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



Fig. 015


Fig. 016


Fig. 017


Fig. 018


Fig. 022


Fig. 021
Photo By: The world Journalism Project


Fig. 020


Fig. 019
Photo By: Sizwe Ndingane


Fig. 023


Fig. 024

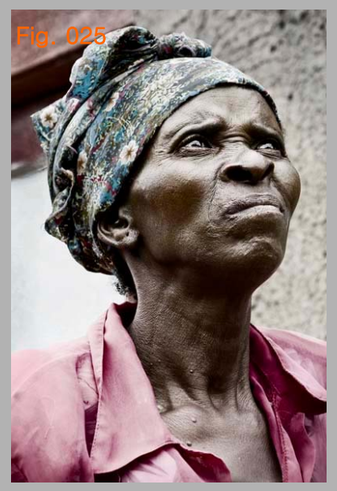

Fig. 025


Fig. 026

All the photos above with the exception of fig.19&21 was taken by Sophie Smith

CHAPTER

01

Cities today are experiencing a crisis. For more than a century they have been used as the raw material with which to realize ideological agendas. They have been moulded to represent a single philosophy, to serve a single industry, or to perform a single dominant function. This overlay has suppressed their role as venues for social and political freedom and has collided with their intrinsically multifarious nature. Schisms have formed. In tandem with the existence of wealthy urban enclaves, older cities are marked by zones of large-scale disinvestment, calculated neglect, and abandonment. (Park, 2005, p. 020)



Fig. 101

Aerial Photograph of Grahamstown supplied by: National Geo-Spatial Information

Introduction

1.1 Background

Whilst studying the countryside of South Africa, it is clear that a great divide exist between rich and poor. This is not only a South African issue but can be seen worldwide especially in “Cities of the South”, cities or towns situated in the southern hemisphere.

As urbanisation gains momentum and the number of people flooding to urban centres for employment and food increases exponentially, space in the city becomes contested and issues of spatial injustice are magnified. Often those who come to cities for employment and food security do so as a last resort, and are already at a disadvantage. They have no money and can not compete for space and access in the urban centre and have to pioneer a city life on the periphery.

“*Cities have always had a magnetic pull. Even in their early days , they had to surround themselves with walls for protection against immigration. Anyone not living in the city felt like a second-class citizen. This is how it was in ancient Rome, were wars were even waged over citizenship. People living in cities have always enjoyed more freedom and possibilities for development than those living outside them.”* (Burdett et el: 2007, p.6)

Cities are seen as massive metropolises with millions or tens of millions of people , Beijing, Mexico city, Johannesburg and New York, not too long from now we might even have cities of fifty million or more. There also exist many cities of a smaller scale, these cities might have only 50 thousand or a 100 thousand people, but have similar characteristics to their larger cousins. In South Africa we have many smaller cities or urban centres dotted along the landscape. These cities are not necessarily destinations and are not situated on the coast or main trade routes, but were often established during colonisation and acted as pioneer stations for colonisation to establish in foreign territory. They might have started as military garrisons and then grew into small colonial towns for settlers. Over a period of hundreds of years these small towns spread over large areas settlements and farms developed around them. They were a refuge in the wilderness and acted as anchors for pioneer farmers. In more recent times these smaller cities have grown fast mainly due to mass urbanisation.

This study will focus on such towns and cities in the Eastern Cape of South Africa with specific reference to Grahamstown, a pioneer town started originally as a military garrison for the British army in the early part of the nineteenth century. Grahamstown is situated in the Makana municipality district of the Eastern Cape and is one of many similar small to medium sized cities in this area. Grahamstown had a reported population of 124 758 people in 2003. Grahamstown and similar cities in the region have had a dramatic growth over the past couple of decades due to urbanisation of the rural communities in the entire district. There has also been an influx of people, mostly black, from the former homelands of Ciskei. There are some reports estimating Grahamstown’s population at over 200 000 Xhosa speakers alone.

This type of mass urbanisation towards smaller urban centres has become the norm in the Eastern Cape. As economic pressures and the need for regular employment grow, people migrate towards urban centres such as Grahamstown. The political and economic situation in the Eastern Cape is one of the weakest in Southern Africa. Rising unemployment in rural areas, due to mechanised farming, inactive farms and a growing population, has given momentum to the rate of urbanisation.

