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Restitution, inclusion and identity: Gaborone First People Congress Center

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ABSTRACT

In my thesis I wish to illustrate the ability of architecture to provide restitution, inclusion and identity. In Botswana, Basarwa have been forcefully evicted from their ancestral land to facilitate diamond mining by the government. In addition to this, within other Southern African countries, Basarwa have experienced varying degrees of similar circumstances. This has resulted in Basarwa experiencing widespread exclusion, loss of culture and dispossession.

The aim of this project is not to solve this issue but to create a platform to work towards improving the current state of Basarwa. The aim is to explore the notion of a cultural think-tank; an advocacy center where Basarwa from all over southern Africa can congregate and advocate for the various issues affecting them, where information and archives can be accessed and cultural performances can occur. This is a significant step towards achieving this goal. The site is in Botswana at the heart of the administrative center and has been selected as a subversive form of restitution.

This thesis investigates the types of dispossessions that Basarwa have experienced the resulting effects of exclusion, and the experiences of Basarwa in the Southern African context. Cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism are explored as vehicles of change that could help achieve the goal. Furthermore as a means of restitution and identity building, mythological cosmology and design have been investigated as they are the essential elements in the formation of identity and a source of pride and esteem for Basarwa.

By creating a building where advocacy for the plight of Basarwa can occur, which celebrates the mythological cosmology, design heritage and cultural practices of Basarwa, the aim is to achieve restitution, inclusion and identity.