

CHAPTER SIX

INFORMING INHABITATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

It seems to me that the generation of young architects who, like myself, came out of World War II, was motivated by certain passions: we were determined to change the world, nothing less. We realized that mankind was faced by all sorts of predictable disasters - population explosion, hence wars, disease, poverty, and so on. We believed, quite sincerely, that modern architecture could do something about all these things – especially about housing the poor, and about creating a viable, healthy, democratic (and, incidentally, beautiful) communities. We believed that we could slay the automobile, defeat fascism, and abolish disease. We were starry-eyed, and beautifully naïve (Blake 1993:xii).

This chapter:

- Construes an architectural theory of free inhabitation for the domestic architecture of the Silent Subversives.
- Considers the theory as a contributing narrative towards current debates concerning housing densities.

6.2 SELECTED LITERATURE

Here, we review literature to investigate the fifth sub question:

What theory underpins the Silent Subversives approach to dwelling that contributes to housing debates?

This chapter draws on many of the sources from the previous chapters. Additional literature specific to this chapter has a twofold organisation based on the informants for theory and the grounded implications thereof.

6.2.1 Informative theory

Due to our adoption of a hermeneutic methodology, it seems appropriate to refer to hermeneutic philosophical texts related to dwelling. Preferring to move beyond the universalising phenomenological and ontological tendencies of Heidegger's 'Building Dwelling Thinking' from *Poetry, Language, Thought*. (1975), Kim Dovey's (1999: 39-52) 'Place' in his book *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form*, swings any ideas of essentialist or ant-essentialist everyday lived experiences in line with Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau's social free constructions more appropriate for our discussion. The hermeneutic accounts in Dripp's *The First House: Myth, Paradigm, and the Task of Architecture* (1999) and Joseph Rykwert's *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural*

History (1997) offer us an 'origin' from which we can measure any liberated shift for our post-war theoretical construal. Although broad, Neil Leach's 'Belonging' in *AA Files* (2003) and his 'Drag Spaces' in *Static* (2006) allow us to situate an understanding of identity, belonging and appropriation particular to our cohort.

6.2.2 Grounding implications

To set the scene for post-war housing densification and urban predictions, we refer to Coltman's 'Suburbs and the City – Conflict of Survival' and Ivan Schlapobersky's 'Housing in the year 2000', both in *Domestic Architecture* supplement to *S.A. Architectural Record* (1965). In order to consider the implications of our previous chapter's spatial conception on housing, various sources supporting historic courtyard typologies and its relevance for housing futures are necessary. The main readings include Hoffman's *One-Family Housing: Solutions to an Urban Dilemma* (1967) and Sam Davis' *The Form of Housing* (1977). Academic papers by Gerald Steyn 'African courtyard architecture: Typology, Art, Science and Relevance' (2005) and Lone Poulson and Melinda Silverman's 'Design Strategies for the Densification of Low Income Housing', bring the discussed topic into the twenty-first century. For pedagogical implications, this chapter selects Paul Sander's 'Defining a relevant architecture in South Africa' in *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly* 4 (2000).

6.3 THEORETICAL CONSTRUAL

6.3.1 Secondary Simplicity

The idiosyncrasy of modern man to outdo the 'Joneses' will lead to nothing else but pure chaos, waste and a decline of morality. It is strange to note that the poorer and simpler the people, the greater their community spirit. Their houses do not scream for recognition; rather they blend into each other as if an artist had allocated each place in the community. This unity, the feeling of belonging to something greater than one's material possessions, is what results in a true architecture – simple in context, yet complex in structure (Bergs 1965:10).

It has been said¹ how the economic circumstances of the Great Depression and the Second World War influenced the frugal dispositions of our agents, which one argues, inclined their ability to improvise simply in the design of their dwellings². In Bourdieu's (1993:5) terms, these dispositions or habitus, after "a long process of inculcation", we argue would have become their "second nature". In this regard then, we speak theoretically of their frugal character as a 'secondary simplicity', which they divulged in their domestic architecture.

Historically, architectural discourse has used the word 'simple' in too many ways to include in this thesis. For instance, Adrian Forty (2000: 249) reminds us that "simple' must be one of the most overworked

¹ See Chapter 2.

² For example, the case of the Trek Boers caught up in the Anglo-Boer War, the poor white situation and Schmiki's émigré influences on Eaton. Fisher (1998:133-135) elaborates on how the "Economics of Hardship" translate into "enthusiasm for innovation".

words in the architectural vocabulary". One can argue that whether in eighteenth century, nineteenth century, modernist or in Venturi's³ terms, 'simplicity' has mostly been described aesthetically. In architectural discourse, the barometer of 'simple' origins lies in Vitruvius' mythical narrative of the first dwelling that also implied the "origins of political structure, the formation of language, and finally the birth of architecture" (Dripps 1999: 3). Important for this thesis, is how the notions of the so-called 'primitive hut' refers to 'primary simplicity', the memory of nature and inhabitation, or the first act of appropriation prior to stylistics (Rykwert 1997:14, 75).



Figure 6.1. Left: Black Forest Farmhouse (Harries 2000: 153). **Right:** Pierneef's Boerehuis, 1920 (Fisher 1989:7).

Theorists from Laugier to Lloyd Wright to Le Corbusier appealed to romanticised ideals of "primitive living", while the transcendentalists⁴ reduced simple living to an utopian essence exemplified by "the little hut in the woods" (Rykwert 1997:16-17). In phenomenological discourse, Heidegger thinks of the Black Forest farmhouse (Fig.6.1.Left) as the building that invokes dwelling (Harries 2000:152). Irrespective of any urbanity, these accounts situate simple living within the rural landscape. In the same vein, Fisher (1998:137) suggests Third Vernacular Regionalists, (represented by the Afrikaner) were "imbued with a strong *genius loci* or spirit of the place because of direct ties to the land both through their history and by their enterprise" (Fig. 6.1.Right). Yet, more specific to the post-war generation, Chipkin (1993:294) writes:

In the 1950s they designed simple, low-profiled houses ... These domestic prototypes were based on the captivating doctrine of the 'ultimate simplicity of means', a description used by the Architectural Review and borrowed from the Australian commentator Robin Boys.

Taking the post-war situation and the inability to regress to paradisiac origins of simplicity, the theoretical position considered for the Silent Subversives here rather reconciles their childhood experiences with their adult architectural education more aligned with Bourdieu's thinking⁵. In this light,

³ For further reading, see Venturi, R. 1966. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art. "Venturi did not reject simplicity outright as an aim, only when it is forced" (Rorty 2000:250).

⁴ Transcendentalism refers broadly to New England (USA) thinkers influenced by philosophical romanticism, exemplified by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) and Henry Thoreau (1817-62). By referring to nature as truth, they were advocates of social reforms rejecting materialism (Mautner 1997:570).

⁵ See Chapter 5.

'Secondary Simplicity' continues humble sensibilities of past living as a spontaneous 'second sense' adjusted for everyday post-war living expressed architecturally. As per the introductory definitions of this thesis, Harries (2000:4) hermeneutically defines the term 'architecture' that differentiates between architecture as an event and buildings as merely physical. Consequently, this thesis considers the dwellings of the Silent Subversives as the receptacles that accommodate social event, appropriation and thereby belonging. The challenge for our agents during the restrictive burden of apartheid was how to find ways of living freely under subjugation – a silent subversive-ness. The habitus is a *non-natural* silent embodiment that changes unreflexively and constantly by circumstances. For example, childhood experiences, education and socio-political conditions bring about a "principle of improvisations" always bound by a continuity relative to a primary (simple) origin (Bourdieu 2005:46).

Lefebvre warned against any form of 'reductivism' or "the tendency to privilege a single concept, and make everything else fit that concept" (Forty 2000:248). Therefore, both the simplicity of past living (phenomenological home) on one hand and the modernist stylistic simplicity (*sachliche* function) on the other hand we could regard as "reduced models". Stylistic labels such as *minimalism* therefore become dangerous. Instead, one argues that 'secondary simplicity', in line with Lefebvre (1971:88), straddles dialectically and non-cognitively between the two concepts of 'lived experience' and 'spatial production'. This then also ties in with Bourdieu's reciprocity of habitus to habitat whereby "space frames social practice" (Dovey 2005:285).

