

# DIVIDED PAST, DIVIDED FUTURE – FROM CAPE TO JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

From the early history of Homo sapiens, survival of the fittest depends on co-operation. Humans formed settlements where the hunter-gatherers became warriors, while agrarians became farmers. This created a mutual relationship, where the warriors offered protection in exchange for produce. Later colonial settlements were established by explorers, from Europe, as hunter-gatherers, but they mutated into farmer-producers for expansion and then back to warriors for survival. Colonial explorers annexed new terrain using Western forms of contract and title deeds unknown to those who roamed these lands before. The colonizers used addictive substance such as alcohol and tobacco which was almost unknown to indigenous tribes, weakening their morale and opening the door for exploitation.

In Africa, as in other colonized terrain, these events left a bitter tension between colonizers and indigenous inhabitants, with a history of slavery, war and racial divide as the long term damage.

Legal systems were used to manipulate and control, from the Cape to Johannesburg and in between. This history and its outfall is summarized with reflection on the current status quo which has moved from racial to economic inequality, described in Soweto and Alexandra, two prominent townships of Johannesburg.

**Keywords: Colonialism, Apartheid, inequality, economic migration**

**RESUMEN**

Desde la más pronta historia del *Homo sapiens*, la supervivencia del más apto depende de la cooperación. Los humanos formaron asentamientos en los que los cazadores-recolectores se convirtieron en guerreros, mientras que los agricultores se convirtieron en granjeros. Esto creó una relación mutua, en la que los guerreros ofrecían protección a cambio de productos. Posteriormente, los exploradores europeos establecieron asentamientos coloniales como cazadores-recolectores, pero se transformaron en agricultores-productores para expandirse y luego volvieron a ser guerreros para sobrevivir. Los exploradores coloniales se anexionaron nuevos terrenos utilizando formas occidentales de contrato y títulos de propiedad desconocidos para los que vagaban antes por esas tierras. Los colonizadores utilizaron sustancias adictivas como el alcohol y el tabaco, casi desconocidas para las tribus indígenas, lo que debilitó su moral y abrió la puerta a la explotación.

En África, como en otros terrenos colonizados, estos hechos dejaron una amarga tensión entre los colonizadores y los habitantes indígenas, con una historia de esclavitud, guerra y división racial como daño a largo plazo.

Los sistemas legales se utilizaron para manipular y controlar, desde el Cabo hasta Johannesburgo y en el medio. Esta historia y su desenlace se resume con la reflexión sobre el statu quo actual, que ha pasado de la desigualdad racial a la económica, descrita en Soweto y Alexandra, dos destacados municipios de Johannesburgo.

**Palabras clave:** Colonialismo, Apartheid, desigualdad, migración económica

**RESUMO**

Desde o início da história do *Homo sapiens*, a sobrevivência do mais apto depende da cooperação. Os humanos formaram assentamentos onde os caçadores-coletores se tornaram guerreiros, enquanto os agricultores se tornaram fazendeiros, fato este que criou uma relação mútua onde os guerreiros ofereciam proteção em troca de produtos. Mais tarde, exploradores europeus estabeleceram assentamentos coloniais também como caçadores-coletores, mas se transformaram, primeiramente, em agricultores-productores para expansão e, posteriormente, novamente em guerreiros, para sobreviver. Os exploradores coloniais anexaram novos territórios utilizando-se de formas de contrato e títulos de propriedade ocidentais desconhecidas para os que perambulavam por estas terras. Além disso, os colonizadores europeus utilizaram-se de substâncias viciantes como álcool e tabaco, quase desconhecidas das tribos indígenas, enfraquecendo seu moral e abrindo as portas para a exploração.

Na África, como em outros territórios colonizados, estes eventos deixaram uma tensão amarga entre colonizadores e habitantes indígenas, com uma história de escravidão, guerra e divisão racial como o dano a longo prazo. Da Cidade do Cabo a Joanesburgo, e entre, sistemas legais foram empregados para manipular e controlar. Esta história e seu desfecho são resumidos em uma reflexão sobre o atual *status quo* que passou da desigualdade racial para a desigualdade econômica, descritas em Soweto e Alexandra, duas áreas destacadas de Joanesburgo.

**Palavras-chave:** Colonialismo, Apartheid, desigualdade, migração econômica

Cities arose out of necessity for survival by means of co-operation. The collective term of cities go back to the early origins of human life. Many inhabitants working toward a common goal. As ancient as the occurrence of cities, is the quest for division within. Cities are the urban expression of collective energy, yet the hunger for power and wealth manifest in the form of greed, countering the sense of community in the form of oppression and division.

