Decolonizing Public Space in South Africa: from conceptualization to actualization

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ABSTRACT

Cities and public spaces are changing. Many movements such as 'Black Lives Matter' are questioning the meaning of public space in post-colonial contexts. This paper focusses on the decolonization of public space in South Africa as a strategy to achieve spatial transformation. Drawing from seven years of in-depth research, the discussion explores the concept of decolonization and proposes a 3-stage process for decolonizing public space, supported by examples and implications for spatial practice. The paper shows that although fundamental spatial transformation necessitates radical mental transition, decolonization should move beyond the decoloniality of the mind towards physical intervention in public space.

Introduction

As Covid-19 spreads throughout the world, the use of public space became severely restricted or even prohibited. Images of famous places standing deserted during lockdowns forced urban designers and other built environment practitioners to reconsider the value of these spaces in cities. While doing so, another fateful event occurred in the USA, where George Floyd, a black man, was forced to the ground by a white police officer and pinned down with his knee, while struggling to breathe. He died on his way to the hospital. This sparked enormous protest all across the world, highlighting continuous inequalities and practices of discrimination in public spaces. This movement became known as 'Black Lives Matters' and their call for transformation reverberated in many public places.

Reconsidering past practices of discrimination, irrevocably opened old wounds of colonialization. Protest action expanded to question various representations of oppression in public space. Statues of prominent figures related to the slave trade or instrumental in colonial atrocities were targeted. One by one, the old icons of the past were toppled or removed – from Columbus in the USA and Colston in the UK to Leopold II in Belgium. In South Africa, the controversial figure of Pres Paul Kruger – fenced in from previous attempts to remove him four years ago during calls for decolonization – was again painted along with four other statues of Boer warriors surrounding him. These acts reopened the debate related to the meaning of structures in the built environment.

The discussions in South Africa began with the #Rhodes must fall movement that started at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in March 2016. This movement was directed against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes – influential British imperialist and co-founder of UCT. The campaign was directed at the removal of the statue and led to a wider movement to decolonize education, and subsequently public space in the country. One by one colonial

related statues were targeted, either being spray-painted or removed, for example, the well-known figure of Queen Victoria in front of the library in Port Elizabeth. This also extended to include representations of old Boer generals or presidents from the early nineteenth century, including General CR Swart and President MT Steyn in Bloemfontein. These actions raise several questions regarding the nature and meaning of public space, representations in space, as well as the educational role of public space in post-colonial cities, especially in the aftermath of the recent global 'Black Lives Matter' protests

This discussion focuses on the decolonization of public space in South Africa. While there are many interpretations and different applications of decolonization, Jansen (2019, 7) maintains that there is a gap between the high theory in decolonization writings and the practice of 'making decolonisation work on the ground'. Drawing from seven years of in-depth research on different types of public spaces in the country, the article explores a 3-stage process that can be instrumental in assisting urban designers to move away from mere conceptualization of decolonization to applying it in practice as a tool to facilitate more fundamental spatial transformation. The article is situated within larger debates on the decolonial turn in philosophy but extends this to investigate its meaning for spatial transformation in changing post-colonial cities. The article is therefore structured in three parts: 1) presenting the decolonial literature, 2) discussing the proposed 3-staged process of making decolonization work on the ground and 3) presenting examples of the proposed 3-stage process of decolonizing public space – from conceptualization to actualization.

Thinking about decolonization

Decolonization, as Gough (1999, 73) writes about globalization, 'is not a subject and/or object to be constrained by definition, but a focus for speculation – for generating meanings'. It does not refer to a specific theoretical school but rather aims to embrace a family of diverse positions that share a common view. Decoloniality, therefore, refers to varied processes of dismantling, contesting and disrupting oppressive narratives and discourses that perpetuate colonial ideology.

Decolonial scholars argue that although post-colonies have attained their political independence, the colonizer has maintained physical and symbolic power over knowledge production (Thiong'o 1986; Biko 2004; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013). These scholars argue strongly that the end of colonialism was not marked by the attainment of independence and that colonialism itself has not been dismantled. This reading of colonialism exposes the long lasting consequences of colonization and the need for decolonization on the physical, symbolic and structural level. Thinking about decolonization in this way, a few key issues related to this article emerge namely, misrepresentation, identity and culture. All of these are often based on a lack of understanding or acknowledgement of alternative knowledge systems and ways of being.

Colonialism did not only focus on wealth accumulation from its colonies through processes of violence and exploitation, rather, it systematically elevated its superficial ideology into naturalized constructs of identity 'supported' by the biology of the human race (Fanon 1952; Maldonado-Torres 2007, 2011). For instance, biological categorizations of black and white, female and male justified the colonizers ordering of society. Accordingly, these ideas manifested in the economic, religious, cultural and political assemblage and misrepresentations of people and spaces. Dascal (2007) argues that through such naturalized ideas, colonialism intentionally colonized the minds of the natives, demonizing existing

knowledge, identities and cultures in an attempt to ensure the lasting effects of the colonial project.