The habitus is taken for granted rather than consciously conceived; a form of ideology in the sense of a socially constructed vision perceived as natural; culture seen as nature. Its importance derives largely from its thoughtlessness or *doxa* – its silence (Dovey 2005:284).



Figure 6.2. Left: Framed enclosed space. Bernard Rudofsky, house in São Paulo, Brazil, 1940s (Mock 1946: 89). **Right:** "Space takes precedence over mass". Barrie Biermann, Architect's House, Durban, 1962 (Beck 1985: 46).

What avoids Bourdieu's theory from becoming a *reductivist* concept is its applicability to the infinite situations of diverse agents, albeit collectively due to similar lifestyles and similar conditions. Although, different to the specifics of region, an architectural similarity can therefore occur irrespective of geography. Perhaps overlooked by regional theorists, Amos Rapoport (1969:420) in his study to establish house forms in relation to different cultural regions ironically concludes, "that it is not site,

climate, or materials that determine either the way of life or the habitat". In this regard, habitat has the potential to transcend the limitations of region (Fig. 6.2. Left).

We have previously referred⁶ to the theoretical parallels of South Africa, the United States and Europe all striving for a newfound post-war freedom. Therefore, we avoid reducing the domestic architecture to a 'Regionalist' essence. When Biermann (1985:46) speaks of a 'Regional Vernacular', he does so by synthesizing the "old-fashioned modern design" as a cultural tradition with "economic necessity" as a condition of lifestyle. Although, Biermann appropriates Natal (now Kwazulu-Natal) as "his region", Morphet (1998:154) reminds us "he always paralleled the region with other parts of the world"⁷. More important than regional style, was Biermann's "sense of well being...true dwelling" – hence inhabitation (Wang. D. Artefacts) (Fig. 6.2. Right).

In light of the above, we refer to Leach's (2003:1-2) critique of 'Critical Regionalism' that is only preoccupied with "questions of form, as though cultural identity is somehow constituted by form alone". Instead, Leach advises architectural theorists to take heed of cultural theory that recognizes cultural devices, whereby "culture is not constituted by a system of objects alone, but by a discourse that imbues these objects with meaning". Leach (2003:2-3) exemplifies:

Thus Critical Regionalism, for example, in investing form with such significance, does not recognise how the same form will take on radically different connotations in a different cultural milieu ... In order for architecture to be understood in terms of cultural identity, some kind of identification with architecture must have taken place. But how exactly does this identification occur?

6.3.2 Silent Scenography

There were no preconceived ideas, no reference to fashionable magazines, no limitation in style. Thank Heavens! For "style" is so very often merely a façade lifted from the past with rooms placed behind (Schlapobersky 1965:32).

More specific to this thesis, is how identification beyond stylistic scenography ensues in the domestic architecture of the Silent Subversives. Robert Shmiki provides a clue for our Pretoria cohort with his belief that buildings were not "stylistically bound" but rather that "residential buildings should form the backdrop against which the lives of the owners should be acted out" (Jooste 2000: 48). We have demonstrated⁸ the mid-century architect's 'background' spatial-conception to insure that occupants not only *acted out* their everyday lives freely but socially in relation to others. In line with Leach's (2003:3) model of identification⁹ as 'belonging', we can therefore say that through repetitive everyday

⁶ See Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

⁷ He saw Alexander's Greece in Durban's Grey Street; Hindu temples and Attic temples; Drakensberg Khoisan paintings with those at Altamira and Lascaux. Durban to Venice. Bierman's 'silent lecture' at the Durban Art Gallery consisted of showing parallel slides; one set Durban and one Venice. He thought the city should gather the will 'to drop the image of a lower middle class English bathing town and really get some touch of the international style" Morphet 1998:154).

⁸ See Chapter 5.

⁹ Leach (2006: 3) draws from Judith Butler's concept of 'performativity' for notions of identity and belonging.

'performativity', the Silent Subversives allowed identification with their domestic architecture, not by virtue of stylistic scenography, but through spatial inhabitation.

For many of our agents, existentialist living in various degrees during apartheid becomes "identity politics as field of individual empowerment", which allows "the possibility of political agency". Repetitive performativity permits "subverting received norms" and the "power to question and subvert that which it cites" (Leach 2003:6). We may hermeneutically deduce that in the Silent Subversive domestic architecture, the building form alone is not the architecture, but serves as the scenography for the act of existential and subversive living to take place, albeit silently.

For if identity is performed, then the space in which the performativity takes place can be seen as a stage. After a certain number of performances that stage will no longer seem neutral. It will be imbued with associations of the activities that took place there, on the part of those who witnessed those activities. If identity is a performative construct – if it is acted out like some kind of 'filmscript' – then architecture could be understood as a kind of 'filmset' (Leach 2003:7).

As we have seen¹⁰, the post-war domestic stage of performativity focused on the public or social zone as a meaningful 'communicative space' wrought through spatial appropriation. We can therefore say that the continuity of landscaped open planned space, courtyards and terraces are the stage and the built-ins are the props. The structural disposition in the form of walls and roof are consequently the scenography (film set) supporting the act. Through personal dispositions enabling a true understanding of intertextuality and everyday life as the 'script', the Silent Subversive architect was able to choreograph domestic architecture for autonomous inhabitation.

The agent engaged in practice knows the world ... without objectifying distance, takes it for granted, precisely because he is caught up in it, bound up with it; he inhabits it like a garment (*un habit*) or a familiar habitat. He feels at home in the world, because the world is also in him, in the form of habitus (Bourdieu 2000: 142-3).

Studies on the relationship of scenic design to architecture and cities¹¹ is of interest here but too exhaustive to cover in this thesis. In the mid-century, film designers often use the contemporary house itself as the cinematic scene (Fig. 6.3. Left). Generally, the objective of scenic design¹² is the production of appropriate elements to support and enhance the narrative of the play been acted out. The question then arises: which scenography would be appropriate for the act of silent domestic subversion during apartheid? With regards "collapsing a particular political ideology" in the first place "on to a particular form", Leach (2006:4) warns of the "mistake to map certain activities on to certain forms". In what Sudjic (2005) might describe as *The Edifice Complex*, "South African architects were required to give

¹⁰ See Chapter 5.

¹¹ For further reading, see David Clarke. 1997. *The Cinematic City*. London: Routledge.

¹² For further reading, see Brockett, O.G., Margaret Mitchell, M. and Linda Hardberger, L. 2010. *Making the Scene: A History of Stage Design and Technology in Europe and the United States*. Tobin Theatre Arts Fund, distributed by University of Texas Press.

substance” to apartheid’s segregated activities reflected stylistically as modernist iconography (Peters 2004:537-547).



Figure 6.3. Left: Setting for Tom Ford’s 2009 Film *A Single Man* 2009, John Lautner, Schaffer Residence, Montrose, California, 1949 (<https://hookedonhouses.net/2011/01/16/lautner-house-a-single-man/>) **Right:** Silent subversive scenography. Gawie Fagan, Ladybrand Volkskas Bank, 1958 (Siverman 1998: 138).

In contrast, subversive scenography silently neutralises itself. How? Firstly, we consider the material properties in relation to the spatial conception where we have previously discussed¹³ a twofold attempt at neutralizing. Following a gradual breakdown of the wall as window, contemporary architects arrived at a neutral frame in an attempt to rid the wall entirely. Melinda Silvermann (1998:129) implies how the previously discussed¹⁴ Afrikaner Volkskas bank later adopted a modernist idiom for their Afrikaner corporate ideology including the 1950s banks of Gabriel (Gawie) Fagan. In light of our discussion here, one argues that Fagan’s bank designs although suited to the characteristics of their small towns, were less about “ideological fervour” and also about a subtle subversive-ness against the established corporate image of the other banks with the breaking down of the wall as device (Fig. 6.3. Right). Gwendoline Fagan (2016: 34) explains:

Hurter, the general manager of Volkskas, asked Gawie whether he really constructed large windows on the street to be appropriate for a bank. Gawie answered him: “Surely our bank has nothing to hide?” After which he often heard Mr Hurter say” “Volkskas has nothing to hide”.