## PREFACE – HISTORY

Jan Van Riebeeck docked in the Cape of Good Hope with 3 ships on 6 April 1652, on contract for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) to establish a refreshment station for passing ships of the VOC. He was under strict instructions not to colonise the region but instead supply fresh water, fruit, vegetables, meat and medical assistance. In the same year a two year naval war between England and the Netherlands started, which hastened the first fort made of mud, clay & timber, surrounded by a garden. Meat was bartered with the local hunter gatherer Khoi-Khoi tribe.

Despite the initial non-colonization plans, nine company servants were given permits to farm along the Liesbeeck River for wheat. They were given unlimited access to land but were restricted to trade only with the VOC. By 1659 the station produced sufficient goods to supply any passing ship, but since the Khoisan were seen as “uncooperative”, slaves were imported from 1657 (Aartsma 2012).

The Khoi Khoi used the land for hunting and gathering, while the San grew produce for their own use, until farming started in 1657.



Fig 1 Goldblatt D. 1993 Hedge planted in 1660 to keep indigenous Khoikoi out of the first European settlement

Unlike the Dutch they did not have a written culture, with no title deeds to show. “Van Riebeeck refused to acknowledge that land ownership could be organised differently from the Dutch/European way.” After the Khoisan were denied rights to the land they occupied, they unsuccessfully attempted armed resistance which continued. In response to the growing clashes, Van Riebeeck planted a wild almond hedge in 1660 as the first layer of protection of the Dutch settlement. Once the boundary was established, he sent exploration parties to investigate the inland. (Fig 1)

After an attack by French ships and interest in the Cape by Britain, the VOC declared itself as owners of the Cape region in 1672, claiming they purchased the land from Osingkhima, leader of a Khokhoi group with brandy, tobacco and bread. From the moment of their arrival, the Dutch used written documents to dominate and claim land with the Khoisan who had no written culture, resulting in ongoing resistance. (Aartsma 2012; 2008).



Fig 2 Signal-Hill-Midnight panoramic stitched image, by author 2010

The British invaded and occupied the Cape from 1795 until 1803, when it was handed back to the Dutch, but they permanently occupied the Cape after 1806 while at war with France (South African History Online 2011).

### THE LEGACY OF SEGREGATION

As the move outwards from the Cape spread North the British founded Port Elizabeth, one of the earliest sites of urban division based upon racial segregation. “As the initial spatial



Fig 3 Goldblatt, D. The destruction of District Six under the Group Areas act, 1982

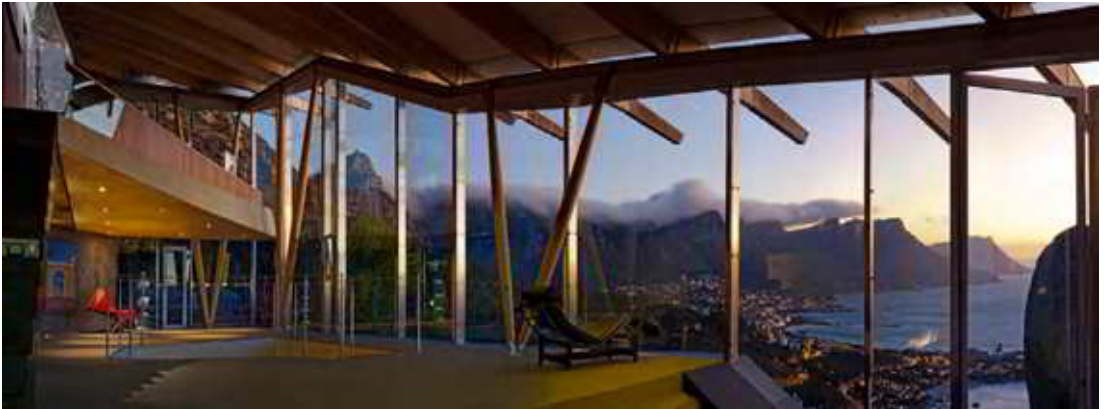


Fig 4 Lions Ark –Ocean View drive Cape Town–, stitched panoramic by author 2014

design of the colonial outpost catered exclusively for European needs, missionaries founded a so-called location or separate residential area near the town centre for indigenous persons in 1834. The development of the Native Strangers' Location is historically significant, as it provides insight into early colonial approaches that used segregated residential development as a mechanism of urban administration and spatial control. It also represents one of the first authorised forced removals in a South African urban area." (Strauss 2019, 139).

Forced removals continued as the town expanded for the benefit of the European community using the Native Administration Act 3 of 1876, based on Roman Dutch legislation from the Cape. Following numerous forced removals, New Brighton outside Port Elizabeth became the first official township, "a legal precedent for the future development of racially segregated urban settlement in South Africa" (Strauss 2019, 140).