The control over the colonized mind introduced a way of seeing the world that relinquished one's culture and therefore ushered the adoption of the culture of the colonizer, leaving the colonized 'rootless and nameless' (Mveng 1994, 156 cited in Kgatla 2018). The colonized was seen as the 'other' (Auga 2015), as inferior and without the right to put down roots (Fanon 1952). 'Othering means imagining someone as alien and different to "us" in such a way that "they" are excluded from "our", "normal", "superior" and "civilised" group. It is by imagining a foreign other in this way that "our" group can become more confident and exclusive' (Holiday 2010 cited in Auga 2015, 51). The misrepresentation of the colonized gave rise to both physical and epistemic violence, of a 'civilizing mission' (Auga 2015, 54) to transfer 'valid' knowledge (Connell 2014) through the control of space and changing the minds of the natives (Mudimbe 1988).

Therefore, thinking about decolonization requires a reconsideration of knowledge. Who produces and validates it? Whose stories were/are told about whose knowledge systems and whose spaces and symbols are celebrated? Knowledge has a history and is shaped by power relations born in certain historical contexts (Lange 2019). These power relations are mentioned and expressed in different ways, for example through rules or norms guiding our planning practices (Winkler 2018) or through recent actions in public space, for example, related to the death of George Floyd. Decolonization cannot be achieved if the majority continues to be oppressed and humiliated in a post-colonial era that holds on to colonial misrepresentations of identities, cultures, and epistemologies of the 'other'. This starts to highlight certain challenges of decolonization and a realization that we cannot consider the decolonization of public space without decolonization of validated knowledge, as well as misrepresented identities and cultures that have gone unquestioned.

Implementing decolonization – making it work on the ground

Urban design is concerned with the socio-spatial process of shaping human settlements and the built environment with all its associated problems and complexities. It, therefore, has an important role to play in the future of human society and encompass the heavy burden of responsibility to help address these problems, rather than exacerbate them through a narrow understanding and inadequate solutions (Madanipour 2014, 2). What does this mean for the decolonization of public space? Connell et al. (2017, 23) maintain that 'discourses are not just academic exercises, the issues can have powerful implications for practice'. As such, there is a need for an emphasis on practice-based forms of knowledge (Ibid).

In implementing decolonization, two issues are spotlighted, namely place-specific intervention and inclusivity. The first is concerned with the acknowledgement of the geo-socio-political space in which public space is produced and reproduced. As with the production of knowledge, the (re)production of space should also include a 'shift in the production of reason' (Maldonado-Torres 2011, 5). This reiterates the notion of whose stories and symbols are acknowledged and represented. Histories of the global south are often exoticised or represented as parts of European history, thereby eroding their specificity (Mamdani 1996). The call is to acknowledge that colonial history is not all that defines a post-colonial nation, and that other historical processes should be acknowledged and respected in the production of knowledge and reason to ensure specificity in an intervention. The aim is to represent the colonized with the historical specificities that make them unique

but also avoiding an idiosyncratic representation that removes them from global dialogue and scholarship. Accordingly, Auga (2015) warns against the creation of a new ‘other’ through nationalism and extreme culturalism but argues for the creation of a different story altogether.

This relates to the second issue of inclusion. After independence, both groups in the former colonies had to imagine a post-colonial social order and lay the foundation for a new nation. However, often they were unable to fashion inclusive societies for a variety of reasons (Mbeki 2009). Implementing decolonization calls for the acknowledgement and inclusion of the ‘other’, ‘being there for others’ and taking into account the agency of the marginalized (Auga 2015, 54). It suggests possibilities for the inclusion of multiple and a variety of spatial and bodily references. Given this, “ … decolonization can be told in multiple languages, with unique and rich meanings and conceptual bases (Maldonado-Torres 2011, 5, 7). Bearing this in mind, decolonization is not just a critique but needs action and broader changes (Jansen 2019).

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1994), a concept is not a name attached to something, but a way of approaching the world. Therefore, it is not so much about what decolonization is, but what it can potentially become. Le Grange (2019) furthermore explains that decolonization 1) has no single meaning, 2) it does not have to involve destruction, 3) it is a process, rather than an event and 4) it does not mean turning back the clock to a previous time. Decolonization needs to speak to the challenges faced in the contemporary world.