The active occupant experiences the scenography of what remains - the material screens - spatially under a ‘floating’ roof. Berg (1965:8) emphasises that architecture is thus not mere building and that in the sense of form, material is “to serve both the practical and emotional needs of mankind”. The architecture *is* the ensemble of material form and more importantly inhabitation. In order to understand how materiality (culture) neutralises itself as blending into landscape (nature) we refer to Berg (1965:8) citing Frank Lloyd Wright¹⁵:

¹³ See Chapter 5.

¹⁴ See Chapter 2.

¹⁵ South African architects purchased Hitchcock’s book on Frank Lloyd Wright for MOMA from Foyles Bookstore, 12-14 Church Street, Cape Town.

To build a house one needs to know how to use materials. These give form to the building. 'Form' should not be mistaken for 'shape'. 'Form' is an abstract character which will result from certain functions pertaining to the problem, whilst 'shape' is the final physical outline the building presents to the viewer. The architect must be a psychologist, since materials can be used in many different ways and produce different emotional reactions. Materials change in colour, texture and character under different conditions of lighting. This is true of all materials. As a pool of water is affected by the tranquillity of the turbulence of its surroundings, so the material is affected by the quality of light in its environment, Light and shade are the most important elements that can be used as architectural expression [sic] and they are free!

Next, we consider the *architecture parlance*. What could the neutralised physical form unconsciously be saying? Historical geneology and pragmatics aside, one posits that Dovey's interpretation of Bourdieu's notion of 'silent complicity' is relevant here. Dovey (1999:1-2) argues that if architecture and urban design 'frames' meaningful everyday life in the disposition of spaces we inhabit, then the built form (scenography) as a necessary frame is "neutral to the life within". In the case of ideologies, such as apartheid, "the more that the structures and representations of power become embedded in the framework of everyday life, the less questionable they become and the more effectively they can work".

He [de Certeau] celebrates the possibilities of resistance to any disciplinary regime. As disciplinary power in space becomes more totalizing, it also becomes more available for subversion ... de Certeau suggests that the most totalizing sites of oppression can be sites of liberation. Resistances and appropriations can insinuate themselves into the very pathways of discipline (Dovey 1999:47).

If that is the case, then one could reverse argue that if the framework is entrenched in daily routine the subversive intertextual collusion effects the frame as silent and neutral. Therefore, in Bourdieu's terms the silent *parlance* whether submissive or subversive, has the most effect. Exemplified by the conditioned wall, the effectiveness of any scenography itself in the domestic architecture of our agents as a preconceived "subversive metaphor", which Pienaar (2017:46) considers for Eaton is questionable¹⁶.

Architecture for its own sake is utterly void – a cold, lifeless husk. To serve human needs and aspirations makes it noble and gives it its only status (Meyer 1965:16).

6.3.3 Free Inhabitation

It asks what architecture can do to make us feel at home beyond housing. Can we find techniques that: - create a framework by which we can define ourselves in relation to the world around us; - bundle, reveal and domesticate the technologies that allow us to do so; - define space that remains open to all interpretations of daily life and open to the landscape around the place of dwelling; - create shelter without alienation ... can we imagine, and perhaps only imagine, a way of being at home beyond the house? (Betsky 2008:186).

¹⁶ For further reading, see Pienaar, M. 2013. *The Norman Eaton Legacy: A Critical appraisal of the documentation of his domestic oeuvre*.

It would be presumptuous to delve deeply here into one of the most deliberated topics of philosophy – ‘freedom’, ‘liberty’, ‘autonomy’, ‘free will’, ‘political freedom’ and so on¹⁷. Rather of interest is for us to *situate* our notion of free inhabitation within these studies. We legitimise the importance thereof based on the previously discussed¹⁸ post-war preoccupation of expressing matters of “freedom, democracy and human rights” for a new contemporary architecture. In brief, free inhabitation falls within one concept of liberty that Isaiah Berlin (1909-97) in 1958 termed ‘Positive Freedom’ (*freedom to*). Berlin’s first concept is where one has the choice to be free, but “there are still obstacles to take full advantage of your opportunities” causing one “to take the rational option”. Dualistically, the second concept Berlin termed “Negative Freedom’ (*freedom from*) as liberty where “It doesn’t matter whether or not I actually take advantage of the opportunities open to me: I am still free to the extent that I could, if I chose, take advantage of them” (Warburton 2001:5-11).



Figure 6.4. **Left:** Dizziness of positive freedom (Gardiner 1988: 112). **Middle:** Negative Freedom. Photo by Harry Shunk, Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void*, Paris, October 23, 1960 (Noever 2004: 57). **Right:** Being and Nothingness (Sartre 1969: cover).

One aligns the notion of *free* inhabitation for our agents *becoming* positive freedom (Fig. 6.4. Left), while the attempts of the generations that followed them one argues are a sense of negative freedom (Fig. 6.4. Middle) and thereby an illusion of *freed* inhabitation (for example the freedom generation of the 1960s and today's virtual reality). Immediately after the Second World War, social psychologists such as Erich Fromm (1900-1980) wrote about “liberation from domination”. However, after the war, Fromm (1942:2) pointed out the obscurity of freedom.

Now taking the above layers of *Secondary Simplicity* and *Silent Scenography* into consideration, we avoid constructing an essentialist stylistic concept, but construe principles for the domestic architecture of the Silent Subversives that we dub ‘Free Inhabitation’. From the first layer we deduct a notion of primary inhabitation as a Vitruvian mythical *first simplistic act* of appropriation and language in nature. From there, ‘the memory of [lost] nature’ re-enacts *dwelling* in Heidegger’s phenomenological sense of

¹⁷ For further reading, see Warburton, N. 2001. *Freedom: An Introduction with Readings*. London and New York: Routledge. See also, Watson, G. 2003. *Free Will*. London: Oxford University Press.

¹⁸ See Chapters 2 and 5.

being in the world (*dasein*). Supposedly, the word dwelling denotes 'to dwell' as in 'to stay'¹⁹, understood consciously (thinking) as being tied to rural land and thereby fixed to place.

The word for peace, *Friede*, means the free, *das Freie*; and *frei* means preserved from harm and danger, preserved *from* something, safeguarded. To free actually means to spare. The sparing itself consists not only in the fact that we do not harm the one whom we spare. Real sparing is something *positive* and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own essence, when we return it specifically to its essential being, when we "free" it in the proper sense of the word into a preserve of peace. To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence (Heidegger 1975:351).

However, considering the political situation the Silent Subversive found themselves in, any return to a romanticised ontological experience could only be a *secondary simplistic act* of illusionary autonomic emancipation in the suburbs. This aligns more with the transcendental philosophies of Sartre (Being and Nothing) (Fig. 6.4. Right), Fromm (Freedom and Fear) and Kierkegaard (Freedom and Self) Bourdieu (Habitus and Habitat) and de Certeau (Action in Everyday Life). In general, Fromm (2001:11-17) describes a commonality:

Common to all these theories is the assumption that human nature has no dynamism of its own and that psychological changes are to be understood in terms of the development of new "habits" as an adaptation to new cultural patterns ... When man is born the stage is set for him ... This does not mean he cannot try, together with others, to effect certain economic and political changes...but in the very essence of life: the need to be related to the world outside of oneself, the need to avoid aloneness ... yet he may be related to ideas, values, or at least social patterns that give him a feeling of communion and "belonging" ... the more he gains freedom in the sense of emerging from the original oneness [primary simplicity] with man and nature and the more he becomes an "individual", has no choice but to unite himself with the world in the spontaneity of love and productive work or else seek a kind of security by such ties with the world as destroy his freedom and the integrity of his individual self.