After the establishment of Johannesburg as a gold mining town in 1886, the history of forced removals continued there, as in

Port Elizabeth and Cape Town, where natural topography separates the Cape Flats from Table Mountain and the sea. The beauty of the Cape is reserved for those with privilege, previously by legislation, now with very high property value.

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH LEGISLATION AS A TOOL FOR SPATIAL SEGREGATION IN COLONIAL TOWNS**

In the early twentieth century, infectious diseases were spreading through colonial towns. The use of legal frameworks to enforce spatial segregation increased racial tension, resulting in a "moral panic and racial hysteria known as sanitation syndrome. In Cape Town for instance, the eruption of plague in 1901 resulted in the swift relocation of 6000+ black persons from the urban centre" - similar to New Brighton at Port Elizabeth. In Johannesburg Indian inhabitants were removed from the inner city "Coolie Location" to Klipspruit township citing plague as the reason. (Strauss 2019, 141).



### SEGREGATION FOLLOWING THE PATH OF WEALTH TO THE NORTH



Fig 5. Goldblatt D. The farmer's son with his nursemaid, on the farm Heimweeberg. North-West Province, 1964

Legislation furthering spatial segregation continued to control land ownership and rights – “In the Transvaal, the Precious and Base Metals Act 35 of 1908 also restricted the occupation of certain land by black families and individuals. The amalgamation of the four British colonies established the Union of South Africa in 1910.”

Between 1910 and 1948, this government developed legal systems for spatial control of land management, as the legal foundation for apartheid segregated urban development. (Strauss 2019, 145).

In the height of apartheid from 1948 to 1990, legal frameworks were continuously used as tools to take away the human rights of Black and similarly segregated communities. Townships on the outskirts of cities were planned to be too far for protest to spread into the city or town centres, but within a few hours of public transport travel to work in the cities which they served. Townships themselves became the stage for protest by citizens, known as “unrest” often accompanied by long ‘state of emergency’ which extended the power of authorities, the military and the government to levels of extreme abuse.

During this inhuman era Black and similarly classified citizens were forced to carry

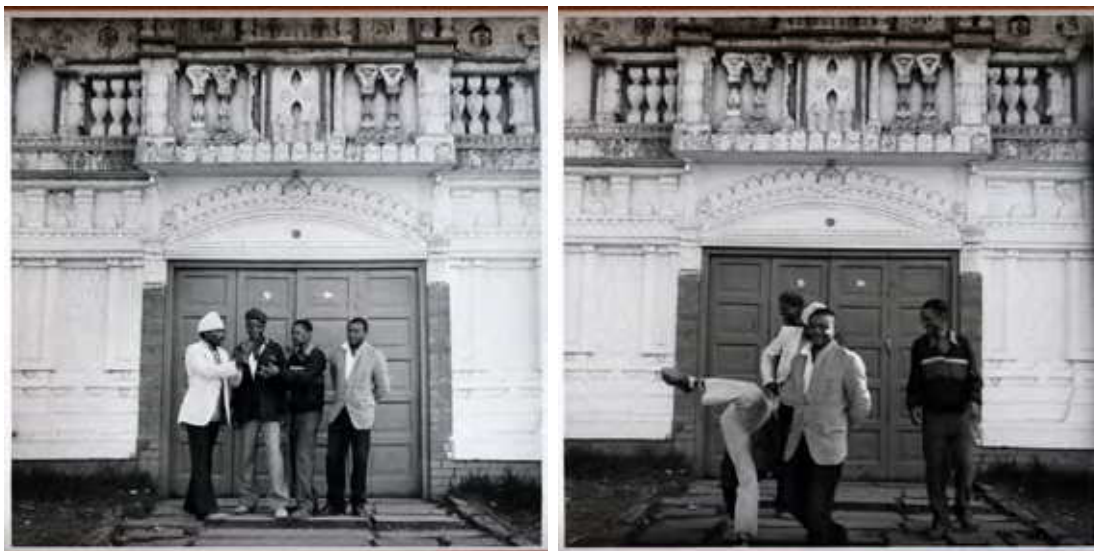


Fig 6-6a Marabastad Pretoria-Pass book protest dance, analogue silver gelatin print, by author 1985



Fig 7. Soccer City, Soweto, Aerial stitched panoramic by author 2012

a pass book at all times, for the sake of control by police and authorities. Soweto, short for South Western Township, is the largest township near Johannesburg, now a city in its own right. It is here that the functional 51/9 free-standing dwelling was reproduced at a massive scale, despite inefficient land use. Houses were laid out for quick access by military or police, with tall lighting masts which lit the area brightly at night. Even the largest stadium in the country, FNB Soccer City, is located in a kind of no-man's land on the edge of Soweto, surrounded by dry dusty mine-dumps, the legacy of a gold mining town.