The sustainability of smaller towns and cities in the Eastern Cape has increased dramatically with the migration of new citizens towards these urban centres. It is feasible to expect a city like Grahamstown to double its population by 2050, to over 300 000 inhabitants. This compares well with cities in Australia and New Zealand. Canberra is the capital of Australia and has in the region of 350 000 people and is the eighth largest city in Australia. Wellington is the capital of New Zealand and has a population of 393 400 people, and is the second most populous urban centre in New Zealand.

When one looks at cities like Canberra and Wellington it is difficult to imagine that a “sleepy hollow” like Grahamstown could become a thriving metropolis competing with world class capital cities. The possibility certainly exists for Grahamstown to grow, and to grow smartly, by planning for an influx of large numbers of people. The questions remains: Can we plan effectively for mass urbanisation of the relatively poor to this urban centre? Does Grahamstown have the required resources to sustain such an increase in population density?

Even if Grahamstown does not grow much, which is doubtful, then it is already competing with smaller urban centres in the United States, in terms of population. New Haven is situated on the northern shore of Long Island on the eastern seaboard of North America in Connecticut, New England, and has a population of 129 779 people. Central to the economy of New Haven is Yale University, its biggest tax payer and an Ivy league school.
New Haven is therefore similar in size of population to Grahamstown and also has a University as its main economic driver. Rhodes University in Grahamstown is home to 7000 students and 2000 staff of which 375 are academic staff. *The lowdown on higher education*, “Times Live”, 18 September 2011, in an article on Universities in South Africa, they stated that Rhodes university had received 3603 applications for admission, admitting only 1397 of applications in 2008. This supports the idea that Rhodes university could grow dramatically over the next decade.
After extensive research, the following basic economic drivers were identified: Grahamstown has 27 Schools in total, of which 7 are private schools, 13 primary schools, and 14 Secondary schools; Three large hospitals with over 600 beds in total; a prison at Waainek for 680 prisoners. It is home to Rhodes university and 6-SA Infantry Battalion, and has a small airport. Grahamstown is the seat of the High Court in the Eastern Cape, and also serves an extensive farming community. It has recently become one of the most sought after festival destinations, with the Grahamstown National Arts festival taking place every year and attracting 50 000 people.



Fig. 102 Map of South Africa showing the Cacadu district – Grahamstown is situated in the Makana Municiplaity in Cacadu district

Map by: Htoni



Fig. 103 Map of the Eastern Cape – Number 8 is Makana Municiplaity in the Cacadu district

Map by: Htoni

1.2 Problem Statement

South Africa has a rich history, characterised by native inhabitants such as the Khoisan and then the southern moving Bantu tribes of central Africa. More recently though the history is formed by colonisation, first by the Dutch East India Company 1652 and later by Britain in 1795.
The Eastern Cape was colonised by the British in the early 1800's to strengthen the Cape government's position on the eastern frontier against their Xhosa neighbours. Grahamstown was founded in 1812 by Lieutenant-Colonel John Graham as a military outpost. Grahamstown grew during the 1820's mainly due to the British settlers giving up farming in the surrounding areas and taking up their original trades in Grahamstown.

Grahamstown has a typical colonial urban character and was laid out according to strict colonial parameters still visible in the layout of the town today. The colonial town consisted primarily of the **Military Garrison** (military base), the **Civil Station** and the **Native City** (King, 1976: 17,18).

Due to it's colonial history Grahamstown developed in two main parts, the colonial centre (Civil Station) developed around the Cathedral square, and Fingo township (Native City) developed to the north east of the colonial centre. Land in Fingo Village was given to the Mfengu tribe by Sir George Grey on behalf of Queen Victoria, for services rendered in the frontier wars 1846-1853, on the side of the British. By 1858, 318 title deeds were given to the Mfengu people. This part of town developed as the first black township with free hold title in the history of South Africa, and was the start of the black township (Native City) of Grahamstown as we know it today.