Some scholars have started to suggest what this process could entail. Connell (2014) suggests that this should encompass several intellectual projects including the 1) defence and preservation of indigenous knowledge’s and practices, 2) thinking through the invasion were colonized people try to make sense of what happened to them, 3) analysing the colonial and global orders to determine its relevance, as well as the knowledge gaps, to 4) reconstruct Northern knowledge and 5) develop new knowledge where relevant through the application of southern theory and postcolonial perspectives.

Chilisa (2012) suggests a fivefold process of decolonization, namely 1) rediscovery and recovery, 2) mourning, 3) dreaming, 4) commitment, and 5) action. The first is the process where the colonized people rediscover and recover their own history, culture, language and identity. The second, constitutes a process of lamenting the continuous assault on people’s identities and social realities. Dreaming opens up avenues for indigenous people to invoke their own stories, worldviews and knowledge systems to image alternative possibilities. Commitment initiates voices of support for the colonized, which should then lead to action, strategies and practices for broader transformation. Deconstruction and reconstruction therefore requires discarding what was wrongly written (Le Grange 2019) and retelling the stories of the past to correct distortions and envision a different future (Chilisa 2012)

In addition, Pinar (2004) proposes four reflective moments to allow individuals or groups to give life to their own stories, namely the regressive, progressive, analytical and synthetical moments. The regressive step focusses on the past. The purpose is to re-enter it to transform the memory and acknowledge the influence on the present. This involves the process of remembering. The progressive moment focusses on the future and looks forward to what is possible, both in terms of personal aspirations and social reality. The analytical step constitutes stepping back and considering the future in the past, the past in the future and the present in both. Finally, the synthetical moment aims to bring about a sense of wholeness by

focussing on the meaning of the present. This involves a process of awareness of what flows within us, what drives us to do things and be, and what gives meaning to our lives.

While the detail differs, these processes involve three key elements, namely 1) remembering and recognition, 2) re-imagining and transcendence and 3) transformation and renewal. The focus of the first phase is to delve into the past to remember, reconnect and heal scars of misrepresentation and in the processing of healing, to find clues for going forward in terms of identity and culture. The second phase constitutes a projection into the future to look for potential and imagine different possibilities related to recognition and expression. The third phase is concerned with merging the past and the future into the present to find relevant solutions for a specific place and time in an inclusive manner. While this starts to offer a pathway towards decolonization, the question remains as to what it would constitute in terms of rethinking and reshaping public space. As maintained by Auga (2015, 50), 'citizenship and public spaces around the globe are neo-colonised'. Therefore, how do we decolonize public space?

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> *"For those of us who are inmates of the modern university, prisoners in the ongoing colonising project, at least in a metaphorical sense, I suggest we think of our task as one subverting the project within, through a series of acts that sift through the historical legacy, discarding some parts and adapting others"* (Mamdani 2019, 17).

The challenge regarding the decolonization of public space is how to subvert the project from within and which parts to discard or adapt? Urban designers are, therefore, faced with this challenge in their quest to decolonize public space. While there is an ongoing debate about the decolonization of knowledge in South Africa (Ramoupi 2014; Mbembe 2015; Jansen 2019) and some initial explorations of its implications for planning theory and ethics (Winkler 2018), as well as the educational role of public art (Schmahmann 2019), there has been very little consideration of decolonization of public space in academic literature. The debate has, however, been initialized recently in several popular articles on major news platforms such as CNN (USA), BBC (UK), VRT NWS (Belgium), Euronews and News24 (South Africa), begging further exploration of its meaning for urban design and the reconceptualization and reshaping of public space. Drawing from both academic literature and discussions on these news platforms, as well as in-depth research related to the transformation of public space in South Africa, this article suggests that the decolonization of public space in the country could include a focus on the three stages discussed above, namely to 1) remember and recognize, 2) re-imagine and transcend and 3) transform and renew.

Remember and recognize

As mentioned above, the first stage of the process of decolonization is concerned with delving into the past to remember, reconnect and heal and in the process, search for clues to embrace the future. It is about asking difficult questions and facing the uncomfortable histories of the past. This process involves making sense of the past, where the colonized grapples with what happened to them. This is often difficult for the colonizers to face and to allow an analysis of colonial and global orders (Connell 2014). However, it is a necessary prerequisite for the reconstruction of knowledge and physical space. It also paves the way for recognition of what is there, how it is represented and how it can be interpreted or in other words, how history or knowledge have been misrepresented.