### **GOLD FEVER TO DISSIDENT WATER**

Gold fever brought a sense of international interest, in mining experts from the United Kingdom and Australia and along with it, heavy machinery and foreign labour. Once open cast mining was replaced with tunnels weaving deep under the city, pumped water became essential. Yet, the dry region had insufficient water for people, causing typhoid. "In 1889 Barney Bar-

nato acquired the concession for water supply originally granted to Mr James Sivewright... during the drought of 1895/6, water was sold from a wagon... resulting in a typhoid outbreak" A geologist, Dr Draper, saved the city by discovering water near Zuurbekom, which was handed to Barnato's Johannesburg Waterworks company. Barnato made his millions not from gold, but from selling water to the mining companies (Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt 2013).

In fact the river of inclined gold runs below that same *Uitvalgrond* triangle where "no gold was found". As mining continued deeper and deeper, two chemists were credited with the recipe for cyanide used to release gold from the ore, still present in the acid water which fills abandoned mine shafts. (Bremner 2013).

The city grew at unprecedented levels, but with great inequality between white foremen and black workers. The seeds of racism and discrimination were driven by greed. Mine managers had 2 baths to cleanse after coming to the surface, black workers lived in compounds and were paid a pittance. The most hardened teams were the shaft sinkers



Figure 8 Dobsonville mine Soweto, stitched panoramic by author 2017

who sometimes worked 3 years to sink a shaft between 2,4 – 2,7km below ground (Goldblatt and Gordimer 1973).

The old mine dumps, containing layers of excavated soil dug by thousands of labourers since 1886 are being recycled. Vast quantities of scarce water is used to wash out small quantities of gold, a secondary mine recycling. These huge artificial landscapes, dug from below by thousands of migrant workers, are now being removed again for greed. Many old mines con-

tain old tailing dams, used by local children for swimming on hot summer days. The mines contain traces of cyanide –used to remove gold ore, unenriched uranium and pyrite–, a toxic cocktail for any living creature.

Abandoned mines are also recycled by Zama Zama, illegal miners who may have been trained before, usually armed for self-defence. They have no safety gear or backup. Informal networks of food, alcohol and even prostitutes serve the illegal miners at a premium price.



Fig 9 First-hole-1886, Langlaagte, 500 Zama Zama informal miners rework old shaft, by author 2015





Fig 10 4829-Wemmerpan detail by author 2013



Fig 11 Dark-Ponte-Citadel, Stitched panoramic by author 2015

Some seams or “reefs” contain the richest gold field the world has ever known. Mining activities have yielded over 1.5 billion gold ounces since the late 19th century –a third of all the gold that has ever been produced. The country’s wealth and its Apartheid system both developed out of this harsh mining en-

vironment. The economic boom continued for well over a century but today the gold deposits appear to be reaching depletion while the people of South Africa have reached a political settlement giving equal rights to all and setting their sights on growth beyond mining (Howcroft 2018).



Fig 12 Mills 02 Vortex Trains & Highway, analogue multiple exposure 50asa rollfilm by author 2021

Migrant workers travelled from all corners of Southern Africa by train leaving families behind in search of an elusive pot of gold. Many never saw their wives or children again as mining took drastic tolls on health, treated in the worst manner by ruthless mining companies. “Coal Train”, a song by Stimela and Hugh Masekela, (1993) describe the train which carried thousands of workers from every corner of Africa to slave in the goldmines. (*Figures 11/12*)

#### ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP VS SANDTON

Alexandra is one of the oldest townships of Johannesburg established in 1912, its population estimate ranging between 180 000 to 750 000, due to a large number of fluctuating informal residents. Its infrastructure was only designed for 70 000, but every fixed dwelling has at least 3 shacks on the same 500-600 sq.m. The more recent East Bank has some community facilities, but dangerous flooding occurs along the banks of the Jukskei River. Streets are still lit



Fig 13 London road, Alexandra township, stitched panoramic by author 2013



Fig 14 Sandton skyline from Wynberg Alex – stitched panoramic by author 2010



Fig 15 Newtown-Cooling Towers-Impllosion. Analogue silver gelatin prints by author 1985

with sodium floodlights on tall timber poles, a remnant of apartheid riot control measures. (Fig 13) (The World Bank Group 2000) A great sense of community spirit remains in Alex since apartheid protest days.