Since 1949, Grahamstown's black and coloured townships grew at a steady rate, in a north east direction, separate and away from the colonial urban centre. It is within this separate development, that the base problem exists. Due to racial segregation, not only in colonial urbanism, but in many westernised cultures, different races in the same town or city would live in parts segregated from one another. This segregation has lead to cracks and fissures in the social fabric of Grahamstown and many other colonial towns in the Eastern Cape and South Africa as a whole. These colonial towns, all of them beautifully designed and laid out, suffered two strikes against them that promoted separate living and development within a single town or city. The first, was the colonial layout that separated the native community from the colonial settler community, and secondly this separate development was entrenched by apartheid restructuring during the formation of the Group Areas Act of 1950. With the 1994 elections in South Africa and a newly democratic government it was hoped that this "separateness" would be addressed and that towns and cities within a new South Africa would be integrated.

Now almost 20 years since liberation, there is no sign of real integration and the cracks within the social and physical fabric of cities in South Africa has grown. It seems now that this division is not legislated along the lines of black and white but rather economically driven, thus increasing the divide between the races.

It is impossible not to notice the great divide that exists between the colonial towns and their black and coloured townships in the Eastern Cape. The original colonial town (civil station) is characterised by an almost white only population in a pristine urban and sub-urban environment. The colonial town has a high street with mixed use developments all along its edge and generally has the church as the central piece. The suburbs surround the high street and have well designed and equipped schools and houses along quiet tree lined streets. In contrast, the township starts 2 or 3 km away from the edge of the old colonial town, and usually has some kind of physical barrier between the township and colonial town. The black township is characterised by low rise developments, mostly houses and shanty towns or shacks. The police station is central to the layout of this community. Commercial activity exist on a haphazard, inconsistent, and informal base. The shebeen is one of the few successful enterprises and most people living in the Township work in the old colonial part of town which is situated a few kilometres away. The black township (which also includes coloured people) has schools, provided by government and the misadministration is evident in the badly maintained buildings and grounds. Although some roads are neatly tarred and the main accesses are at least maintained gravel roads, the rest are makeshift and hardly fit to travel by four wheel drive vehicles.

The township is dirty and plastic bags and papers are wind strewn. The basic waste management employed in the colonial centre of town does not reach into the township and certainly does not service the informal settlements sprouting up on the fringes. Even though there is a clear absence of public money, the township is organised by the people who live there, and there is a sense of place of belonging. Cattle walk the streets towards new grazing, donkey carts transport goods and people go about their daily business. The lack of investment and confidence is holding this part of town back.

According to King, most Post Colonial cities have common characteristics:

1. They are all products of culture contact situations between an industrialising or industrialised European colonial power and a traditional , agrarian or craft based economy.
2. They all manifest certain comparable spatial characteristics , both in terms of the relationship between different cultural settlements and, within each settlement area, between its component parts.
3. The cities today are characterised by cultural pluralism.
4. Despite the fact that they were deliberately planned to promote residential segregation, they are now required to promote processes of integration, at the national cultural, social, economic and ethic level.
5. In comparison with urban centres in industrial societies and, in many cases, according to their own administrators, these cities all have problems of housing, a shortage of economic resources, under-developed communications systems and a lack of the institutional infrastructure required to deal with social, administrative and political needs.

1.3 Scope and Delimitations

This study will deal in essence with the possibility of the integration of the peripheral community marginalised to the fringe of cities and towns in South Africa. Cities and towns will be studied critically to ascertain their current form. The discourse will be representative of a search for possible answers to questions about how we arrived at the current urban fabric, it will search for reason in the crisis.

Although the study looked at larger cities to start with, it will focus primarily on the study of cities in the Eastern Cape. These cities and towns, often overlooked because of their relative size to largest cities, have become a political time-bomb. Service delivery in the townships of the Eastern Cape country-towns has reached a position of national shame, this is also true in towns and cities in other outlying areas of the South Africa.

It is hypothesised that the study will find that the difficulty with service delivery lies within the separateness of these towns, between township and colonial town. The fact that a single municipality has to deliver services to two distinctly separate towns is causing disruption in the flow and execution of deliverables in smaller towns and cities.

