DSPACE

https://dspace.org/

Integration of the peripheral community: defining fractured urbanism in Grahamstown

Erasmus, Marius

2014-02-20
http://hdl.handle.net10539/13895

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

A *user's* guide: to facilitate the healing of fractures and fissures in the urban fabric, caused by colonial urban development and apartheid restructuring of towns in South Africa

Abstract

I spent last December driving through parts of the Eastern Cape, and could not help but notice the beautiful character of the small colonial towns, Cathcart, Fort Beaufort, Alice, Bedford, Grahamstown, Adelaide and many more that litter the countryside. All of these towns have carefully planned urban layouts, consisting of masterfully crafted buildings set around public space. The church often forms the *central piece ,* either along the high street or as the culmination at the end of the main corridor, other buildings are strategically placed and set out to respect certain parameters which in turn create and define public space and place. It all seems so simple, buildings, some of them hundreds of years old and still relevant in their environment today. The high street leads effortlessly through the centre of town and is fed by side streets crossing it, large old trees line the sidewalk and all the buildings face the street. There is a bustle in the streets, the traffic flows at an even pace, the sidewalks are filled with activity. Every type of store and building seems to fit, from "wheel alignment" to "ice-cream" parlour. Turning down the tree lined side streets, the commercial activity dies down slowly and is replaced by more suburban character, quaint houses set back from the street boundary but still facing the road, mostly low fences and garden walls presenting a sort of suburban utopia. Old schools are dotted around the suburb with rugby fields and clock towers proudly announcing their presence. Side walks are wide and well maintained, as one continues down the street, and seemingly reach the end of the small town, then forced back down a side street to the centre of town. Most of these towns only have one or two points of entry and exit: "in on the high street, and out again on the high street"

As you leave the bustle of the high street it turns to a country road where cars and taxis speed, goats and cattle graze on the verge of the road and children play in green fields. The town is behind you and the open road beckons, then out of nowhere sprout sparsely spaced houses seemingly placed in fields of dust and stone. The road surface remains that of country road and the cars don't slow down, suddenly the houses and shacks are right up to the edge of the road. Dogs roam freely and children with mucus baked faces watch you go by, a donkey cart is pulled next to the road. You have just entered the second town or township the "native city" (King :1976, p.18) . The township seems disorganised, the smell of open fires is in the air, only black faces stare back and a different world greets you. Plastic bags and paper rubble rides on the wind. The world of the poor plays out here, the only civic buildings clearly visible are the police station with its torn and tattered flag, and a dusty school with broken windows. Can this be the same town with the same citizens or is it a whole new country separated from its source by a few kilometres? It seems, the two towns developed totally separately within a couple of kilometres of one another. South Africa has a long history of separateness. With democracy came the promise of togetherness and integration, yet almost twenty years after liberation these towns seem even more separate, and the lack of integration is clear, the gap is growing. The old colonial town, although well preserved, has stagnated. The native city is swelling, rolling, sprawling along the hills, this periphery town has become a city in crisis. How did this happen, and can the periphery be integrated with the whole?

Aerial Photographs by: National Geo-Spatial Information


Fig. 008


Fig. 009


Fig. 010


Fig. 011


Fig. 012


Fig. 013



Fig. 014

Photo By: Sophie Smith