About 1km away across the M1 highway, glittering towers form the Sandton skyline, the new economic hub of Johannesburg. The JSE stock exchange moved here in 2000. Fig 14 Many workers commute from Alex to serve as the workforce of shops and companies in Sandton.

While a few major corporate companies stayed in the Johannesburg CBD, the majority moved to Sandton or Rosebank, including Anglo Gold, a founding gold trade business. The

contrast between overcrowded Alex and corporate Sandton are extreme. In recent times, as higher income players of every race have acquired wealth, the division is far less about racial divide but rather about economic status. At the same time many historic landmarks of early JHB have been abandoned or demolished, like Newtown cooling towers, Eskom House etc. (fig 15)

One of the greatest ironies is the location of the Gautrain intercity train which travels from Pretoria via Sandton through Marlboro / Alex to ORT airport. The greater majority of Alex residents are excluded from this facility due to its high cost, beyond the means of many



Fig 16 Marlboro Alex Firewalk Gautrain, stitched panoramic by author 2013



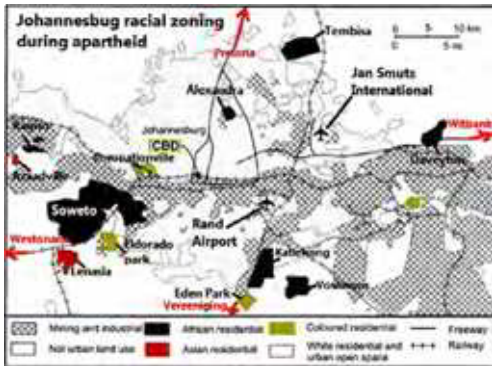


Fig. 17 (Jaroslava Pallas 2017)

unemployed or low income workers. The station is guarded with high security fencing. (Fig 16)

The zoning diagram below clearly indicates the distance between townships and older suburbs. Apartheid spatial planning ensured sufficient distance in case of protest while

allowing workers to reach areas of employment with public transport.

## CONCLUSION

From the earliest times cities were made up of protectors, the hunter-gatherer evolved into warriors, mostly occupying the seat of power. Agrarian farmers who raise produce rely on the warriors for protection, paid for in food or taxes. In ancient cities they farmed land outside the walls, but came in for shelter and safety in times of war or conflict. History often shows how these roles are reversed, like the settlers who were sent as hunter gatherer explorers, but then become farmers when times of peace allow.



Fig 18 Top-Star-Booyens City & Suburban. Analogue silver gelatin print by author 1992



So the early explorers of the Cape transformed to farmers, and back to soldiers during conflict, just as the Khoikhoi and the San battled for their existence in an unjust system.

In the City of Johannesburg farmers transformed to gold miners, entrepreneurs and stock brokers, continuing the flux and trade between produce and prospect. Many workers were spatially separated from the city by apartheid planning. The division has moved from a racial to an economic barrier, but the divide is increasing due to corruption, poverty, pandemic and climate change.

The City of Gold has become symbolic – a legacy which is rapidly disappearing. It is this strange sense of unprecedented making and removal of landscape that makes Johannesburg

a city of Non-Utopia. “U-topia is a Greek word, which translates directly as No Place” (Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt 2013).

This was one of my first images of a mine, using an old manual Linhof 6 x 9 cm with expired film. It captures the surreal drive-in cinema located atop a mine dump, ironically named ‘The Top Star’. The approach road spiralled up like a DNA strand around an industrial ziggurat. The mine dump was recycled and removed around 2013. This man-made mountain no longer exists but for the illegal mineworkers and whole industries who supply them, it remains a viable but dangerous dream. Note the metal recyclers having a smoke break under the Willow trees.

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**Leon Krige**, (trained as an architect at Wits & Staedelschule Frankfurt under Prof Peter Cook – Archigram. Taught Architectural Theory & Design at Universities of Pretoria, Wits & currently UJ) is a photographer and architect documenting the urban topographies of major cosmopolitan cities. In his photographic practice, Krige uses high-resolution photography predominately at night. Working with long exposures, a single shot can take up to an hour to expose, during which time, the city revolves around the fixed lens. Nevertheless, his measured technique elucidates an exactitude of various nuanced luminosities: incan-

descent domestic interiors and sodium orange hues for infrastructure and control.

Documenting the transitional urbanity of Johannesburg since the 1980s, he has recently started working with other megacities including Cape Town in South Africa; and Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Investigating the history, development, and deterioration of these cities, Krige explores the topography and metamorphosis from high vantage points. It is at this vantage, that he often finds himself face to face with the stark reality of societies in transition: entire communities dispersed outwards, as developers populate the skyline.



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