At first glance it seems that most of these towns lack clear aims, goals and objectives to reach targets set by national and provincial government with regards to service delivery. This study will however not focus on political influence or governance issues and will also not be concerned with vehicles for insuring infrastructural spend in these areas.

The research segment of this study was aimed at a strategic level, and although it drew from the political and financial paradigm as a base, it will look for solutions at a level beyond the political and financial and will attempt to predict a growth path that might inform decision making.

This study will not deal with peripheral communities such as gated estates, farming communities or temporary communities who occupy space on the periphery, but will rather be concerned with established townships and informal communities pushed to the fringe of the city due to spatial injustice and restructuring and now for this reason suffering the consequence of separate development. It will concentrate on looking for a set of solutions based on looking at the larger argument of mass urbanisation (Burdett et el, 2007)

Demographics and the current size of population, although interesting and informative, will be included merely as background support for the larger argument of social injustice and exclusion.

The study will look at physical issues of city and town planning. It will attempt to simulate possible future scenarios. It will draw heavily on historic precedent and will keep in mind that resources are limited and that space comes at a price.

Although this is in many ways a scientific document, and we are scientists so to speak, who deal with numbers, figures, outcomes and results, we do act at an instinctive and intuitive level of design and we interpret all the information presented to us in a creative way. Therefore it is important to include checks and balances to ensure the design process does not lead the outcomes. It is for this reason that the final design is not as important as the guidelines that are achieved through this study. Each architect, urbanist, planner or designer will bring his or her own flavour to the solution, but it is hoped that the solution will respond to the needs and requirements of the specified problem. Creativity and passion are key ingredients.

Housing shortage, a lack of sufficient education and poor medical care is high on the priority of governments worldwide and although this study acknowledges these elements as needing attention, it will focus on the root cause of social exclusion of the fast urbanising poor and how to plan for future densities and social upliftment.

Unfortunately, as with most dissertations, time and resources prevent us form dealing with all the issues in detail, for that reason some assumptions will be made. These assumptions will be based on common knowledge or desktop research. It is also difficult to achieve the desired effect or outcomes without detailed knowledge of the people who occupy the spaces and places that we study and design for. This study although attempting to gain an understanding of the local marginalised migrants and citizens of Grahamstown, fell far short of what is required in terms of community involvement to truly make an impact that will be of national importance. I do believe it is a start, but it will have to be tested by exposing it to the community and all other stakeholders to ascertain its true relevance.

Why Grahamstown as the subject of this study?

I had very little previous knowledge of the city and had only visited it once, before deciding on it as the subject of this research and design discourse. The beautiful character of the colonial town and the juxtaposition of the township intrigued me. The history of colonialism and the 1820 settlers in this area made for an interesting case study. The tension that exists between the colonial past and the present form lends itself to critical analysis. The rich history of this area combined with the rate of urbanisation from its surrounding rural areas makes this urban centre particularly relevant in the current political and social landscape. Its typography and position in relation to the two large cities of Port Elizabeth and East London and other smaller urban centres, make it unique in terms of its anthropology. Its current layout also describes the problem we are facing in so many town is South Africa very concisely. The fact that Grahamstown is becoming known as a world-renowned centre for education and arts finalised my decision.

Although this study concentrates on Grahamstown, I believe it will be relevant to most cities in South Africa.