These difficult questions involve queries about what should stay or go, for example in the case of statues of former controversial figures or whether the name of a public space should change or not. In the USA, many protestors have argued that the statues of former confederates represent hurtful memories of colonial domination and slave trade and should be removed. This gave rise to the fall of Columbus in Baltimore on July, 5th, 2020, as well as other controversial figures such as George Washington in Portland, Oregon and Jefferson Davis in Richmond, Virginia (Maxouris 2020). President Trump, however, defended these and called for the protection of the nation's history and warned that everyone who tried to remove a statue will face the law (BBC News 2020). Similar events took place in England, where Britain's imperialist monuments faced angry Black Lives Matters protestors. One by one they fell or were removed, from Edward Colston in Bristol to Robert Milligan in London. Both were slave owners (Guy 2020). In Belgium, the Black Lives Matters movement sparked a huge debate about the history of colonization and the role of King Leopold II in dehumanizing Congolese workers during this period. Consequently many called for the removal of all representations of the former King from public space. According to Belgium, professor Gerits, Leopold II should not disappear from public space because he was a terrible person, but because he represents the essence of the Belgium colonial propaganda (Gerits 2020). However, an antagonist maintained that these statues represent the history and should therefore not be removed (Heylen 2020). It, therefore, highlights the opposing views related to images of the past.

It also questions the value of preserving history versus the feelings or memory evoked by these statues. As explained by a historian, Ana Lucia Araujo, statues are linked to memory and if the trauma of memory linked to the actions committed by these historical figures outweighs the historical facts, then it calls for the removal of symbols of oppression (Hurst 2020). An example of this is the covering and uncovering debates surrounding Sara Baartman's naked sculpture at UCT's main library. The uncovering of Sara was seen by some as an act of respecting artwork and the artist's vision. However, decolonial thought implores us to think not only about the artist but the represented artwork. In this instance, the artwork is not a mere object, but a representation of victimization against the body of a person who once lived. Sara's naked sculpture is, therefore, a constant reminder of everyday sexualization and dehumanization of black women. However, commenting on the removal of offensive statues, the outgoing vice-chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa cautioned that we should not simply break down offensive statues. Together with a colleague, they maintain that an inquiry should take place about the statues and collective decisions made by society. They state that the decision should not be the sole prerogative of a self-appointed political vanguard (Habib and Leisegang 2020). Similarly, Schmahmann (2019) argues for careful consideration of when to remove statues. She maintained that the removal of the Rhodes statue was the first step towards addressing a much broader issue, namely the lack of transformation on the UCT campus more generally. However, the removal of sculptures does not ultimately work productively in enabling change or to evoke questioning and development of critical insight regarding past actions (Schmahmann 2019).

Remembering allows a public space to make sense of the past and thus to recollect events or heroes and recall their significance or sacrifice. This is aptly demonstrated through two interventions in the capital city, namely Freedom Park and Solomon Mahlangu Square. Freedom Park is located on the hill just above the CBD of Pretoria, called Salvokop. Freedom Park is a physical concretization of South Africa's experiences and symbols and a centre of knowledge to deepen the understanding of the nation. It narrates the story of South Africa

from the pre-colonial and colonial periods to the Apartheid Era and celebrates the new democracy and its connection to humanity and freedom (Freedom Park n.d.). The park includes a museum, a reflection pond, a water pool with everlasting flame and the circle of harmony. This circle is made up of nine large stones that were brought from the nine provinces in the country by traditional healers to symbolize the unification of the nation in the post-apartheid period (Figure 1). Solomon Mahlangu Square was originally built in Mamelodi, in the northeast of Pretoria, to commemorate the execution of a young struggle hero by the Apartheid government in 1970. In 2015 the square was redeveloped by the City of Tshwane (the municipal area including Pretoria) to recognize key anti-apartheid activists in formerly marginalized areas or townships by telling their various stories. The space, that resembles a park more than a square, includes an amphitheatre, green space, a wall of remembrance including the name of other struggle heroes and the statue of Solomon Mahlangu (Figure 2).