One argues that during the heyday of apartheid (1950s to 1960s), any post-war cohort as "a cog to serve a purpose outside himself" needed to consider "Submission versus Subversion" (Fromm 2001: 95). A silent subversion would transcend the status quo. Architecturally, by separating the physical form (scenography) from the act of subversion, a free inhabitation comes about. It is in this sense that one can say, taking clues from each of the above philosophers, notions of transcendence²⁰ alters Heidegger's conception of primary fixed inhabitation *becoming* secondary free inhabitation, albeit within the intellect of Dovey's (1999: 46-47) "illusions of freedom".

He [Lefebvre] reverses the notion that home is a haven, and although depression, famine, and war are beyond us, we can manage our own lives. In place of this duality between everyday life and public affairs ... he points to a dialectical relationship between where we live, how we live, what we consider natural, and decisions which have been made and are being made (or not being made by people operating in government and the corporate state ... But beyond the bleakness of an

¹⁹ The German word for dwelling *Wohnen* implies keeping safe and staying.

²⁰ See Chapter 5. In particular, *Silent Transcendence*.

everyday life regulated by the needs of consumption, Lefebvre points to the cracks in the concrete made by that which cannot wholly be repressed; The awakening of sexual desire and love; the undeniable delights of play; and the allure of the festival, the bursting of work-time and prefabricated leisure experienced in celebration ... a fruitful urban life (Lefebvre 1971: ix).

Similar to Hans-George Gadamer's (1986:13) concept of "free play" on a structured field²¹, the mid-century suburban architecture allowed unencumbered social activity on an open or split-levelled platform. In his tribute, Hallen (1991:9) conveys how Biermann his business partner "was of liberal mind and in the struggle with the limits of freedom vis-à-vis order, he would come down on the side of freedom for the creative in design". The post-war *status quo* established 'order' for our cohort in which the aim of an autonomic expression of everyday life occurred behind closed doors²². In his introductory essay to Gwen Fagan's (2016:2) book, Peter Rich refers to the Fagan couples' "independent belief in one's autonomy" achieved through the "balance of routine and creativity". Julian Cooke (1985: 61) describes how his generational compatriot Amancio Guedes introduced "a comparatively dry Southern African profession" to the idea of "an architect as autonomous artist". Nevertheless, Dovey (1999:183) settles:

Rather I want to conclude with some questions about the prospects for designers who wish to engage in making places which embody something of a quest for equity, justice and liberty ... The first is that there is no zone of autonomy or neutrality in which to practice architecture and urban design. Such practice exists only with those who control land and resources ... The second is that the built environment does not inherently oppress or liberate; rather people use built form in the attempt to do so. There are no styles or forms of liberty or oppression. Any built form can serve the interests for which it was not intended ... Oppression and liberation are forms of social practice which are mediated by built form.

6.3.4 Historical Epilogue

As the opening quote to this chapter reminds, the young post war generation was "starry-eyed, and beautifully naïve". Anyhow, we recall²³ the seeds that post-war intellectuals had planted in the 1950s and the 1960s for the noisy complicity of the 'freedom' generation to follow. Nearly a decade younger than our cohort, we advocate Danie Theron (1936-2011) to represent a generation caught between 'secondary simplicity' and 'new complexity'. Theron (1972:53) acknowledges that the "decade of the sixties represented in many ways a watershed in South African political, economic, and cultural life. In architecture, especially domestic architecture, one could argue that the sixties in particular was a transitional decade with overlapping theoretical stances regarding inhabitation.

In *Houses of the Sixties: Architect-designed Homes in South Africa 1960-1970*, Theron (1972:53-65), based on the premise of a "greater degree of sophistication and affluence", distinguishes the domestic architecture of the sixties from those of the "previous two decades". Despite providing examples from our cohort that clearly demonstrate simplicity, Theron hypothesises that the new condition required "more complex planning and form requirements". Disregarding social practice, he returns to historic

²¹ For clarity, see Gadamer, H.G. 1986. *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. Cambridge: University Press.

²² See Chapters 2 and 5.

²³ See chapter 2. In particular, *Silent subversive-ness*.

“expressive forms” and a “renewed recognition of the formal planning” in “traditional houses”. In Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction*, the proverbial pitched roof was, of course, once more the symbol of stylistic street scenography (façade) (See Fig.6.5. Left). However, Louis Khan’s methods combined with complex plans dominated the “ant-Brazil style” of the next generation (Garner 2003: 128, Curtis 1996: 443-451, Chipkin 1993:318) (Fig. 6.5. Right). Regardless of the socio-spatial principles established by his seniors, Theron exemplifies Willie Meyer and Glen Gallagher’s Robinson House (1966) as the first South African house to “assume a formal character”.

Post-Modernism as broadly defined, in its South African manifestation has been a sign of the rootlessness and uncertainty of the South African spirit – the zeitgeist of this country – as expressed in architecture. It is a trivialisation of culture in that here it cannot be the search back into history that will connect past and present assuming that at its best Post-Modernism does this. It does not reflect our history but it certainly reflects our uncertainty (Noero 1993: 2).

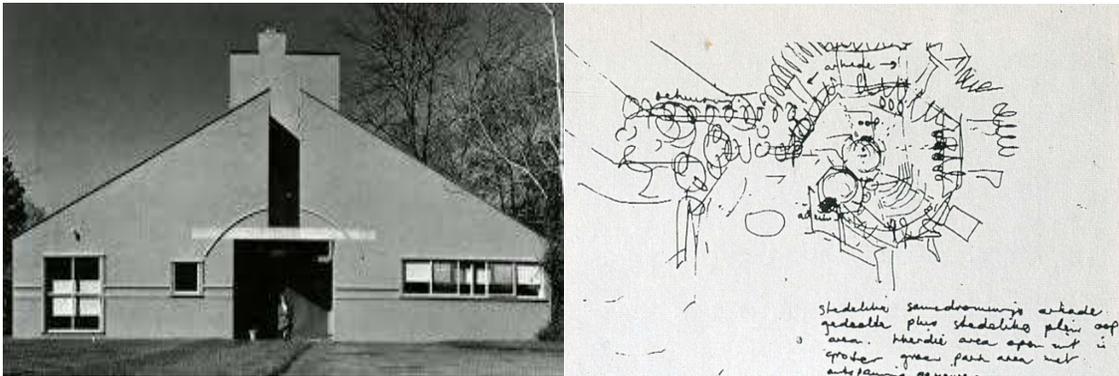


Figure 6.5. Left: “Open and closed, complex and simple, big and little”. Venturi and Rauch, Residence Vanna Venturi, Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, 1962 (Venturi 1977: 118). **Right:** .Complexity of plan. Wilhelm Meyer, Sketch for Rand Afrikaans University, 1967 (Chipkin 1993: 319).

One can argue that by the mid-1970s South African academics had firmly adopted this new ‘post-modern’ stylistic approach as an antithesis to the ‘modernist’ category into which they placed our agents neatly. In 1975, we note once more a battle of the styles: for example Herbert (Martienssen as International Style) versus Harrop-Allin (Eaton as Regionalist). Although, Biermann declared the modern movement dead²⁴, the majority arguments spurred on by Charles’s Jencks, were justified in relation to the pre-war work modernists as ‘style’ and not their ‘social’ concerns which were proven to be calamitous (Prinsloo 2000:65).

Today, it is easy to forget that during the 1950s, in the aftermath of the recent war, people had been quite content to allow themselves to be liberated from the past. It was only as the idealism of the period began to turn obviously sour during the second half of the 1960s that people began to react so fiercely against the ‘Contemporary’ style of the 1950s [...] but any sort of contemporary style *per se*, and what made people revert once again in the 1979s and the 1980s to the ideals of the ... dream cottage ... that they had left behind during the 1930s (Jackson 1994:221).

²⁴ See Low, I. 2004. Barrie Biermann: Past values for the present day. *Digest of South African Architecture*. 10.