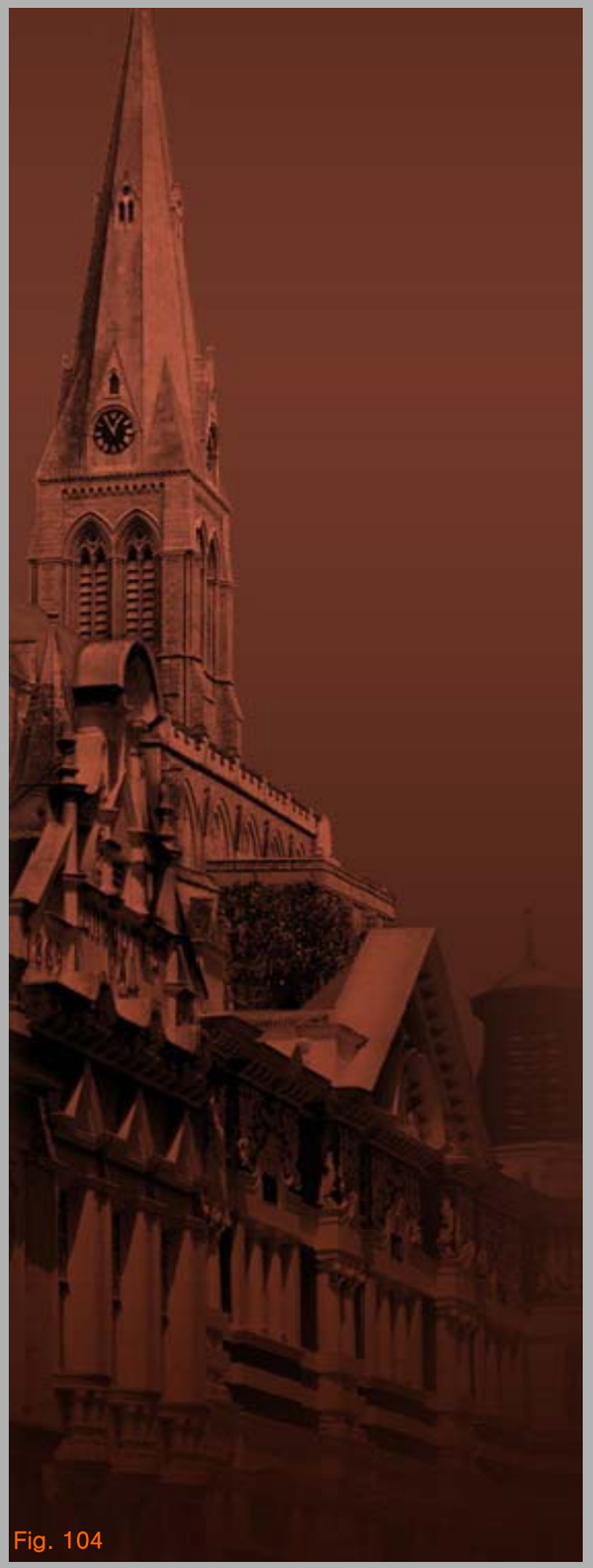


Fig. 104



Fig. 105

Above pictures taken from Makana official website www.makana.gov.za

1.4 Research Question

When it comes to our cities and towns in South Africa, questions of sustainability, relevance, access and social inclusion take centre stage. We might ask ourselves what will our towns and cities look like in 30 or 50 years from now? Will there be opportunity for our children and their children? When we look back on current events and ideas, will we be astonished at how good our decision making was, or will we be trying to repair the mistakes we made?

History is a fascinating subject and teaches us many things about ourselves. Often, history contains examples of enlightenment and progress, but also tyranny and stagnation. How will we shape the future? Decisions and actions today will shape our future and that of our children.

The central questions then: Can we make the correct decisions today? Can we action those decisions effectively and in time?

I would also like to ask: How does the pace of urban development and the scale of interventions affect the future of our urban space? Is incremental development the key to successful urban areas?

Too often decisions are based on political influence, or actions are taken, so that we deceptively look like we are doing the things we are supposed to be doing. For example, we often start building houses because of a target set by government, before the proper planning has taken place. This is detrimental to all work that happen after those poorly planned houses are constructed. It often means that the poor work has to be destroyed before we can progress with properly planned work based on correct and informed decision making. Unfortunately no city is immune to political interference or performance based numbers. It is however important to guard against these influences and use them creatively to advance good planning practises, and encourage community involvement, to contain political ideologies by informing against social injustice.

The ideas of master planning and modernist planning have been replaced by a neoliberal based ideology. This reinforces the ever growing gap between the rich and the poor and negates the importance of community. Projects and development are often developer driven and depend on the appetite of the private sector and the stability of the free market system.

In trying to formulate a central question to direct the research and design, many factors have to be included, or even specifically excluded to allow us to move forward incrementally.

How has colonial development and apartheid restructuring influenced the urban layout of towns and cities in South Africa, both negatively and positively? Why have these influences continued after 1994? Can the negative influences be redressed through incremental planning for future growth, whilst taking mass urbanisation into account?