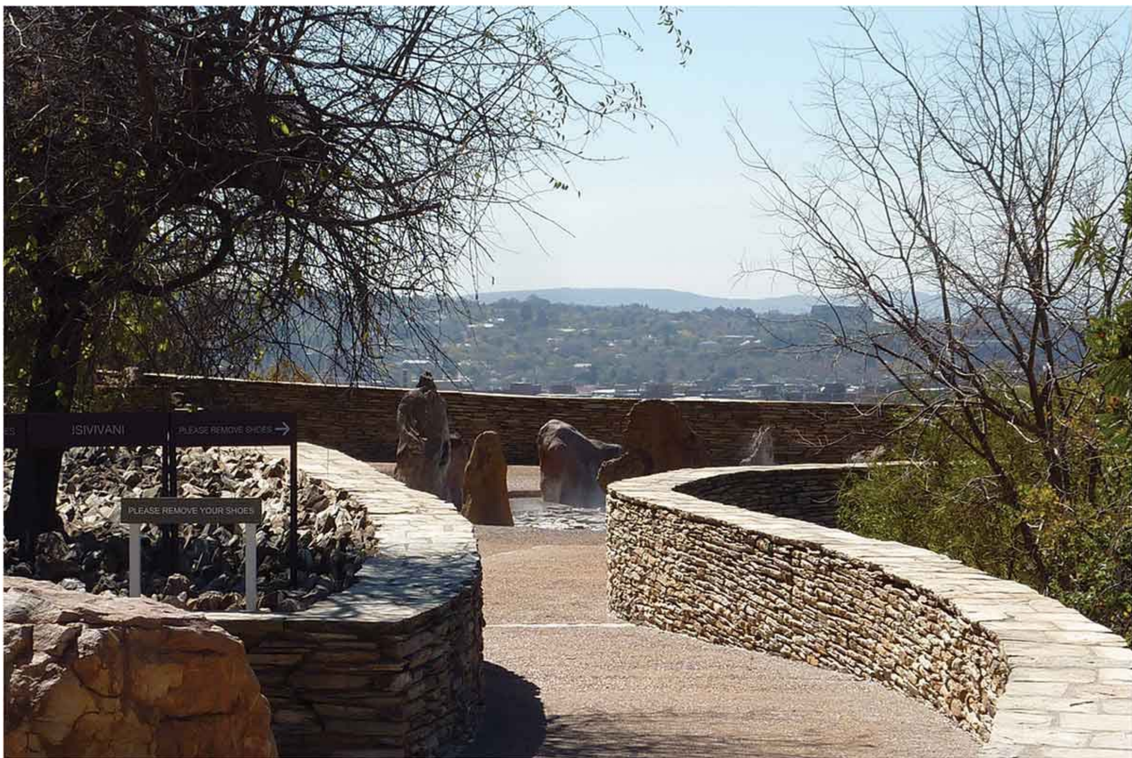

Figure 1. Circle with nine stones from all South African Provinces

Figure 2. Solomon Mahlangu Square with the amphitheatre in the front and the statue at the back

Both of these interventions were new and widely supported. However, as discussed above, it becomes more difficult when questions of intervention involve established spaces and whether to remove everything reminiscent of the past, including the name or only parts of the built form. Two approaches are highlighted, referring to the oldest spaces in the Pretoria CBD. Lilian Ngoyi Square is the second oldest public space and was established in the 1800s when Church Square became too overcrowded to accommodate both religious and trading functions. Consequently, Market Square was established to facilitate vigorous trading. However, in 1960s, Market Square was renamed after the South African prime minister from 1954–1958, J.G. Strijdom, who was renowned for his visions of racial segregation. Strijdom Square, featuring a large bronze statue of the prime minister, represented apartheid's sacred precinct and a symbol of Afrikaner identity (Hook 2005). Furthermore, it hosted the brutal killing of seven black people by Barend Strydom, an extreme right white supremacist in 1988. Hence, the tarnished image and memory associated with the space had to be changed. The square was renamed after Lilian Ngoyi, one of South Africa's leading female anti-apartheid activists and redesigned to include a landscaped space with pathways and vegetation leading to the Woman's Museum in the background (Figure 3). In another case, a more moderate approach was taken. The regeneration of Church Square, located in the centre of the CBD, did not give rise to the removal of the statue of Pres Paul Kruger. Although the statue became a centre of contention during the decolonization debates and student uprising in 2016 in Pretoria and had to be protected by barb wire to prevent its demolition, a decision was taken to include it in the upgrading of the square and to consider adding other statues alongside it. As a result, the revitalized space includes the statue with four Boer soldiers at the bottom. Due to the 2016 attempts to destroy it, it was fenced in (Figure 4). Despite the fence, it was again targeted in June 2020, when the pedestal of the Kruger statue and faces of the soldiers were sprayed with red paint. This led to an outcry by some groups who bemoaned the lack of respect for history and different people's roles. The action was also criticized from a heritage perspective. Some Cultural Groups, like the Federation for

Afrikaanse Culture (FAK), are now calling for the removal of the statue to a place where it can be protected (Van Eaden 2020). The reading of the arguments by the FAK faces much criticism and can be viewed as a desire to maintain whiteness and white privilege, linked to the insensitivity to the broader colonial context. It raises interesting questions about whose conception of the past should prevail. It asks, how is history remembered and does it have a place in a contemporary society that has evolved in agency, values and morals. Furthermore, it begs the question of how do we then physically present and preserve history and communicate its significance, without continuing the victimization and humiliation that the history once represented. This paves the way for the next stage.