Within the decade of the 1980s where “South Africa’s international isolation intensifies” (Prinsloo 2000:55), the *UIA-International Architect* (1985) publication featuring ‘Southern Africa’, “presented architectural work from a region which may be considered as a geographical unity, but certainly not as a cultural or political one” (Beck 1985a:2). Nevertheless, therein Beck (1985b:22) called for South African architects to apply regional lessons from Eaton rather than that of the 1960s which “led to an urge to be perceived as being part of the modern world” conveyed as “international formalism”. Yet, Beck (1985:46-49) provides examples from the 1960s – Biermann and Fagan’s houses – stylistically as an “appropriate regional architecture”. Without exploring the socio-spatial conception so important for the time, South African regionalist academics referred to these two examples exhaustively²⁵ in support of a construct for a ‘relevant’ South African architectural style justified as the previously discussed ‘critical regionalism’. Nevertheless, Frampton (1980:314) provides clarity:

The term ‘Critical Regionalism’ is not intended to denote the vernacular as this was once spontaneously produced by the combined interaction of climate, culture, myth and craft, but rather to identify those recent regional ‘schools’ whose primary aim has been to reflect and serve the limited constituencies in which they are grounded. Among other factors contributing to the emergence of a regionalism of this order is not only a certain prosperity but also some kind of anti-centrist consensus – in aspiration at least to some form of cultural, economic and political independence.

Following Mandela’s release from prison (1990), South Africans were again, desperately seeking a “relevant” South African ‘style’ without a deeper understanding of the ‘cultural identity’ of all citizens. As we have re-evaluated²⁶, Fisher (1998:123-148) on one hand, was looking to a past regional tradition for our generation, while in the same year, on the other hand, (Judin *et al*, 1998) were critically reviewing Fagan and Biermann in relation to a future after apartheid. With regards post-apartheid democratic identity, Jonathan Noble (2011:1) puts the political and aesthetic themes manifested in post-1994 architecture, albeit public buildings, to the test. One could argue, that some of these projects (for example Freedom Square, Pretoria and Walter Sisulu Dedication Square in Kliptown, Johannesburg) have, despite their democratic and symbolic aims, not succeeded in terms of appropriation. This reinforces the abovementioned sentiments of Dovey with regarding “styles or forms of liberty or oppression”. The re-appropriation of the British Imperialistic Union Building is a point in case highlighting the building merely as scenography. Perhaps, architects in the 1990s had forgotten the lessons of what constitutes appropriation.

It is the imagining self ... that, both as creator and as spectator, can inhabit through these works a world already beyond the future-orientation of modernity, where the notion of progress has collapsed and yet the narrative function, with its vectors of recollection and projection, remains the only alternative to articulate ethical action. An appropriate choreography for a postmodern world.

²⁵ See Chapters 1 and 4.

²⁶ See Chapter 4.

Chora, an empty gap that is not nothingness, assumed by common sense to be an exclusive space of action, is the meaning of architecture (Pérez-Gómez 1994:31).

The late 1990s saw a reappearance of attention to the 1950s 'Contemporary' as a "spontaneous expression of a feeling of creative and social liberation" that "represented a genuinely radical and revolutionary solution to the problem facing society" (Jackson 1994:223). One doubts the relevance of a post-world war condition of *free* inhabitation according to post-millennial desires for absolutely *freed* inhabitation (for example 'virtuality').

In defining a relevant architectural education for South Africa in 2000, Sanders (2000: 315-321), refers to the usual agents of the 1950s and 1960s in that they "were successfully developing an understanding of means and place in which modernity was transformed into something even greater, with the resourceful use of materials". Sanders grants relevance to our agents in terms of early twenty-first century themes of "Eco-technology, sustainability, environment, place, culture and future city"²⁷ prioritised in schools of architecture.

The 1960s unleashed a round of promise for a more socially responsive architecture through research in human-environment studies ... While such research continues it is increasingly marginalised within architecture schools and is often more useful for the question it begs than those that it answers ... The illusion of 'changing the world' is maintained through the production of ever-new imagery while the reproduction of social practice continues unchallenged (Dovey 2005:293-294)

The aim of the education, declares Sanders, is to "resist the insipid tendencies of the many clients and developers currently defacing our urban landscapes" by seeing a "future based on substance and not mere escapist fantasy" (negative freedom). Even, as Leach (1997:84) professes that "in an age of virtual reality, the very corporeality of the body cannot be ignored when addressing the experience of space" (positive freedom). Nearly two decades later, it is difficult to legitimise Du Plessis' (2001:47) referencing some of our agents (Biermann, Fagan and Jooste) as relevant with regards twenty-first century topics of migration and rapid urbanisation.

However, in light of a post 2008 economic countdown and with regards what Du Plessis (2001:47) terms "interconnectedness and interdependence", the domestic architecture of the Silent Subversives may still be applicable. With regards housing, we have seen²⁸ that whether quantitative ('native housing') or qualitative (socio-spatial conception), one can argue that any research on South African housing densification cannot ignore referencing the generation of the 1950s and 1960s, albeit beyond an idea of 'free inhabitation'.

²⁷ For example: Jane Jacobs *The Death and Life of great American Cities* (1960), anthropologist Edward T. Hall's *The Silent Language* (1959) and *The Hidden Dimension* (1966), Peter Blake's *God's Own Junkyard* (1964), Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960), Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), Christopher Alexander's *Community and Privacy* (1963) and Robert Andrey's *African Genesis* (1961)

²⁸ See chapter 5. In particular, *Suburban Situation*.

It may well be that the concept of 'belonging' – an ever provisional, rhizomatic model of attachment to place – offers us a viable paradigm to replace the now somewhat outmoded model of 'dwelling' that once dominated architectural discourse. For just as identity itself is today no longer a fixed condition, but a continually re-negotiable site of individual expression, so 'belonging' offers an equally flexible concept that can accommodate the transitory nature of contemporary existence. In a realm whose programmatic figures include the 'wanderer', 'migrant', 'refugee' and 'exile', the notion of 'belonging' offers a more sympathetic framework for understanding contemporary modes of identification with place (Leach 2003:13).

6.4 INHABITED HOUSING

6.4.1 Consolidated Society

[There was a] distinct shift from individual buildings to designing on an urban scale, and the focus moved from single family houses to group housing, bringing with it all the attendant concerns with political and social issues (Fox 1998:29)

By the late 1960s, the domestic architecture of our cohort with all its extensions was a “simulacra of urban communities on single-family plots (Hine 2005:21). Because of managing to alter bureaucratic byelaws, Sutton achieved in 1965, in Craighall Park, to design double-storey 'townhouses' named 'The Courtyards'. (Chipkin 1993:243, Sutton 2015:58) (Fig. 6.6. Left and middle). By 1969, Claassens (1969:19) regarded 'one-off' houses as insignificant. Furthermore, he criticized the freestanding “speculative housing development” in the “mushrooming suburbs” of the time as inadequate with regards length of services, garden maintenance and costs. The reasons he gave were a combination of public demands and “archaic building bye-laws”²⁹. Van Rensburg (1979:35) reinforces these sentiments:

Lets get the bye-laws revised and brought up to date. Let the higher authorities, our various administrations, similarly drop outmoded philosophies and allow us to produce semi-detached group housing type schemes, sharing common walls and so on. Let us create houses that are turned inwards to patio areas, useful cheap living spaces, omitting passages and entrance halls. Lets consolidate space and lets look back at what civilizations of 2000 years ago produced. There is a lot to learn from them.

Lennard (1965:15) reminds of the South African initial reluctance in the 1960s of accepting the “idea of group planning of suburban domestic architecture”. With regards consumerism and suburbia, the post-war situation for white South Africans paralleled that of middle-class Americans. We have seen³⁰ the critiques from Mumford and Neutra regarding the problems of conformity and isolation of the “archetypal suburban refuge”. With regards the “daily stress” of commuting, the Silent Subversive Coltman³¹ (1965:22-24) provides a critique and lessons of the suburb in relation to the city centre. He questioned

²⁹ Byelaws revolved around the issue of fire or “perpetuated bye-laws from the Fire of London in 1666” (Claassens 1969:19).

