-ground of the study area with Apies River and Walker Spruit with post-apartheid city buildings in red. An intercepted form or alternative typology is added in green and is based on forms derived from Thomas (2021)

7. Findings

The concepts and theoretical framework briefly discussed in this paper extend far beyond what is presented and argued. The issues embedded in the transformation of the post-apartheid city are vast, complex and integrated. This paper presents only one contributing argument: The argument against the genderisation of the city structure. This argument is illustrated by the masculine-feminine binary at play at an urban level (Figure 2 to 5) and at a personal level (Figure 1). When one type of person emerges as societally preferred, and the structures and systems of that society align to progress and protect that one preferred type at the expense of others, then an imbalance occurs. This paper argues that the city is out of balance with nature, and what is natural and human. This imbalance results in consequences that can be dire when considering the legacy of apartheid and the climate emergency we are facing. The emergence of womxn as agents of change will hold the key to the transformation of the post-apartheid city and will contribute towards a circular approach the economy and city will use.

8. Conclusion

There is an argument for how the characteristics of a masculine post-apartheid city perpetuates the post-colonial capitalist industrial linear economy thinking (or masculine approach), vested in profiteering from natural resources and an oppressed labour force. This paper finds that systems and structures such as protestant religion established the heteronormative white masculine binary perspective as the societal norm and facilitated this exploitation of nature and labour. As a matter of urgency, it must be noted that masculine thinking has been successfully implemented and has resulted in a capitalist industrial linear economy thinking that contributes to the current climate emergency. Due to limited space and the need for brevity, these concepts were not further presented in this paper. However, there are opportunities for future research to show these connections and the implications.

The structure of power today, and the distribution of wealth today, remains almost identical to during the apartheid regime; societies remain unchanged because systems and structures put in place remain unchanged. South Africa is a rainbow nation that speaks of diversity and inclusion. An essential part of diversity is the depth of meaning, texture, and emotion that different voices bring to a narrative. Therefore, this paper argues for a newly established narrative vested in womxn as agents of transformation. This narrative is about inclusion, not erasure, and includes all voices, striking a balance between the masculine and feminine, because to include the feminine voice is to preserve indigenous practices. Inclusion is an act of remembrance, whereas to negate existence is to forget.

Transformation of the post-apartheid city will provide a newly established narrative vested in an indigenous-thinking circular economy. An agenda that includes womxn will inform architectural interventions that include programmes that encourage a closed-loop circular economy (or feminine approach), contributing to a solution. Interventions that include nature as related to femininity and spirituality, and representative of womxn, will result in an intercepted form that will replenish rather than exploit.

It took decades to build the segregated apartheid city that we aim to dismember and reconstruct (Parnell, 2002); therefore, the redemption of the post-apartheid city will also take time. There is a need for effort and continuous adjustment, consideration, reimagining, and redefining, along with inclusive participation that will result in belonging and investment among the citizens who form part of the city of Tshwane.

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