Figure 3. Lilian Ngoyi Square with the Woman’s Museum in the background

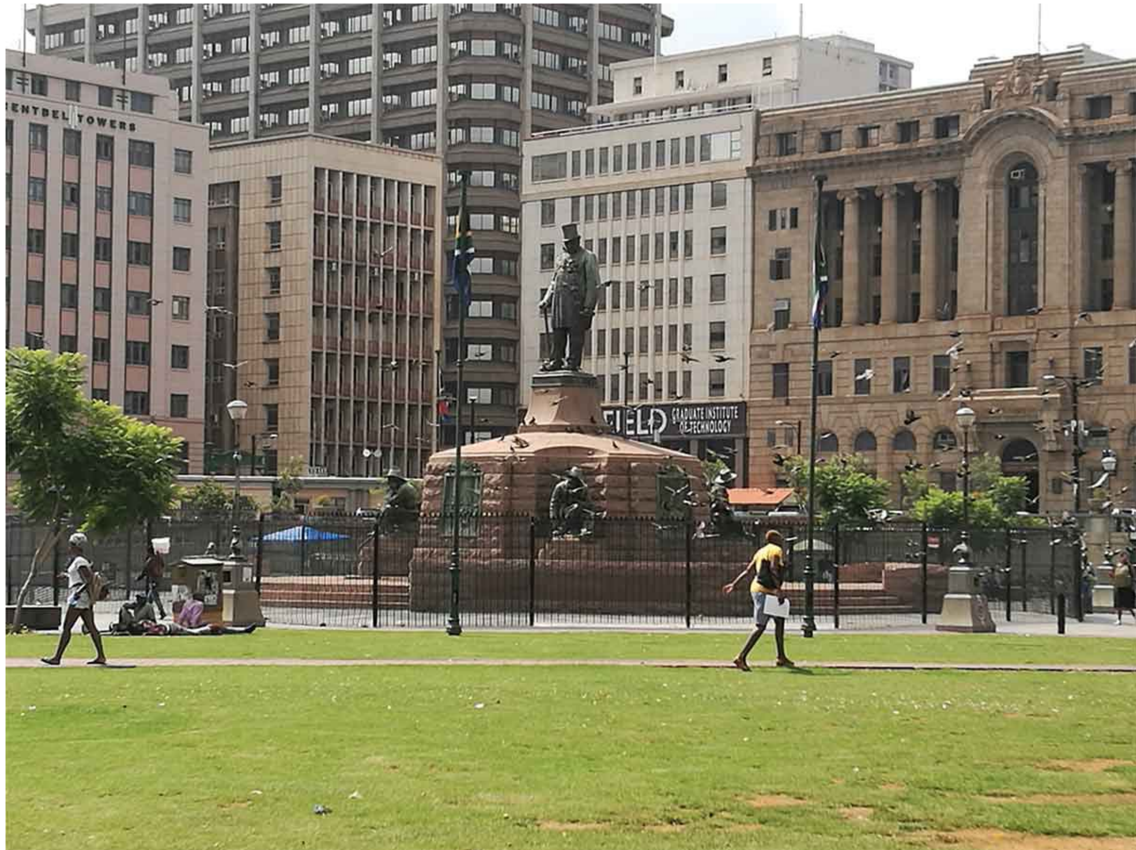

Figure 4. Church Square as photographed in 2020 after it has been upgraded

Re-imagine and transcend

The second stage of decolonization deals with the future and a re-imagination of what public space can become. It is concerned with a projection into the future to look for potential and various possibilities to rethink the meaning of existing and new representations of events and people in public space. This includes both the inclusion of alternative stories and/or the establishment of a dialogue between the old and the new to enable observers to reflect on the past and re-imagine an alternative future. Schmahmann (2019) argues for careful consideration of the educational role of public art in a public space, where monuments and sculptures become part of the curriculum with the capacity to elicit greater knowledge and understanding from the viewers. It may, therefore, be more pertinent to open up a dialogue between the old and the new or to introduce the dialogical moment, where new works of art are placed or designed in such a way to converse with or question older ones. This can then act as a counter monument (Schmahmann 2019).

On a more superficial level, there are some examples of retrofitted public spaces that include attempts at dialogical relationships in South Africa. In City Hall Square (formerly called Pretorius Square), the statue of Chief Tshwane was added in front of the City Hall in Pretoria without removing the other two statues. The first statue, nearest to Paul Kruger Avenue, is that of Marthinus Pretorius who founded the city in 1855. The middle one depicts his father, Andries Pretorius, after which he named Pretoria. The closest sculpture to the City Hall is

that of Chief Tshwane, the son of the African Chief who settled in the area 200 years ago and after whom the municipality was named in 2000 (Figure 5). This does not only present a historical view of the prominent leaders over time but also allows interrogation of who played what role in history.