³⁰ See Chapter 3. In particular, *Fourth Stylistic Situation: 1940s to 1960s*.

³¹ Coltman was an architect known for his design of the Meintjies Tuberculosis Settlement, Alexandra Township, published in the *SAAR* in October 1954:31.

the “contemporary neurosis” to “escape” to suburbia in terms of the increase of motorcar traffic and subsequent required motorways as being paradoxical to preserving “precious values” of devouring the countryside with suburban sprawl (Fig. 6.6. Right). Coltman (1965: 23-24) wrote:

The grey monotone of suburbia, mile upon mile, sterile, dull, unfulfilled, is upon the cities of Europe and America. It is descending upon us. We must cry out against it. But who is to cry out? Our city fathers have not the voice, the technocrats have not the understanding, the land developers lack the inclination, and the victim, Mr. Everyman, is enmeshed in an inertia of his own domestic concerns.



Figure 6.6. Left and middle: Changed byelaws for narrow walkways and Private courtyards. Michael Sutton, *The Courtyards*, Townhouses, Craighall Park, Johannesburg, 1965 (Sutton 2015: 60) .**Right:** Suburban commuter stress. Photo form *The Star*, 1960s (Coltman 1965: 23).

Perhaps most pertinent to this thesis' theoretical position is the “social pressure” regarding suburban everyday living (Fig. 6.6. Right). In the sixties, architects were aware of rapidly increasing populations, urbanization and the ramifications thereof on the socio-economics and environmentalism of housing. This furthermore contradicts Fisher's (1998:139) claim that the Pretoria alumni of our generation lacked a sense of urbanity. Instead, several of our agents acknowledged the realities of “restricted land use” and “process of consolidation” as Schlapobersky (1965b:27) proves:

This means that the individual housing unit will be smaller and spatially less wasteful, standardized in overall size with the opportunity of flexibility internally to meet individual needs. The domain of privacy will be restricted to the housing unit itself and its open terraces or patios. The bits and pieces which presently constitutes private gardens will be consolidated into large parks and recreation places ... The amount of open space will be related to population density.

We have seen³² in the dispositioned dwellings that the criteria called for in the above quote for any future consolidated housing were already in place by the early 1950s. The patio, terrace or courtyard spatial conception could also be suitable for duplex, group or multi-housing. However, these contributions were

³² See Chapter 5.

essentially towards what Hoffman (1967:8-9) in the 1960s defined as 'Urban Low-Rise Group Housing'. Based on several mid-sixties observations, Schlapobersky (1965b: 25) predicted an urban future:

The ideal home on its holy half acre, whether it be well designed or badly designed by the architect or a spec builder, will be the cherished memory of a forgotten era in the year 2000. Between now and then, the combined effect of certain forces already at work, will render it wasteful, expensive and totally ineffective for housing the urban population. These forces are: Population Explosion; Social Pressure; Change in mode of Travel.

In distinguishing between freestanding houses and housing densities, Davis' (1977:3-6) research indicates, "There is no evidence connecting crime or pathology to density". Instead, "decades of testing and evaluation"³³ in the 1970s had proven the advantages of high density over perceived traditional associations of freestanding settler dwellings³⁴. More importantly, studies indicated, "the common street orientated low-rise housing block was less efficient than courtyard-type housing". Davies (1977:6) writes:

A study by James Tice and Stefanos Polyzoides describes how this vernacular low-rise/high density dwelling provides many of the amenities of the single family house but with increased land use efficiency. The courtyard is the collective substitute for the private yard. Accommodating controlled play areas and security, these enclaves have a high degree of community identity.

Nevertheless, urban theoreticians in the 1950s and 1960s used the extreme terms 'concentration' or 'deconcentration'³⁵ to denote low or high rise densification with the qualitative emphasis on "Society through Concentration" (Hoffman 1967:8). The generation of the 1950s and 1960s considered urbanisation the "more serious problem confronting the world", but more importantly for them was "how best to deal with the so-called population explosion ... in a way that will enable people to live in a humane, civilized fashion free from the burdens of modern urban life" (Jensen 1966:1). In other words, free inhabitation irrespective of restricted circumstance. Similar to the housing dilemma of the 1950s and 1960s, twenty-first century urban designers confront the issue of 'density' as a reality in Asia and Africa³⁶.

This need is no less one of the basic requirements of society today than at any other time in the world's history, but meeting it becomes immensely more difficult ... and while the problem of planning for the urban community is one with regional aspects, there are astonishingly close similarities between the tasks confronting the major cities in various parts of the world today, in spite of superficially varying local conditions (Jensen 1966:1).

Although, not all Silent Subversive agents designed group housing, but "simulacra" of the urban, the spatial conception elaborated on in the previous chapter were the same as for those that were housing enthusiasts³⁷. Claassens (1969:20) provides a good example of suburban "higher density development"

³³ The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York conducted the studies (Davis 1977:1).

³⁴ Mega housing proposals replace one house one plot for one block-one plot, which arguably too exacerbates urban sprawl.

³⁵ For an example of 'extreme concentration', see White, W. 1958. *Exploding Metropolis*. New York. For an example of 'deconcentration', see Kevin Lynch. 1960. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge.

³⁶ For further reading, see Bello-Schünemann, J. 2018. 'Defining the future of Africa's Brave New World', in *Africa in Fact*. Johannesburg. 12-17.

³⁷ This thesis has referenced the following agents with regards housing interests: Biermann, Claassens, Coltman, Fox, Lennard, Lipmann, Margoles, Schlapobersky, Spence, Sutton and Van Rensburg.

called Killara Park (Pretoria, c.1965) which consists of “a mixture of high rise, medium rise flat-blocks and terrace houses in a garden setting” that applies the same spatial-conception as his houses (Fig. 6.7. Left). The assessors citation for awarding House Claassen’s a merit (1968), concluded that the house “could serve as a model for higher density suburban living” (Harris 1969: 35). Based on socio-spatial conceptions for free inhabitation, we postulate that the lessons of the domestic architecture of our cohort can contribute to both vertical and horizontal densification as discussed next.

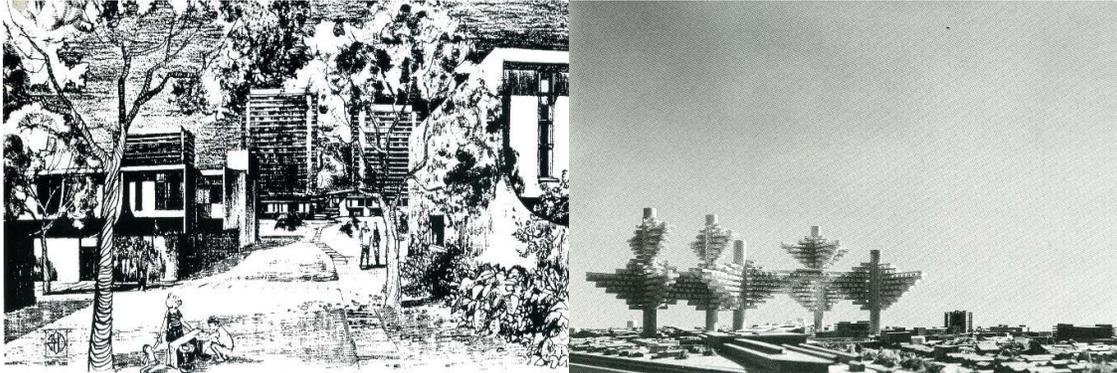


Figure 6.7. Left: Charles Swanepoel’s rendering of high density development. John Claassen, Killara Park, Pretoria, c.1965 (Claassens in *Plan2* 1969: 2). Right: Metabolist “Cities in the Air”. Arato Isozaki, *Cities in the air* (shzuoka version), 1960 (From *Struggling Cities: from Japanese Urban Projects in the 1960s* model exhibited at the University of Pretoria, Department of Architecture, 20 July till 12 August 2015).