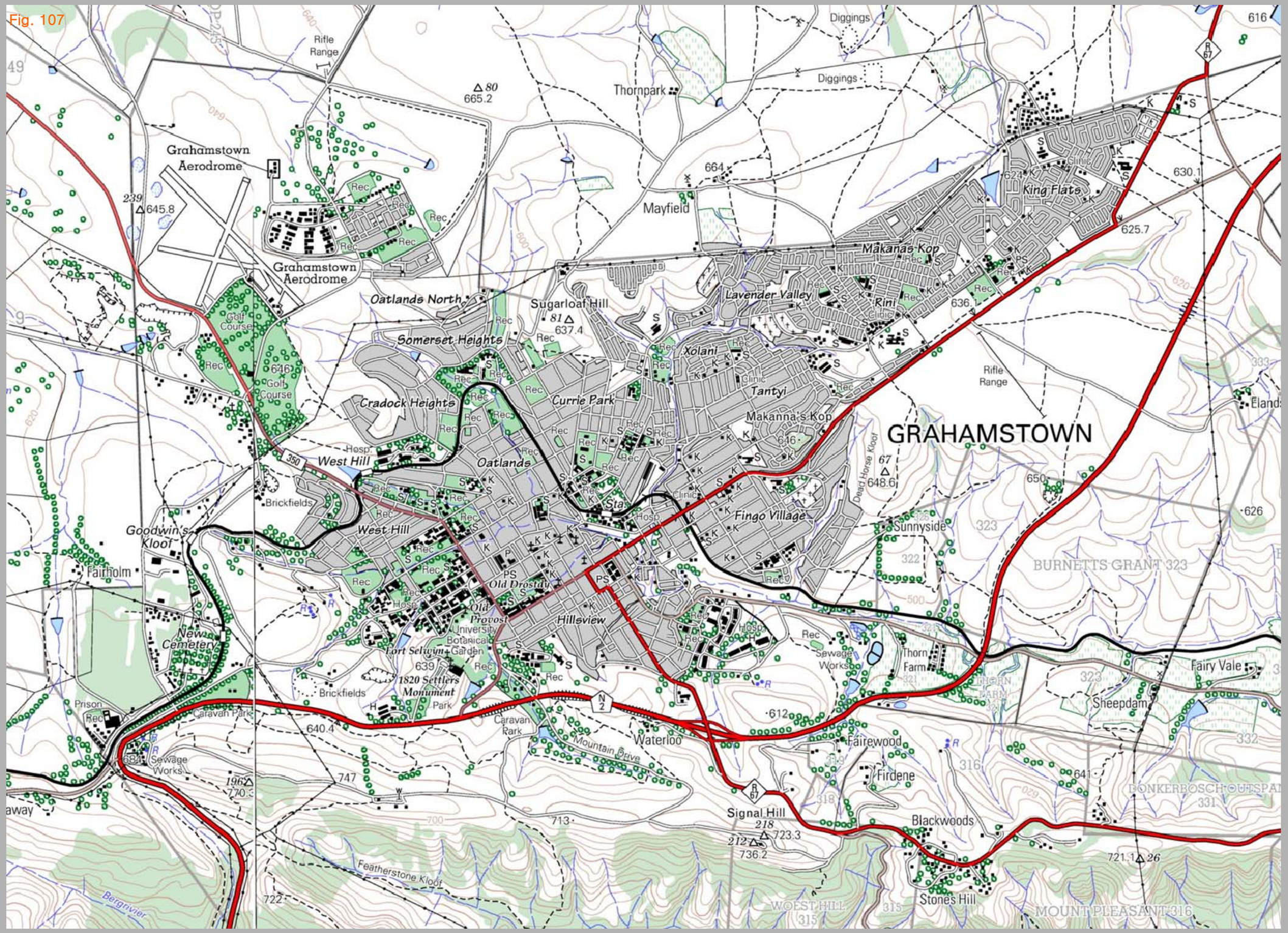
aerial view of grahamstown

Fig. 106



Aerial Photograph of Grahamstown supplied by National Geo-Spatial Information

Fig. 107



Map of Grahamstown supplied by: National Geo-Spatial Information