Figure 5. Statues of Marthinus and Andries Pretorius and Chief Tshwane at City Hall Square, Pretoria

In this way, a step has been taken to create a new dialogical moment without the destruction of the former colonial symbols. The symmetric positioning, size and balance of the statues represent an acknowledgement and a celebration of different histories. However, scholars such as Hendricks (2018) have warned against uneven, performative and mere 'add and sir' projects that do not produce substantive transformation. In response to this, it can be argued that the decolonization attempts at the City Hall are not just a change in 'décor' but a compelling representation of history that evokes personal and political questions that challenge and educate the viewers. The City Hall, therefore, signifies a dialogue between the statues, as well as an intended constructive dialogue between the viewers which is necessary for the re-imaging of different possibilities.

In another example, different stories and the history of different people were represented in the Greenpoint Park in Cape Town. Preparations for the FIFA Soccer World Cup in 2010 presented an opportunity to redevelop the park and the sports facilities. The heritage aspects were not only addressed through the preservation of the river system but also the biodiversity garden that, according to the landscape architect, Marijke Honig, included a focus on 'people and plants'. As a result, it includes reference to how people ate, what they used for medicine and shelter. The garden, therefore, includes some domed huts, typical of the shelters in which

the original Khoikhoi herders were living in when they roamed the Cape about 500 years ago (Figure 6). Although this project represents the history of the Khoikhoi herders in an attempt to decolonize space, in a critical review, it can also be regarded as the 'makeshift' of decolonization, where indigenous communities are exotified and presented in a way to fashion their primitiveness and brand it for tourism purposes. In simple terms, it can be the use of the 'other' in an ad-hoc and opportunist manner, just as the West has historically done to the South. However, what decolonizes such representations, is when there is a shift in the power relations and institutional inclusion of the 'other' that is represented, without this, there can be no decolonization.

Figure 6. Representations of the structure of the Khoikhoi shelters in Greenpoint Park, Cape Town

The re-imagination of public space and the creation of dialogical relationships can take on various forms at different scales, in and between public space. A powerful example is the juxtapositioning of Freedom Park with the Voortrekker Monument on the hill just opposite the one on which Freedom Park was built. The Voortrekker Monument, an icon of Afrikaner identity and nationalism, was designed and inaugurated in 1938 to commemorate the 'Groot Trek' of 1835 (loosely translated as the Big Move and conceptualized as the move of God's chosen people to the promised land). The Dutch Immigrants left the Cape Colony and moved inland towards the north to escape the rule of the British in search of independence. Here they encountered many African tribes such as Zulus and Xhosas, which led to numerous wars, the most well-known was the Struggle of Blood River, where many settlers fought against the Zulus. The history of the monument is contested and its interpretation has been re-read throughout history. However, no physical changes have been made to the original structure to

formally persuade or alter the historical narrative (Marschall 2010). As such, the monument still stands as a symbol of Afrikaner culture, spirituality and ideology.

The development of Freedom Park as a counter-monument on the opposite hill began in the year 2000. Freedom Park as discussed earlier was established as a site honouring and preserving the history of all South Africans. It is considered a rival but equal in significance to the Voortrekker Monument and regarded as an alternative narrative creating a spatial dialogue. Jacobs (2014) has argued that both spaces represent heterotopias. She argues that they have a tendency to associate with only a select group and that they are exclusive because of their location and entrance fee requirements. Marschall (2009, 2010) also argues that the spaces are focal points for tourists, however, they do not represent the world which they look down upon. This article seeks to acknowledge the criticisms of the two spaces, however, it argues that despite the critique, the spaces provoke a necessary physical and symbolic dialogue, and present the slow process of including and acknowledging different worlds. Freedom Park and the Voortrekker Monument contain stories of the past, the present and the desired future in a manner that educates, challenges and/or validates history from different communities. These types of spaces physically represent the challenges and opportunities for decolonizing public space, collective memory and public politics at large. Moreover, they present the fine line between the (re)interpretation, (re)reading and (re)knowing of the old and the new to (re)imagine the future. This paves the way for the next section.

Transform and renew

As pointed out, decoloniality is about how we transform the world. It is concerned with actions to touch and feel the other that was excluded or previously inferiorised (Fanon 1952). This process of transformation, therefore, involves seeing the world as many worlds that exist simultaneously and transform our thinking and doing to include all these worlds. This relates to the ethical values we adopt and how we portray or represent these values. Winkler (2018) proposes an engagement with resistant text to illuminate untold stories and allow for a pluriversal understanding to emerge. Maldonado-Torres (2011) calls for greater integration and decolonial love to transcend the old divisions. Kessi (2019) appeals for engagement with the everyday life experience of everyone, particularly those that were formerly excluded. This should involve the creation of a decolonial aesthetic that includes and recognize all, where every human being must be seen as a human being. This stage, therefore, needs to merge the past and the future into the present to find relevant solutions for a specific time and place. To do this, we need ongoing discussions (Kessi 2019) and new ways to enable agency and allow ongoing conversations and forms of empowerment.