6.4.2 Housing Models

The housing models for our local cohort were distinct from both their predecessors and successors. In chapter two, we dialectically investigated the former pre-war modernist social housing and regional sprawl models towards the problem of appropriate post-war housing. Although concerned with low-cost and efficient domesticity, both these precursor models were obsessed with promoting style above democratic social concerns. On the other hand, we saw the reformist and counter-cultural seeds of the fifties resulting in the social forces of populist consumerist culture in the late ‘swinging-sixties’ that were far from the ‘secondary simplicity’ habitus of our generation.

Spurred on by prosperity and space travel³⁸ imagery (For instance the Metabolists and Archigram), the urban futures of the next generation “were utopian ideals of transforming traditional cities into grandiose visions corresponding to a proposed new way of living” (Garner 2003:126) (Fig.6.7. Right). The populist and elitist 1970s allowed a plurality of houses and housing, consumerist culture saw houses and housing from an eclectic stylistic point of view (Prinsloo 2000:65). Although, Davis (1977: xi, xiii) suggested a shift from the 1960s technical programme towards housing as social and economic, the later criteria dominates any intentions of public participation subject to the *Form of Housing* essentially as “a physical

³⁸ “Ironically, it was the success of the space program in the mid-1960s, which helped to undermine this confidence in the ability of technology to solve the major problems of housing” (Davis 1977: xi).

manifestation of a complex process". In an interview, (Sharp 1979:34), Van Rensburg highlights the effect of consumerist culture on suburban housing in the 1970s:

Affluence is certainly and without doubt the main factor which has caused the complete breakdown of "good taste" in our domestic scene. This has not only happened here, but also in other countries – modern Athens for instance is a disaster. What has happened to the charm and simplicity of the old Greek towns and villages – especially those on the islands? With affluence comes plenty and of course, a wide choice of building materials and finishes. We live in a plastic age and with the current marketing system, potential houseowners are bombarded with such an incredible mass that only extreme restraint and that certain "built-in" good taste factor can avert disaster. Take a look at our new suburbs, the volume of disasters are a rather tragic reflection of this country's aesthetics. What has happened to the charm of a Karoo town?

As the above quote informs, the Silent Subversives drew housing models from a distant past as relevant for any futures. For one, Van Rensburg (1979:35) called for the consolidation of space based on the lesson of "what civilizations of 2000 years ago produced" (Fig. 6.8. Left). Unwitting of the variety of family-types, John Rashmere (1965:10) referred to the "beautiful simplicity" of the "tribal African [...] instinctively sensitive to the significance of family" and therefore for him an appropriate domestic model for housing. In seeking a solution for the "problem of housing the community". Lennard (1965:13) refers to "that ageless form of human habitation rooted so firmly in the instincts of human nature since man first began to live in groups". We have seen³⁹ how Biermann and Spence looked to cluster housing precedents in Egypt, the Middle East and the Ndebele. For low-rise cluster/courtyard high-density housing, Lipman (2003:95) appealed to younger generational planners to learn from African traditional settlement models (Steyn 2005: 108) (Fig.6.8.Right).

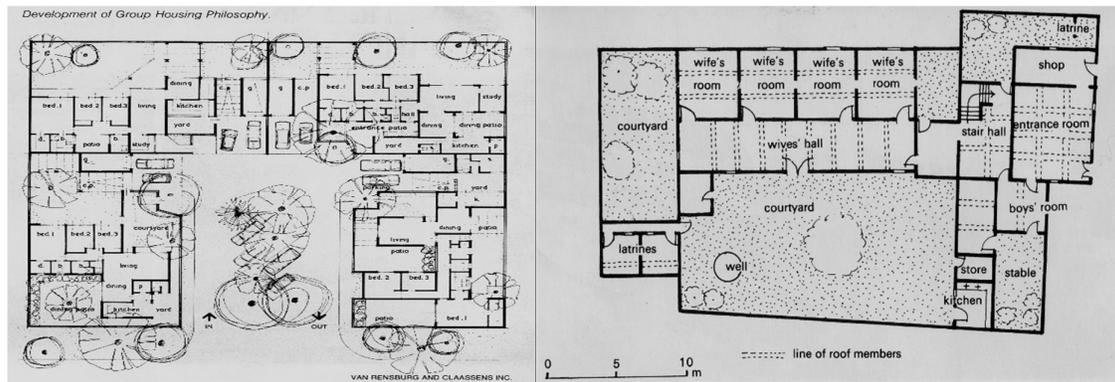


Figure 6.8. Left: Group-Housing Philosophy. Van Rensburg Claassens Inc., c.1970 (Sharp 1979: 35). **Right:** African courtyard Hausa house, Northern Nigeria, c.1950 (Denyer 1978: 175).

Common to all these past models, was the notion of what Hoffman (1967:8) referred to as "social intelligence". In terms of house form, architectural theoreticians might term these 'cluster' models as 'courtyard typologies'. For instance, Steyn (2005: 112) has dealt comprehensively with the affiliation of

³⁹ See Chapter 4.

“the traditional houses of sub-Saharan Africa and those of the Middle East, based on the shared concept of courtyards” permitting a comparative methodology between Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and African cluster types. Incidentally, as illustrated in Susan Denyer’s *African Traditional Architecture* (1978), many of these African clusters were composed of rectangular buildings (Fig. 6.8. Right). Steyn (2005:112) writes:

If the iconic image of the Western house is the hearth and that of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern houses that of the introverted courtyard, then the prevailing image of the archetypal indigenous southern African dwelling is unquestionably ... around a courtyard. Some observers might insist that a courtyard is tectonically a more enclosed form of open-to-sky space – as in Greek and Roman dwellings – but this study proposes that any open living space that is the focus, or organising structure, of a dwelling can typologically be classified as a courtyard. Such spaces are indeed called a ‘courtyard’ by many scholars.

The importance of Steyn’s (2005:111) research here is not the terminology, configurations or “morphology as the articulation of a type by applying the elements of style”. Rather the application of “archetypal clustering” to contemporary housing that “offers relatively high densities, privacy and protected outdoor living space”, but most importantly “allowing a social mix – all desirable characteristics of a good contemporary neighbourhood”. The courtyard house generated the technique of cluster housing as an economic alternative to “green belt” concepts requiring less infrastructure and “efficient sharing of walls” which consequently “reduces materials and energy consumption” (Davis 1977:13). Synthesising previous discussions⁴⁰ with this chapter, we may advance that the archetypal housing model employed by the Silent Subversives provides appropriate psychological significance for contemporary housing densities “as a more sustainable alternative to suburban sprawl” as advocated by both Steyn (2005:106) and Davis (1977:13). Hoffman (1967:12) contextualises our position for the sixties:

The patio house can be traced back to the oldest cities in the east, and even to-day, cities like Esphahan with a population of some 300,000, exclusively consists of closely spaced low-rise houses ... “The dwelling comfort enjoyed by the inhabitants of Ur or Echet-Aton and the sanitary installations of Mohenjo Daro can put most of the tenement houses of the nineteenth century to shame, and our modern dwellings have, in any case, much less space than those of the cities of 4000 years ago”.

In his “thoughts”, Lennard (1965:15) observed the global parallels of “primitive courtyard inhabitation” as a “familiar scene” also in the “South African landscape”. He exemplified the Siedlung Halen group-housing project in Berne, Switzerland (1965) as a future high-density model “grouped closely together in terraces, each house having its own patio-garden and a series of courts on various levels” (Fig. 6.9 Left). The young post war South African generation also looked to prototype courtyard models in English New Towns (Lennard 1965:15). There were many globally spread good high-density low-rise

⁴⁰ See Chapter 5. In particular, *Outdoor rooms*.

courtyard/terrace/patio housing schemes in the 1960s⁴¹ as precedent for our agents. These examples replaced those of their student years, such as Le Corbusier's Radiant City, *Unité d' Habitation* (1946-52) and Oscar Niemeyer's planned city of Brasília (1960) (Chipkin 1993:223-225). The unreceptive realities uncovered by these "monuments to an idea" introduced the need for "pragmatic, fluid solutions, determined by plebiscite rather than diktat" (Garner 2003: 127-128).

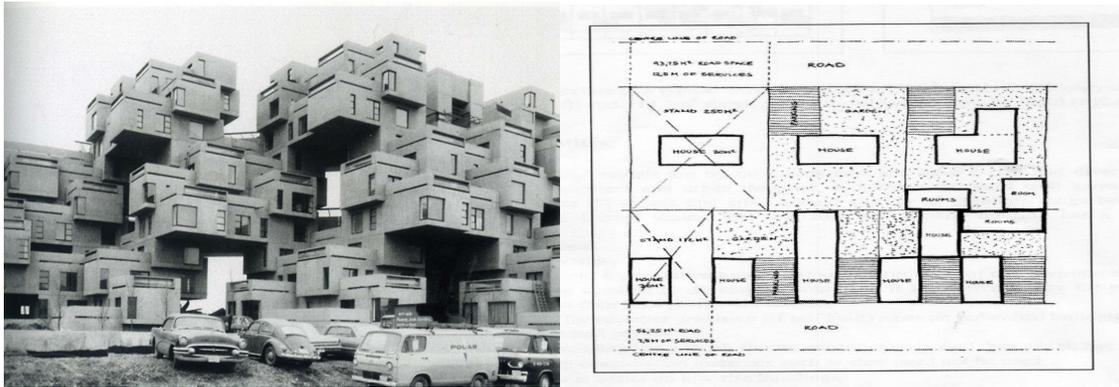


Figure 6.9. Left: 'Habitat' pre-fabricated multilevel patio housing. Moshe Safdie, Expo '67, Montreal, Canada, 1967 (Garner 2003: 133). Right: Socio-spatial backyards. *Comparative Analysis* for new medium-density housing Model, 2005 (Poulson *et al* 2005: 9).

In 2014, the United Nations (UN) Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat) concluded, "The majority of new urban dwellers will reside in slums and/or informal settlements"⁴². Unable to address their initial post 1994 policies, the post-apartheid South African government shifted the focus from 'housing' to 'human settlements'⁴³. In this regard, academics Poulson and Silverman argue⁴⁴ for a new form of housing delivery that gives attention to affordability and flexibility rather than status driven 'suburban dreams'. Rather, they propose backyard rooms for rental income that not only increase the density of one plot-one-house housing models but also provide specific household arrangements accommodating various household types or for rental purposes.

For these reasons, the economic necessity of informal occupation of land with shack settlements sprawls out on gridded plots with the idea of adding on to suit diverse appropriation. In effect, both these densification strategies transform housing into socio-spatial courtyard models not unlike those of the Silent Subversives. Therefore, the stage is set free inhabitation to take place.

⁴¹ For example, the Atelier 5, *Siedlung Halen*, 1965; Moshe Safdie's, *Habitat*, Montral Expo, 1967 and Neave Brown's Fleet Road Terrace Housing, London, (1967). The latter received The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) acclamation in 2017.

⁴² From Mariama Awumbila's paper 'Drivers of Migration and Urbanization in Africa: Key Trends and Issues', presented at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Cities, Human Mobility and International Migration, New York, 7-8 September 7-8, 2017.

⁴³ See Amira Osman, 'South Africa urgently needs to rethink its approach to housing', in *The Conversation*, June 4, 2017. <http://theconversation.com/south-africa-urgently-needs-to-rethink-its-approach-to-housing-78628>.

Osman highlights how in desperation, people are providing their own housing. While government policy has somewhat unrealistically aimed to eradicate all informal settlements, the department expected that it would take decades to upgrade existing informal settlements. Despite the construction of two million low-cost houses since 1994, most households still live in informal settlements across South Africa because of continuing urbanization.

⁴⁴ From Lone Poulson and Melinda Silverman's paper 'Design Strategies for the Densification of Low Income Housing', presented at XXXIII IAHS World Congress on Housing, Transforming Housing Environments through Design, Pretoria, September 27-30, 2005.

The urbanistic model here was obviously the shanty town ... The architectural model was the self-built shacks ... Neither the urbanistic nor the architectural model made any reference to an abstract model or an artificial organization: all one had to do was to let people get on with it and, so that this would happen harmoniously , to create a climate that was free of authorities, techniques, regulations and specialists. Only then would the forms arise out of the accumulation of details and not out of a central order. It was up to the architect to gather all this together and organise it into a work of art without massacring either its complexity or its naivety. (Kroll 1999: 12).

6.5 SUBCONCLUSIONS

This chapter has highlighted how the Silent Subversives expressed their frugal dispositions as simplicity in their domestic architecture. Relative to architectural discourse concerning 'origins' as a first act of appropriation or primary simplicity, we adopted a theoretical term - secondary simplicity – to describe inhabitation beyond romanticised ideals of rural dwelling more suited to a post-war and apartheid suburban living conditions. We verified that we still read this changed freer notion of improvised appropriation relative to the primary ground of nature. Having emphasised the problem of, on one hand, universal phenomenological essences and, on the other hand, stylistic reductivist concepts, we postulated an underlying theory for the Silent Subversives as a fusion of the two positions. We argued that this synthesising theory transcends geographical region based on global post-war aspirations for freedom and authentic dwelling. We revealed that this common cultural device was not reliant on form alone for meaningful identification to occur. Instead, we noted that for our Silent Subversives the physical form of their domestic architecture was merely the scenography to support the more important act of everyday performance resulting in a silent and autonomous spatial inhabitation. We pointed out that although the apartheid regime attempted to reflect ideologies stylistically, the domestic architecture of our generation, in contrast, materially neutralises itself in order to be an effective and subversive 'silent complicity'.

From the above premises, the chapter construed a theory of free inhabitation. Without exhausting concepts of freedom, the study placed an idea of the free in the post-war philosophical circumstances that professed the possibility of becoming free, albeit perceived. We translated this transcendental aspiration in terms of the occupation of the domestic architecture of the Silent Subversives as a principle of 'free inhabitation' as opposed to fixed notions of dwelling tied to physical *loci*. We argued that the post-war cohort had the choice of transcending bleak physical circumstances through a play-full liberal approach to living, which their domestic architecture could support socially. Although, this slant, we said set the scene for the next generations ideas of freedom, the affluent 1960s altered the stances regarding simplicity and complexity. The latter standpoint, we noted, resorted back to traditional stylistic form making which 1970s architects prioritised over inhabitation. We had seen thereafter how the focus in the 1980s and the 1990s was on regionalism as a relevant style for South African architecture neglecting previous socio-spatial conceptions or considerations of authentic cultural appropriation.

However, this chapter demonstrated the resurgence of 1950s and 1960s reforms, particularly with regards housing densification, as important pedagogical lessons for the twenty-first century.

This chapter confirmed the awareness of our cohort regarding urban futures for an increasing population and thereby the need for housing consolidation. Unlike the technical approach during the war, their interests revolved around the wellbeing of inhabitation. The spatial conception from the previous chapter allowed us to understand the important role of the courtyard or patio in low-rise high-density housing discussed in this chapter, that we suggested, in terms of our theory of free inhabitation, is relevant when considering the twenty-first century housing crisis irrespective of geography or densification forms. Especially having taken the consumerist eras and the 2008 economic crash into consideration, we identified the essential contribution that a 'secondary simplicity' approach allows, with regards inhabitation beyond the physical building itself. We referenced archetypal housing settlement models as precursor for the cluster housing as socio-spatial schemes of our generation that offers further lessons for high density, privacy and social intertextuality for future economic and environmentally sensitive housing inhabitation.

Finally, this chapter relayed how the principles of the Silent Subversive domestic architecture embed in subversive shack settlements whereby people are 'free' from authorities that have failed to deliver, hence allowing the notion of 'free inhabitation'.