As noted by several leading urban designers (Madanipour 1996; Carmona 2014; Lang 2017), urban design is both a product and a process. While the previous stages tended to deal mostly with the product, true transformation in terms of decolonization also need to emphasize the process. Therefore, the decolonization of public space also needs to involve the users of the space or the inhabitants of surrounding areas to relate their stories and allow a new story of a place to emerge. This is a crucial part of Regenerative Development and Design (Mang, Haggart, and Regenesis 2016) and arguably also a valuable mechanism to facilitate a process of transformation and renewal towards the decolonization of public space. An example refers to the urban upgrading of Warwick Junction in Durban, a huge inter-modal exchange and trading hub. Greater community engagement and a deeper understanding of the nature of the place allowed the urban designers and city council officials to surpass their original ideas to remove the informal traders, but rather to accommodate them in the redevelopment of the

precinct and the public space through the provision of different types of market spaces and stalls. The result has been vibrant public spaces bustling with people and an acknowledgement of both identity and culture in addressing everyday needs.

An important part of the process of renewal is therefore not to have a selective renewal or acknowledgement where some are 'in' and others 'out'. This would constitute a type of new-colonization, where some cultural groups feel left out or abandoned. A case in point is the Khoisan people, who represent the earliest people that inhabited the Southern Part of African. They have been camping on the lawns of the Union Buildings for more than a year (Figure 7) and demand that president Ramaphosa recognize the languages of the Khoisan as official South African languages, as well as declare the Khoisan the first nation of the country and rightful owners of the land (Pretoria News 2019).

Figure 7. Resistance in public space: representatives of the San people camping in the Union Buildings Park calling for an acknowledgement of their culture and language (January 2020)

In this way, public space can also become a place of resistance to enforce, advocate or provoke decolonization and renewal. In connecting the case of Green Point Park (discussed earlier) to the resistance and peaceful protests exercised by the Khoisan at the Union Buildings, it becomes apparent that the decolonization of public spaces is more than mere 'decoration' and ad-hoc ornaments arranged in public spaces. The article argues for a true reshuffling of power, acknowledgement of different communities and vanquishing of structural violence before public spaces can be decolonized. Without this, public space decolonization projects will merely result in decorative attempts that will be put to shame when citizens use their agency to claim for equal recognition and participation in society.

Public spaces can lead and provoke the discussions and debates to decolonize as illustrated by the Khoisan at the Union Buildings, however, at some point, the public space needs to transform and represent the results of this provocation.

Conclusion

Across the world, much is discussed about decolonization, yet, little is being said about how to decolonize public spaces. In South Africa, the discussion started in all earnestness in 2016 with the #Rhodes must fall movement and has recently flared up again. The narrative of decolonization and its modus operandi includes opposing views which have led to various actions, particularly in public spaces. Statues all around the world have faced much scrutiny, whilst others received the all-clear, many have been defaced, fenced-in, covered or even removed. Such actions and associated debates signify a need for a deeper interrogation of, in the words of Jonathan Jansen, 'how to make decolonisation work on the ground' or in the case of this paper, how to decolonize public space.

This paper set out to explore the multiple understandings of decolonization. In essence, it relates to misrepresentation and a lack of acknowledgement of alternative knowledge systems, as well as issues of identity and culture. The challenges facing decolonization in practice are therefore related to knowledge production, transfer and circulation and how this is represented through various symbols in public space. This relates to where knowledge and/or symbols are produced and (re)produced, and how it is represented and accepted. In practice, the meaning of a symbol in public place can often extend beyond what is usually thought of as knowledge systems, as illustrated by examples.

To address this, the article argues for a threefold process, namely to 1) remember, to 2) reimagine and 3) transform. The first stage deals with the past, through removing symbols of oppression or celebrating new meaningful events. This should be done without continuing the victimization and humiliation that the history once represented. The second stage is concerned with the future and a projection of various possibilities. Introducing dialogues between the old and new can offer one way to re-imagine alternative conversations. The third stage transcends the differences and attempts to renew through the inclusion of all worlds and all stakeholders. It, therefore, highlights the importance of both the physical product and its symbols, as well as the process with all the relevant people. This offers various options to urban designers to respond in different ways related to the nature and meaning of different public spaces.

Decolonization does not have to be violent. It can encompass a process of healing, drawing on learning from Regenerative Development and Design and following pleas by leading decolonialists such as Fanon and Malnado-Toress. The paper argues that the process of decolonization should focus on potential and the co-evolution of multiple stories of different worlds in various public spaces. The decolonization of public space should therefore not focus on 'othering', but on acknowledging specificities. Only in transcending the dualisms can we move towards truly integrated spaces celebrating everyone's stories.

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